

## ***Place at the Table***

We were made for this! Yes, we were made to overcome the obstacles of Covid Crisis Reintegration, once again to be united in Christ.

Not only we, as people; but also our church: the church we call home; the church built for us through the great sacrifices of our precursor-parishioners; the church in which we have all yearned to assemble once more with one another before God. This church, beautifully laid out and constructed and adorned, is MADE for our reintegration in the sight of God.

Our church was made BIG, and there is room for all God's children, as they say. Or, as the Governor of our State (Commonwealth) has prescribed, there is room for 50% of God's children, with the remaining space left over as a buffer for safety's sake. The seating capacity is over 800 souls; if you leave empty half the pews (already marked off) and leave space within the pews between households or families, we should still be able to assemble in good numbers.

Our church was made GENEROUSLY, to accommodate these children of God who want to come forward when the Good Shepherd *spreads his table before us in the sight of our foes.* (Psalm 23:5). Not to be confused with our Holy Altar, which itself is large and worthy to bear the Saving Sacrifice we offer: five feet deep by eight feet wide and over three feet high. The Communion Table is separate, accessible, and over a hundred feet long, to accommodate as many banqueters as possible.

What hundred-foot table am I talking about, you may ask? It has been covered over for some years by brown carpeting, all around the sanctuary, so you might have missed it. But when the Founders built our church, they gave it a table. It has been here all along, and we need it now. *The communion table of walnut is supported by aluminum rails,* marveled the author of the 1961 article "Church of Cruciform Design" about our new church building, shortly after it was constructed.

So, we pulled up the carpet and refreshed that table: over one hundred feet length of eight-inch-wide by two-inch-thick flawless beams of fine-grain walnut. It's gorgeous. The aluminum "table legs" were destroyed, so they are replaced by powder-coated steel that echoes the bronze metal of the baldachino (canopy over the altar).

This is where the Faithful are to approach the Lamb's High Feast: at the table. This is where you *take this, all of you, and eat of it:* at the table. This is what will give you a place safely and uncrowded to receive the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Him who is Life: at the Communion Table.

The practice for the past forty or fifty years of having the priest stand in one place while the faithful move toward him to receive has become a chaotic danger in time of coronavirus. Simply, it is hard to hit a moving target. What is required for the sanitary and accurate transmission of Holy Communion is that the recipient HOLD STILL.

***You may hold still and receive on the tongue:*** tilting your head (back) and opening your mouth (wide) and extending your tongue. The best posture for this to work is kneeling (unless you are quite short), so our table has nicely cushioned pads on which you can kneel.

***You may hold still and receive on your hands:*** left hand resting on right, mask already removed so you can immediately, before you move away, place Our Lord on your own tongue. The best posture for this is STANDING, unless you are really tall, in which case the rail will not impede the motion of your hands as you receive.

After twenty-two years of experience, I am convinced that *the safest and most accurate way to communicate the faithful with the Body of Christ is for the recipient to KNEEL and receive ON THE TONGUE*, as long as the communicant kneels first, then waits for the priest to come to him and administer the sacrament. Please note, this is very, very different from how people fling themselves down to kneel at the feet of a priest in a moving communion line; that's a panic. Avoiding that panic is where the table comes in.

That said, OF COURSE it is permitted to receive on the hands, as described above, which permission was granted at some point when I was in high school, as I recall. This method can be safe too, but it requires that both hands be completely free -- no toddlers, purses, rosaries, infants, or canes may be in your hands or arms; and it requires that your hands be clean, otherwise the Sacred Host will touch whatever your hands have touched since last you scrubbed them. Grabbing, clutching, or snatching the host will result in interpersonal contact – a big no-no under current circumstances. Helping you hold still is where the table comes in.

Since you are likely used to the moving-communion-line approach, you may be put off for a moment by how to take your place at the table. But we are more than our furnishings, too: actual people will help you find and take your place at the table without crowding or causing concern to any of your brother and sister communicants. This method is two millennia old and obviously intuitive, so after the first time or two, you'll be a natural.

So, kneeling or standing, you will take your place at the table: your whole family together, a respectful space between you and the next person from a different household. The table-legs are actually useful indicators of what makes a respectful and healthy distance.

Holy Communion: the Body of Christ who looks like bread comes together with the members of the Body of Christ, who look like us. *And the two become one flesh.*

We were made for this.

