

Updated 3rd June 2020

(A) The Holy Eucharist ¹

In difficult times, such as we face now, the Church has a wisdom about relaxing its rules to adapt to new and challenging situations, (called “economy”) - particularly when the faithful cannot come to church. In these circumstances the Church has provided for the faithful to continue to receive Holy Communion by allowing those in good standing with the Church to take the Holy Gifts home with them, after prior consecration, to commune themselves as required. In times of persecution, or indeed in the present situation of the Coronavirus pandemic, it might be several months before the faithful at St Aidan’s can safely gather together in the temple. Here is what St Basil the Great says about this and what he blessed in his own time:

It is needless to point out that for anyone in times of persecution to be compelled to take the communion in his own hand without the presence of a priest or minister is not a serious offense, as long custom sanctions this practice from the facts themselves. All the solitaries in the desert, where there is no priest, take the communion themselves, keeping communion at home. And at Alexandria and in Egypt, each one of the laity, for the most part, keeps the communion, at his own house, and participates in it when he likes. For when once the priest has completed the offering, and given it, the recipient, participating in it each time as entire, is bound to believe that he properly takes and receives it from the giver. And even in the church, when the priest gives the portion, the recipient takes it with complete power over it, and so lifts it to his lips with his own hand. It has the same validity whether one portion or several portions are received from the priest at the same time. (ST. BASIL OF CAESAREA: To the Patrician Cæsaria, concerning Communion, Letter 93)

With this in mind, and until the pandemic has abated and is well under control, this is how we shall celebrate the Eucharist together:

1. **Fr Gregory will serve the Liturgy every Sunday at home with Kh. Helen assisting.**² This will be live streamed and retained on Facebook so we can pray together as it happens. Instructions for accessing the live broadcast are on the front page of the parish web site.

When Fr Gregory gets to the point in the Liturgy for the distribution of Holy Communion, you will receive Holy Communion yourself from the Holy Gifts reverently stored at home in your Icon Corner/Prayer Shelf. Fr Gregory reminds us how we should prepare the Holy Gifts for storage at home as follows:

“Whenever you receive the Holy Gifts from me (by prior arrangement by calling at St Aidan’s, or by me bringing it to you), you will take the Gifts home in the container provided, in a prayerful and careful manner. Upon returning home, you will do what the priest does on Great and Holy Thursday when he prepares the reserved sacrament for communing the sick throughout the following year....

First, you will carefully cut up the small Lamb into smaller pieces on a 10cm x 10cm square of kitchen foil taking care not to lose any crumbs. Next, place these with the kitchen foil into an oven on a low

¹ The daily hours of the Church will continue to be offered in your own homes. On Major Feasts, as on Sundays, services, including the Divine Liturgy, will be broadcast as usual from Fr Gregory’s home. Saturday Great Vespers and Matins will be broadcast weekly.

² We shall not be serving the Liturgy in an empty Church. All that will happen then is that some people will break the Church quarantine and just turn up anyway, defeating the whole purpose of what we are doing here, which is to protect life for all.

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*heat (less than 100 degrees Centigrade/Celsius) until they are thoroughly dry. Remove the pieces carefully from the oven and when they have cooled, wrap them entirely and carefully inside the kitchen foil and then place the box in your Icon Corner. **Make sure that crumbs are not lost!** You will commune yourself prayerfully at the appropriate point in the broadcast Liturgy. It is not necessary, by the way, for the wine to be consecrated. The Church's teaching is that the wine becomes the Blood of Christ when the Body of Christ is placed in it. Please try to acquire a suitable fortified wine for Communion such as 'Mavrodaphne' for this purpose. Do all this prayerfully and with good attention.*

Before and after Holy Communion, please use the usual prayers of preparation and thanksgiving. All online resources for these and other prayers will be provided. If you have these already in English or in your own language - if different and preferred - then that is fine.

Please explain to your whole family, including of course the children and young people, what is happening, why it is happening and the great honour we have to receive the Holy Mysteries at home when we cannot get to church. If you have any difficulties doing this, do let Fr Gregory know and he will visit you and help. Of course, this temporary provision will cease at the end of the pandemic.

