

From the Archbishop

On the Reception of Holy Communion

Since COVID restrictions were lifted, I have wondered and several of you have asked, “when can we restore Communion under both species?”

I believe we have come to the point of being able to restore Communion from the Cup in our archdiocese, barring, of course, that there is not another similar outbreak or pandemic in the future. I have chosen the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ on June 2nd, also known as Corpus Christi, as the date on which to restore this practice in our Archdiocese. I am happy to share this good news with you all.

At the same time, I feel it is important to provide this informative video to ensure a more reverent reception of Holy Communion itself. Over time, our actions can become routine and habitual. We may tend to take what is revered and holy, and treat it with less awe and wonder than it deserves. I believe this is a good occasion for us to review how we were first instructed to receive Holy Communion.

Please keep in mind, first of all, that to receive Holy Communion in either form, the Consecrated Bread or the Consecrated Wine, is to receive the fullness of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Prior to the renewal of the Roman Rite after Vatican II, the laity never received Communion in the hand; nor did they typically receive in from the chalice. The renewal of the liturgy after Vatican II allowed Communion of both the Body and Blood of Jesus, as a fuller reception of Christ in accordance with His own words. “Eat my body... Drink my blood”. This however did not do away with the long tradition of the Church, that we continue to receive Communion fully when we receive by only the body or the Blood.

The opening pages of the Roman Missal have instructions for priests and all ministers on the proper way to celebrate liturgy; this is called the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. Let us now draw our attention to what the General Instruction has to say about how to receive Communion in the Roman Rite.

We may tend to take what is revered and holy, and treat it with less awe and wonder than it deserves. I believe this is a good occasion for us to review how we were first instructed to receive Holy Communion.”

Firstly, this text notes that the distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful belongs first of all to priests and deacons. This may also be extended to acolytes who have been instructed and instituted, and other lay faithful who have been duly prepared as extraordinary ministers. Communion is customarily received either in the hand or on the tongue. As the faithful approach the minister of Communion, they are to make a simple act of reverence. The minister of Communion holds up the

sacred bread and says “The Body of Christ”. The Communicant replies. “Amen” and receives the sacred host.

When one chooses to receive on the hand, here is a suitable way of doing so, Create a ‘cradle’ with both hands – one on top of the other – which you then present to the Eucharistic minister. Upon receiving the host, consume it reverently. When one chooses to receive on the tongue, the communicant should open their mouth wide and extend their tongue so that the host can be easily placed.

Having received the Sacred Bread on the hand or on the tongue, the communicant consumes the whole of it before moving on.

In a similar way, communion from the chalice should be done reverently. Should the communicant choose to receive from the chalice, they again make a simple act of reverence and approach the minister of Communion from the chalice. The minister holds up the chalice and declares. “The Blood of Christ”. The communicant again responds. “Amen”, takes the chalice from the minister, sips from the chalice and returns it to the minister. Under no circumstances are the lay faithful to instinct their sacred Host into the precious blood of the chalice. The minister then wipes the chalice with a pacificator, and awaits the arrival of the next communicant. If you are not feeling well, please do not come forward to receive Holy Communion from the chalice. You may still receive Communion in the form of consecrated Bread.

Focus your thoughts on whom you are receiving, let your composure reflect your reverence and gratitude for the Holy Eucharist. This is no mere symbol, you are truly and fully receiving Jesus Christ Himself.”

Although it is not envisioned by the liturgy per say, children, non-Catholics and non-communicants may come forward to receive a blessing. A simple way of indicating that one would like a blessing is to fold one’s arms across their chest.

As you come to receive Communion, do so prayerfully and in the proper spirit, being respectful of the tremendous gift that this Sacrament is. Focus your thoughts on whom you are receiving, let your reverence and gratitude for the Holy Eucharist. This is no mere symbol, you are truly and fully receiving Jesus Christ Himself.

Therefore, if you are aware that you have committed a serious sin, please make a point of celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation before receiving Communion. By doing so, we make a sincere vow to strive for holiness, to be restored by the mercy of God, and we welcome our Lord in the Eucharist in a state of gratitude and purity.

As I have stated, we are returning to the practice of receiving Communion under both forms, the Sacred Body and Sacred Blood of our Lord, with the feast of Corpus Christi on June and I realize that, in some parishes, it may not be possible to re-introduce reception of the Precious Blood, due to

a lack of extraordinary ministers. For this reason, the decision will be made by the pastor in consultation with his parish council.

We hope you will welcome this news with humble hearts as we prepare to share together in the body and blood of Our Lord, and so unify ourselves ever more intimately as members of His Mystical Body – the Church.

Thank you for your attention.

Most Rev. Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan

This was published on Northern Light Magazine April 2024 -Issue 37. Pages 6 - 7