

20 More Articles on Holy Communion

Table of Contents

Ten Ways to Fall in Love with the Eucharist	1
How To Better Prepare Yourself For Communion	4
Reconsidering Communion in the hand.....	5
“Kneeling and Communion on the Tongue” will bring back True Devotion.....	10
The Day the Host Dropped on Communion in the Hand	11
Altar Rails and Reverence	13
A Modern Athanasius	15
Can a priest order us to stand when receiving Communion?	17
Why You Should Receive Communion Kneeling and on the Tongue	17
The Reform that No One Wanted.....	19
Communion on the Tongue Is an Apostolic Tradition.....	20
Abuses with Communion in the Hand While Standing	21
“Whatever You Can Do to Stop Communion in the Hand Will be Blessed by God”	25
How to Receive Holy Communion on the Tongue.....	30
Holy Communion in the Hand?	31
Communion in the Hand, and Other Monumental Mistakes.....	37
Only One Way to Receive Holy Communion.....	40
And The Pope Says:.....	42
Altar Rails Are Returning to Use	43
Discerning Whether To Receive Communion In The Tongue vs. In The Mouth.....	46

Ten Ways to Fall in Love with the Eucharist

Fr. Ed Broom, OMV

The saints are the mad-lovers of Jesus; they were on earth and now are in heaven loving God for all eternity. In this article, we will give a list of what some saints have said in an excess of love for the most Holy Eucharist. Then we will give ten keys to unlock the treasure-case of gems to love the Eucharist more in our lives! Let us read and meditate on the fire of the saints and the Eucharist:

- “Holy Communion is the shortest and the safest way to Heaven.” (St. Pius X)
- “If the angels could be jealous of men, they would be for one reason: Holy Communion.” (St. Maximilian Kolbe)

- “In one day the Eucharist will make you produce more for the glory of God than a whole lifetime without it.” (St. Peter Julian Eymard)
- “How I love the feasts!... I especially loved the processions in honor of the Blessed Sacrament. What a joy it was for me to throw flowers beneath the feet of God!... I was never so happy as when I saw my roses touch the sacred Monstrance.” (St. Therese the Little Flower)
- “When you look at the Crucifix, you understand how much Jesus loved you then. When you look at the Sacred Host you understand how much Jesus loves you now.” (Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta)
- “From the Eucharist comes strength to live the Christian life and zeal to share that life with others.” (St. John Paul II)
- “This is the bread of everlasting life which supports the substance of your soul.” (St. Ambrose)
- “The longer you stay away from Communion, the more your soul will be weak, and in the end you will become dangerously indifferent.” (St. John Bosco)
- “The Eucharist is the consummation of the whole spiritual life.” (St. Thomas Aquinas)

Now let us dive into ten golden keys that can open up the infinite treasure house of jewels so as to derive countless graces and blessings from Jesus’ greatest Gift to the entire world: Holy Mass and Holy Communion, His Body, Blood Soul and Divinity!

Faith. Beg the Lord for a greater faith in the sublime mystery of the most Holy Eucharist. Let us say with the Apostles Saint Thomas: “My Lord and my God.” Let us also say the prayer of the man of the Gospel: “Lord I believe but strengthen my faith!”

Visit. Make it a habit to visit the most Blessed Sacrament as often as is possible. Whenever I see a church I stop to make a visit so that when I die the Lord will not say: “Who is it!” Friends meet to chat, talk, and enjoy each other’s company; so should we, in visiting and talking frequently to Jesus.

Spiritual Communion. Highly recommended by St. Alphonsus Liguori as well as Pope Benedict XVI in his document “*Sacramentum Caritatis*” is the frequent practice of the Spiritual Communion. It can be done in a simple manner and as often as your heart desires. You can say the simple prayer: “Jesus I believe that You are truly present in the Tabernacle in Your Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. Now I cannot receive you sacramentally but come at least spiritually into my heart.” Then enter into your heart and thank, praise and love the Lord who has come spiritually into your soul. This can fan the flame of love for our Eucharistic Lord.

Read John 6. The Gospel of John chapter six has three parts: Jesus multiplies the loaves, walks on water, and then He gives a sublime discourse related to the Eucharist; actually it is a Eucharistic prophecy. Best known as the “Bread of life discourse”, Jesus promises to give us the Bread of Life. Also Jesus points out in no unclear terms that our immortal salvation depends upon our eating His Body and drinking His Blood, which obviously refers to Holy Communion. Read and meditate this powerful chapter!

Fifteen Minutes. Years ago there was published a small booklet with the title “Fifteen minutes with Jesus”. We included a copy in one of our Catholic Articles in our Readings section. It is a little gem where Jesus encourages the reader to enter into simple but profound conversation with Him. Basically Jesus wants to be our Best Friend and challenges us to open up the secret mysteries of our heart to Him as only He can truly understand the inner secrets, wounds and mysteries in our heart.

Holy Hour. Get into the habit of making a daily Holy Hour in front of the most Blessed Sacrament. It will transform your life if you persevere in the practice. The Great Servant of God, Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, who made his Holy Hour faithfully for more than fifty years, called it The Hour Of Power!

Adorn and Embellish Churches & the Eucharist. The woman lavished her expensive nard on the feet of Jesus; she wept and her tears came pouring forth on the feet of Jesus; finally she wiped Jesus' feet with her hair (Lk. 7:36-50). Fulton Sheen points out that this is symbolic of the gestures of love and attention we should manifest in the way we adorn, embellish and beautify the Churches and tabernacles where Jesus abides. Known for his spirit of penance, fasting, and sacrifice, the Cure of Ars would travel long distances and expend big sums of money to purchase the best for his little Church. Why? For the simple reason that Jesus the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords abides in the tabernacle and descends from heaven in the hands of the priest in every consecrated Host. "O come let us adore Him!"

Holy Mass and Holy Communion. Of course the greatest action in the whole universe is the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The greatest gesture any human being can accomplish is to assist at Mass and to receive Holy Communion with faith, devotion, reverence and awe but especially with a passionate love. Whenever possible, go to daily Mass. Arrive early to prepare yourself. Offer your own private intentions. Participate in Holy Mass fully, actively and consciously. Receive Holy Communion as if it were your first Holy Communion, or your last Holy Communion. Be exceedingly thankful for your faith in such a sublime and august mystery! Do not rush out of the Church after Mass. Rather, spend some time after Holy Mass to render abundant thanks to Jesus for such a sublime gift. Actually the word "Eucharist" means THANKSGIVING! What a sublime gift, free of charge. The only condition is lively faith and a heart overflowing with love for Jesus the greatest of all lovers!

A.C.T.S—Remember the four principal ends or purpose of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass—
A.C.T.S... A—stands for Adoration. The primary purpose of Holy Mass is to offer adoration to God the Father, by the offering of Jesus the Victim and through the power of the Holy Spirit. C—stands for Contrition. Our hearts should be contrite and humble and repentant for our many sins. It is a great practice to offer our Mass and Holy Communion in reparation for our sins, the sin of our families as well as in reparation for the sins of the whole world. T—stands for Thanksgiving. Everything that we have in this life (with the exception of our own sins) is a pure gift from God. Therefore we should be overflowing and abounding in the thanksgiving. "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; his love endures forever." S--stands for Supplication; in other words we should offer prayers of fervent intercession and petition for the many needs of the world: the world at large, the Church, the conversion of sinners, the sick, the dying, our own personal family needs, the souls in purgatory, and much more....

Eucharistic Missionary. As Mary receive Jesus in the Annunciation and promptly and quickly brought Jesus to her cousin Elizabeth, so should we bring Jesus to others and others to Jesus. This can be done in a very concrete manner by encouraging Catholic lost sheep wandering in the wilderness back to the fold. The second largest religious group in the United States as well as the Americas are non-practicing Catholics. Find the time, manner, effort and initiative to invite some lost soul back to Church. Hopefully s/he can make a good confession and return to the reception of Holy Communion and to the loving embrace of God the Father. All this might take place if you simply trust God and take the initiative to welcome Him back! God is so loving and good! Share the Good News to the entire world!

How To Better Prepare Yourself For Communion

Fr. Ed Broom, OMV

Sacramental Theology teaches a key principal that all Catholics should know so as to derive the most abundant graces that flow from the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Sacraments. This key principal is called *Dispositive Grace*. What this term means, in clear and unequivocal terms, is that you receive graces from the Sacraments in direct proportion to your disposition of heart and preparation of soul. Sacraments are like *fire*. Fire can do immense good, but it can also do immense damage.

St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, chapter 11, warns us to be aware of whom it is we are receiving. Some were eating and drinking and ignoring the poor and then celebrating the Meal of the Lord in this ill-disposed condition. The fiery Apostle to the Gentiles fiercely reprimands those who would receive Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of Our Lord, in such a condition. For that reason St. Paul said that some were eating and drinking the Body and Blood of Our Lord unto their own condemnation. The same Apostle exhorted them as well as the Church at large (and that includes you and me) to be sure that we are in the state of grace before receiving Holy Communion. The Catechism has taught for centuries, with respect to the reception of Holy Communion—the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—that we must be in the state of grace. Reception of the Eucharist requires that our soul be in the state of grace to receive Jesus worthily and receive the innumerable graces available for our peace of mind, joy of spirit, growth in holiness and eternal salvation for all eternity.