Please note that this economy for this communing of the people is only available for members of the parish of St Aidan. A priest only gives Holy Communion anyway to such persons that he knows well, together with those who have letters from other parishes when they visit. This restriction is particularly important for the security and care of the Holy Mysteries in these circumstances. "The Holy Things are for the holy." (Liturgy)

2. How will I receive the Holy Gifts?

This will happen in one of two ways. The first way is for you to make an appointment no later than 6pm on Friday to come to church on **Saturday mornings between 10am and 12 noon**. These opening times are strictly **NOT for the faithful to gather together** (as the law stands at present).

When you arrive at church, **please stay by the gate and do not enter**. Fr Gregory will see you and place the Pre-Sanctified Holy Gifts, oil, holy water, books or anything else you need on a small table set up for this purpose outside at least two metres distant from where you are waiting. When he gives you the signal, come forward and receive what he has prepared for you, giving thanks to God.

The second way applies if you cannot come to church because you are infirm or self-isolating, Fr Gregory will make a home visit. He will not be able to do this if you are at home during a personal quarantine period, but he will visit when that period has expired, while of course maintaining social distancing at all times. He will greet you outside the house as regulations currently stand. Please place a small table outside your front door so the Gifts can be collected from it and in front of you but with social distancing observed.

(B) Confession and Spiritual Guidance

Part of your preparation for Holy Communion is of course to **confess, fast and pray**. All of this you can continue to do at home. However, there will come a time when you need **sacramental confession and**

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spiritual guidance. How does this work? Confession and spiritual guidance is, of course, best conducted in person but under current pandemic regulations that is not possible when the priest and penitent or spiritual child need to be separated by at least 2 metres! Consequently, we do the best we can under the circumstances (economy) and this means a telephone conversation. Contact Fr Gregory for an appointment.³

(C) Care and Witness

The mission of the Church continues through war, civil unrest, famine, natural disasters, persecutions and plagues. This is how it has always been. In Christian history the experience has been that many have come into the Church, who were not once followers of Christ, by being impressed deeply by the love and sacrificial service (even to the point of death) given by faithful Christians. Several people have already approached Fr Gregory since lock-down offering to help with shopping, visiting lonely people and offering all kinds of help. Fr Gregory has now started a Pastoral Directory of parishioners who can offer this kind of service. Perhaps you can do something similar, or indeed quite different? Do let Fr Gregory know as soon as you can. Let us give this witness as a dedication to Christ, just as in any other aspect of our lives in happier times.

(D) The Directories

There are four Sector ministries of the “Domestic Church” in place:- The **Spiritual Directory** (Broadcast services and prayer); the **Pastoral Directory** (Confession, Spiritual Direction and friendly chats over the phone); the **Education Directory** (Published Bible Studies, All Age Christian Education including E-Quip and Followers, Facebook Vlog teaching broadcasts, YouTube etc) and the **Mission and Service Directory** (evangelism and service in the community – within public health regulations). These are developing and extending in reach and take-up very well and they are appreciated by a growing number in our parish. If you can help with any of these, or make use of them, please email me at: father.gregory@gmail.com

(E) Christian Giving and Church Finances

For those who give to the work of our church by envelopes (which is ongoing) ... this method is cancelled for the duration of the pandemic. Please consider setting up a bank standing order to continue your contributions. This will be much appreciated. Please email me at father.gregory@gmail.com for the Bank details you will need.

Finally ...

I want to emphasise that not only will the Church continue to grow spiritually and in love during this crisis, however long it lasts, but also, both myself and Fr Emmanuel will continue to work and pray hard for the encouragement and salvation of us all. The most important thing is for all of us to keep in touch with each other, “maintain[ing] the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). To that end, we should commit ourselves to regular communications by telephone conversations, email, WhatsApp etc. There will be conference calls between Fr Gregory and the parish council to ensure that the leadership of the church remains in good shape. Above all, we must pray without ceasing and love without limit.



³ As of the date of this document Fr Gregory has heard far more confessions than he would have done in a comparable period in church! This is difficult to explain but it remains a puzzling fact. Maybe it is related to the pandemic itself?