

The Body and Blood of Christ

Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds

What is the Eucharist? The Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The word *Eucharist* itself means "thanksgiving." We are grateful for the gift of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, who gave Himself to us when He instituted the Eucharist at His Last Supper in the presence of his disciples with the command to "Do this in memory of me." With Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead we are reminded at every Mass that the Eucharist is a memorial, a meal, and a sacrifice inviting us to enter into His Paschal Mystery. Every Mass is an invitation for us to connect our daily life with His life, suffering, death, and resurrection. As the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, we too are called to be transformed as we receive Him and are sent forth to proclaim His Good News to the world.



Who distributes the Body and Blood of the Lord?

According to the *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America* [27] "Bishops, Priests, and Deacons distribute Holy Communion by virtue of their office as ordinary ministers of the Body and Blood of the Lord."

[Norms 28] "If such ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not present, 'the Priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him ... Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence."



How do I receive Holy Communion? The norm established for the reception of Holy Communion is that 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. When Holy Communion is received under both forms, this sign of reverence is also made before receiving the Precious Blood. [Norms 41] "Holy Communion under the form of bread is offered to the communicant with the words, 'The Body of Christ.' The communicant may choose whether to receive the Body of Christ in the hand or on the tongue. Both practices have a long and venerable tradition in the Church, and one is not preferred over the other."



When receiving in the hand, the communicant should be guided by the words of St. Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386 AD): 'When you approach, take care not to do so with your hand stretched out and your fingers open or apart, but rather place your left hand as a throne beneath your right, as befits one who is about to receive the king. Then receive him, taking care that nothing is lost.'



Once someone receives Holy Communion in this manner, he or she must consume the Body of Christ reverently and completely.

The communicant who wishes to receive from the chalice approaches the minister. The minister presents the chalice, saying, "The Blood of Christ." The communicant makes the gesture of reverence – a simple bow of the head – and responds, "Amen." [Norms 43]

The minister gives the chalice to the communicant, who drinks from it and gives it back to the minister. The communicant may not intinct (dip the host) in the chalice. "The communicant, including the extraordinary minister, is never allowed to self-communicate, even by means of intinction." [Norms 50].

"Those receiving the chalice may never pick up the chalice to self-communicate, nor may the chalice be passed from one communicant to another." [Norms 44]

"After each communicant has received the chalice, 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]

"It is the choice of the communicant, not the minister, to receive from the chalice." [Norms 46]



Concomitance and Fuller Sign.

The Church teaches that Jesus Christ, body and blood, soul, and divinity is fully present in the Host alone and in the Precious Blood Alone. This is known as concomitance. By this virtue, the entire self of Jesus is present in the sacred Host alone and in the Precious Blood alone, because He cannot be divided. Therefore, nothing is missing when we receive under one form of the Eucharist—Body OR Precious Blood, or both. With this in mind, the Church also teaches that when we receive the Eucharist under both forms—Body and Precious Blood—we experience the "fuller sign" of the Eucharistic banquet as Christ demonstrated at His Last Supper. [Norms 16, 20]

Further Reading:

Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America (USCCB, cited throughout this document)

The Reception of Holy Communion at Mass (USCCB)