If you are aware of having committed a mortal sin, then you should abstain from receiving Holy Communion, simple and clear. Otherwise this will be a Sacrilegious Communion, the fire that burns, damages and destroys your soul rather than the fire that heats and warms.

Probably you are thinking to yourself: “what then is a mortal sin?” I have heard the terminology years ago, but I forgot the definition. Good question, and here is our answer. To commit a mortal sin there are three conditions.

1. *A Grave Matter*. The sin that is committed is serious or grave by its very nature. Sins against the Sixth Commandment are by their nature grave or serious. Missing Holy Mass on Sunday, without any justifiable reason, is grave/serious matter—to give just a couple examples.
2. *Full Knowledge*. A mortal sin is not committed if the person committing it is not aware of it. However, as followers of Christ, we are morally responsible and obliged to make it a constant effort in our lives to study and learn our faith on a constant basis. This is called Permanent Formation. Some people, due to negligence and laziness, make no effort to grow in the knowledge of their faith. This is culpable ignorance that should be corrected.
3. *Full Consent of the Will*. Finally, to commit a mortal sin, one has to give free and total consent of the will. This means that a mortal sin is not done by accident, as if one were to slip on a banana peel. No! You know it is serious and you do it anyway against your conscience.

If these three conditions are present, then it constitutes a mortal sin. By committing a mortal sin, the state of sanctifying grace is lost thereby excluding one from the reception of the Holy Eucharist until....

Sacramental Confession. Yes! So as to be able to receive the most Holy Eucharist worthily, as faithful and practicing Catholics, we must have recourse to the Sacrament of Confession, Reconciliation, or if you like The Sacrament of God's infinite Mercy.

All too often today, even among Catholics you hear, "well I confess directly to God because He knows me, sees me, hears me and loves me." As a practicing Catholic, you must receive forgiveness through the proper means or channel that Jesus has determined through His Church and through the reception of the Sacrament of Forgiveness and through the presence of the ordained priest. When the priest absolves you: "And I absolve you of your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." then it is not so much that the priest forgives you (He is only the instrument), rather it is Jesus Himself who forgives you and washes you clean through His Precious Blood that was shed on the cross on Good Friday.

Worthy Communion. Then after having received the Sacrament of Confession, Holy Communion can be received in the state of grace and will serve as the most powerful means of sanctification and eternal salvation.

A Warning on Routine Communion. A real danger for many Catholics is the danger of falling into the terrible pitfall of the "The Routine Communion". In other words, Mass and Holy Communion are available in abundance and I receive Holy Communion with little preparation, poor participation in Holy Mass, with a cold heart and literally no thanksgiving after I have received the Eucharistic Lord. Jesus complained to St. Faustina because He said that many receive Him as if He were a mere *object*. How terrible it is when we ourselves are treated like mere "objects" by others. How much worse when Jesus is treated as a mere object—Remember, Jesus is God.

In the sacristies of the convents of some nuns there is a reminder usually in eye's view of the priest celebrant with this catchy admonition: "*Priest, man of God, celebrate this Mass as if it were your first Mass, your last Mass and your only Mass.*" Should we not approach Holy Communion with the same disposition of heart—to receive Jesus with great fervor and faith and love as if it were our first Holy Communion, last Holy Communion, and only Holy Communion? If that is our disposition of soul, Holy Communion will definitely be the most powerful means for our constant sanctification and eternal salvation.

Reconsidering Communion in the hand

By Arturo Ortiz

Why We Should Go Back To the Traditional Reception of Holy Communion.

Throughout the history of the Catholic Faith specifically in the Roman Rite of the Mass, the reception of Holy Communion kneeling and on the tongue is the established tradition. This has been true for various centuries dating as far back as the Early Church. This is itself the tradition of the Church and

is still the norm in the Extra-Ordinary form of the Mass. It was not until the ecclesiastical revolts and dissent during the 1960s and 1970s in which this tradition started falling out of place.

Holy Communion started to be given in the hand as an abuse in several countries like parts of Scandinavia and Germany. It was this that pushed His Holiness Pope Paul VI to issue his instruction for receiving Holy Communion “Memoriali Domini” which he stressed his opposition and concerns regarding the effects of allowing the practice of Holy Communion to be given in the hand.

First and foremost Pope Paul VI stated: “When the Church celebrates the memorial of the Lord it affirms by the very rite itself its faith in Christ and its adoration of him, Christ present in the sacrifice and given as food to those who share the Eucharistic table. For this reason it is a matter of great concern to the Church that the Eucharist be celebrated and shared with the greatest dignity and fruitfulness.”¹

Pope Paul VI also stated that although for some years the faithful could receive in the hand, it was done with the greatest respect, and that this practice was soon stopped (I will describe more specifically the reason why communion in the hand was ever allowed in the early church further in the article). Pope Paul states “thus the custom was established of the minister placing a particle of consecrated bread on the tongue of the communicant...”²

To finish with Pope Paul VI’s Memoriali Domini, Pope Paul asked various bishops whether they would be supportive of changing the tradition of the reception of Holy Communion from the tongue to the hand. In this poll Pope Paul VI asked three questions which go as following: “1) Do you think that attention should be paid to the desire that, over and above the rite of receiving Holy Communion on the hand should be admitted? 2) Is it your wish that this new rite be first tried in small communities, with the consent of the bishop? 3) Do you think that the faithful will receive this new rite gladly, after a proper catechetical preparation?”³

In all three of these questions the majority of the bishops answered in the negative. This reason shows that most bishops were in agreement that the tradition of receiving Holy Communion on the tongue should be retained. Pope Paul concluding from this survey that according to the poll, changing the discipline of Holy Communion by allowing Communion in the hand would be bad for various reasons, nevertheless he allowed for countries who could obtain a recognition (a special permission) to allow Communion to be given in the hand. However to be given the recognition several conditions needed to be met. A) Communion in the hand needed to already be an established custom in the country. B) There would need to be a secret vote and with a two thirds majority in which the Episcopal conference approved of the change and petition Rome for the recognito. C) No loss of sacred particles and no loss of faith in the Real Presence could occur.

Here in the United States the change from the reception of Holy Communion in the tongue by allowing for the reception in the hand was actually very unpopular, which you can see by how many times this change was turned down. Regarding the acceptance of Holy Communion on the hand by the recognitio here in the United States, John Andrew Dorsey explains how Archbishop Joseph Bernardin helped bring about the recognitio in a pretty sketchy way.

Dorsey explains: “The late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, then president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, had unsuccessfully attempted twice to establish Communion in the

hand in America (in 1975 and 1976). Unfortunately, he finally prevailed in May 1977 when Communion in the hand was illegally authorized in the United States. The bishops totally ignored the requirements expressed in Pope Paul VI's indult about not allowing the practice of Communion in the hand where it was not already established. Furthermore after the initial voting Archbishop Bernardin reported that the vote had fallen short of the required two - thirds of all legally present members yet Bernardin was dead-set on getting Communion in the hand one way or another, even if it had just been voted down. To get around the lack of votes, bishops who were not present, retired, or even dying, were polled illegally.⁴

The Dangers of Holy Communion in the hand

There are no doubts dangers when receiving Holy Communion in the hand even when done reverently. These include the fact that it is very easy for fragments and particles of the Eucharist to fall down. This is already true when much regulation is used, such as the use of the paten, the use of communion rails, and receiving in the mouth. This is much more true when people receive standing and on the hand.

In Canons 3 and 4 of the Council of Trent regarding Holy Communion the following is stated:

Canon 3: If anyone denies that in the venerable sacrament of the Eucharist the whole Christ is contained under each form and under every part of each form when separated, let him be anathema.

Canon 4: If anyone says that after the consecration is completed, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are not in the admirable sacrament of the Eucharist, but are there only <in use>, while being taken and not before or after, and that in the hosts or consecrated particles which are reserved or which remain after communion, the true body of the Lord does not remain, let him be anathema.⁵

Our Lord is therefore present even in the smallest of crumbs in the Eucharist. Neglecting that smallest particle such that it falls to the ground is really the equivalent of having an entire ciborium full of hosts fall to the ground.

Furthermore experiments with unconsecrated hosts show that with Communion in the hand it is really easy for the particles to get stuck to the hand, which then end up falling to the floor, and which furthermore end up trodden and stepped under foot, and finally possibly vacuumed or scooped up and thrown to the trash.

Another great danger associated in much part with Communion in the hand is the fact that it is much easier for people to walk out and steal the Eucharist either for negligent reasons, or for truly sinister motives in desecrating the Eucharist. In some places in the world, including here in the United States, black masses are not uncommon with Satanists celebrating these sorts of masses with consecrated hosts. It was not too long ago that a black mass was going to be celebrated in Harvard which would have occurred, were it not for the constant pressure from faithful Catholics against such event.

