

Practices for Holy Communion: Reminders for Clergy and Parish Leaders

The Church affirms the value of receiving Holy Communion under Both Kinds.

- Both the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal [GIRM]* and the *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds for the Diocese of the United States of America [Norms]* uphold the value of receiving Holy Communion under both kinds by the people.
- “The Council’s decision to restore Holy Communion under both kinds at the bishop’s discretion took expression in the first edition of the *Missale Romanum* and enjoys an even more generous application in the third typical edition of the *Missale Romanum*:

Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it takes place under both kinds. For in this form the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clearer expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord, as also the connection between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Kingdom of the Father.

The *General Instruction* further states that ‘at the same time the faithful should be instructed to participate more readily in this sacred rite, by which the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is made more fully evident.’” [*Norms*, 20, citing *GIRM*, 281-282; see also *GIRM*, 85, 283]

- “For just as Christ offered His whole self, Body and Blood, as a sacrifice for our sins, so too is our reception of His Body and Blood under both kinds an especially fitting participation in the memorial of His eternal life.” [*Norms*, 16]

Reception of Holy Communion under only one Kind (either species) constitutes the full and complete reception sacrament of the Eucharist.

- “Christ is ‘truly, really, and substantially contained’ in Holy Communion. His presence is not momentary nor simply signified, but wholly and permanently real under each of the consecrated species of bread and wine.” [*Norms*, 8]
- It remains perfectly acceptable for the faithful to receive only one species, and there may be any number of health-related or other reasons for doing so. People should be reminded to refrain from partaking of the chalice (and in some instances from attending Mass) when they are ill.

The normative posture for the reception of Holy Communion is standing.

- “The norm established for the Dioceses of the United States of America is that Holy Communion is to be received standing, unless an individual member of the faithful wishes to receive Communion while kneeling” [*GIRM*, 160, citing *Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Instruction, Redemptionis Sacramentum*, March 25, 2004, no. 91]
- The assembly stands after the Invitation to Communion (“O Lord I am not worthy...”) and remains standing until the last person has received Holy Communion. The faithful ‘may sit or kneel while the period of sacred silence after Communion is observed.’ [*GIRM*, 43]
- “No. 43 [above], is intended, on the one hand, to ensure within broad limits a certain uniformity of posture within the congregation for the various parts of the celebration of Holy Mass, and on the other, to not regulate posture rigidly in such a way that those who wish to kneel or sit would no longer be free.” [*Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments*, June 5, 2003 [*Prot. N. 855/03/L*]]

The gesture of reverence is a simple bow of the head before receiving Holy Communion.

- “When receiving Holy Communion, the communicant bows his or her head before the Sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives the Body of the Lord from the minister. The consecrated host may be received either on the tongue or in the hand, at the discretion of each communicant. When Holy Communion is received under both kinds, the sign of reverence is also made before receiving the Precious Blood.” [GIRM, 160]

The communicant may receive the Host in the hand or on the tongue.

- “The communicant may choose whether to receive the Body of Christ in the hand or on the tongue.” [Norms, 41]
- These are equally appropriate options for the communicant. The Church does not indicate that either method of receiving the Host is to be preferred. Both practices have a long and venerable tradition, and one is not to be considered superior to or more reverent than the other.

The dialogue at Communion may not be adapted.

- “The proper and only permissible form for distributing Holy Communion is to offer the consecrated bread by saying, ‘The Body of Christ’ and to offer the consecrated wine by saying, ‘The Blood of Christ.’ No other words or names should be added; and the formula should not be edited in any way.” [Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Mass, USCCB]

The Communion chant or song begins when the priest consumes the Host and continues until all have received Holy Communion.

- “While the Priest is receiving the Sacrament, the Communion Chant is begun, its purpose being to express the spiritual union of the communicants by means of the unity of their voices, to show gladness of heart, and to bring out more clearly the ‘communitarian’ character of the procession to receive the Eucharist. The singing is prolonged for as long as the Sacrament is being administered to the faithful.” [GIRM, 86]

At Mass, distribution of Holy Communion from the tabernacle is to be avoided whenever possible.

- “As a general rule, Holy Communion is given from the hosts consecrated at the same Mass and not from those reserved in the tabernacle.” [Norms, 30]
- “It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord’s Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the cases where this is foreseen, they partake of the chalice, so that even by means of the signs Communion may stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated.” [GIRM, 85]

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are to be used only when they are needed above and beyond all ordinary ministers of Holy Communion [priests, deacons] present at the Mass.

