



A Response to the Questions Regarding Blessings During Holy Communion

Several parishioners and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion have asked me to address the issue of *giving a blessing* for those who request it at the Communion line by crossing their arms over their chest. They inquired what is the church's teaching on this and how are they to respond to it. In my early years as a priest I used to encourage little children who have not had their First Communion come up with their family to receive a "blessing" (and adults who are in the RCIA program). At that time I thought it was a great idea to prepare them for their future First Communion. About 5 years ago I was surprised to find out at a liturgical conference sponsored by our diocese for all the priests that the practice was actually liturgically incorrect and highly inappropriate. The thought that came to my mind was how am I going to explain this to the kids I have encouraged over the years that I can't "bless" them anymore (at least not during Communion). At that time I was in a transition moving to a new parish assignment where the practice was already discontinued and was no longer an issue. So please bear with me as I attempt to explain the reason why the blessing during Communion is explicitly discouraged. I also would like to remind everyone that this is a liturgical norm for the universal church and not my own personal preference that I'm introducing to the parish. And please read the excerpt taken from the Vatican's *Congregation for Divine Worship* (February 2008, Vol. IX, No. 10). I found a website that has more detailed explanation on this issue: www.adoremos.org.

Here's my attempt to try to explain the reasons in simple terms. First of all, the Communion line is for one purpose only: for the faithful to receive the Holy Eucharist. Secondly, *everyone* is blessed appropriately at the end of the Mass. Thirdly, the graces and blessings we receive through the merits of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the same for every Mass anywhere in the world; which means, someone will not receive *more* blessings by receiving an *added* gesture of a blessing at the communion line or at anytime during Mass; nor would anyone be deprived of graces for not getting the '*added*' blessing. Fourthly, a blessing is not supposed to be given by the priest or anyone when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed; which is the case at Holy Communion. If you noticed, there is no final blessing given after Mass whenever the Eucharist is exposed at the end of Mass during our First Friday Mass with Adoration. Fifthly, and this is a serious one, lay people are *strictly forbidden* under canonical penalty to simulate (imitate) the gesture of a blessing by a priest. Our Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) are placed in a very awkward situation whenever someone comes up to request a *blessing*. And this is primarily the reason why I'm addressing the situation now rather than later. The EMHC's have been asking me practically every week for a clear guidance on this matter. They really want to do the right thing but just don't know how to properly respond to the faithful when they come up for a blessing. One thing is very clear, the Church *forbids* them to give *any* kind of a gesture that could be mistaken for a blessing.

Believe me, I have been deep in agony trying to figure out the best way to correct this situation without offending anyone or causing great confusion to the children. There is no easy solution but I do have some suggestions. For starters, I recommend that all the parents kindly instruct their children regarding the *adjustment* that needs to be made regarding the communion line. A good catechesis or explanation is needed to let them know that they are not being deprived of a blessing. Instead, they should look forward with attentiveness for the final blessing at the end of Mass when it is appropriately given. And if the kids REALLY insist on receiving an extra blessing, please tell them that any of us priests will GLADLY give them a blessing *after* Mass. (The ironic thing is, that is actually how one can get an *extra* blessing—if one receives a blessing *outside* of Mass! It sounds odd, but it's true.)

I would like to request from the parents to let the kids know *not* to expect any gesture from any of the ministers, priests and lay ministers alike, when they come up at the communion line. Parents need to explain to their kids that by crossing their arms they are giving a reverent gesture of *embracing* Jesus as a sign of their great love for Him in the Eucharist. And soon they too will finally be able to receive Jesus at Holy Communion. (If for some reason an unaware child maintains a steady position waiting for some kind of a gesture at the line, a minister may say, "*God bless you*", while politely motioning them that they may *proceed*.)