Throughout scripture kneeling and prostration were signs of humility, obedience, and respect. This is easily seeable in the New Testament, specifically in regarding the Gospels. In (Luke 5:8) we see how when Peter witnesses one of Jesus' first miracles with the big catch of fish, how Peter falls down as a sign of his unworthiness and his sinful nature. In the same book we also see in (Luke 8:41) how Jairus begs Jesus by prostrating himself down in the ground for his daughter's health who is suffering

through a hemorrhage. In the book of the Apocalypse in (5:8, 14) we see the four living creatures and the twenty four elders fall down before the Lamb which signifies Christ.

Bishop Athanasius Schneider recalls in his book “Dominus Est” Jesus’ command at becoming like children when Jesus stated “Amen I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). Bishop Schneider states “The gesture of an adult who kneels and opens his mouth so as to be fed like a child corresponds in a felicitous and impressive manner to the admonitions of the Fathers of the Church concerning the attitude to have during Holy Communion”⁶

Lastly regarding the act of taking Christ directly in our mouths recalls an Old Testament passage which depicts Ezekiel receiving the word of God by consuming it. It states: And [the Lord] said to me “But you son of man, hear what I say to you, be not rebellious like that rebellious house, open your mouth, and eat what I give you.” And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and lo, a written scroll was in it, and He said to me, “Son of man, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go speak to the house of Israel.” So I opened my mouth, and He gave me the scroll to eat “And I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that book”. And he said to me, “Son of man, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.” Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey. (Ezek 2:1,8,9; 3:1-3)

If this is true of the word of God in scripture, how much more true can it be when we receive Christ the Word of God made flesh in Holy Communion?

The Protestants change the Liturgy during the Reformation and replaced Communion in the tongue with Communion on the hand to signify to people that Christ is not truly present in the Eucharist, but only as a mere symbol. Thus of the various aspects in which the liturgy was changed includes the removal of any reference to the Mass being a sacrifice, as well as to the reference of Christ being truly and substantially present in the Eucharist. Reverend Peter M.J Stravinskis in the forward to the book Dominus Est writes “Indeed the change of the centuries old practice of priests placing the sacred host directly onto the tongue of recipients to that of the hand came precisely from the Protestant Reformers, who were intent on calling into question both the ministerial priesthood and the doctrine of transubstantiation, as their own writings attest”⁷

This should make people think whether the practice of the reception of Holy Communion in the hand really helps with reverence and the belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It should thus make us think whether it is a prudent practice.

There are various excuses and objections that people make in regards to the reception of Holy Communion in the tongue, which I will address as thoroughly as possible. These objections include the fact that during the Last Supper all who were at table with Christ received Communion on the hand. Another similar objection that is made is that in the Early Church Communion in the hand was practiced as well. A third objection that is made is that Communion in the hand is allowed by the Church. Lastly various people object that you don’t have others feed you, but rather you feed yourself. This last objection is in my opinion one of the most modern, and also one of the weakest.

Although it is most likely true that Communion in the hand was the method used during the Last Supper it is to be reminded that all those who were present at the Last Supper were the twelve

Disciples of Christ. It is during this supper that Christ besides instituting the Holy Eucharist, similarly institutes the priesthood. For this reason it is evident that at this time the disciples are already ordained priests, and perhaps bishops. For this reason their hands are consecrated. This is also the reason that there is nothing wrong regarding the priest touching the sacred host. His hands have the mark of Christ and are thus different than anyone else who is not consecrated. Even the priest though is bound to touch the Eucharist as least as possible.

It is also true that to a certain extent the practice of Holy Communion in the hand was practiced in the Early Church. This is only a half-truth though. First of all there is strong evidence that the Eucharist was not truly touched by the fingers of a person, but only the palm. The palm served as a patent at a time when patents were not greatly available. Furthermore the communicant would directly place the Eucharist in the mouth with the tongue without touching it with the fingers. It was only during times of persecution that this practice was allowed. This was mainly for keeping the Mass as quickly and short as possible, lest they fall under arrest during these hard times. Once persecution was over the practice quickly fell out of place. This also leads to the fact that there is an organic development to the Mass. Even though Communion in the hand was once allowed for times of persecution, this practice was quickly abandoned once persecution was no longer the case.

A pretty strong argument at the surface is that Holy Communion is allowed by the Church. This is mostly true in places in which the recognitio has been given. However just because it is a practice currently allowed by the Church does not necessarily make it a prudent one, specifically as this particular practice started out as an abuse. Furthermore it is to be reminded that at least here in the United States the whole scandal regarding the way in which the recognitio was given is sketchy.

The last argument as stated is in my opinion the weakest of these. This opposition comes from the fact that we should not receive Holy Communion in the tongue because in reality it is quite silly that we are fed by someone else. This argument is truly made by various individuals including priests and bishops, which although most are in my opinion with good intentions, are nevertheless ignorant with regards to this objection. All one has to do is recall the words and reflection of Bishop Schneider on the significance of kneeling and being fed the word of God through the mouth. That sign of childlike humility which helps us to live out the commandment of becoming like a child.

In closing this article I propose that people reconsider Communion in the hand and really think about whether it is doing good or bad. I strongly encourage the Church hierarchy to promote the traditional manner of kneeling and on the tongue and perhaps do away with Communion in the hand altogether. There has been enough lack of faith in what the Church teaches, as well as rebellion and dissent. This is true in regards to the teaching of the Eucharist. If we don't help show the Divine Reality that Christ is truly and substantially present in the Eucharist by our gestures and reverence, then a disbelief in the Eucharist will surely only get worse.

Notes:

1) Pope Paul VI: *Memoriali Domini*

2) *Ibid*

3) *Ibid*

4) John Andrew Dorsey: *The Sinister History of Communion in the Hand* (Latin Mass Magazine, Winter/Spring edition 2014)

- 5) The Council of Trent session XIII on the Most Holy Eucharist
- 6) Bishop Athanasius Schneider: Dominus Est pg. 30
- 7) Reverend Peter M.J Stravinskis: Forward to the book Dominus Est pg.8

“Kneeling and Communion on the Tongue” will bring back True Devotion

By kathleen

It is interesting to see how an old post on the topic of receiving Holy Communion devoutly, “Cardinal Ranjith to his clergy – communion on the tongue only and while kneeling is mandatory”, has suddenly had another surge of visitors and some lively new comments. Why this surprising renewed interest?

The only explanation has to be that the subject is of enormous concern to very many traditional Catholics who are weary of witnessing the lack of Faith in communicants, and sad or disheartened at the constant abuses of Our Blessed Lord’s Sacred Body at many Ordinary Form Masses. If reverence and piety could be restored in the way we celebrate and participate at Mass, faith would increase, hope strengthened, and charity (containing all the virtues) would naturally follow and turn unhappy or lukewarm Catholics into fervent members of the Church once more.

Kneeling to Receive Communion on the Tongue

Receiving the Sacred Host on one’s knees and directly onto the tongue (from the consecrated hands of the priest) should not be restricted to a Latin or Tridentine Mass (in theory), but where, if anywhere, is one able to receive Our Blessed Lord in this humble, reverent way at a Novus Ordo Mass? I can only think of two churches of the many that I have visited at home and abroad where this practice can be seen during a Novus Ordo Mass.

And yet as the commenter Geoff Kiernan points out, all three of the last Popes, Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI (and now even Pope Frances) encouraged solely, kneeling and on the tongue, as the preferred way of receiving Holy Communion.

Bishop Schneider noted that the reverence and awe of Catholics who truly believe they are receiving Jesus in the Eucharist should lead them to kneel and receive Communion on their tongues. “The awareness of the greatness of the Eucharistic mystery is demonstrated in a special way by the manner in which the Body of the Lord is distributed and received,” the bishop wrote.

Before he became Pope, Card. Ratzinger said: “The kneeling of Christians is not a form of inculturation into existing customs. It is quite the opposite, an expression of Christian culture, which transforms the existing culture through a new and deeper knowledge and experience of God. Kneeling does not come from any culture – it comes from the Bible and its knowledge of God... The Christian Liturgy is a cosmic Liturgy precisely because it bends the knee before the crucified and exalted Lord. Here is the centre of authentic culture – the culture of truth. The humble gesture by which we fall at the feet of the Lord inserts us into the true path of life...”

The (Extraordinary Form) Tridentine Mass

Every single detail of the Tridentine Mass of the Ages is centred towards Adoration of God from the very opening words of the priest, “introibo ad altare Dei”. The culmination of this sublime Mass is the

Consecration of the Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Our Lord and Saviour. It follows that by the time the faithful then move toward the altar rails to receive the Sacred Host, they are better prepared spiritually by the deeply prayerful 'build up'. They now have an ardent desire to receive the Blessed Sacrament, and to do so with great piety, gratitude and reverence.

A Holy Mass and a devout reception of Holy Communion go hand in glove.

