

Guidelines for Receiving the Holy Eucharist

What to Do

- **Come prepared:** Make sure you have gone to confession for any serious (mortal) sins and make sure you have fasted from all food and drink except water for at least an hour before receiving communion. Do your best during Mass to pay attention to the readings, prayers, and homily and draw nearer to Jesus as you get ready to receive him.
- **Bow or genuflect before receiving.** This is a sign of reverence for Jesus who is present in the Eucharist. Bow forward at the waist or kneel briefly on your right knee. You can do this while the person in front of you is receiving. Be careful of the people in front of and behind you.
- **If you receive the Body of Christ in your hand:** Make sure your hands are uncovered (no gloves, etc.), clean, and empty. Make a solid “throne” for Jesus with your hands: one beneath the other, flat and firm, and raised up in front of your chest. (See photo at right.) When the priest, deacon, or extraordinary minister says, “The

Body of Christ,” respond clearly, “Amen.”* Once the host is in your top hand, use your bottom hand to pick it up and put it in your mouth and eat. Please do so it immediately!

- **If you receive the Body of Christ on the tongue:** Keep your hands folded prayerfully. When the priest, deacon, or extraordinary minister says, “The Body of Christ,” respond clearly, “Amen.” Then extend your head forward, open your mouth, and extend your tongue slightly over your bottom teeth. (See photo below.) Once the host is on your tongue, gently close your mouth around it and eat.
- **To receive the Precious Blood:** Bow or genuflect. When the priest, deacon, or extraordinary minister says, “The Blood of Christ,” respond clearly, “Amen.” Take the chalice (cup) firmly in both hands and sip from it, then hand it back. Return prayerfully to your pew.

It is your choice how to receive the Body of Christ (hand versus tongue). For consistency and ease of teaching,



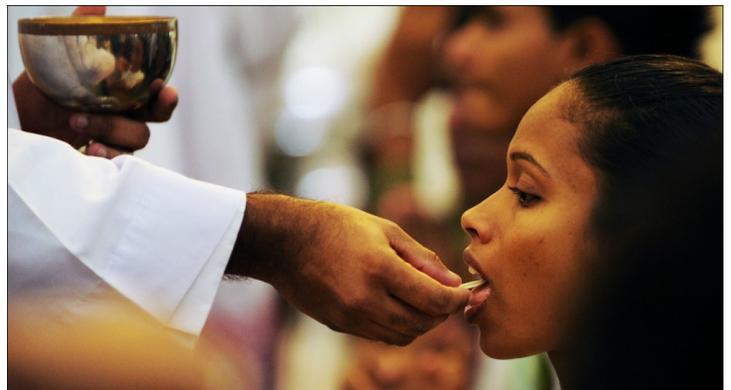
we will teach First Communicants to bow and receive in the hand, which has been established as the norm here in the United States. However, genuflecting, receiving on the tongue, and even receiving while kneeling are still practiced in the Church and are beautiful ways to show reverence for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. You may teach your children to receive in these ways.

What's Optional

Many people make the Sign of the Cross after receiving, but this is not required.

What Not to Do

- **Treat the Body and Blood with disrespect:** Don't walk away with, make faces with, or play with the host. Be reverent, careful, and consume it immediately.
- **Don't be shy:** Come forward knowing that Jesus wants to unite himself to you. Bow, present yourself as ready to receive, and say, “Amen” clearly.
- **Don't exaggerate:** There is no need to bow down to your toes or to shout your responses, and you should never reach for, snatch, or “take” Communion from the minister. The Eucharist is a gift that we receive, not take!



***‘Amen’ signifies ‘I believe.’** As Catholics, we believe Jesus is truly present in the Holy Eucharist. Other faiths do not share this belief in the Real Presence, which is why non-Catholics should not receive Catholic communion at Mass. They can come forward with their arms crossed over their chest for a blessing.