



EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL & REVERENCE FOR THE REAL PRESENCE OF JESUS

Along with the rest of the United States, the Diocese of Owensboro will be participating in a three-year long nationwide Eucharistic Revival beginning on Corpus Christi Sunday, June 19, 2022. These three years provide us with an opportune moment to reflect on the great mystery of the Eucharist – what we believe about the sacrament and our personal response to Christ’s sacrifice. After a hiatus due to Covid, it is with great joy that, in the Diocese of Owensboro, we will return to the optional practice of the faithful receiving the Body of Christ on the tongue and the Blood of Christ from the chalice beginning on the Feast of Corpus Christi, June 19, 2022.

Our Lord gave the Church the great gift of the Holy Eucharist to feed us spiritually and give us the strength we need to follow Him faithfully. The bread and wine become His Body and Blood during the Mass. It is not just a symbol of Christ but, in a profound and holy transformation, the elements actually become the Lord’s Body and Blood. It is a central mystery of our faith, and what a great mystery this is! As Catholics, we have a tremendous treasure in our ability to physically receive Jesus Christ. We must respond with faith and reverence to this gift that Jesus has given us.

St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa) once said “When you look at the crucifix, you understand how much Jesus loved you. When you look at the Sacred Host you understand how much Jesus loves you now.” The Holy Eucharist is the most profound witness of Christ’s never-ending love for his children. How can we respond to such an incredible gift of love except by our own response of love? When we love someone, we take extra special care to make sure we are treating them right. However, even in the most loving of relationships, common signs of love and respect can be slowly put to the wayside. This is often not due to a lack of love, but simply letting those small practices slip away with increased familiarity. This time of Eucharistic Revival provides us with the wonderful opportunity to renew our love for our Lord by remembering those simple practices we share as a Church that help us to treat the Blessed Sacrament with love and reverence.

The next page offers some practical reminders of what the Church has prescribed as practices of love and reverence in the reception of Holy Communion.

HOW TO RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION

There are two options for receiving the Body of Christ: in the hand or on the tongue (*Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion*, 41). Reception in the hand is the most ancient option, though both are fully approved by the Church. One's personal choice should be honored, but language suggesting a superior way is to be avoided. Any source that declares one or the other practice is invalid or inappropriate is contradicting the practice of the Universal Church.

Whether an individual chooses to receive Holy Communion in the hand or on the tongue, there are two practices that remain the same:

- **Fast** — at least a one hour fast is to be observed before receiving Holy Communion. This does *not* include fasting from water or medication. An exception is made for the elderly, sick, and those who care for them. (Canon 919 §1, §3)
- **Bow** — 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 kinds, the sign of reverence is also made before receiving the Precious Blood (GIRM 160).

RECEPTION IN THE HAND

- “If Communion is received in the hand, the hands should first of all be clean. If one is right handed the left hand should rest upon the right. The host will then be laid in the palm of the left hand and then taken by the right hand to the mouth. If one is left-handed this is reversed. It is not appropriate to reach out with the fingers and take the host from the person



distributing” (USCCB, *The Reception of Holy Communion*). St. Cyril of Jerusalem states, “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.”

RECEPTION ON THE TONGUE

- The communicant should open the mouth wide and extend the tongue far enough so that the Sacred Host can be placed upon it without danger of falling. Please note that it is important to extend the tongue, not just open the mouth. Do not close the mouth or move the head while the minister is placing Communion on the tongue.

