



**Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion
under Both Kinds in the
Archdiocese of San Antonio
Draft**

- I. Gestures and Bodily Postures**
- II. History of Kneeling**
- III. General Instruction of the Roman Missal**

Guidelines and suggestions for receiving the Precious Blood:

The reverence to receive the Consecrated Host is before not after. Any gesture after like sign of the cross or bow is not required necessary. The person has already Jesus in his/her heart.

To receive the Eucharist reverently is in state of grace, no mortal sin. Kneeling is not necessary a gesture of reverence. People are free to receive Christ as they prefer.

No one is required to receive under both species, but the Church does encourage it. If one only partakes in the Host or only in the Precious Blood, they must remember they are receiving the fullness of Christ - Body, Soul, and Divinity. Thus, it is the choice of the communicant, not of the minister, to receive from the chalice. (Norms, no 46)

For the reception of the Precious Blood, the GIRM, no. 286 states: "Each communicant, after receiving the Body of Christ, moves to the minister of the chalice and stands facing him. The minister says, "The Blood of Christ", the communicant replies, "Amen", and the minister hands over the chalice, which the communicant raises to his or her mouth. Each communicant drinks a little from the chalice, hands it back to the minister, and then withdraws."

The Meaning of "Receiving": To "receive" Holy Communion is not to take or grab—it is a receptive act. We open ourselves to the gift of Jesus Christ, allowing Him to enter into us sacramentally. The term reception implies humility, surrender, and faith. In the writings of the Fathers—such as St. Augustine, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, and St. Ambrose—this reception was understood as both physical

and spiritual. It was an act of the body and soul together—a communion of the whole person with the whole Christ. (Some people in our parishes try to get the Host, please advise them to place the hands in order to receive -not to take-communion)

I. Gestures and Bodily Postures

The postures we take during the Mass contribute to the expression of our prayer and are part of our full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy.

During the Communion Rite, there are a number of postures and gestures of great importance. The ritual books and liturgical documents call for a certain uniformity of posture that expresses our unity, but they also allow for some legitimate variations. This document provides a directive for the local Church of the Archdiocese of San Antonio concerning the preferred posture during the Communion Rite.

GIRM #42. The gestures and bodily posture of both the Priest, the Deacon, and the ministers, and also of the people, must be conducive to making the entire celebration resplendent with beauty and noble simplicity, to making clear the true and full meaning of its different parts, and to fostering the participation of all. Attention must therefore be paid to what is determined by this General Instruction and by the traditional practice of the Roman Rite and to what serves the common spiritual good of the People of God, rather than private inclination or arbitrary choice.

A common bodily posture, to be observed by all those taking part, is a sign of the unity of the members of the Christian community gathered together for the Sacred Liturgy, for it expresses the intentions and spiritual attitude of the participants and also fosters them.

II. History of Kneeling

In the 1967 document *Eucharisticum mysterium* (Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery), the Sacred Congregation of Rites (now called the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments) established that,

34 In accordance with the custom of the Church, the faithful may receive communion either kneeling or standing. One or the other practice is to be chosen according to the norms laid down by the conference of bishops.

At the time this directive was issued the US Bishops did not establish a posture, although Communion processions and reception standing quickly became the custom throughout the United States, as they did in much of the world.

III. GIRM # 160.

The norm established for the Dioceses of the United States of America is that Holy Communion is to be received standing, unless an individual member of the faithful wishes to receive Communion while kneeling (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Instruction, *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, March 25, 2004, no. 91).

Specifically, the norm established for the Archdiocese of San Antonio is that Holy Communion of the Precious Blood of Christ is to be received standing so as to avoid the risk of spillage.

Posture and Preparation

The Church permits reception of Holy Communion either on the tongue or in the hand, provided both are done with reverence. *The norm in the Latin Rite remains on the tongue, but the Holy See has granted indults allowing for reception in the hand.* Regardless of the method, the following should guide our practice:

- **Posture before receiving:** The faithful are to bow reverently before receiving. Kneeling, where practiced, is a longstanding tradition that emphasizes humility and adoration. Standing, if customary, must still be accompanied by a profound bow of the head.
- **Reverence while in line:** Silence, folded hands, and a prayerful disposition help prepare the soul. One should not be chatting or distracted. It is an ascent toward the holy—not a cafeteria line.
- **Receiving on the hand:** The hand should be clean and formed like a throne—one hand placed upon the other, lifted high enough for the priest, deacon, or extraordinary minister to reverently place the Host. The communicant should consume the Host immediately in the presence of the minister.
- **Receiving while carrying a child:** The Church does not prohibit this explicitly, but it is strongly discouraged. Carrying a child occupies one or both hands and makes it difficult to form a proper throne or consume the Host reverently. In such a case, reception on the tongue is far more appropriate.
- **Receiving on the tongue:** This ancient practice is still preferred by many. The faithful should open their mouth wide and slightly extend their tongue to receive the Host carefully and reverently.

Spiritual and Sacramental Readiness

To receive worthily requires more than outward appearance. One must be in a state of grace, free of mortal sin, and have fasted for at least one hour before reception (Canon 919). It is also appropriate to offer prayers before and after Communion, such as the *Anima Christi* or the *prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas*.

Those who receive Communion may receive either in the hand or on the tongue, and the decision should be that of the individual receiving, not of the person distributing Communion. If Communion is received in the hand, the hands should first of all be clean. If one is right handed the left hand should rest upon the right. The host will then be laid in the palm of the left hand and then taken by the right hand to the mouth. If one is left-handed this is reversed. It is not appropriate to reach out with the fingers and take the host from the person distributing.