

Exaltation of the Cross
September 14, 2025
Fr. Josh Luttig

So as we celebrate the exaltation of the cross today, we simultaneously recognize the lowering, the self-emptying and the humility of Christ. St. Paul writes to the Philippians saying, Christ emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness and found in human appearance. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. And in reality, throughout all of history, God has continually lowered Himself and humbled Himself in love for us. And this all began with creation, because God didn't have to create anything.

God is infinitely perfect and blessed in Himself, the catechism says, yet He chose to create and love creatures, including you and I, who can never really love Him back completely. And in fact, we can reject God through sin and through our free will. So there is a real lowering in humility in God when He chose to create and share His love with His creatures. And then after He created the world and after we had sinned, He still chose to be present. God could have just created the world and stepped back and let nature take its course.

But no, He didn't do that. God chose to be present with His creation, to intervene into history and even dwell in the ark of the covenant and the temple of the Jewish people to show how much He loved them. So God continued to lower Himself by being present to His people even after they sinned. And then we get to what St. Paul tells the Philippians today that it wasn't enough for God's presence to dwell in the ark in the temple.

God chose to become one of us. He took the form of a slave. And He united Himself to His creation that He came to save. So that is even greater humility. But St. Paul says He went even lower than that. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

God chose to be humiliated on an instrument of torture. He was naked, beaten, mocked, abandoned by His friends, falsely accused and left to die on the cross. And not only that, He bore the weight of all the sins of every human being. At the same time, the weight of every sin that has ever been or ever will be committed laid upon His shoulders on the cross. I can't even imagine that weight.

But taking the form of a slave and dying on the cross still wasn't low enough for God. And so the nights before He died, Jesus chose to take the form of our food so that His creation, He loved so dearly, could receive Him into our very bodies. The same Jesus who died on the cross and rose from the dead is the same Jesus present body, blood, soul and Divinity in the Eucharist. And unfortunately, the same Jesus in the Eucharist was found lying in the parking lot.

Last weekend, a parishioner found a consecrated host in the parking lot. And in light of this, Father John and I want to take a few minutes this weekend to give some practical instruction about the Eucharist. And this is going to take a bit of time, but this is our Lord that we're talking about. It's worth taking this time so we are respecting and taking care of the One who humbled Himself so much for us.

In particular, we want to discuss how to prepare to receive the Eucharist, how to receive the Eucharist, and then what to do if something happens to go wrong.

So first, how to prepare for the Eucharist. The first way we can do this is by going to confession if there's any mortal sin in our souls, because mortal sin separates us from God. So we should not receive Jesus if we are in that state.

And Jesus wants us to receive Him, but He gave us the Sacrament of reconciliation in order to prepare us to receive Him worthily, because we are never worthy to receive Jesus on our own. And that's why we say right before Communion, Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the Word and



my soul shall be healed. So it is Jesus who makes us worthy to receive Him. And He wants to do this through confession.

Now, we also prepare to receive the Eucharist by fasting for at least one hour before receiving Him in the Eucharist.

And this is what the Church asks of us. So we can consume water, and we can consume medicine, medication, and if that medication requires us to eat some food with it, that's okay as well, but that's it. That means no gum and no coffee. These are the two things that people kind of assume are okay, but in fact are not.

And so if you happen to have a lapse of judgment and you ate something right before Mass, you can just tell Father John or I, and we can dispense you. We can give you permission to receive Jesus in the Eucharist. But don't just assume that's okay. Okay?

And the whole point of the fast is to prepare our souls to receive Jesus.

Not eating for just an hour before receiving Him. It produces just that little bit of hunger in our bodies, and that's meant to stir up a hunger in our souls to receive our spiritual food. So these are just two ways that the Church ask us to prepare to receive Jesus by going to confession. If we are in a state of mortal sin and by observing the Eucharistic fast. So if we have not done either of these things, we should not receive the Eucharist.

And some people think that receiving Jesus is part of our obligation to come to Mass on Sunday. But that's not true. We're required to attend Mass and participate in it by entering into Jesus' sacrifice on the altar to the Father, which is what happens at every Mass. But we are not required to receive communion. So if you should not receive the Eucharist on a particular day, we ask you to please come forward and cross your hands over your chest and the priest or the deacon will give you a blessing or the Eucharistic minister will say a brief prayer for you.

And I want to add here that I have an immense amount of respect for people who come forward with their arms crossed. I am glad that they are respecting Jesus enough to not receive Him when they know they shouldn't. And I never assume anyone who does this is in a state of mortal sin. I always assume that they ate something before Mass or they have another reason not to receive. So I never assume it's some sort of grave sin.

And so all of this applies to us, obviously. But if we bring someone to Mass who isn't Catholic or who doesn't know better, such as our children, it's also our responsibility to explain to them that they should not receive the Eucharist out of love and respect of Jesus. Okay? So that's how to prepare to receive Jesus.

Now, how do we properly receive the Eucharist?

And the first and most important thing to mention here is that the disposition of our hearts is the most important aspect of how we receive Jesus. There are people who can have the most devout exterior disposition as they receive, yet their hearts can be so far away from where God wants them. And on the other side, there are people who, because they don't know any better, lack proper exterior disposition as they come forward to receive Jesus. But their hearts are very well disposed. So it's not all about what's happening exteriorly.

