

# How to take Holy Communion

Every important occasion carries with it clear expectations about how things are to be done and how people are to conduct themselves on those occasions (Think about what would be expected if you were meeting the Pope or the President or even just consider all the etiquette books that have been published about weddings!). The same is especially true for what we Catholics consider to be one of the most important occasions of all: receiving our Lord in Holy Communion. There are things to be said and done in certain prescribed ways for the sake of good order and reverence and to express our unity as we receive the Sacrament of Unity.



## FOR ALL COMMUNICANTS

As you are about to receive the Host or the Precious Blood, the Priest, Deacon or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion will proclaim:

**“The Body of Christ” or “The Blood of Christ.”**

Upon hearing these words, the recipient responds **FIRST** with a profound bow of the head (from the neck up only, without jerking one’s head like a nod, but slowly and deliberately. This is a **SIGN OF REVERENCE**.

## SIGN OF REVERENCE

Each communicant is to make a sign of reverence before receiving the Host and/or the Precious Blood. In the United States, that gesture is to be a profound bow of the head. You make your bow **AFTER** the Priest, Deacon or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion proclaims: **“The Body of Christ” or “The Blood of Christ”**.

**AFTER** you make the profound bow of your head the correct response to the proclamation of the minister is simply **“Amen.”** The word

**“Amen”** is prescribed because it expresses many layers of theological meaning contained in this brief ritual dialogue. **No** other response should be used (for example: “I believe” or “My Lord and my God”). It is particularly inappropriate to respond with “Thank You” or some other form of secular or seasonal greeting (“Merry Christmas” or “Happy Easter”).



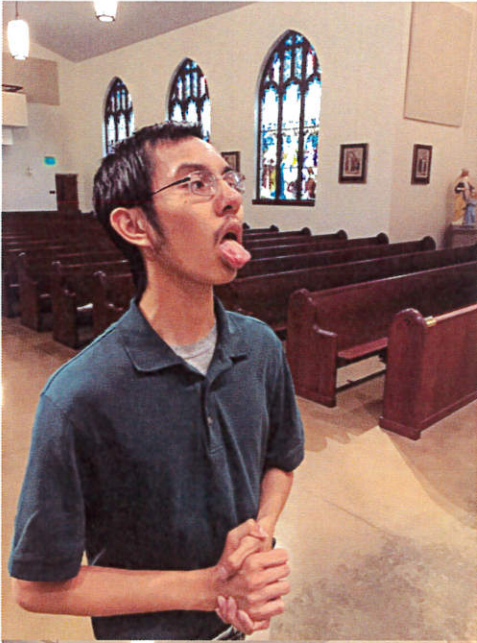
## RECEIVING THE HOST IN THE HAND

The proper way to receive the Host in the hand is to place one hand flat on top of the other so that the open palm is facing upward. Saint John Chrysostom described this beautiful gesture as making of your hands a throne for the King of Kings. The “throne” of our hands should be at the height of heart – never lower.

In order to indicate clearly that you intend to receive in your hands, you should have your hands in this position already when you approach the Minister of Communion and not wait until after the dialogue **“The Body of Christ” / “Amen.”** It is not appropriate to receive the Host by taking it with two fingers (as if “plucking” or “pinching”) from the Minister. Wait for the minister to place the Host on your palm!

Once the Minister has placed the Host onto your palm, step to the side and consume it immediately by taking it with the fingers of the lower hand and placing the Host in your mouth. It is not appropriate to take the Host with your mouth directly from your open palm.





### RECEIVING ON THE TONGUE

The procedure is similar to that of receiving the Host in your hand: as you approach the Minister, the Minister will proclaim “**The Body of Christ**” make a profound bow of the head and then say “**Amen.**” Once you say “Amen” open your mouth wide and stick your tongue out as far as possible and keep it there until the Host is placed on your tongue. Then close your mouth.

Once you receive the Blessed Sacrament step to the left or right (depending on the side of the aisle you are seated at) and reverently consume the Precious Body. Then return to your pew or enter the line to receive the Precious Blood.

### IF YOU ARE NOT RECEIVING COMMUNION

If you are choosing not to receive communion simply place your hands crossed over your chest in an X to indicate to the Minister that you will not be receiving Communion at this Mass.



### RECEIVING FROM THE CUP

The procedure is similar to that of receiving the Host in your hand: as you approach the Minister of the Cup, the Minister will proclaim “**The Blood of Christ**” make a profound bow of the head and then say “**Amen.**” Take the cup in your both hands; take a small sip of the Precious Blood and then slowly and carefully return the cup to the Minister. Avoid quick sudden movements with the cup so as not to spill any of the Precious Blood. Return to your pew once you have returned the cup to the Minister.

### RECEIVING BY INTINCTION

There is a serious concern about the increasing number of people who try to receive communion from the cup by “self-intinction,” which means taking their own host and dipping it into the Precious Blood before consuming it. The physical act of Communion is always to be that of “receiving” as a sign of humility in accepting the Gift of the Eucharist; self-intinction implies, by contrast, a “taking” for oneself. Therefore... in the Catholic Church’s protocols for Holy Communion, self-intinction is considered highly improper and is NOT to be done.



### FOR EVERYONE

Our sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ is the sign of our unity with Christ and the Church.

We express that unity in many ways during the actual reception of Communion. One of the most important ways to express that unity, in addition to the postures, gestures and spoken dialogues described above, is that we join our voices in the Communion Song. Please take your hymnal and join along in the singing while everyone is receiving Holy Communion.

The proper time for your own silent, private prayer of thanksgiving is AFTER everyone has received communion and the singing has concluded.