And please feel free to let me know if you have any helpful suggestions that you can recommend.
Your shepherd in Christ,
Father Escalante

The Congregation for Divine Worship dated February 2009, Vol. XIV, No. 10, gives these directives:

- (1) *The liturgical blessing of the Holy Mass is properly given to each and to all at the conclusion of the Mass, just a few moments subsequent to the distribution of Holy Communion.*
- (2) *The directive states that lay people, within the context of Holy Mass, are unable to confer blessings. These blessings, rather, are the competence of the priest (cf. Ecclesia de Mysterio, Notitiae 34 (15 Aug. 1997), art. 6 & 2, Canon 1169, and Ritual De Benedictionibus (1985), n. 10).*
- (3) *Furthermore, the laying on of a hand or hands - which has its own sacramental significance, inappropriate here - by those distributing Holy Communion, in substitution for its reception, is to be explicitly discouraged.*
- (4) *The Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortion.84, "forbids any pastor, for whatever reason to pretext even of a pastoral nature, to perform ceremonies of any kind for divorced people who remarry". To be feared is that any form of blessing in substitution for communion would give the impression that the divorced and remarried have been returned, in some sense, to the status of Catholics in good standing.*
- (5) *In a similar way, for others who are not to be admitted to Holy Communion in accord with the norm of law, the Church's discipline has already made clear that they should not approach Holy Communion nor receive a blessing. This would include non-Catholics and those envisaged in Can 915 (i.e. those under the penalty of excommunication or interdict, and others who obstinately persist in manifest grave sin). The Congregation clarifies that extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (always laity), cannot give sacramental blessings with Mass.*

2009 WORKCAMP FUNDRAISER GOLF TIME!

6th Annual Charity Golf Tournament Friday, May 8th at 9 am



Stoneleigh Golf Course
To sponsor a hole or to play in
the tournament, please contact
Jane Treado at
janedhs78@aol.com

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING AN EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF HOLY COMMUNION?

Father Escalante would like to meet, as a group, with all those to whom he has not yet spoken, who are interested in becoming EHMC's. This short meeting will be Wednesday, May 6, 7:30pm, in the Oratory Room. Please call Kathleen if you are interested or for more information

SOUL STITCH MEETS TODAY 1:30-3:30pm in the hall. We will learn how to crochet, or you can work on current projects.

LIGHTHOUSE CATHOLIC MEDIA CD'S

We all have friends or family members who have fallen away from the Church, loved ones who are searching for answers about their Faith, who want to increase their knowledge and understanding, but don't know where to begin. Now you can reach out to these people by offering them a wonderful learning tool, a Lighthouse Catholic Media CD. People can deepen their understanding of the Faith when they listen to inspiring talks given by some of the best Catholic speakers in the world. Some of you have already started listening to these CDs. In fact, this program has been so popular that we have been adding new titles to our display. The Lighthouse CDs are in a display case in the narthex. Take the CDs you find interesting and then pass them on to someone else. If you can afford to make a \$3 donation, we will use it to purchase more CDs. Thanks for your continued support of this ministry.

ATTENTION SCOUTS! If your son or daughter has earned a Catholic Scouting award please contact Marilyn Gugliotta at 338-2712 or 6gugs@comcast.net to arrange to have it presented at an upcoming Mass.

Western Loudoun Relay for Life LIFE IS A CELEBRATION

May 30th and 31st

Heritage High School, Leesburg

Please join the St. Francis team, Walking in Faith. One day. One night. One

community. There are several ways you can be a part of our team – you can become a team member and relay with us, you can donate money to the team via either the team website (easiest,) or cash or check to a team member, you can purchase raffle tickets for a Redskin quilt with over 50 signatures of past and current team members and coaches, or you can buy flowers from us after Mass on Mother's Day. For more information, please contact Sheila Cowling at 571-216-3024 or e-mail Sheila@flythrough.com. To access the team website, you will find a link on the St. Francis website, or Google: Western Loudoun Relay for Life, go to Teams and choose team Walking in Faith.



POP Fund Seeks Parishioner Ideas on New Groups to Gift

Did you know that since 2001 St. Francis de Sales Parish has donated more than \$172,000 to groups serving the poor in our local community as well as on every continent? This incredible generosity has happened because 5% of the weekly offertory collection is set aside in a Preferential Option for the Poor (POP) Fund, from which these gifts are made.

Parishioner nominations are now being accepted for Spring 2009 gifts. If you know of an organization striving to lessen the hardships of the poor that might benefit from a POP Fund gift, please submit your written nomination to the church office. Nominations should include a suggested donation amount; a description of the organization and the parishioner's personal connection to the group; and a brochure or web site information for the organization. Nominations are due in the church office by May 19.



To those who have family in the military: Please send us a small photo with their name, age, branch of service, and rank. We

will be making a bulletin board of these men and women to display so that when we pray for them we know who they are and it will make it more personal.

Our Thoughts and Prayers Are With ...

