

Today's gospel is the introduction to Jesus' bread of life discourse. We are going to be hearing from this teaching all month long and we will be exploring different aspects of the Eucharist. Today, however, we are just going to do a very basic review of how to receive communion. Guidelines and rules. Why do we have so many rules? Because we don't do what we are supposed to do. This goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. In the beginning, there was just one rule. God told Adam: "You can eat from any of these trees, except for this one." What one did Adam and Eve choose to eat from? The one that was forbidden. From that moment on, more and more rules have been piled upon us. If we would just do what we are supposed to do, things would be much simpler.

Guidelines for receiving Holy Communion. You can find some of this information on the inside covers of the green missalettes. Only Catholics in a state of grace should present themselves for Communion. You must also fast from food or drink for one hour before receiving communion; the exceptions to this are that you can drink water and take medicine. Being in a state of grace means you are not aware of having committed a mortal sin. There are a number of different examination of conscience guides available to help you determine this. Use them. Anyone who is aware they are in a state of mortal sin should go to sacramental confession before receiving communion. If in doubt about your state, go to confession first. Those who cannot receive the Eucharist are encouraged to make an act of spiritual communion, which can also be found in the missalettes.

Why only Catholics? Why don't we have open communion? Most non-Catholics don't share the Catholic belief that Jesus is truly and permanently present body, blood, soul, and divinity in the Eucharist. When you come forward and say amen—and you must say amen, it is not an option, it is required—you are saying that you believe what the church teaches about the True Presence. Receiving the Eucharist is also a sign that you are IN COMMUNION with the Church, meaning you recognize the authority of the Pope and you are trying to live according to the teachings and doctrines of the Church. I will return to this in a couple weeks. If this restriction bothers you—that is probably good because perhaps it will prompt us to be more serious in offering prayers and sacrifices for unity among all Christians, especially where the Eucharistic body of Christ is concerned.

You may receive communion on the hand or on the tongue. There are appropriate and inappropriate ways to do both. Watch the video on the parish website. When you receive, you must consume the Eucharist immediately. This is

where we have the biggest problem every week. Sometimes the communion line looks like the McDonald's drive through—people eating on the run. You must be standing still when you consume the body of Christ. Turning and walking away is not allowed. Every Sunday people reenact a small-scale version of the Garden of Eden by doing the one thing they are instructed not to do. Why is this such a problem? It is irreverent to take the body of Jesus and munch on it as you are walking away. Also, once you turn away from me, I can't see what you do with the Eucharist. I have had people try to take it outside. One time I found it crushed and thrown on the floor. It has been found wrapped up in a Kleenex. It has been found laying abandoned in the pews. People steal consecrated hosts to use them in satanic rituals. When the body of Christ is placed in your hand, you must consume it right then and there. The liturgical books say you are permitted to take a step to the side and consume facing the altar; I wouldn't allow even that because instead of side-stepping, people turn, take a couple of steps and then turn back. I still have to watch people to see what they are going to do. One of my jobs is to make sure the Eucharist stays safe. You would help me do my job if you would just consume the Eucharist while standing still directly in front of me.

When is the Precious Blood in the chalice going to come back? That is up to the archbishop and he has not given permission for it. There are some priests who have brought it back on their own; that is disobedience to the archbishop and it won't happen here. One of the biggest concerns with Communion from the chalice is the safety of the precious blood. The Holy See—the Vatican—requires that communion with the Precious Blood be completely excluded where even a small danger exists of the sacred species being profaned. Jesus is truly present in the smallest particle of a consecrated host and in the smallest drop of the precious blood. If a consecrated host gets dropped, it is very rare for a particle to break off so it is very easy to clean up. The precious blood is a liquid though. If a chalice gets dropped or is spilled—and my sources tell me this has happened here more than a few times—it is almost impossible to clean up. We will follow the instructions of the archbishop on this matter.

The church has always taught that Jesus is fully and truly present in both sacred species. Even if we receive only the body or only from the chalice, we are receiving the fullness of Jesus. For the validity of the sacrifice, the priest must consume under both species because he is the one offering the sacrifice on behalf of the people, but Jesus is truly present body, blood, soul, and divinity in both eucharistic species. When we receive only one, we are receiving the full body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus.

The Eucharist is a sacrifice. The Eucharist is also a meal. It is a sign of communion within the Body of Christ. The word “eucharist” means thanksgiving. I am hoping to explore all of these aspects more fully as we progress through this teaching but one quick word about eucharist as thanksgiving. We spend a lot of time grumbling about what we don’t have and what we don’t like; sometimes the people who have the most are the one who grumble the most. People who are firmly rooted in the Eucharist know the value of the virtue of gratitude. Let us show ourselves to be members of the Body of Christ by being grateful for what we have.