Fr. Peter Carota, on his blog Traditional Catholic Priest says:

"I believe that the Latin Mass is superior from my own empirical experience of offering the English, Spanish Novus Ordo Masses along with the Latin Mass for 6 years. Any priest who offers the two masses together, day in and day out will, in all honesty, find out that the Latin Mass is more pleasing to God. It is because of its total orientation toward God, its adoration of God and perfection that was organically developed over centuries and centuries."

The Solution

An obvious solution would be to only attend a Latin Mass where kneeling to receive the Sacred Host is more acceptable. But sadly for most of us, these are options that are not easily available.

In spite of Pope Benedict XVI's 'motu proprio', the Apostolic Letter, *Summorum Pontificum*, allowing the return of the Mass that "nourished the faithful for centuries", this has not been applied in many dioceses yet, probably because a great many priests no longer know how to celebrate it!

So what can we do to return to the sacred traditional way of receiving Holy Communion whilst kneeling and on the tongue? Another answer would surely be to get together to collectively beg our priests, and perhaps even petition our Bishops later on, to bring back the facilities for the laity to receive Our Blessed Lord in this humble way. If altar rails (so tragically ripped out of many churches) cannot be replaced, at least a few prie-dieus (kneeling pews) could be strategically set in front of the altar for those who are unable to kneel on the ground.

Is it not worth a try? Is Our Lord not the King of Kings? Does He not deserve the maximum efforts on our part to devotion and respect in receiving His Sacred Body and Blood?

Lex orandi lex credendi lex Vivendi. With this move, and then the slow but sure bringing in of other pious practices during Holy Mass that have been discarded since the 70's, the faithful will be invigorated in their faith. Let's start the long climb back to reclaiming all that is sacred and beautiful and holy in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

The Day the Host Dropped on Communion in the Hand

By John Vennari

It is a bedrock Catholic truth, taught by the Church since the time of the Apostles, that Our Lord Jesus Christ is truly present in the Most Holy Eucharist: Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

The Council of Trent defined dogmatically that Our Lord Jesus Christ is present in every part of the Blessed Sacrament. The Council taught infallibly: "If anyone denieth that, in the venerable

Sacrament of the Eucharist, the whole Christ is contained under each species, and under every part of each species, when separated; let him be anathema.”

This means that Our Lord is present even in the smallest particle of the Host, and in the smallest particle that may fall to the ground. Thus the reverence that we owe to the Blessed Sacrament demands that we take every precaution that no particle of the Host — not even the smallest — is left open for desecration in any way.

First of all, Saint Thomas Aquinas taught that “out of reverence for this Sacrament, nothing touches it but what is consecrated.” Thus, he said the sacred vessels of the altar are consecrated for this holy purpose, but also, the priest’s hands are consecrated for touching this Sacrament. And St. Thomas said that it is therefore not lawful for anyone else to touch it, except to save it from desecration.

(Summa, III, Q. 82. Art. 3)

This reverence for the Blessed Sacrament, and even for the smallest particles, was incorporated into the traditional Mass — the Old Latin Mass — which contained strict rubrics on this point:

1) From the moment the priest pronounces the words of the Consecration over the Sacred Host, the priest keeps his forefinger and thumb together on each hand. Whether he elevates the chalice, or turns the pages of the missal, or opens the tabernacle, his thumb and his forefinger on each hand are closed. The thumb and forefinger touch nothing but the Sacred Host;

2) During Holy Communion, the altar boy holds the paten under the chin of those receiving Communion, so that the slightest particle does not fall to the ground. This paten is cleaned into the chalice afterwards;

3) After Holy Communion is distributed, the priest scrapes the corporal (the small linen cloth on the altar) with the paten, and cleans it into the chalice so that if the slightest particle is left, it is collected and consumed by the priest;

4) Then, the priest washes his thumb and forefinger over the chalice with water and wine, and this water and wine is reverently consumed to insure that the smallest particle of the Sacred Host is not susceptible to desecration.

Communion in the hand and so-called Eucharist lay-ministers make a mockery of the Divine Truth that Our Lord is truly present in every particle of the Eucharist, and make a mockery of the holy rubrics used by the Church for centuries as a safeguard against desecration. What happens with Communion in the hand?

The Host is placed in the hand, which is not consecrated. The communicant picks it up with his own fingers, which are not consecrated. The sacred particles fall to the ground, are stepped upon and desecrated.

Likewise with so-called Eucharistic lay-ministers, their hands are not consecrated; they should not be touching the Sacred Host. The sacred particles of the Host fall to the ground, are stepped upon and

desecrated. The fingers of “lay-Eucharistic ministers” are not always washed, so any particle remaining will also be desecrated.

No authority in the Church, not even the highest, can dispense a Catholic from the duty of preserving the necessary reverence owed to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Any Church leader who does so labors under the “diabolic disorientation of the upper hierarchy” warned against by Sister Lucy of Fatima, and is derelict in his duty.

Only forty-five years ago, Communion in the hand was unthinkable in Catholic churches. It was recognized for the sacrilege that it is. Only forty-five years ago, Eucharistic lay-ministers were unthinkable in Catholic churches. It was recognized for the sacrilege that it is.

But now, these abuses are permitted and promoted by a liberal hierarchy who — in this area and in many other areas — suddenly approve what the Church always rightly condemned.

The truth, however, is that God does not change, and man’s duty of reverence toward the Blessed Sacrament does not change, even if we have many leaders who in their destructive liberalization of the Catholic Church, seem to care little or nothing for the true reverence we owe to Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist.

Where is this reverence and care for the Blessed Sacrament in the post-Conciliar Church with the introduction of Communion in the hand and the “anyone can handle it” attitude? How will our young people gain any understanding of the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament when He receives cavalier treatment from clergymen? How can reverence for the Eucharist be instilled in the Catholic faithful when they see It given in the hand as common foodstuffs, and distributed by ill-trained lay people who should not be handling the Blessed Sacrament in the first place? It is no mystery why so many Catholics have lost faith in the Sacred Mysteries.

The Need for Reparation

In 1916, a year before Our Lady’s visitations at Fatima, the “Angel of the Eucharist” appeared with Chalice and Host to the children. He administered the Sacred species to the three children saying, “Eat and drink the Body and Blood of Our Lord, horribly outraged by ungrateful men. Make reparation for their crimes and console your God.” The Angel left the chalice and the Host suspended in the air, and prostrated himself before It. The children imitated him. The Angel then prayed repeatedly this act of reparation: “Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I offer Thee the Most Precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference by which He Himself is offended. And by the infinite merits of His most Sacred Heart and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of Thee the conversion of poor sinners.”

Let us commit to memory this prayer and say it throughout the day as often as possible. The need for reparation is colossal.

Altar Rails and Reverence

By liturgy guy

Altar rails are making a comeback and with their return so is reverence. It is becoming more common these days to see the installation of rails as an integral component of liturgical reform and church architecture. From dioceses as diverse as Charlotte, North Carolina to Madison, Wisconsin the rail has returned.

To be clear, there was never a requirement to remove altar rails (also called communion rails) in the years following the Second Vatican Council. However, there were many in the Church who aggressively sought to remove that which was considered traditional and sacred. Gone were the high altars, beautiful Catholic statuary, and of course, altar rails.

A liturgically misguided attempt at egalitarianism ruled the post-conciliar landscape, one which challenged the very distinction between sanctuary and nave. Overtones of anticlericalism were pervasive, as was a new type of Catholic worship, one intentionally structured for ecumenical purposes.

By their very presence altar rails hindered the march toward the profane desired by many. With such liturgical innovations as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and most particularly the practice of Communion in the hand, altar rails were an affront to the moderns. In the new, democratic, liturgy kneeling had simply become outdated and uncouth.

In his seminal work “The Spirit of the Liturgy” Cardinal Ratzinger noted that, “The man who learns to believe learns also to kneel, and a faith or a liturgy no longer familiar with kneeling would be sick at the core.” In recent years, however, there has been a slow yet steady healing occurring within the liturgy.

Church designers, architects and historians such as Duncan Stroik and Denis McNamara have done their part in this effort. McNamara, who is a professor at the Liturgical Institute of the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, addressed the theological significance of rails in a July 2011 interview with the National Catholic Register:

“(The altar rail) is still a marker of the place where heaven and earth meet, indicating that they are not yet completely united...But, at the same time, the rail is low, very permeable, and has a gate, so it does not prevent us from participating in heaven. So we could say there is a theology of the rail, one which sees it as more than a fence, but as a marker where heaven and earth meet, where the priest, acting in persona Christi, reaches across from heaven to earth to give the Eucharist as the gift of divine life.”

Altar rails are contributing to the restoration of the sacred and the recovery of reverence within the Holy Mass. At my home parish of St. Ann’s in Charlotte, North Carolina the rail returned with the 2009 renovation of the church. The altar rail was installed to accommodate the Traditional Latin Mass which was offered weekly. Over time the use of the rail was expanded to include all masses, whether offered in the Ordinary form or Extraordinary form.

The altar rail has also returned to Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Salisbury, North Carolina (also in the Diocese of Charlotte). While the new church was completed back in 2009, the rail was not installed until just last year in support of the weekly Sunday Traditional Latin Mass.