The Deployed: Major Karl M. Wojtkun, Capt. Andrew Kellner, 2LT Brendan McCormick, LTC Michael F. Goodnow, Sr. Arm Yonatan Holz, Arm 1stC Brian Rickert, SSGT Sara Wiest

The Sick: Norma O'Grady, Hannah Brown, Albert Cippel, Grover 'Corky' Corcoran

The Deceased: Fr. Michael C. Kelly, Isabella Hayes Isaacs, Chase Harrison, Maria Keran, Patricia Evelyn Weaver, Charlotte Wells, Robert Saunders, Miriam Moore, Stephanie Jackson, William Leonard, Andrew Michael Wilson, Janet Law, Jose Vera Tudela, James Emmet Lanaghan, Samuel Phillips, William Cooper



Religious Education

Melissa Gobs, DRE

338-4497 or m.gobs@saintfrancisparish.org

Please Pray for our First Communicants!

On Saturday May 9, one hundred and sixty of our parish children will receive our Lord *Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity* in the Holy Eucharist. Please keep them and their families in prayer as they prepare for First Holy Communion. May this time of First Holy Communions remind us all of the power of the Holy Eucharist in our lives, and help us come to Jesus with open, grateful, and new hearts longing to receive Him just as we did on the day of our First Holy Communion.

Anima Christi

*Soul of Christ, sanctify me
Body of Christ, save me
Blood of Christ, inebriate me
Water from Christ's side, wash me
Passion of Christ, strengthen me
O good Jesus, hear me
Within Thy wounds hide me
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee
From the malicious enemy defend me
In the hour of my death call me
And bid me come unto Thee
That I may praise Thee with Thy saints
and with Thy angels
Forever and ever. Amen*

First Communion Rehearsals - WEDNESDAY, MAY 6

Those in the 10:30am Mass (Session 1, Weekday) will rehearse on Wednesday, May 6 from 5 - 6pm
Those in the 2pm Mass (Session 2, RCIC) will rehearse on Thursday, May 6) from 6:30-7:30pm

May Crowning

Sunday, May 10 immediately following the 12:30pm Mass. The children of our parish are invited to honor our Blessed Mother in a May Crowning. The children will join in a procession from the Church to the statue of Mary in the back garden singing hymns and placing flowers before Our Lady. All children who participate are asked to bring a flower from home. First Communicants who participate are encouraged to wear their First Holy Communion attire. Please join us in this great Marian tradition.

RE Calendar

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Sun., May 3 | Gr. K-8 - Session 1 - 8:45am at LVHS Gr. K-8, RCIC - Session 2 - 10:30am at LVHS |
| Mon., May 4 | Gr. 1, 7, RCIC, and Special Needs - 4:15pm at the church |
| Tue., May 5 | Gr. K, 2, 4, 8 - 4:15pm, at the church |
| Wed. May 6 | Grades 3,5,6 - 4:15pm, at the church |

TEEN FAITH NEWS



TEEN MASS - at 6pm every Sunday, All welcome-please bring friends. Teens are welcome to sit in the front left 3 rows of church.

Short Workcamp Meeting

May 3rd - From 7:15 - 7:30pm. For those who still have papers that need to be turned in, money to be handed in, or auction items to be handed in. **Next Workcamp meeting will be Sunday, May 17th.**

No Youth Night - Sunday, May 3rd - Spring Retreat. Please pray for us while we are on our retreat.

Golf Tournament - Friday, May 8th. Contact me if you are interested in sponsoring a hole or playing in the tournament.



J.A.M. Field trip - On Saturday May 16th 3pm-11pm, we have a special J.A.M. trip planned. We will be going down to JPill in Dumfries for a Middle School Bash with *special guest, Chris Stefanick*. All Middle Schoolers are invited and need to sign up before May 9th. Parents, we will need drivers for this event.

Jane Treado Youth Director
540-338-6381 or Janedhs78@aol.com

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

You can help make this the best VBS ever
SUMMERTIME BLAST

won't be a success without you!

We are recruiting new volunteers now; please sign up to help and enjoy a fun, faith-filled week with the children of our parish. Pick up a volunteer form in the Narthex and return it to the RE office.

All rising 7th and 8th graders can earn service hours by helping with VBS

VBS is JULY 13-17 - 9am - 12noon

Questions? Contact

Melissa m.gobs@saintfrancisparish.org or
Janice j.rees@saintfrancisparish.org

A VBS NURSERY IS PROVIDED FOR ALL
VOLUNTEERS WITH BABIES THRU 4YEAR OLDS

We hope to see a lot of new volunteers!

