

INTERVIEW

Sarah: profanities have to stop, the Eucharist isn't negotiable

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"It's a matter of faith and if we were really aware of what we are celebrating in the Mass and what the Eucharist is, certain ways of distributing Communion wouldn't even come to mind." Cardinal Sarah, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the

Discipline of the Sacraments responds publicly to the "concerns" of the faithful, who have not only been deprived of Holy Mass, but who are now dismayed by the bizarre proposals being put forward, with a view to a limited return to public Masses, that guarantee hygienic safety for the distribution of communion.

Recently, and in Italy, there has been talk about a solution which has already been adopted in Germany by some, whereby the Body of Christ is "packaged" : "To allow Italian Catholics to return to it, whilst avoiding contamination - states the newspaper La Stampa - consideration is being given to a "do it yourself" communion with "take away" hosts previously consecrated by the priest, which would be closed individually in plastic bags placed on shelves in the church". «No, no, no - Cardinal Sarah replies shocked on the phone - it's absolutely not possible, God deserves respect, you can't put Him in a bag. I don't know who thought of this absurdity, even if it is true that the deprivation of the Eucharist is certainly a suffering, the matter of how to communicate is not open to negotiation. We communicate in a dignified way, worthy of God who comes to us. The Eucharist must be treated with faith, we cannot treat it as a trivial object, we are not at the supermarket. This is total madness."

Something like this has already taken place in Germany ...

Unfortunately, many things are done in Germany that are not Catholic, but that doesn't mean you have to imitate them. Recently I heard a bishop say that in the future there will be no more Eucharistic assemblies, only the liturgy of the Word. But this is Protestantism.

As usual, "compassionate" reasons prevail: the faithful need Communion, which they have been deprived of for some time, but since the risk of contagion is still high, a compromise must be found ...

There are two issues that must be absolutely clarified. First of all, the Eucharist is not a right or a duty: it is a gift that we receive freely from God and that we must welcome with veneration and love. The Lord is a person, no one would welcome the person he loves in a bag or otherwise in an unworthy way. The response to the privation of the Eucharist cannot be desecration. This really is a matter of faith, if we believe we cannot treat it unworthily.

And the second issue?

Nobody can prevent a priest from confessing and giving communion, nobody has the right to stop him. The sacrament must be respected. So even if it is not possible to attend Masses, the faithful can ask to be confessed and to receive Communion.

Speaking of Masses, what do you think about the prolonging of celebrations on streaming or on TV

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We cannot get used to this, God became incarnate, He is flesh and blood, He is not a virtual reality. It is also highly misleading for priests. In Mass the priest has to look at God, instead he is getting used to looking at the camera, as if it were a show. We cannot go on like this.

Let's go back to Communion. In a few weeks, there is still hope that public Masses will be restored. And apart from the more sacrilegious solutions, there is also discussion as to whether it is more appropriate to receive Communion in the mouth or in the hand, and in the latter case how to receive it in the hand. What should be done?

There is already a rule in the Church and this must be respected: the faithful are free to receive Communion in the mouth or hand.

In recent years, there has been concern that a clear attack on the Eucharist is taking place: first there was the question of the divorced and remarried, under the banner of "communion for all"; then intercommunion with Protestants; then the proposals on making the Eucharist available in the Amazon and in the regions with a shortage of clergy, now the Masses at the time of the coronavirus ...

It should not surprise us. The devil strongly attacks the Eucharist because it is the heart of the life of the Church. But I believe, as I have already written in my books, that the heart of the problem is the crisis of faith in the priesthood. If priests are aware of what the Mass is and what the Eucharist is, certain ways of celebrating or certain hypotheses about Communion would not even come to mind. Jesus cannot be treated like this.