More recently there is also the story of St. Mary's of Pine Bluff, Wisconsin. Father Richard Heilman, pastor, had the altar rail installed earlier this year following a \$20,000 gift from an anonymous donor. Overall the return of the rail has been well received by his parishioners. Since Fr. Heilman was already offering the mass ad orientem, and using kneelers for the faithful at Holy Communion, the reintroduction of the altar rail made perfect sense. More importantly, Father has seen reverence for the Eucharist continue to grow. Much like St. Ann's in Charlotte, the majority of parishioners at St. Mary's of Pine Bluff choose to receive Communion on the tongue.

It is fitting to conclude with the words of our pope emeritus, Benedict XVI, when he was still Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Ratzinger noted 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."

Pray that more Catholics are blessed to experience the return of the altar rail to their parish and to receive Holy Communion while kneeling.

A Modern Athanasius

By liturgy guy

Saint Athanasius is remembered and venerated today for his unswerving defense of orthodoxy against the Arian heresy of the fourth century. Exiled five times during his life, and often greatly outnumbered by heretical bishops, Athanasius defended the divinity of Christ, eventually finding vindication at the Council of Nicea.

Today there is another Athanasius who is a lone, prophetic, voice speaking out in defense of Our Eucharistic Lord. Bishop Athanasius Schneider of Astana, Kazakhstan has spent much of the last eight years since being appointed a bishop by Pope Benedict advocating for the traditional practice of receiving Holy Communion on the tongue while kneeling.

This modern Athanasius authored "Dominus Est -It is The Lord" back in 2008 on this very subject. It is widely believed that Bishop Schneider's work played a significant role in Pope Benedict's decision to only distribute Holy Communion in the traditional manner at all papal masses.

The following is an excerpt of a recent interview with Bishop Schneider conducted by journalist Sarah Atkinson which appeared in the Catholic Herald. The full transcript is available to read at the Latin Mass Society of England and Wales [website](#).

Regarding the Reception of Holy Communion

"To my knowledge and experience, the deepest wound in the actual crisis of the Church is the Eucharistic wound; the abuses of the Blessed Sacrament...

"There is...the question of the objectively irreverent reception of Holy Communion. The so-called new, modern manner of receiving Holy Communion directly into the hand is very serious because it exposes Christ to an enormous banality.

“There is the grievous fact of the loss of the Eucharistic fragments. No one can deny this. And the fragments of the consecrated host are crushed by feet. This is horrible! Our God, in our churches, is trampled by feet! No one can deny it. “And this is happening on a large scale. This has to be, for a person with faith and love for God, a very serious phenomenon.

“We cannot continue as if Jesus as God does not exist, as though only the bread exists. This modern practice of Communion in the hand has nothing to do with the practice in the ancient Church. The modern practice of receiving Communion in hand contributes gradually to the loss of the Catholic faith in the real presence and in the transubstantiation.

“A priest and a bishop cannot say this practice is ok. Here is at stake the most holy, the most divine and concrete on Earth,” continues Bishop Schneider. “I am very sad that I am feeling myself as one who is shouting in the desert. The Eucharistic crisis due to the modern use of Communion in hand is so evident. This is not an exaggeration. It is time that the bishops raise their voices for the Eucharistic Jesus who has no voice to defend himself. Here is an attack on the most Holy, an attack on the Eucharistic faith.

“Of course there are people who receive Holy Communion in the hand with much devotion and faith, but they are in a minority. The vast mass, though, are losing the faith through this very banal manner of taking Holy Communion like common food, like a chip or a cake. Such a manner to receive the most Holy here on earth is not sacred, and it destroys by time the deep awareness and the Catholic faith in the real presence and in the transubstantiation.”

“It seems that the majority of the clergy and the bishops are content with this modern use of Communion in hand and don’t realize the real dangers connected with such a practice. For me this is incredible. How is this possible, when Jesus is present in the little hosts? A priest and a bishop should say: “I have to do something, at least to gradually reduce this. All that I can do, I have to do.”

“Unfortunately, though, there are members of the clergy who are making propaganda of the modern use of Communion in the hand and sometimes prohibiting receiving Communion on the tongue and kneeling. There are even priests who are discriminating those who kneel for Holy Communion. This is very, very sad.”

“There is also an increase in stealing of hosts, because of distributing Communion directly in the hand. There is a net, a business, of the stealing of Holy Hosts and this is much facilitated by Communion in the hand.” “Why would I, as a priest and bishop, expose Our Lord to such a danger, to such a risk? When these bishops or priests (who approve of Communion in the hand) have some item of value, they would never expose this to great danger, to be lost or stolen. They protect their house, but they do not protect Jesus and allow him to be stolen very easily.”

Bishop Athanasius Schneider’s book “Dominus Est-It is The Lord” is published by Newman House Press. At a list price of only \$8.00 and under 65 pages, this book needs to be in the hands of every priest and bishop. Through catechesis, personal witness, prayer and reparation we will see an end to this practice of communion in the hand.

Can a priest order us to stand when receiving Communion?

Answered by: Catholic Answers Staff

No, your pastor does not have any authority to place such a restriction. Your right to receive Communion on the tongue while kneeling is guaranteed by Church law, and a local pastor cannot change this. He is within his rights to *ask* that you stand, so that he doesn't have to change his posture while distributing Communion, but you are within your rights to decline this request if you feel more comfortable or reverent doing it the other way.

The argument that it is too hard for the priest to give Communion to people who are kneeling is specious. Catholic priests were doing that for centuries, and in the old days it required them to stoop even more since the communicants were kneeling while the priest stood on the platform in front of them, meaning their heads were often even lower with respect to him.

If it is your priest's habit to position himself on the bottom step in the sanctuary when distributing Communion (perhaps he is shorter than most communicants), he easily can take a step down to give Communion to the kneeling, then can take one step up to give Communion to someone who is standing.

Why You Should Receive Communion Kneeling and on the Tongue

By Kevin M. Tierney

When John Paul II gave his addresses that became the *Catechesis on Human Love*, one of the most salient points was that we can't speak of things we do "in the body" or "in the spirit", since the body and spirit together comprise the human person. When we sin, we sin through our bodies and through our spirit. Both are wounded by sin, and both must be redeemed (Romans 8:23), and eventually reunited. (1 Cor 15:41-54) This redemption is made possible through the Sacrifice of the Cross (CCC601), and as the *Catechism of St. Pius X* teaches us (Article 4:19), the fruit of Christ's sacrifice is applied to us *in a very special way* by the sacraments.

How This Impacts the Body: We often hear the cliché *actions speak louder than words*, and this is especially true in regards to how we live out the Catholic faith. (James 2:24) St. Paul speaks about how we need to use our actions to control our bodies. (1 Cor 9:27) This lesson applies in a profound way to how we receive Holy Communion. When we approach Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, Catholics today either bow or kneel. Bowing implies (at least in Western culture) reverence. For traditionalists, we try to take it one step further. Here kneeling implies *subjection*. You need to use your whole body to kneel at the communion rail. This is the way we bring our own bodies into subjection, since it is the nature of the flesh to seek its own pleasure and desires. (Matt 26:41)

We also kneel at the rail as a sign of our sinfulness. In the Catholic liturgy the sanctuary represents the heavenly liturgy, and the communion rail represents the line between heaven and earth. Another separation that is signified is the timelessness of the offering on the Cross being presented to the Father in heaven (in the sanctuary) and the fallible limitations of time here on earth. For God, all things are present (CCC 600), yet for man, we measure things through time.

Holy Communion becomes the meeting of all of these things. The infinite is given in the finite, the eternal given in the temporal, and heaven and earth are joined. For our part, we approach as close as we can to heaven seeking God's grace, but we cannot enter into heaven yet due to our fallen nature. Instead, we must wait with humility and patience for Christ to come and transform us. Our reception of Holy Communion is a small participation of that transformation that will happen in the fullest at the end of time.

How This Impacts the Soul: While we might sin with the body, all sin begins in the *interior, that is, in the soul*. As Jesus points out, it isn't what we take into us that will defile us spiritually, but what proceeds from our fallen natures that is defiled. (Matthew 15:10-20) Within each and every soul lie many disordered tendencies that only we know about, and some we don't even know about. This is why salvation is a gift freely bestowed by God. Left to our own devices, *even our faith will not be sufficiently pleasing to God to merit salvation*. (Council of Trent, Session VI, Chapter VIII)

When we receive Holy Communion, the life of Christ is infused into our soul, and combined with great faith, the defilement of our fallen nature is cleansed, and we become less and less attached to those things. As a result, we who were predestined by God become slowly conformed to the image of His Son in time. (Romans 8:29-30) If we let the grace of God work within us through good works (Ephesians 2:8-10), we can truly say at the end of time *it is not I who live, but Christ who lives within me* (Galatians 2:20) and Christ can say *well done faithful servant!* (Matthew 25:23)

Once we have been purified by Christ in this heavenly experience, we can then bring His Gospel to the world. When we receive communion on the tongue, we are calling to mind not just the words of Christ above, but also the prophet Isaiah. While we all know his prophesy of the suffering servant, we seldom talk about how his prophetic ministry entered a new stage in the book of Isaiah Chapter 6.

