

“STAY WITH US, LORD”

*In the **Sacrament of the Eucharist**, we are receiving our Divine Lord and our closest friend. Our attitude is one of awe, respect, and intimate friendship. There is something paradoxically familiar and sublime about God’s Presence among us—a delicate balance that, at times, we may find difficult to adequately express.*



Moses before the Burning Bush confidently approached our Lord who had come so near, and yet humbly received the divine invitation to “remove the sandals from your feet, for you are standing on holy ground” (Exodus 3:5). Likewise, outside his tomb, the risen Lord in his new Presence allowed Mary Magdalene to embrace him for a moment yet discouraged her from “holding on to Me...” (John 20:17). As the Feast of Corpus Christi draws near—the feast of the Most Precious Body & Blood of our Lord—I would like to offer some guidance regarding balance in approaching Holy Communion:

- ❖ **Self-Examination:** St Paul cautioned the Corinthians, “whoever eats the Bread or drinks the Cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself before receiving the Bread or the Cup” (1 Cor. 11). If for any reason we are not rightly disposed to receive the Sacrament, in our lack of understanding, or through a conscience burdened with grave sin, we should not allow fear of others’ opinions to pressure us into receiving unworthily. Rather, we lovingly cross our arms over our hearts to receive the blessing, a gesture which may often show greater love.
- ❖ **Confession beforehand:** It is appropriate to go to Confession before receiving holy communion especially if we are aware of any grave sin still “polluting” the temple of our hearts. For example, intentionally missing Sunday Mass without serious need is considered a grave neglect of His Love. We should seek forgiveness before receiving Communion again. Less grave, “venial” sins are forgiven at the start of Mass: “May almighty God bless us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting Life.”
- ❖ **Being intentional:** Many times we can feel distracted or self-conscious when standing in line for Holy Communion. We should strive to keep our attention focused on the One who alone sees our hearts, avoiding any distraction during so intimate a moment of Grace. Our confident “Amen” upon receiving Him implies, not unlike a wedding vow, “I surrender myself into full Communion with all He is and all He has revealed to us.” We “remain in Him” in our hearts during the silence after Communion.
- ❖ **Kneeling or Standing?** Often we have the option of standing or kneeling to receive Holy Communion whenever a kneeler is present. Both ways are equally reverent, having a humble disposition of heart and offering a slight bow if you remain standing. Whether kneeling or standing, pause as you receive the Host into your mouth. If standing, one should step to the side to make the sign of the Cross before moving to your seat. Avoid kneeling without the support of a kneeler, so as not to put the Blessed Sacrament at risk.

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- ❖ ***Hand or Tongue?*** Traditionally, Catholics were encouraged to receive our Lord on the tongue. More recently the Church offered some clarification about receiving the sacred Host, reverently, on one's palm. This was not to diminish the sacred nature of the Blessed Sacrament; rather, reminded of our own sacred dignity through Baptism, we can be at ease receiving the Host on the palm. One's hands, however, should always be clean to hold our Lord. When receiving, the positioning of our hands might be compared to a "throne" of sorts: our non-dominant hand normally receives the sacred Host from the minister, while the dominant hand—from underneath—takes the Host and reverently raises it to our mouth. We should receive the sacrament reverently *with two hands*, whether the Host or from The Cup.
 - ❖ ***Receiving the Body, the Blood, or both?*** We often have enough Extraordinary Ministers to offer Holy Communion under both Species. Whenever we receive the Sacrament under either form, we receive the whole Jesus: Body, Blood, Soul & Divinity. Receiving the Blood of Christ from the Cup is optional. If you are Gluten-Free, you may receive from the Cup when it is offered, and we also offer low-gluten hosts. Please call the office if that is something you would like to benefit from.
 - ❖ ***Dress-code?*** As sensory beings we communicate in more ways than simply through our words. Our actions and externals, of themselves, communicate or miscommunicate our internal dispositions. Without additional qualification, dressing nicely for Mass displays an awareness of the sacred intimacy offered to us during the "Wedding Feast of the Lamb". Modesty & moderation express our own interior attitude of awe, without inadvertently drawing others' attention towards ourselves instead of towards the Lord. In more recent times, we may see women veiling, not unlike Religious Sisters, calling to mind the church as "bride" coming to meet her Bridegroom in the Heavenly Wedding. A request from our altar society: while fashionable, lipstick itself tends to stain the cloths ("purificators") used for wiping the Cup; please avoid heavy amounts of lipstick when receiving from the Cup.
 - ❖ ***Accidents?*** On rare occasions, it may happen that a Host or droplets of Precious Blood may spill. In such cases, the minister alone should retrieve the fallen Host, or use the purificator to cover the spill from the Cup (thus closing that line for the Cup). Any cloth or clothing that touches the Sacred Species should, after Mass, be placed in water for the crumbs or Blood to dissolve; that water should be poured into a natural plant and *not* down a normal drain. Once the Sacrament loses its status as a sign of wine or bread, we may presume the absence of the Body & Blood of Jesus and wash the cloth in a normal fashion.
 - ❖ ***Priest, Deacon, or Extraordinary Minister?*** Priests and deacons are the "ordinary" ministers of Holy Communion by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders. Lay people who have received certified training and the Bishop's permission are considered "Extraordinary" ministers of Holy Communion ("out of the ordinary"). We appreciate these lay people who enable us to have manageable communion lines as well as Communion under both Species. They also help visit and bring Holy Communion to our homebound parishioners and hospital patients. Christ wants us to receive Him from the hands of His ministers—ordained or extraordinary. Our focus is on Jesus' Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—not which minister we receive from.
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