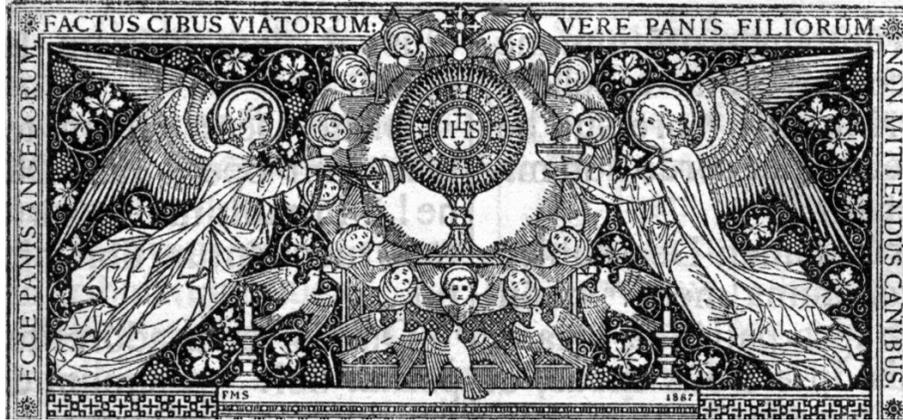


Guidelines for receiving Holy Communion with attention, care, and reverence



*We are glad that you are with us for the celebration of Mass.
We deeply appreciate your observance of these guidelines for receiving Jesus Christ,
who is really, truly, and substantially present in the Holy Eucharist.*

Preparing to receive Holy Communion worthily

The Bishops of the United States remind us, in their GUIDELINES FOR THE RECEPTION OF COMMUNION (1996) that:

“In order to be properly disposed to receive Communion, participants should not be conscious of grave sin and normally should have fasted for one hour. A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord without prior sacramental confession except for a grave reason where there is no opportunity for confession.”

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) prepares our soul to receive Jesus in Holy Communion worthily, by removing from our souls whatever sins stand between us and God. Regularly receiving God’s gift of pardon and peace in Confession is a beautiful and necessary part of our life in Christ, through which we receive strength, mercy, and grace.

When we have returned to the pew, we should do our best to avoid distractions, and spend our time in prayerful thanksgiving to Jesus, whom we have just received.

Making a sign of reverence

As the person in front of you receives Holy Communion, please make a sign of reverence to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. In the United States, this sign of reverence is customarily a bow. Then approach the Priest, Deacon, or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, who will lift the Sacred Host above the ciborium, saying “The Body of Christ.”

The communicant says “Amen,” and then receives Holy Communion by consuming the Sacred Host immediately and reverently. It is not permitted for a Priest, Deacon, or EMHC to add the name of the person receiving Holy Communion.

If Holy Communion is received on the tongue

Receiving Holy Communion on the tongue has been the centuries-old custom of our ancestors, and it is a perfectly legitimate way of receiving Holy Communion today. The universal custom of the Church is to receive in this manner, though in the United States and in some other countries, the Church has granted an *indult*, or exception, for Holy Communion to be received in the hand.

For this reason, Catholics who travel should be ready to adapt to local customs with respect to the posture and mode of receiving Holy Communion, always maintaining a spirit of prayerfulness and reverence toward the Lord Jesus Christ, who makes Himself present for our salvation in the Holy Eucharist.

If Holy Communion is received in the hand

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in the fourth century, offered a beautiful and precise catechesis on receiving Holy Communion in the hand, and his words remain fully applicable today:

“When you approach... make your left hand into a throne for the right which shall receive the King, and then cup your open hand for the Body of Christ, reciting the ‘Amen.’ But be careful that no particles fall. Tell me, if anybody had given you gold dust, would you not hold fast to it with all care, and watch lest some of it fall and be lost to you? Must you not then be even more careful with that which is more precious than gold and diamonds, so that no particles are lost?”

Please remember always to avoid the following:

- Receiving Holy Communion by extending only one hand;
- Taking or grabbing the Sacred Host from the Priest, Deacon, or EMHC;
- Transferring or flipping the Sacred Host from one hand to the other.

If your hands are impeded

If your hands are impeded by carrying a child in your arms, if you are using a cane or walker, if you have a tissue or handkerchief in your hand, a cast on your hand, or are wearing gloves, etc., it is better to receive Holy Communion directly on the tongue.

The posture

The norm for reception of Holy Communion in the United States is standing. At the same time, Holy Communion will not be denied to those who choose to receive kneeling.

Receiving a blessing

Those who will not be receiving Holy Communion at a particular Mass, for whatever reason (those of other faiths, those who have not fasted for an hour, those conscious of unconfessed grave sin, etc.) are welcome either to remain in their pew, or, if they come forward, they may cross their arms over their chest, and the priest or deacon will be happy to give them a blessing. An Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, who is not permitted to offer a blessing at Mass, may instead offer the invitation “*Receive the Lord Jesus in your heart.*”