

Practices in Giving and Receiving Holy Communion

Helpful Videos

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdGkTdv4Dt4> Busted Halo—How to Receive the Eucharist (2011)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbW9iXQJozo> Fr. William Nicholas—How Not to Receive Holy Communion (2016)

Important documents:

- [Code of Canon Law, Book IV, Part I, Title III \(The Most Holy Eucharist\)](#)
- [General Instruction of the Roman Missal](#)
- [Norms for Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America](#)
- [Redemptionis sacramentum: On Certain Matters to be Observed or to be Avoided Regarding the Most Holy Eucharist](#)
- [Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass](#)

Note for how to give Holy Communion on the tongue:

- The Communion minister takes the host and shows it to the communicant, saying “The Body of Christ.” It is best if the minister takes the host between the thumb and the forefinger in such a way that they may place the host on the tongue by pressing down with the forefinger from above. This makes it easier to avoid contact with the tongue of the communicant.

Canon Law

Can. 919 §1. A person who is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist is to abstain for at least one hour before holy communion from any food and drink, except for only water and medicine.

§3. The elderly, the infirm, and those who care for them can receive the Most Holy Eucharist even if they have eaten something within the preceding hour.

Can. 925 Holy communion is to be given under the form of bread alone, or under both species according to the norm of the liturgical laws, or even under the form of wine alone in a case of necessity.

Norms for Distribution of Holy Communion

Catechesis for Receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord

25. When Communion under both kinds is first introduced by the Diocesan Bishop and also whenever the opportunity for instruction is present, the faithful should be properly catechized on the following matters in the light of the teaching and directives of the *General Instruction*:

1. the ecclesial nature of the Eucharist as the common possession of the whole Church;
2. the Eucharist as the memorial of Christ's sacrifice, his death and resurrection, and as the sacred banquet;
3. the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements, whole and entire—in each element of consecrated bread and wine (the doctrine of concomitance);
4. the kinds of reverence due at all times to the sacrament, whether within the eucharistic Liturgy or outside the celebration;³⁸ and
5. the role that ordinary and, if necessary, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist are assigned in the eucharistic assembly.

Reverence

29. All ministers of Holy Communion should show the greatest reverence for the Most Holy Eucharist by their demeanor, their attire, and the manner in which they handle the consecrated bread or wine. Should there be any mishap—as when, for example, the consecrated wine is spilled from the chalice—then the affected "area ... should be washed with water, and this water should be then poured into the sacrarium."⁴⁴

At the Breaking of the Bread

38. If extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are required by pastoral need, they should not approach the altar before the Priest has received Communion. After the Priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the extraordinary ministers, assisted by the Deacon, and then hands the sacred vessels to them for distribution of Holy Communion to the people.

Distribution of Communion

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. When receiving in the hand, the communicant should be guided by the words of St. Cyril of Jerusalem: "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."⁵²

45. 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.

46. It is the choice of the communicant, not the minister, to receive from the chalice.

GIRM

Silence

45. Sacred silence also, as part of the celebration, is to be observed at the designated times.[54] Its nature, however, depends on the moment when it occurs in the different parts of the celebration. For in the Penitential Act and again after the invitation to pray, individuals recollect themselves; whereas after a reading or after the Homily, all meditate briefly on what they have heard; then after Communion, they praise God in their hearts and pray to him.

Even before the celebration itself, it is a praiseworthy practice for silence to be observed in the church, in the sacristy, in the vesting room, and in adjacent areas, so that all may dispose themselves to carry out the sacred celebration in a devout and fitting manner.

85. 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 instances when it is permitted, they partake of the chalice (cf. no. 283), so that even by means of the signs Communion will stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated.[73]

Postures

43. The faithful should stand from the beginning of the Entrance chant, or while the priest approaches the altar, until the end of the collect; for the Alleluia chant before the Gospel; while the Gospel itself is proclaimed; during the Profession of Faith and the Prayer of the Faithful; from the invitation, Orate, fratres (Pray, brethren), before the prayer over the offerings until the end of Mass, except at the places indicated below.

They should, however, sit while the readings before the Gospel and the responsorial Psalm are proclaimed and for the homily and while the Preparation of the Gifts at the Offertory is taking place; and, as circumstances allow, they may sit or kneel while the period of sacred silence after Communion is observed.

