

ON RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

The Roman Catholic Church understands the reception of Holy Communion to be a sign not only of a person's belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist or of their relationship with the Lord but also of their formal relationship with a particular church. For Catholics, this means a full membership in the Catholic Church: having been baptized Catholic or having formally made a Profession of Faith in the Catholic Church, and being in good standing (spiritually free from serious sin and not bound by an invalid marriage).

If you are not Catholic, or if you are Catholic but not able to receive Communion at this time for whatever reason (you did not fast for one hour, you need to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation, you are in an invalid marriage, you have already received the Eucharist twice in one day, or you are too young, etc.), in many parishes you are nonetheless invited to come forward at Communion time with your arms crossed over your chest. This will indicate to the priest, deacon, or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion that you cannot receive Communion but would like to receive a blessing or short prayer instead. This is also a good moment to silently invite Jesus into your heart in a Spiritual Communion.

Communion is often offered under both forms of bread (the Body of Jesus) and wine (the Blood of Jesus). It is not necessary to receive both as you will receive the whole sacrament and identical graces with even the smallest amount in either form, but *"the sign of communion is more complete when given under both kinds, since in that form the sign of the Eucharistic meal appears more clearly."* *Catechism of the Catholic Church 1390*

You may receive the Host either in your hand or on the tongue. The proper response when the priest or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion says "The Body of Christ" is to say, "Amen." If, for some reason, the communicant is not able or willing to drink from the cup then that person should receive only under the form of bread. (See <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/order-of-mass/liturgy-of-the-eucharist/the-reception-of-holy-communion-at-mass.cfm>)

Also, *receiving* from the priest or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion reinforces our posture as *receivers* (not takers) of this precious gift of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.