- “When the need of the Church warrants it and (ordinary) ministers are lacking, lay persons ... can also supply certain of their duties, namely ... to distribute Holy Communion, according to the precepts of the law.” [*Code of Canon Law* §230.3]
- “When the size of the congregation or the incapacity of the Bishop, Priest, or Deacon requires it, the celebrant may be assisted by other Bishops, Priests, or Deacons. If such ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not present, ‘the Priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him, that is, duly instituted acolytes or even other faithful who have been duly deputed for this purpose.’” [*Norms*, 28; *GIRM*, 162.]
- “Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence.” [*Norms*, 28]. In the Archdiocese of Louisville, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are required to complete sufficient formation either through their parish or the Archdiocese. Their pastor must request a mandate through the Office of Worship, and that mandate lasts for five years and may be renewed indefinitely.

The preferred method for receiving the Precious Blood is drinking from the chalice. Self-communication, including by intinction, is not an option for the faithful.

- The chalice may never “be picked up by the communicant for self-communication [except in the case of concelebrating bishops or priests], nor may the chalice be passed from one communicant to another. There shall always be a minister of the chalice.” [*Norms*, 44].
- “The communicant, including the extraordinary minister, is never allowed to self-communicate, even by means of intinction.” If intinction is offered, it is to be done only by the priest: “Each communicant, while holding a Communion-plate under the mouth, approaches the priest who holds a vessel with the sacred particles, with a minister standing at his side and holding the chalice. The priest takes a host, intincts it partly in the chalice and, showing it, says: ‘The Body and Blood of Christ.’ The communicant replies, ‘Amen,’ receives the Sacrament in the mouth from the priest, and then withdraws.” [*Norms*, 49]
- The faithful may not self-intinct. [*GIRM*, 287; *Norms*, 49-50]
- “It is the choice of the communicant, not the minister, to receive from the chalice.” [*Norms*, 46]

The proper procedures for distribution from the Chalice include wiping the Chalice with the purificator.

- “After each communicant has received the Blood of Christ, the minister carefully wipes both sides of the rim of the chalice with a purificator. This action is a matter of both reverence and hygiene. For the same reason, the minister turns the chalice slightly after each communicant has received the Precious Blood.” [*Norms*, 45]
- Pouring of the Blood of Christ after the consecration from one vessel to another is never to be done. The wine must always be poured into chalices before consecration. [*Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 106].

The Precious Blood is not reserved, and any remaining at the end of Communion distribution is consumed.

- When more of the Precious Blood remains than was necessary for communion, ordinary and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion consume what remains from their chalice at the credence table. [*Norms*, 51-52]

Deacons are particularly the ministers of the chalice. When deacon(s) are present and Holy Communion is distributed under both Kinds, deacon(s) are to be ministers of the chalice unless they are unable to do so.

- “When Communion is distributed under both kinds: the chalice is usually administered by a Deacon or, in the absence of a Deacon, by a Priest, or even by a duly instituted acolyte or another extraordinary minister of Holy Communion” [*GIRM*, 284]

Purification of Vessels after Holy Communion is to be done by a priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte after the distribution of Holy Communion or after Mass.

- “The sacred vessels are purified by the Priest, the Deacon, or an instituted acolyte (note: this is a ministry instituted by the bishop and is not the same as an altar server) after Communion or after Mass, in so far as possible at the credence table. The purification of the chalice is done with water alone or with wine and water, which is then consumed by whoever does the purification. The paten is wiped clean as usual with the purificator.” [*GIRM*, 279]
- “The Priest purifies the chalice at the credence table or at the altar.” [*GIRM*, 270] A deacon or instituted acolyte purifies at the credence table.
- Upon returning to the altar, the Priest collects the fragments, should any remain, and he stands at the altar or at the credence table and purifies the paten or ciborium over the chalice, and after this purifies the chalice, saying quietly the formula *Quod ore sumpsimus, Domine* (What has passed our lips), and dries the chalice with a purificator. If the vessels are purified at the altar, they are carried to the credence table by a minister. Nevertheless, it is also permitted to leave vessels needing to be purified, especially if there are several, on a corporal, suitably covered, either on the altar or on the credence table, and to purify them immediately after Mass, after the Dismissal of the people.” [*GIRM*, 163]
- At Masses with a Deacon, the deacon purifies the vessels [*GIRM*, 183].
- After purification, the vessels can be washed by the sacristan or other minister in the usual way in preparation for the next Mass.