In the dioceses of the United States of America, they should kneel beginning after the singing or recitation of the Sanctus until after the Amen of the Eucharistic Prayer, except when prevented on occasion by reasons of health, lack of space, the large number of people present, or some other good reason. Those who do not kneel ought to make a profound bow when the priest genuflects after the consecration. The faithful kneel after the Agnus Dei unless the diocesan Bishop determines otherwise.[53]

With a view to a uniformity in gestures and postures during one and the same celebration, the faithful should follow the directions which the deacon, lay minister, or priest gives according to whatever is indicated in the Missal.

160. The priest then takes the paten or ciborium and goes to the communicants, who, as a rule, approach in a procession.

The faithful are not permitted to take the consecrated bread or the sacred chalice by themselves and, still less, to hand them from one to another. The norm for reception of Holy Communion in the dioceses of the United States is standing. Communicants should not be denied Holy Communion because they kneel. Rather, such instances should be addressed pastorally, by providing the faithful with proper catechesis on the reasons for this norm.

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.

Genuflections and Bows

137. The Creed is sung or recited by the priest together with the people (cf. no. 68) with everyone standing. At the words *et incarnatus est* (by the power of the Holy Spirit . . . and became man) all make a profound bow; but on the solemnities of the Annunciation and of the Nativity of the Lord, all genuflect.

274. A genuflection, made by bending the right knee to the ground, signifies adoration, and therefore it is reserved for the Most Blessed Sacrament, as well as for the Holy Cross from the solemn adoration during the liturgical celebration on Good Friday until the beginning of the Easter Vigil.

During Mass, three genuflections are made by the priest celebrant: namely, after the showing of the host, after the showing of the chalice, and before Communion. Certain specific features to be observed in a concelebrated Mass are noted in their proper place (cf. nos. 210-251).

If, however, the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is present in the sanctuary, the priest, the deacon, and the other ministers genuflect when they approach the altar and when they depart from it, but not during the celebration of Mass itself.

Otherwise all who pass before the Most Blessed Sacrament genuflect, unless they are moving in procession.

Ministers carrying the processional cross or candles bow their heads instead of genuflecting.

275. A bow signifies reverence and honor shown to the persons themselves or to the signs that represent them. There are two kinds of bows: a bow of the head and a bow of the body.

- a) A bow of the head is made when the three Divine Persons are named together and at the names of Jesus, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Saint in whose honor Mass is being celebrated.
- b) A bow of the body, that is to say a profound bow, is made to the altar; during the prayers *Munda cor meum* (Almighty God, cleanse my heart) and *In spiritu humilitatis* (Lord God, we ask you to receive); in the Creed at the words *Et incarnatus est* (by the power of the

Holy Spirit . . . and became man); in the Roman Canon at the words *Supplices te rogamus* (Almighty God, we pray that your angel). The same kind of bow is made by the deacon when he asks for a blessing before the proclamation of the Gospel. In addition, the priest bows slightly as he speaks the words of the Lord at the consecration.

Purification

278. Whenever a fragment of the host adheres to his fingers, especially after the fraction or the Communion of the faithful, the priest is to wipe his fingers over the paten or, if necessary, wash them. Likewise, he should also gather any fragments that may have fallen outside the paten.

279. The sacred vessels are purified by the priest, the deacon, or an instituted acolyte after Communion or after Mass, insofar as possible at the credence table. The purification of the chalice is done with water alone or with wine and water, which is then drunk by whoever does the purification. The paten is usually wiped clean with the purificator.

Care must be taken that whatever may remain of the Blood of Christ after the distribution of Communion is consumed immediately and completely at the altar.

280. If a host or any particle should fall, it is to be picked up reverently. If any of the Precious Blood is spilled, the area where the spill occurred should be washed with water, and this water should then be poured into the *sacrarium* in the sacristy.

RS

89. “So that even by means of the signs Communion may stand out more clearly as a participation in the Sacrifice being celebrated”, [174] it is preferable that the faithful be able to receive hosts consecrated in the same Mass. [175]

HCWE

53. A single genuflection is made in the presence of the blessed sacrament, whether reserved in the tabernacle or exposed for public adoration.