

COMMUNION UNDER THE FORM OF BREAD AND WINE

A statement by the Episcopal Liturgical Commission of the Australian Episcopal Conference, 10 July 1986

(This 2008 edition has updated references and some terminology and omitted the occasional sentence where a provision has been superseded.)

1. INTRODUCTION

From ancient times the Church has taught that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life.

At every assembly in Jesus' name which celebrates the memorial of his redeeming death and resurrection, the Church gathers to eat the bread of life and drink the cup of salvation.

The Reception of the Eucharist

Through sacramental communion, the faithful take part more fully in the celebration of the Eucharist.

The bread and wine for the eucharistic celebration should appear as food. The eucharistic bread should also be made in such a way that the priest is able to break the host into parts and to distribute them to at least some of the faithful.

Communion as a sign

Holy communion is a more appropriate sign when it is received under both kinds. Under this form (leaving intact the principles of the Council of Trent, which explain that Christ is truly received whole and entire under either species), the sign of the eucharistic banquet appears more perfectly.

Reception under both kinds shows how the new and eternal, covenant is ratified in the blood of the Lord, and exemplifies better the relationship of the eucharistic banquet with the eschatological banquet in the Kingdom of the Father (c.f. Mt. 2:27-29) (from the Instruction *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, 1967, no. 32).

Opportune Catechesis — Restoration of an Ancient Practice

For many years some of God's people have desired to restore the ancient practice of communion under both kinds. The restoration of this practice was not approved by the Council of Trent in 1562. But with the passing of centuries and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council wished for "a more perfect form of participation in the Mass", so that the people of our day might follow more closely the action of Christ and the apostles at the Last Supper. It must be remembered that according to the Catholic faith, Christ whole and entire, the true sacrament, is received, even under one kind.

A reverential approach and distribution will deepen the faith of each communicant and of the worshipping community in the real presence of Christ. For reasons of hygiene or other reasons a communicant may choose not to receive communion from the chalice.

2. COMMUNION UNDER BOTH KINDS

When Communion under Both Kinds is permitted.

- a. Communion under both kinds is regulated by the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (see no. 283).
- b. Communion under both kinds is also permitted at Masses on Sundays and feast days in Australia, if, in the judgment of the Ordinary, communion can be given in an orderly and reverent way. (Rescript of the Holy See 7/86 of 13 January 1986.)

Communion under Both Kinds not permitted

Because of the obvious pastoral difficulties, communion under both kinds is not permitted in the following circumstances:

- a. At Masses celebrated in the open.
- b. At other Masses where the large number of communicants would prevent proper order and reverence.
- c. When circumstances do not ensure that due reverence can be maintained towards the consecrated wine both during and after the celebration (c.f. *Inaestimabile Donum*, nos. 13-14).
- d. At Masses where the assembled congregation is so diverse that one is unsure whether those present have an appropriate level of understanding (e.g. junior schools).

Ministers for Communion

In order to avoid undue delay where many people wish to receive communion, all priests, deacons and acolytes present are to minister, and the Ordinary may also appoint suitable men and women to assist as extraordinary ministers of communion.

Ministers are asked to judge from experience how many ministers are needed for celebrations and the circumstances where communion can be given in an orderly and reverent way.

Normally, two ministers of the chalice will be needed for each minister of the eucharistic bread.

When holy communion is distributed to the faithful only under the form of bread, sufficient consecrated wine is always needed for concelebrants, deacons and acolytes. Extraordinary ministers of communion and the ministers of the celebration may also receive under both kinds.

3. PREPARATION

The nature of the sign demands that the material for the eucharistic celebration truly has the appearance of food. Therefore the eucharistic bread should be made so that the priest is able to break the host into parts and distribute them to at least some of the faithful. The breaking of the bread, which was a common name for the Eucharist in Apostolic times, demonstrates clearly the force of this Christian sign of unity: all are united in love and through the one bread given to all the faithful (from *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 321).

The quantity of bread and wine needed for a celebration should be estimated carefully.

For the consecration of hosts one large paten may be used for all the bread to be consecrated.

The wine should be brought to the altar in a decanter or cruet and then poured into the chalice(s).

Where additional vessels for the bread are needed, these are brought to the altar at the fraction, when the celebrant and assistants break the eucharistic bread into the ciboria or the patens.

The Lamb of God, the litany to Christ, the new paschal lamb, accompanies the fraction and should continue as long as the fraction and pouring of the elements continue. At this time a brief verse after “Lamb of God” and before the words, “Have mercy on us” can be inserted.

Vessels to serve as chalices or as receptacles for the eucharistic bread (patens, ciboria, etc) are to be made from materials that are solid, dignified, appropriate and non-absorbent.

Simple baskets or other receptacles ordinarily used outside the liturgy are not permitted. Nor should the sacred vessels be of poor quality or aesthetically worthless. The Conference of Bishops judges which materials are appropriate for sacred vessels. Such vessels are to be blessed by a Bishop or priest using the rite of blessing of a chalice or paten before use.

4. MINISTERING OF COMMUNION

Because of its sign value, communion by drinking from the chalice is preferred to any other form of ministering the precious blood. The chalice is always offered to the communicant by the minister with the words: “The Blood of Christ” and the communicant answers “Amen”. The chalice is never to be left on an altar or table to be picked up by the communicant; nor may the chalice be passed from one communicant to another. There must always be a minister of the cup. After each person receives, the minister is to wipe both sides of the rim of the cup with a purifier for reasons of courtesy and hygiene. It is also helpful to rotate the chalice a quarter turn after each communicant.

Children should be instructed by the parents that communion under both kinds is an ancient Church tradition for children receiving communion.

If the eucharistic bread or any particle of it should fall, it is to be picked up reverently. If any of the precious blood spills, the area should be washed and the water poured into the sacrarium.

After communion any sacred particles remaining are to be placed in the tabernacle. Care should be taken with any fragments which remain on the corporal or in the sacred vessels. Should any of the consecrated wine remain it is consumed immediately at a side table; and the vessels are purified then or after Mass, at the side table.

The consecrated wine may not be reserved, except for someone who is ill. Nor may it be consecrated at one Mass and reserved for use at another. It is strictly prohibited to pour the precious blood on the ground or into the sacrarium.

Another Method for Communion under Both Kinds

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (nos. 285, 287) describes the reception of holy communion by intinction. If communion is distributed by intinction it is always the minister who dips the eucharistic bread into the chalice.

This method does not allow the communicant the option of receiving communion in the hand.

5. CONCLUSION

The Church wants to ensure that the rite of communion in the Eucharist is celebrated with faith and dignity so that all participants may be united more closely through Christ in the community of the Church. It is because the Church wishes to emphasise this corporate unity in Christ, and therefore the symbolism of the one bread and the one cup, that the Church recommends that the priest and at least some of the faithful consume portions of the same host.