



### Diocesan Regulation concerning “Communion Services” in the Absence of a Priest

It has become common in a number of Parishes and Institutions in the Diocese of Santa Rosa for Deacons and Laity to hold Communion Services in the Absence of a Priest on both Sundays and weekdays whenever a priest is not available for the celebration of Holy Mass. Often these Services are held on scheduled days, sometimes weekly, sometimes several times each week. The practice, while popular, is not consistent with the Instructions from the Holy See, namely The Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments.\*\*

Therefore in order to clarify matters for the Diocese of Santa Rosa, I hereby direct:

- 1) As a general policy, Communion Services in the Absence of a Priest are forbidden both on Sundays and on weekdays.
- 2) Information about the times for Masses at nearby Parishes and Chapels is to be published regularly in Parishes of the Diocese so that those who are able may travel to other sites for Mass.
- 3) Pastors are encouraged to make arrangements, when they are unable to celebrate Mass, that a Parish Leader be instructed to lead the Community in Prayer according to the Approved Rites (Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest – which is available in both English and Spanish). The Rites include the possibility of Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer or a Celebration of the Liturgy of the Word. Only a Deacon may preach on these occasions. A lay person leading the Service may read a text prepared by the Pastor. These Services are to be conducted without the Distribution of Holy Communion.
- 4) Deacons may also expose the Blessed Sacrament for a period of adoration followed by Benediction. Distribution of Holy Communion is not permitted in conjunction with Benediction.
- 5) This policy is not intended to impede those persons charged with the important duty of bringing Holy Communion to the Sick and to Shut-ins.
- 6) Under no circumstances are those charged with the duty of bringing Holy Communion to others to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in their own homes.
- 7) These Regulations become effective on August 1, 2018.

Given at the Chancery, Santa Rosa this 3rd day of July, 2018

  
+Robert F. Vasa, Bishop of Santa Rosa

\*\* 165. It is necessary to avoid any sort of confusion between this type of gathering and the celebration of the Eucharist. The diocesan Bishops, therefore, should prudently discern whether Holy Communion ought to be distributed in these gatherings. The matter would appropriately be determined in view of a more ample co-ordination in the Bishops’ Conference, to be put into effect after the *recognitio* of the acts by the Apostolic See through the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. It will be preferable, moreover, when both a Priest and a Deacon are absent, that the various parts be distributed among several faithful rather than having a single lay member of the faithful direct the whole celebration alone. Nor is it ever appropriate to refer to any member of the lay faithful as “presiding” over the celebration.

166. Likewise, especially if Holy Communion is distributed during such celebrations, the diocesan Bishop, to whose exclusive competence this matter pertains, must not easily grant permission for such celebrations to be held on weekdays, especially in places where it was possible or would be possible to have the celebration of Mass on the preceding or the following Sunday. Priests are therefore earnestly requested to celebrate Mass daily for the people in one of the churches entrusted to their care. (Instruction on the Eucharist, Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, March 25, 2004)