



Mass Parts 44/52: *How to Receive Communion*

As we discuss the Communion Rite, we can review together a few things about how to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. There is absolutely no “versus” when it comes to receiving Communion in the hand or on the tongue. To create a battle between the two is to make a political statement that has no place in our Church. The last 5 Popes have said that both ways to receive are valid, so that means that both ways are valid. You can say that you “prefer” one way over the other, but not that one is objectively “better.”

There are rules, however, within each of these 2 ways. Immediately before receiving, we are instructed to bow to the Host and also to the Chalice. If receiving on the hand, hold up both of your hands, one under the other, forming a throne to receive your Savior. Barely raising your hands above your waist, rolling your eyes, and mumbling out an “amen” does not show proper reverence for receiving the Body of Christ. Of course, if you have a cane or only one hand, you can be just as reverent in receiving on the one hand. Remember to allow the minister to place the Host into your hand, don’t be a pinchy-crab and take it. You have been called to receive, not grab. And once you have received the Host in your hand, immediately place it in your mouth. When you walk away still holding it, it makes the minister nervous as to what you may be doing with it. We need to see the Host consumed. We have found Hosts in the pew after Mass. If you see someone come back to the pew and still holding the Host, tell them kindly and quietly to eat it. If they don’t, ask kindly for it from them and bring it to me after Mass.

If you are receiving on the tongue: bow, say “Amen”, and then stick out your tongue. The minister should not be trying to find the coin slot. And if you are receiving on the tongue, don’t also put out your hands, that gets very confusing.

All have the option to receive the Precious Blood from the Chalice as well. It is an interesting history that has led to surprisingly few people coming to the Chalice today. There was a large historic fight over the Chalice for more than 500 years that banned the laity from receiving from the Chalice. With the reforms of the liturgy after the Council, all are now invited to receive from both the Chalice and the Host, but almost nobody does. It is theologically true that only one element is necessary for the grace of the Sacrament, but to complete the external sign value of the Sacrament, as human nature is both human and divine, it would be nice to receive both.

One thing that is forbidden in the U.S. is “intinction.” In some countries, the priest can have a small Chalice stuck in the middle of what looks like a bunt cake pan. He dips a Host into the Chalice of the Precious Blood and places it directly on the tongue of the one receiving. No one in the congregation is allowed to take a Host themselves and go over and dip into the Chalice. The chance for drips of the Precious Blood onto the ground is too great.

Keep remembering our ongoing rule for Liturgy: *Lex orandi, lex credendi*. How we pray and act in Mass forms our beliefs and how we believe informs our pray. The recognition of the Eucharist as the Sacred Body and Blood of Jesus Christ should form how we approach, handle, and receive. How we then treat the physical presence of the Eucharist should then in turn form our belief in the Real Presence of the Eucharist.

-Fr. Kopp

Next Week: Who is able to receive the Eucharist?