



## One Body, One Faith, One Act of Worship

At the heart of every Eucharistic Celebration is a sacred encounter with the living Christ. Holy Communion is not a private moment detached from the rest of the assembly; rather, it is the culmination of the Church's public worship, in which we approach the Lord together as one people, formed into one Body in Christ. For this reason, the Church offers clear guidance to help us receive the Eucharist with reverence, unity, and faith.

## Proper Disposition: Preparing Heart, Mind, and Body

The Church teaches that to receive Holy Communion worthily, a person should be properly disposed. This includes being in a state of grace, observing the Eucharistic fast—no food or drink, except water and medicine, for at least one hour before receiving Holy Communion—and approaching with faith in the Real Presence of Christ. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us:

“Anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to Communion” (CCC, no. 1385).

This interior preparation is essential. At the same time, the Church teaches that our outward actions matter because they express what we believe inwardly. Posture, gestures, and manner of receiving Holy Communion are not empty formalities; they are embodied professions of faith.

## Standing as the Preferred Posture

In the dioceses of the United States, the Church has established standing as the normative posture for receiving Holy Communion. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal states: “The norm for reception of Holy Communion in the dioceses of the United States is standing” (GIRM, no. 160).

Standing is not chosen at random. It is an ancient Christian posture that expresses resurrection faith, dignity, and readiness to be sent forth. Standing together in procession also highlights an important theological truth: we do not approach the Eucharist as isolated individuals, but as a pilgrim people moving toward the Lord as one Body.

At the same time, the Church is clear that no one may be denied Holy Communion for choosing to kneel, since kneeling is itself a posture of reverence and adoration (GIRM, no. 160; *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, no. 91).

However, in the document that was distributed to all the priests in the Diocese of San Bernardino on November 9, 2025, entitled “New Diocesan Norms for Kneeling: For Implementation Advent 2025,” it reads,

“The manner of reception is determined by the individual receiving and not by those distributing communion... Drinking from the chalice, however, is required to be done while standing.”

## Receiving on the Tongue or in the Hand

The Church permits two legitimate ways of receiving Holy Communion: on the tongue or in the hand. The GIRM teaches:

“The communicant receives the Sacrament either on the tongue or, where this is allowed and if the communicant so chooses, in the hand” (GIRM, no. 160).

This permission is rooted in authoritative Church teaching. The instruction *Memoriale Domini* affirmed that while receiving on the tongue remains the universal norm, Communion in the hand may be permitted by episcopal conferences with the approval of the Holy See. This permission does not represent a change in doctrine but rather a disciplinary allowance within the Church’s living tradition.

The Vatican later clarified:

“Each of the faithful always has the right to receive Holy Communion on the tongue” (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*, no. 92).

Therefore, Communion on the tongue is always permitted, and Communion in the hand is permitted where approved, as is the case in the Diocese of San Bernardino. The choice belongs to the communicant, not to the minister. What matters most is not the method itself, but that Holy Communion is received reverently, attentively, and immediately consumed, recognizing the sacredness of what is being received.

## Receiving Communion on the Tongue

When the minister says, “The Body of Christ,” respond clearly, “Amen.” Open your mouth and extend your tongue slightly so that the Sacred Host may be placed securely. Remain still and attentive, allowing the minister to place the Host reverently on your tongue. Do not move your head forward.

## Receiving Communion in the Hand

When the minister says, “The Body of Christ,” respond clearly, “Amen.” Place one hand flat on top of your dominant hand, forming a throne to receive the Host. This means that if you are right-handed, your right hand should be underneath; if you are left-handed, your left hand should be underneath. After receiving—never reaching out to take the Host from the minister’s hand—step aside and use your dominant hand to consume the Host immediately and completely before returning to your place.

In both forms, Holy Communion is to be received with deep reverence, recognizing that we receive the true Body of Christ and approach the Lord together as one people of faith.

## Personal Devotion and Communal Worship

The Church deeply values personal devotions. Private prayer, Eucharistic adoration, the Rosary, and personal gestures of piety all play an important role in nurturing our relationship with God. These practices shape our hearts and help us grow in holiness. However, the Eucharistic Celebration is not a private devotion. It is the Church’s public act of worship, governed by shared norms so that we may worship with one voice and one posture of faith. As the Second Vatican Council teaches in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the liturgy is the action of Christ and His Church, not of isolated individuals. For this reason, personal preferences—while meaningful in private prayer—are gently subordinated during Mass to the common language of the liturgy. In doing so, we bear witness that:

- \* We belong to one another
- \* We worship as one Body
- \* We receive the same Lord at the same table

This unity does not suppress personal devotion; rather, it purifies and elevates it, drawing it into the greater act of Christ’s self-giving to the Father.

## One People, One Act of Faith

When the minister presents the Host and says, “The Body of Christ,” the communicant must respond, “Amen.” This single word is a profound profession of faith—not only in Christ’s Real Presence, but also in the Church herself. The communicant should not remain silent or merely nod. Likewise, no additional words or expressions—such as “thank you”—should be added to this brief but deeply meaningful dialogue. In that moment, we affirm:

- \* Our belief in what we receive
- \* Our communion with the Church
- \* Our unity with one another

Approaching Holy Communion with proper disposition, reverence, and unity is not about rigid rules. It is about allowing our bodies, voices, and actions to proclaim what our hearts believe. In doing so, we honor the Eucharist, strengthen the unity of the Church, and give glory to God, together.

## Sources

Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 1384–1387

General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 160

Memoriale Domini

Redemptionis Sacramentum, nos. 91–92

New Diocesan Norms for Kneeling: For Implementation Advent 2025

Code of Canon Law, canon 843 §1

Second Vatican Council, Sacrosanctum Concilium