When King Uzziah died, the young prophet had a vision of Heaven, specifically what heavenly worship looks like. He saw the Seraphim proclaiming the *Sanctus* and the altar of sacrifice. Isaiah's reaction is one Peter would proclaim in front of Jesus centuries later: *depart from me, I am a sinful man*. (Luke 5:8) At this point something peculiar happens. One of the Seraphim go to the altar and take a burning coal from the altar of sacrifice and approach the prophet. The burning coal is then placed on Isaiah's lips. (Another way of saying that is placing the burning coal on the tongue.) At this point the angel proclaims his sins forgiven, and God selects Isaiah as His chosen messenger of redemption and judgment to His people Israel.

When we receive communion, we kneel before the heavenly worship service going on in the sanctuary, and have the burning coal of Holy Communion placed on our tongue, which purifies not just our lips but our whole being, both soul and body. Once we have been purified, we hear the *Ite Missa Est*, or a command to go preach the Gospel. We become God's chosen messengers not just to Israel, but to the entire world, making disciples of all nations. (Matthew 28:19)

The best part about all of this is you don't need the Latin Mass to do this. You can do this in whatever liturgy you attend. It also serves as a powerful reminder of how we live our faith through the body.

The Reform that No One Wanted

By Dr. H. P. Bianchi

No one wanted Communion in the hand

Within Catholic circles there is one point that all Catholics – traditionalists, progressives, liberals, conservatives – agree on: the unprecedented level of change. Consequently, most scholars would argue that the council was the defining event of the modern church, and that nothing had a greater impact on the church since the Reformation.

In reading about the history of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, I began seeing references to the GIFT (Growth in Faith Together) program and an extensive survey that was part of the program in the late 1960s. The GIFT program lasted from 1970 to 1975 and 21 parishes took part. An impressive 13,796 Catholics responded, and though I am not an expert in statistics, such a high number should provide enough data to make a definitive statement concerning the laity's reactions to the changes following Vatican II.

Over the winter break, I spent several days shifting through the survey results in the diocese's archive, located in the basement of St. Mary's Seminary (It is a closed box and not accessible to the general public). The survey results could provide evidence for many articles, even books, but I was initially only interested in questions dealing with the liturgy.

What piqued my interest was question 23. This question, unlike the other questions, changed several times, and I have not determined the reason behind the shift. Its three versions with survey results are: I like to participate actively at mass: 75% agree and 24% disagree; There should be more lay participation in Sunday Mass: 35% agree and 64% disagree; I would prefer to take Communion in my hands: 17% agree and 82% disagreed. The first two versions reveal that people wanted to be part of the Mass, but not front and center.

The version relating to the reception of Communion in the hand is perplexing for a variety of reasons. First, the 1970s were not a traditional era. As seen above, most people approved of the main liturgical changes, and when it came to social issues, they were exceedingly liberal, with 68% disagreeing with the church's teaching of contraception. Second, it is also curious that there has been nearly a universal switch. I have no statistics about current practices, but from my own personal experiences, almost everyone receives Communion in the hand.

Communion in the hand was not authorized by Vatican II; though in some countries, like Germany and the Netherlands, the practice became more commonplace after the council. To address the question, Paul VI surveyed the world's bishops on the topic, and released a document, *Memoriale Domini*, to explain the church's position. Below are the questions sent to the world's bishops and their responses.

1. Do you think that attention should be paid to the desire that, over and above the traditional manner, the rite of receiving Holy Communion on the hand should be admitted?

Yes: 597 No: 1,233 Yes, but with reservations: 315 Invalid votes: 20

2. Is it your wish that this new rite be first tried in small communities, with the consent of the bishop?

Yes: 751 No: 1,215 Invalid votes, 70

3. Do you think that the faithful will receive this new rite gladly, after a proper catechetical preparation?

Yes: 835 No: 1,185 Invalid votes: 128

Since the majority of bishops opposed the vote, the pope issued a clear and poignant statement on Communion in the hand. "The Apostolic See therefore emphatically urges bishops, priests and laity to obey carefully the law which **is still valid and which has again been confirmed**. It urges them to take account of the judgment given by the majority of Catholic bishops, of the rite now in use in the liturgy, of the common good of the Church." He, however, left open the option of a local conference to continue the tradition of receiving Communion in the hand, **if the practice was already in place**.

As an historian, I have two questions related to Communion in the hand. First, why was this reform the one that no group wanted? The pope and bishops, who a few years before passed sweeping liturgical reforms, came down on the opposite side on this issue. The laity also favored the majority of the liturgical changes, but not this one. What made the traditional practice of receiving communion, kneeling at a communion rail and on the tongue, so popular even with a progressive generation?

Secondly, how did the shift happen so rapidly? My first memories of going to Mass come from the mid-1980s, only 15 years after Memorial Domini, and Communion in the hand had already become the norm. How did a practice go from being unpopular to the universal practice in 15 years or less?

Of course, these questions on the reception of Communion touch on more than one aspect of the liturgy. Its significance relates to the meaning of Communion, the role of laity, the changing of the liturgy in general, and much more. I am interested in hearing your thoughts, especially if you lived through these events in 1970s.

Communion on the Tongue Is an Apostolic Tradition

Statements from Popes, Saints and Church Councils:

St. Sixtus 1 (circa 115): "The Sacred Vessels are not to be handled by others than those consecrated to the Lord."

St. Basil the Great, Doctor of the Church (330-379): "The right to receive Holy Communion in the hand is permitted only in times of persecution." St. Basil the Great considered Communion in the hand so irregular that he did not hesitate to consider it a grave fault.

The Council of Saragossa (380): Excommunicated anyone who dared continue receiving Holy Communion by hand. This was confirmed by the Synod of Toledo.

The Synod of Rouen (650): Condemned Communion in the hand to halt widespread abuses that occurred from this practice, and as a safeguard against sacrilege.

6th Ecumenical Council, at Constantinople (680-681): Forbade the faithful to take the Sacred Host in their hand, threatening transgressors with excommunication.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274): "Out of reverence towards this Sacrament [the Holy Eucharist],

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." (*Summa Theologica*, Part III,)

The Council of Trent (1545-1565): "The fact that only the priest gives Holy Communion with his consecrated hands is an Apostolic Tradition."

Pope Paul VI (1963-1978): "This method [on the tongue] must be retained." (*Memoriale Domini*)

Pope John Paul II: "To touch the sacred species and to distribute them with their own hands is a privilege of the ordained." (*Dominicae Cena*, 11)

Pope St. Leo the Great is less well known for something very important to liturgical studies. He is one of the most ancient witnesses to the practice of Communion on the tongue. Notably, Saint Leo the Great read the sixth chapter of Saint John's Gospel as referring to the Eucharist (as all the Church Fathers did). In a preserved sermon on John 6 (Sermon 9), Saint Leo says: "*Hoc enim ore sumitur quod fide creditur*" (Serm. 91.3). This is translated strictly as: "This indeed is received by means of the mouth which we believe by means of faith. "Ore" is here in the ablative and in the context it denotes instrumentation. So then, the mouth is the means by which the Holy Eucharist is received.

The Council of Rouen (650): "Do not put the Eucharist in the hands of any layman or laywoman but only in their mouths.

Abuses with Communion in the Hand While Standing

BY BEN YANKE

An Indult Born Out of Disobedience

The practice of receiving Holy Communion in the hand first began to spread in Catholic circles during the early 1960s, primarily in Holland. Shortly after Vatican II, due to the escalating abuses in certain non-English speaking countries (Holland, Belgium, France and Germany), Pope Paul VI took a survey of the world's bishops to ascertain their opinions on the subject. On May 28, 1969 the Congregation for Divine Worship issued *Memoriale Domini*, which concluded: "From the responses received, it is thus clear that by far the greater number of bishops feel that the present discipline [i.e., Holy Communion on the tongue] should not be changed at all, indeed that if it were changed, this would be offensive to the sensibility and spiritual appreciation of these bishops and of most of the faithful." After he had considered the observation and the counsel of the bishops, the Supreme Pontiff judged that the long-received manner of ministering Holy Communion to the faithful should not be changed. The Apostolic See then strongly urged bishops, priests and the laity to zealously observe this law out of concern for the common good of the Church.

Despite the vote, in 1969 Pope Paul VI decided to strike a compromise with his disobedient bishops on the continent. Given "the gravity of the matter," the pope would not authorize Communion in the hand. He was, however, open to bestowing an indult – an exception to the law – under certain conditions: first, an indult could not be given to a country in which Communion in the hand was not an already established practice; second, the bishops in countries where it was established must approve of the practice "by a secret vote and with a two-thirds majority." Beyond this, the Holy See set down seven regulations concerning communion in the hand; failure to maintain these regulations could result in the loss of the indult. The first three regulations concerned: 1) respecting the laity who

continue the traditional practice (of receiving kneeling and on the tongue), 2) maintaining the laity's proper respect of the Eucharist, and 3) strengthening the laity's faith in the real presence.