MASSSES for the WEEK

† deceased

Sat., May 2

9:00 am

Sat., May 2

5:00 pm

Sun., May 3

7:00 am

8:30 am

10:30 am

12:30 pm

6:00 pm

Mon., May 4

6:30 am

9:00 am

Tue., May 5

6:30 am

9:00 am

Wed., May 6

6:30 am

9:00 am

Thurs., May 7

6:30 am

9:00 am

Fri., May 8

6:30 am

12:00 noon

Sat., May 9

9:00 am

Sat., May 9

5:00 pm

Sun., May 10

7:00 am

8:30 am

10:30 am

12:30 pm

6:00 pm

First Saturday

† Fr. Michael C. Kelly

Vigil: 4th Sunday of Easter

† Jack Heelan

4th Sunday of Easter

† Deceased members of the D'Elia, Curran, Butts and Sommer families

Broderick Family

McCuition Family

People of the Parish

Sister Mary Lavey

Easter Weekday

Michael Osowski

† Jack Heelan

Easter Weekday

Michael Osowski

† George & † Helen Rutzel

Easter Weekday

† Dr. James A. Roberts

Michael Osowski

Easter Weekday

Michael Osowski

† Leon and † Felixa Slivonik

Easter Weekday

† Joseph A. Murphy

In Thanksgiving for the Eucharist

Easter Weekday

† Fr. Michael C. Kelly

Vigil: 5th Sunday of Easter

† Sara Fitzgerald

5th Sunday of Easter

† Rev. Stanley Slivonik

† Mary Agnes Thompson

† Esther Samonte Madrid

People of the Parish

† Bill Hayes

PARISH FINANCIAL STATUS: 4/26/09

| | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Offertory - this week | \$ 13,636 |
| YEAR TO DATE | \$ 280,541 |
| 2nd Collection | \$ 1,701 |

This Week

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Mon., May 4 | <u>RCIA</u> - 7:30pm |
| Wed., May 6 | <u>"Living Life in the Spirit"</u> - 6:30pm |
| | <u>Charismatic Prayer Group</u> - 7:30pm |
| | Oratory Room |

SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2009

4th Sunday of Easter

See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. - *1 John 3:1*

Below are the names of people along with the date of their burial from our parish since the time St. Francis de Sales became a parish in 1967.

Scripture tells us to pray for the living and the dead.

Mary Louise Franz, May 19, 2008

Eugene A. Kurtenback, May 30, 2007

Anne Hope Poirier Kirby-Overmyer, May 24, 2006

Robert C. Moore, May 19, 2004

Deacon Gerald A. Melvin, May 17, 2004

Shellie Jeff Gunnells, May 1, 2001

Juanita G. Heller, May 22, 2001

Veronica Mannion, May 24, 1999

Charles A. Gobs, May 26, 1999

Andrew Beaudway, May 4, 1998

John K. Donohoe, May 2, 1998

Florence G. Egan, May 18, 1995

Joseph Amari, May 4, 1989

Richard J. Klyn, May 12, 1986

John P. Minogue, May 10, 1983

Charles M. Schwab, May 22, 1981

Minnie Mae Abel, May 5, 1980

William D. Christie, May 13, 1980

Irene L. Baker, May 26, 1971

May Envelope Project

During the month of May, the parish office will be doing some Spring Cleaning in an attempt to update our parish database and go green! The office is requesting that everyone who is currently receiving offertory envelopes to please put them in the collection basket whether or not they contain an offering.

We are trying to reduce the number of mailings to people who no longer participate in the parish. For those who take advantage of the electronic giving program, we already have your information so you will not need to do anything.



Readings for the Week

| | |
|------------|---|
| Monday: | Acts 11:1-18; Jn 10:1-10 |
| Tuesday: | Acts 11:19-26; Jn 10:22-30 |
| Wednesday: | Acts 12:24 — 13:5a; Jn 12:44-50 |
| Thursday: | Acts 13:13-25; Jn 13:16-20 |
| Friday: | Acts 13:26-33; Jn 14:1-6 |
| Saturday: | Acts 13:44-52; Jn 14:7-14 |
| Sunday: | Acts 9:26-31; Ps 22; 1 Jn 3:18-24; Jn 15:1-8 |