But proper exterior disposition is supposed to lead to and express proper interior disposition. And that's why I'm going to go into how to be properly exteriorly disposed to receive Jesus. And the first thing to mention with that is receiving on the hand or the tongue, kneeling or standing, these are all legitimate ways we can receive our Lord. And anyone who says otherwise, saying it has to be one way rather than another, is not in



line with what the Church teaches. The bishops in America have been explicitly clear about this saying that any of these ways are permissible.

So that being said, if you choose to receive Jesus on the hand, you are responsible for any particles that might remain on your hands after receiving Him that way. Because any piece of the Eucharist is still Jesus. It's still His body, blood, soul and divinity. So we need to make sure there aren't any particles of Jesus left on our hands if we choose to receive Him this way. So if we receive Jesus on the hand, we want to make a throne with our hands to receive God.

So that means using two hands if we're able to. It means their hands are flat. So we have the landing pad, so to speak, for Jesus. So our hands are not like cupped like this. And the hand underneath is used to pick up Jesus and just put Him in your mouth.

And then you should look at your hands or your fingers to make sure there aren't any particles remaining. And if there are, please consume them. And one note, just for the girls who like to wear long sweatshirts as the weather gets a little cooler. Sometimes you wear your sweatshirts like halfway above your hand or over your hand. Just please roll those back so we have some place to put Jesus.

And the last two things about receiving on the hand are the most important. Number one is we don't grab Jesus from the Eucharistic minister. We never take Jesus. We want to receive Him and not take Him. Number two is we ask to please consume Jesus in front of the Eucharistic minister.

Don't start walking back to your pew and receive Him. Because sometimes someone can walk away without consuming Jesus and we want to make sure that doesn't happen because that's how Jesus can end up in a parking lot.

Now receiving Jesus on the tongue. I have so many funny stories about this. I mean I've been licked, I've been bitten. I'm surprised I still have all my fingers.

Okay. I mean some people are really self-conscious about how they look, so they like barely stick out their tongues. You can't even fit Jesus on there. I mean some tongues don't stay still. They're like wobbling all over the place and I gotta go like chase the tongue around.

And some people are clearly not brushed their teeth. So I'm like the body of Christ.

I mean some people just open their mouth like a little mail slot and expect me to just slide Jesus in. So there's a bunch of different stories. I mean some people try to use their lips and grab Jesus and some people try to use their teeth. So my point in all this is that there's a bunch of ways not to do this. Okay?

So the simple thing, that's all we're asking, is that you open your mouth wide and you stick out your tongue and just stay still. You don't need to like move towards Jesus or anything like that. Open your mouth and stick out your tongue. It might look a little goofy, but that's okay, that's fine. So we will place Jesus on your tongue and Jesus will stick to your tongue.

You don't need to try to use your lips or your teeth. So again, we don't grab Jesus either with our hands or our mouths. And using your teeth is how priests lose fingers.

Okay, so with all of this I want to reiterate, the most important way to receive Jesus is by having a well-disposed heart. But receiving Jesus in a reverent external way, whether kneeling or standing on the tongue or on the hand, can help us foster that well-disposed heart that the Lord desires us to have as we receive Him.



So finally on to what to do if you see that something has gone wrong. And we will just run through a couple of situations. So let's say you see that a host has fallen on the floor during communion and it doesn't seem to be recognized. Ask said you please tell the nearest priest, deacon, eucharistic minister or an usher and they will take care of the situation.

Next, what if you find Jesus anywhere else? Like left in a hymnal or in the parking lot? We ask that you please grab a tissue or something to hold Jesus in and bring Him to a priest or deacon.

And now what if you see someone receive Jesus at communion and just walk away with Him without consuming Him. And the first thing we want to mention is this is not a moment to judge the person or assume the worst. I mean the vast, vast, vast majority of these of times this happens, it's the person simply doesn't know any better.

So we need to be gentle. But unfortunately, some people involved with satanic cults try to steal Jesus from Catholic churches to use for very nasty and unholy things. So we do need to be vigilant and firm. But what do we do when that happens? If you're willing to approach the person who has walked away with Jesus, you can do so gently and gently but firmly ask them to consume Jesus.

And if they consume Him, your job is done. But if they refuse to consume Him, please gently but firmly just hold out your hand and ask them to give Jesus back to you. And if they do that, you can bring Him to a priest or a deacon. But if you are not willing to approach the person, we ask that you please let a priest or deacon know what happened as soon as possible, even as communion is going on, so that we can properly address the situation.

Now, I know this is a lot of information. And you guys know by now that I don't prefer to give longer homilies. But this is our Lord that we're talking about, and it's worth spending the time so that everyone knows how to prepare for how to receive Jesus, as well as what to do if something happens to go wrong.

And just to be clear here, we're not asking anyone to be a liturgical police officer, right? We're not asking anyone to judge how someone else receives Jesus.

Even when something does go wrong, like when Jesus is found in a parking lot, most of the time it's out of ignorance. It's not out of some sort of negligence. So that's why Father John and I wanted to cover all of this. We want you guys to be informed so that you can be more respectful and know what to do if something goes wrong. Because when Jesus chose to institute the Eucharist, He knew beforehand all of the bad things that would happen as a result of Him humbling Himself to become our very food.

But He did it anyway because He loves us that much and He wanted to lower Himself so that He could literally become our spiritual food on this journey to our heavenly homeland. So as we lift high the cross today, let us remember how low Christ has made Himself for us and make sure we are being respectful and reverent with Jesus and the Eucharist.