Bernardin's Campaign: So how did Communion in the hand come to America?

In 1975 and again in 1976, Archbishop Joseph Bernardin, the president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) attempted in vain to garner two-thirds of the bishops to vote in favor of receiving Communion in the hand. The following year – which coincided with the end of Bernardin's term as president – brought one final attempt. Bernardin appointed Archbishop Quinn, who became Bernardin's immediate successor as NCCB president, to be the chief lobbyist for Communion in the hand. During the proceedings a brave bishop requested a survey of the bishops be taken – this survey would ask each bishop whether or not Communion in the hand was widely practiced in his diocese, for without the practice's current wide-use the first condition of the indult would not be satisfied. (*Of course, everyone knew that Communion in the hand was not a previously established practice in the United States.*) Though his request was seconded and supported in writing by five other bishops, Bernardin had the motion dismissed as “out of order.” The bishops then voted ... only to once more fall short of the two-thirds majority. This, however, did not end the matter. Bernardin decided to (unlawfully) begin gathering “absentee votes” from any bishop he could find – including retired bishops who no longer administered any dioceses. Consequently, the number was adjusted to meet the two-thirds majority.

Pope Paul VI's Regulations – Have they been met?

So, what about Pope Paul VI's regulations that could result in the loss of the indult?

1) Respecting the laity who continue the traditional practice (of receiving kneeling and on the tongue)

- Reports are now widespread of priests refusing Communion to those who wish to receive kneeling and on the tongue. Even reports of priests berating people for this. A friend of mine said he was traveling and attended Mass where he proceeded to kneel and indicate that he wished to receive on the tongue. The minister of Holy Communion refused and ended up walking away from him. He remained. Finally, the priest came over and said, “Get up son, we don't do it that way here.” My friend said, “So, you are refusing me Communion?” The priest said, “Yes I am.” He got up, walked out and reported him to the chancery. It is a severe infraction against canon law for any priest to do this.

2) Maintaining the laity's proper respect of the Eucharist

- While I can relate to many of the following, here is a testimony from a Deacon:
- I've watched a mother receive communion, her toddler in tow, then take it back to the pew and share it with him like a cookie.
- At least four or five times a year, I have to stop someone who just takes the host and wanders away with it and ask them to consume it on the spot.

- Once or twice a month I encounter the droppers. Many are well-intentioned folks who somewhere, somehow drop the host or it slides out of their hands and Jesus tumbles to the floor.
- I've found the Eucharist in a hymnal, under a pew, in the bathroom and in the parking lot.

The Vatican does not allow communion in the hand ... one reason is because tourists were taking the Holy Eucharist home as a souvenir of their trip to Rome.

Not too long ago, I was alerted to someone who did not consume the Host. After Mass I confronted the young man, and he pulled it out of his shirt pocket. It seems he wasn't Catholic and didn't believe, and so didn't know what to do. But, I am very worried these days, with the rise of satanic cults who use the Eucharist in their rites. In fact, someone shared this story of his youth, as he admitted these satanic cults are everywhere now ...

When I was in junior high I started hanging out and getting high with some of my older brothers' friends. They would "play around" with ouija boards and tarot cards. They would get dropped off at "youth group" at church – go in the front door and out the back into the woods for sex, drugs, and booze. They would brand each other with pentagram rings and even sacrifice small animals. I never participated in it – cause I was the "little brother" – but they would talk about the Black Mass all the time. There was an older guy – our dealer – in his late twenties who claimed to be a wizard and showed us his pyx (I didn't know what it was at the time) that he would use, because the priest at the Catholic Church he went to wouldn't pay much attention, "well, they have a pyx, they must be legit!" He even said he could find hosts after most Masses on the floor or sometimes between hymnal pages, like bookmarks. I remember that, when he opened it to show us, he told us it was Jesus and that we were gonna "have a party" with him ... well, I chickened out and went back to "youth" group – a couple nights later...our friend, after the "Jesus party" with the "wizard," decapitated his sleeping aunt with a samurai sword because he "heard voices" telling him to ... she was a regular Mass-attending woman; the only one left in the family. He's locked up in a mental institution for life. When I started learning about Catholicism, I always remembered that awful time, and couldn't – can't – shake the feeling that my friend opened himself up to demonic possession by participating in the Black Mass that night...there were no drugs in his system when they arrested him that night."

3) Strengthening the laity's faith in the Real Presence:

- In 1950, 87% believed in the Real Presence. Today, that number has plummeted to a mere 34%. The abusive and hurried manner in which the practice of Communion in the hand was imposed after Vatican II led to a widespread lack of reverence for the Eucharist and caused great pain for many in the Church. It disoriented many people, who with real justification — especially in light of the recent and overwhelming loss of faith in the Eucharist as the real presence — feared that the very heart of Catholic belief had been compromised.

So, we see that Pope Paul VI's regulations for maintaining the temporary indult are not even close to being realized.

Scholars and Saints Speak

Why Kneel? Pope Benedict XVI, has noted that kneeling is "an expression of Christian culture, which transforms the existing culture through a new and deeper knowledge and experience of God." He reminds us that "the word proskynein alone occurs fifty-nine times in the New Testament, twenty-four of which are in the Apocalypse, the book of the heavenly liturgy, which is presented to the Church as the standard for her own liturgy."

In his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Pope Benedict speaks of a "story that comes from the sayings of the Desert Fathers, according to which the devil was compelled by God to show himself to a certain Abba Apollo. He looked black and ugly, with frightening thin limbs, but, most strikingly, he had no knees. The inability to kneel is seen as the very essence of the diabolical."

Why Receive on the tongue? Despite the widespread practice of Communion in the hand, the universal discipline of receiving Holy Communion on the tongue has not changed. A bishop, for example, may forbid the practice of Communion in the hand but not the practice of Communion on the tongue. The Church strongly encourages the latter but not the former. With respect to Communion in the hand, the Church speaks only in a cautionary tone because of the many abuses that often accompany this practice.

St. Thomas Aquinas reminds us, with respect to Communion in the hand ... that reverence demands that only what has been consecrated should touch the Blessed Sacrament. He writes:

The dispensing of Christ's body belongs to the priest for three reasons. First, because . . . he consecrates in the person of Christ . . . Secondly, because the priest is the appointed intermediary between God and the people, hence as it belongs to him to offer the people's gifts to God, so it belongs to him to deliver the consecrated gifts to the people. Thirdly, because out of reverence toward 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.

In his apostolic letter *Dominicae Cenae*, **Pope John Paul II** also states: "How eloquent, therefore, even if not of ancient custom, is the rite of the anointing of the hands in our Latin ordination, as though precisely for these hands a special grace and power of the Holy Spirit is necessary. To touch the sacred species, and to distribute them with their own hands, is a privilege of the ordained, one which indicates an active participation in the ministry of the Eucharist."

Mother Teresa reportedly said, "Wherever I go in the whole world, the thing that makes me the saddest is watching people receive Communion in the hand." Even the great Pope John Paul II reportedly said: "There is an apostolic letter on the existence of a special valid permission for this [Communion in the hand]. But I tell you that I am not in favor of this practice, nor do I recommend it."

Become *less* so that you can then become *more*.

Communion on the tongue helps to foster a proper sense of reverence and piety. To step up to a communion rail, and kneel, and receive on the tongue, is an act of utter and unabashed humility. In

that posture to receive the Body of Christ, you become less so that you can then become more. It requires a submission of will and clear knowledge of what you are doing, why you are doing it, and what is about to happen to you.

Frankly, we should not only be humbled, but intimidated enough to ask ourselves if we are really spiritually ready to partake of the sacrament. Kneeling means you can't just go up and receive without knowing how it's properly done. It demands not only a sense of focus and purpose, but also something else, something that has eluded our worship for two generations.

It demands a sense of the sacred. Just like Peter, James and John before our Transfigured Lord, it challenges us to kneel before wonder. It insists that we not only fully understand what is happening, but that we fully appreciate the breathtaking generosity behind it. It asks us to be mindful of what "Eucharist" really means: Thanksgiving.

“Whatever You Can Do to Stop Communion in the Hand Will be Blessed by God”

By Fr. John Hardon S.J.

Not to oppose error is to approve it, and not to defend the truth is to suppress it” – Pope St. Felix III

The decline of belief and faith among Catholics has been spiraling downward ever since the introduction of Communion in the hand in 1969. What started out as disobedience among a few select bishops in Belgium in the 1960's, has now been spread like wildfire among the average Catholic worldwide, in what is largely known in the Catholic world as a third rail topic. There is widespread confusion as to how this can be a disobedient act when it has been approved by the Church. The facts are that Communion on the tongue is still the law of the Church, while Communion in the hand is an exception to the law granted by an indult, which was granted with severe reservations by Pope Paul VI in his encyclical letter “*Memoriale Domini*”.

