

Communion received on the tongue and while kneeling

The most ancient practice of distributing Holy Communion was, with all probability, to give Communion to the faithful in the palm of the hand. The history of the liturgy, however, makes clear that rather early on a process took place to change this practice.

From the time of the Fathers of the Church, a tendency was born and consolidated whereby distribution of Holy Communion in the hand became more and more restricted in favour of distributing Holy Communion on the tongue. The motivation for this practice is two-fold: a) first, to avoid, as much as possible, the dropping of Eucharistic particles; b) second, to increase among the faithful devotion to the Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Saint Thomas Aquinas also refers to the practice of receiving Holy Communion only on the tongue. He affirms that touching the Body of the Lord is proper only to the ordained priest. Therefore, for various reasons, among which the Angelic Doctor cites respect for the Sacrament, he writes: “. . . out of reverence towards this Sacrament, nothing touches it, but what is consecrated; hence the corporal and the chalice are consecrated, and likewise the priest's hands, for touching this Sacrament. Hence, it is not lawful for anyone else to touch it except from necessity, for instance, if it were to fall upon the ground, or else in some other case of urgency” (*Summa Theologiae*, III, 82, 3).

Over the centuries the Church has always characterized the moment of Holy Communion with sacredness and the greatest respect, forcing herself constantly to develop to the best of her ability external signs that would promote understanding of this great sacramental mystery. In her loving and pastoral solicitude the Church has made sure that the faithful receive Holy Communion having the right interior dispositions, among which dispositions stands out the need for the Faithful to comprehend and consider interiorly the Real Presence of Him Whom they are to receive. (See *The Catechism of Pope Pius X*, nn. 628 & 636). The Western Church has established kneeling as one of the signs of devotion appropriate to communicants. A celebrated saying of Saint Augustine, cited by Pope Benedict XVI in n. 66 of his Encyclical *Sacramentum Caritatis*, ("Sacrament of Love"), teaches: “No one eats that flesh without first adoring it; we should sin were we not to adore it” (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 98, 9). Kneeling indicates and promotes the adoration necessary before receiving the Eucharistic Christ.

From this perspective, the then-Cardinal Ratzinger assured that: "Communion only reaches its true depth when it is supported and surrounded by adoration" [*The Spirit of the Liturgy* (Ignatius Press, 2000), p. 90]. For this reason, Cardinal Ratzinger maintained that “the practice of kneeling for Holy Communion has in its favor a centuries-old tradition, and it is a particularly expressive sign of adoration, completely appropriate in light of the true, real and substantial presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ under the consecrated species” [cited in the Letter "This Congregation" of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 1 July 1, 2002].

John Paul II, in his last Encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* ("The Church comes from the Eucharist"), wrote in n. 61: “By giving the Eucharist the prominence it deserves, and by being careful not to diminish any of its dimensions or demands, we show that we are truly conscious of the greatness of this gift. We are urged to do so by an uninterrupted tradition, which from the first centuries on has found the Christian community ever vigilant in guarding this ‘treasure.’ Inspired by love, the Church is anxious to hand on to future generations of Christians, without loss, her faith and teaching with regard to the mystery of the Eucharist. There can be no danger of excess in our care for this mystery, for ‘in this sacrament is recapitulated the whole mystery of our salvation.’”

In continuity with the teaching of his Predecessor, starting with the Solemnity of Corpus Christi in the year 2008, the Holy Father, Benedict XVI, began to distribute to the faithful the Body of the Lord, by placing it directly on the tongue of the faithful as they remain kneeling.

Saint Pope Pius X, 1914 "In the moment of receiving Holy Communion one must kneel."

Pope Paul VI, 1978 Hand Communion started in Holland in 1965/66, as a result of some LAITY QUESTIONING WHETHER JESUS WAS TRULY PRESENT in the Consecrated Host. This sounds similar to: "denial of the Divinity of Christ."

Pope Paul VI in the Encyclical MYSTERIUM FIDEI already rejected so-called "Hand Communion" as an "already spread false opinion". He thereupon asked the Dutch Bishops to write to all their Priests and "to give them directives to once again return to the traditional manner of receiving Holy Communion".

Saint Pope John Paul II

The Pope's Letter (DOMINICAE CENAE) to All Bishops & Priests February 24, 1980

This includes: "How eloquently the rite of the anointing of Priests' hands in our Latin ordination tells that a special grace and power of the Holy Spirit is necessary precisely for Priests' hands! To touch the Holy Eucharist and to distribute them with their own hands is a privilege of the ordained."

INESTIMABLE GIFT (INAESTIMABILE DONUM) On Some Norms Concerning the Cult of the Eucharistic Mystery by Pope John Paul II The Holy Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship (Holy Thursday) April 3, 1980

This includes: "The Holy Eucharist is the gift of the Lord, which should be distributed to laymen THROUGH THE INTER-MEDIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS who are ordained especially for this work. Laymen are neither permitted to take the Sacred Host by themselves nor the Consecrated Chalice."

In Germany, in 1980, Pope John Paul II said: "But I say that I cannot be for it (Hand Communion), and also cannot recommend it." The Priest has, "as servant of the Holy Eucharist and all Holy forms, a primary responsibility — primary, because it is complete." "To touch the Holy Creations is a privilege of the ordained." Laymen can only get such permission "for a true emergency."

Cardinal Julius Döpfner: 1976 Shortly before his death he said: "Had I known that through Communion in the hand so much lack of reverence was to be practiced, I would have never spoken for it... Today one goes to Holy Communion like one took holy water in the past. For two years, I fought for Communion in the hand. Now that I have seen the results, I would never again do it. But now, I know of no way to rescind what has occurred. Get rid of Communion in the hand!"

(Jesus to...) Saint Bridget of Sweden, 1373 "Look, my daughter, I left behind five gifts to my Priests... and fifth, the privilege to touch My Most Holy Flesh with their hands."

Katharina Emmerich, 1824 (stigmata) Considered the most famous of all German mystics, Katharina saw Jesus distribute the bread into the mouths of the Apostles. **Therese Neumann, 1962 (stigmata)** She lived only on the Consecrated Host for some 35 years and also saw Jesus distribute the bread into the mouths of the Apostles.

Maria Simma of Sonntag, 2009 (Suffering Soul for and Visionary of the Poor Souls in Purgatory) In carrying their suffering either mystically or with prayer, she has, since the 1960s, delivered 40 to 50 Priests (incl. Bishops), most of whom were in Purgatory due to spreading the practice of Communion in the hand or similar irreverent practices. Maria called Hand Communion, "the work of the devil" She also repeated often what the Poor Souls told her, and an often expressed worry of theirs is that "the Church of today is in the worst shape that it has been since its very beginning."