

## A CATECHETICAL MOMENT: THE PROPER WAY(S) TO RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION

During the recent October 2019 Diocesan Leadership Conference, Bishop Sheridan spoke with his priests about: (1) A reported incident of desecration of the Eucharist; and (2) The need for all ordained ministers to catechize their parish's faithful how to properly receive Holy Communion.

As you may have noticed, over the past few years, there is an increase in the number of people who are electing to receive the Sacred Body/Host on the tongue – instead of on the hand.

**But, did you know that the Church's prescribed method of receiving the Sacred Host is on the tongue?** That is still the method of distribution of Holy Communion around the world today. Dioceses in the U.S., in 1977 asked for and received permission from the Holy See (in the form of an indult) for Communicants to receive the Sacred Host in the hand. In short, an indult is an exception to the universal law of the Latin Rite. (NB: Like other granted indults over the centuries, for cause, the indult can be removed (or cancelled). This was the case, for example, when in 2002 the Holy See granted U.S. dioceses an indult for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs) (not the ordained clergy members) to “purify” Communion vessels. The 3-year indult was not renewed in 2005, and thus the practice was promptly discontinued within the U.S.)

Additionally, for the reception of Holy Communion, *kneeling* remains the universal norm within the Latin Rite. However, standing is permitted by most U.S. bishops. When one receives standing, one is required to make a specific act of adoration before receiving the Sacred Host or taking the Precious Blood. In the U.S., bishops have prescribed a simple bow of the head as the required act of adoration. While waiting for the person in front of you to receive Communion, recollect yourself for a moment, and bow your head as a gesture of adoration, then:

- Step forward when it is your turn;
- Verbally say aloud “*Amen*” in response to the Communion minister saying: “*The Body of Christ*”;
- The communicant shall with head tilted slightly backward, open their mouth wide and extend the tongue far enough out, so that the Sacred Host can be placed upon it without danger of falling;  
(Please note that it is important to extend the whole tongue, not just open the mouth.)  
(NB: The Communion Minister is not to stick their fingers in a Communicant's mouth.)
- Wait until the Sacred Host is safely placed on the tongue, then return the tongue and close the mouth.  
(NB: It is not proper to use our teeth to receive and it is never a good idea to bite the minister's fingers!
- Once the Sacred Host is safely on your tongue please move to the side to receive the Precious Blood from the chalice.  
(NB: If the Communicant is not going to receive from the chalice, they are still required to bow to the chalice, as they walk by the Communion station and return to their seat/pew.)



At present, a Communicant within the Diocese of Colorado Springs has the option of receiving Holy Communion on the tongue or hand (since on the hand is permitted by the diocesan bishop). If one is receiving on the hand, the following is normative:

- Upon approaching the minister with the Host, extend the hands in the middle of the chest; (The left hand is extended, with the right hand under the left in support (left-handed persons may wish to place the left hand under the right)).  
(Such hands' placement is, in essence, forming a throne in the sign of an X-cross, upon which the Sacred Host is gently placed (or "enthroned").)
- After saying "**Amen**" in response to the Communion minister saying: "*The Body of Christ*";
- The Host is received.
- The Communicant then steps to the side and consume the Host reverently and completely.

NB:

- It is never proper to use our fingers/hands to retrieve the Communion Host, as if we were taking a potato chip from the Communion Minister. (We receive, we don't take.)
- Likewise, we don't "pop" the Host into the mouth as one walks away. Remember "Who" we are receiving!
- Those who do not have the easy use of both hands (i.e., carrying or escorting an infant or child) (or whose hands are not perfectly clean for whatever reason) need to seriously consider reverently receiving on the tongue.
- It is impossible for a Communion minister to "hit" a moving target. Please remain as motionless as humanly possible, until the Host has been placed on your tongue.

Regardless of how we receive, we must approach the Sacrament with reverence and humility;

It is very important that all understand that one does not have the right to receive Holy Communion as one pleases. One may only receive Holy Communion, if: They are a practicing Catholic (who are in the state of grace and in good standing with the Church). Being in the state of grace means not having knowledge of having committed any mortal sins. Those who are not in the state of grace must first be reconciled to God and the Church by means of the Sacrament of Reconciliation before presenting themselves for Holy Communion.

I mentioned above that if you are unable to receive Holy Communion (due to mortal sin, having not kept the communion fast, being non-Catholic or some other reason) it is a good practice to make a Spiritual Communion: **An Act of Spiritual Communion** - "*My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.*"