

# The Proper Manner of Receiving the Body of Christ and of Receiving the Blood of Christ

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## **How should one properly receive Communion?**

The *Norms for the Distribution of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds*, (USCCB, 2002).

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)*, third edition, 2011, no. 160, states that “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 Communion while kneeling (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 25 March 2004, no. 91).

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 ministers. 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.

The minister raises the Host slightly and shows it to each, saying, “*The Body of Christ.*” The communicant replies, “*Amen*”, and receives the Sacrament either on the tongue or, where this is allowed, in the hand, the choice lying with the communicant. As soon as the communicant receives the Host, he or she consumes the whole of it. (*GIRM*, 161)

When receiving in the hand, the communicant should be guided by the words of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, writing around 400 AD: “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.”

The *GIRM* also states that Holy Communion distributed under both species is a fuller sign of the Heavenly banquet (no. 281). “Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it takes place under both kinds. For in this form, the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clearer expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord, as also the connection between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Kingdom of the Father.” (*Eucharisticum Mysterium*, May 25, 1967, no. 32)

No one is required to receive under both species, but the Church does encourage it. If one only partakes in the Host or only in the Precious Blood, they must remember they are receiving the fullness of Christ – Body, Soul, and Divinity. Thus, it is the choice of the communicant, not of the minister, to receive from the chalice. (Norms, no 46)

For the reception of the Precious Blood, the *GIRM*, no. 286 states: “Each communicant, after receiving the Body of Christ, moves to the minister of the chalice and stands facing him. The minister says, “*The Blood of Christ*”, the communicant replies, “*Amen*”, and the minister hands over the chalice, which the communicant raises to his or her mouth. Each communicant drinks a little from the chalice, hands it back to the minister, and then withdraws.”

The only ministers who communicate themselves are Bishops and priests. Deacons and lay persons are to be ministered to and are never to communicate themselves. For this reason, it is not proper, at any time, to take the Host to the Chalice and dip the Host into the Precious Blood.