



Catechesis on Devout Reception of Holy Communion

In eating and drinking the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion, we are joined by the Holy Spirit to Christ Jesus and to one another as members of His mystical Body. Our Lord willed that we receive this sacrament as the soul's spiritual food to sustain and build up those who live with His life, as a remedy to free us from our daily defects and to keep us from sin, and as a pledge of our future glory and everlasting happiness. Therefore, as Catholics we are called to participate fully in the Eucharist by receiving Communion devoutly and frequently.

In addition to preparing for Communion through the Sacrament of Reconciliation and fasting, devout reception of Communion includes the reverent act of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. 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 while kneeling. When receiving the consecrated host, we bow our head before the Sacrament as a gesture of reverence. The minister raises the host slightly and says, *The Body of Christ*, and we reply, *Amen*. The consecrated host may be received either on the tongue or in the hand, at the discretion of each communicant.

When receiving in the hand, we 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." Thus, we should use two hands, unless prevented by physical disability, with one hand placed under the other (it is permissible to place either the left hand under the right or the right hand under the left). After the host is placed in our top hand, we should use our bottom hand to pick up and consume the host immediately. If we are carrying a child, then we are encouraged to receive on the tongue until a time when the child can accompany us in such a way that reception with both hands is possible.

When Holy Communion is received under both kinds, we bow our head before the chalice containing the Precious Blood, the minister shows the chalice and says, *The Blood of Christ*, and we reply, *Amen*. We then reverently drink from the chalice.

As St. Cyril of Jerusalem reminds us, "We have been instructed in these matters and filled with an unshakable faith that what seems to be bread is not bread, though it tastes like it, but the Body of Christ, and that what seems to be wine is not wine, though it tastes like it, but the Blood of Christ." Our act of Communion, therefore, is an act of faith. May our devout and frequent reception of Communion reflect our firm faith in the presence of the saving Christ, body and blood, soul and divinity, who gives life to those who believe.