

Questions about Posture . . .

Q: What is the new “sign of reverence” for communion?

A: 1967 Roman document permitted bishops of a country to determine practices related to the Eucharist. The document stated that it was appropriate that a communicant, when receiving communion standing, make a sign of reverence, to be determined according to local culture. The US bishops have now stated that a “bow of the head” is the normative sign of reverence both before receiving the consecrated host and before drinking from the chalice.

Q: What is the posture for receiving Communion?

A: The norm for the reception of Holy Communion in the dioceses of the United States is standing. Communicants should not be denied Holy Communion because they kneel. Rather, such instances should be addressed pastorally, by providing the faithful with the proper catechesis on the reasons for this norm.

Q: Should people stand or kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer?

A: In the dioceses of the United States, they should kneel beginning after the Holy, Holy, until after the Amen of the Eucharistic Prayer, except when prevented on occasion by reasons of health, lack of space, the large number of people present or some other good reason. Those who do not kneel ought to make a profound bow when the priest genuflects after the words of institution. Kneeling is a posture of reverence, openness and humility. We kneel before Christ really and truly present in the Eucharist. We do this in both awe and supplication. It is for this reason that the Bishops of the United States have chosen the posture of kneeling for the entire Eucharistic Prayer during the celebration of Mass.

Postures for the Parts of the Mass

Q: What are the postures for the parts of the Mass?

A: The posture of the people at Mass has recently been clarified for the unity of the assembly throughout the celebration of the Eucharist.

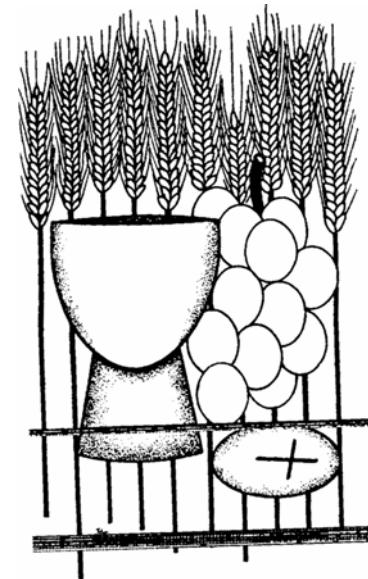
- Introductory Rites through the Opening Prayer *stand*
- 1st Reading until Gospel Acclamation *sit*
- Gospel Acclamation to end of Gospel *stand*
- During Homily *sit*
- Creed to end of General Intercessions *stand*
- Preparation of Gifts *sit*
- From just before people respond
“May the Lord receive. . .” until completion of
the Holy, Holy *stand*
- During the Eucharistic Prayer *kneel*
- From Our Father until after receiving
Holy Communion *stand*
- Receiving Communion *stand*
- After receiving communion *stand, sit or kneel*
- Silence after Communion *sit or kneel*
- Prayer after Communion through end of Mass *stand*

THE DIOCESE OF OAKLAND
2121 Harrison Street, Suite 100
Oakland, CA 94612

April, 2005

DIOCESE OF
OAKLAND

DISTRIBUTION &
RECEPTION OF
HOLY COMMUNION
AND
POSTURE DURING MASS



During the meal Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to his disciples saying, “take this and eat it,” he said, “this is my body.” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Matthew 26:26-28

Some Background Information

Background Information . . .

The renewal of the liturgy is the on going work of the Church and the People of God. The liturgy, in particular the Eucharistic Liturgy, is the center of the life of the church. Therefore, the Bishops of the United States of America have proposed unity in ritual, posture and action as the course to be followed for all dioceses of the USA. This brochure is provided by the Diocese of Oakland as a way of addressing the most asked questions about topics related to the Eucharistic celebration today, with emphasis on questions regarding the Distribution of Holy Communion under both forms, and postures during the celebration of the Eucharist.

For further reading . . .

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy from the Second Vatican Council, December 4, 1963

Roman Missal, General Instruction (GIRM), 5th edition, 2002.

Norms for the Celebration and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America, approved by USCCB, June 14, 2001,

Introduction to the Order of Mass. A Pastoral Resource of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy. 2003.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, United States Catholic Conference, Inc. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994.

Questions and Answers

Q: Are Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion really necessary at Mass?

A: Bishops, priests, and deacons, are "ordinary" ministers of Holy Communion. When present, they always assist in the distribution of Holy Communion. "Extraordinary" ministers help distribute Holy Communion "when the size of the congregation or the incapacity of the bishop, priest, or deacon requires it . . . They should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence." (*Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds*, #28) The pastor of the parish oversees the formation of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. The bishop then grants them the privilege of this special ministry for a certain period of time.

Q: How does one receive the Host and the Precious Blood?

A: The faithful come forward for communion in the usual way. The communicant stands in front of the communion minister. Showing the consecrated host, the minister says, "The Body of Christ." The communicant bows the head, answers "Amen," and receives the host on the tongue or in the hand. If receiving in the hand, the communicant places one hand, palm up, on the other. Ancient writers called this gesture making a throne for Christ the King. The host is placed on the top hand. The communicant takes the host with the other hand, places it in his/her mouth and consumes the host. The communicant then moves to the minister of the cup. The minister says, "The Blood of Christ." The communicant bows the head and answers, "Amen," and the minister holds out the chalice. The communicant takes the chalice and drinks from it, returns it to the minister and returns to his/her place. The communion minister wipes the outside and inside of the chalice rim with the purificator and moves the chalice a quarter turn to prepare for the next communicant. This action is both a matter of courtesy and hygiene.

More Questions and Answers

Q: How many communion ministers should be present for the distribution of communion?

A: When communion is to be given under both kinds, generally there should be two ministers of the Precious Blood for each minister of the Consecrated Bread. In this way, the Communion Rite will not be unduly prolonged.

Q: May the ministers of the Precious Blood consume what is left at the end of Communion?

A: After the distribution of the Eucharist is complete, the ministers of the cup may consume what remains of the Precious Blood at the altar. The Precious Blood is never left on a side table to be taken into the sacristy. The remaining Precious Blood is never reserved in the tabernacle or poured into the sacrarium sink.

Q: What about germs and communicable diseases with reception of communion from the common cup?

A: The Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, in consultation with the Center for Disease Control of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has reported that to their knowledge there have never been any specific episodes or outbreaks of any illness that have been associated with the use of a common communion cup.

Q: I have seen people dip the host into the Precious Blood. Is this an acceptable practice?

A. No. This is, in effect, giving communion to one's-self. Self-communication is not permitted. This practice is different from intinction, a way of distributing communion in which a single minister dips the host into the cup, and offers the host and the Precious Blood saying, "The Body and Blood of Christ" and places them on the tongue of the communicant.