Fr. Matthias Gaudron explains how this happened in his book *The Catechism of the Crisis in the Church*, “Communion in the hand was first practiced without any authorization in a few very progressive groups against the explicit rules of the Church.” And it is that fact that I will explore further in this essay. Fr. Gaudron continues, “On May 29, 1969, the Instruction *Memoriale Domini* took cognizance of this disobedience and reiterated in detail the advantages of Communion on the tongue” (156). Fr. Gaudron explains that after a survey was given to the bishops about whether not they would be in support of introducing Communion in the hand, 58 percent opposed it, and only 27 percent were in favor of it (156).

The outcome of this practice has been a large diminishing of the belief of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. A gallop poll taken only a few years ago, the results of which were referenced in the *Remnant Newspaper*, indicates that just 30 percent of U.S. Catholics now believe in the True Presence. The other 70 percent did not, and their belief system was sprinkled with an odd mixture of Protestant belief and Catholic Theology, or they simply had no understanding of authentic Catholic teaching.

The first objection one gets initially when approaching this subject is a mistaken notion that goes like this: But Jesus gave the Apostles Communion in the hand; therefore we are doing what Christ did at

the last supper. There are two major things wrong with that statement. First of all, this is an assumption. And even if Jesus did indeed give Communion in the hand to the Apostles, we have to keep in mind that the Apostles were priests and Bishops, possessing consecrated hands.

Secondly, there is a traditional custom of middle-eastern hospitality that was definitely in practice in Jesus' time, and still exist to this day, which is, the host feeds his guests with his own hand, placing a symbolic morsel in the mouth of the guest. A thorough reading of the text of St. John's Gospel states (13:26-30): "Jesus answered, 'It is he to whom I shall give this Morsel when I have dipped It.' So when He had dipped the Morsel, He gave It to Judas... So, after receiving the Morsel, he [Judas] immediately went out..." Would Jesus have placed a wet Morsel into Judas' hand? That would not only be unlikely, but very messy. Wouldn't He had expressed the gesture of hospitality to the person of Judas, whom He called friend later that evening in the garden, most especially during the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper with Holy Communion, "giving Himself by His own Hand"?

There is a faction of progressive Catholics who either knowingly or unknowingly obscure the facts of history. They mistakenly believe that they are returning to the ancient practice of the early Christians. But the facts show that this simply isn't the case. It is true that Holy Communion in the hand did indeed happen. However, when we read the Early Church Fathers we discover the reasons for why Holy Communion in the hand was allowed. It was only tolerated during times of Church persecution.

Dr. Taylor Marshall has researched this subject and reports that Saint Basil had this to say on this subject. "Communion in the hand is allowed only in two instances, 1) under times of persecution where no priest is present, 2) for hermits and ascetics in the wilderness who do not have priests." This point needs to be stressed; it was a rare exception, and not the norm. Otherwise, according to Saint Basil, to receive Communion in the hand was considered a "grave immoderation" under normal circumstances. This practice goes way back in Church history. One of the earliest references we have about it is from Pope St. Sixtus I, who reigned from 115-125 AD, "it is prohibited for the faithful to even touch the sacred vessels, or receive in the hand". Saint Paul himself mentions the importance of the Eucharist repeatedly in the scriptures and how one should not approach it unworthily in 1 Corinthians chapters ten and eleven.

Belief in the Real Presence in the Eucharist is taken straight from scripture. When Jesus told His disciples that "My Flesh is real food and My Blood real drink" (Jn. 6:55), His disciples took Him literally and said, "This sort of talk is hard to endure! How can anyone take it seriously?" (Jn. 6:60). St. John's Gospel continues to report; "Jesus was fully aware that His disciples were murmuring in protest at what He had said" (Jn. 6:61). John then states that, "From this time on, many of His disciples broke away and would not remain in His company any longer. Jesus then said to the Twelve Disciples, "Do you want to leave Me too?" (Jn. 6:66-67). "The Twelve stayed with Jesus because they trusted His words" (Jn. 6:69-71).

Jesus was fully aware that the departing disciples understood His teaching literally. If Jesus had only meant that they would eat his Body and drink his Blood symbolically, He would have said so before they walked away. And there are plenty of places in Scripture where the disciples were confused about His teachings so Jesus retold the parable in a way they could understand it, making the message clearer to them. Since He didn't try to re-explain what He meant when instituting the

Eucharist, we know that He meant His words literally, and of course, not in a cannibalistic sense, but supernaturally.

For the last thousand years, and right up to today, Eucharistic miracles have continued to occur that baffle believers and non-believers. Now, thanks to modern technology and modern science, we can examine them thoroughly. The subject of which has been written about extensively in Joan Carroll Cruz's book, *Eucharistic Miracles*. Another wonderful book about the origins of the Eucharist, and as to why Jesus would establish such a practice, which by the way goes straight back to the Old Testament and Ancient Judaism, I highly recommend Dr. Brandt Pitre's book, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*.

The teaching on Christ's Eucharistic Presence was not sincerely contested until the eleventh century, a thousand years after He instituted it. According to Rev. Regis Scanlon, Berengarius of Tours began teaching that Christ was present in the Eucharist only "as mere sign and symbol" and that after the consecration, "bread must remain." Berengarius held, "That which is consecrated (the bread) is not able to cease existing materially". In the thirteenth century, St. Thomas Aquinas names "Berengarius, the first deviser of this heresy," claiming that the consecrated Bread and Wine are only a "sign" of Christ's Body and Blood."

St. Thomas gives a valid reason why bread and wine does not remain once the consecration takes place, "Because it would be opposed to the veneration of this sacrament, if any substance were there, which could not be adored with adoration of "latria". Meaning, Catholics would be guilty of the sin of idolatry by worshipping the bread and wine. Therefore, the physical nature of bread and wine no longer remains, it only appears to remain.

The Council of Trent (1545-1563), agrees with what St. Thomas correctly taught:

If anyone says that in the sacred and holy sacrament of the Eucharist there remains the substance of bread and wine together with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and denies that wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the Body, and of the entire substance of the wine into the Blood, the species of the bread and wine only remaining, a change which the Catholic Church most fittingly calls transubstantiation: let him be anathema (79).

This Council was called to declare Catholic Truth that was being challenged by the Protestant Revolt led by Martin Luther, a renegade Monk who suffered from severe scrupulosity, and sadly, due to his misinterpretations of scripture, as well as his adding to and removal of them, split the Church, leaving us today with over 34,000 Protestant groups and counting.

By the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), there were in place a somewhat large faction of progressive theologians, many of whom were censored by Pius XII, who managed to get themselves invited into the Council by Pope John XXIII, and to even participate in its preceding's. These theologians were successful in holding sway at the Council, much to the orthodox bishops frustrations, and helped to word the sixteen documents produced from the Council with ambiguous language that has confused the faithful right up to this day. Then, in 1969, some of these same theologians helped to promulgate a new Mass by eliciting the aid of the then current Pope Paul VI. With this Mass in place, the rapid decline of Catholic belief, Mass attendance, and religious vocations began.

Adding to this confusion was the progressive undertakings of a group of bishops who incessantly had one agenda in mind, the introduction of Communion in the hand. Communion in the hand was illegally introduced into Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and the United States. The Church adamantly opposed this disobedient and abusive practice from the very beginning. According to Bishop Laise, from his book *Communion in the Hand*, On October 12, 1965, the “Consilium” wrote to Bernard Cardinal Alfrink, Archbishop of Utrecht, Netherlands, “The Holy Father does not consider it opportune that the sacred Particle be distributed in the hand and later consumed in different manners by the faithful, and therefore, he vehemently exhorts [that] the Conference offer the opportune resolutions so that the traditional manner of communicating be restored” (32).

Pope Paul VI vehemently looked for a solution to this crisis. He considered two options, either close the door to all concessions, or allow the concession only where its use was already established. The Pope took a risk and asked for the opinions of the local bishops to help him in this growing disobedience. Unfortunately, the bishops did not help Pope Paul VI, but opened the doors even wider for abuse. Communion in the hand was introduced without authorization, the Pope persistently opposed allowing it but decided to grant an indult, but only where its use was firmly established so as not to call attention to the disobedience of those bishops among their flock.

Pope Paul VI’s compromise was the document *Memoriale Domini* (May 29, 1969), while reconfirming that Communion on the tongue is “more conducive to faith, reverence and humility.” The Pope wisely cautioned that Communion in the hand “carries certain dangers with it which may arise from the new manner of administering Holy Communion: the danger of a loss of reverence for the August sacrament of the altar, of profanation, of adulterating the true doctrine.”

There are plenty of Catholics who sincerely believe that it makes no difference on how they receive Communion. They don’t understand the law of the Church, the history, or the warnings against receiving Communion in the hand. Pope Paul VI again repeated in *Memoriale Domini* the Churches position on this matter, “He should not forget, on the other hand, that the position of the Holy See in this matter is not a neutral one, but rather that it vehemently exhorts him to diligently submit to the law in force (Communion on the tongue).

The truth of the matter is that Communion in the hand was spread through disobedience to the Pope. Pope Paul VI tried hard to put into place many obstacles to slow this disobedient practice from spreading. In *Memoriale Domini* he stated four restrictions; (a) the indult could only be requested if Communion in the hand was an already established custom in the country, and (b) if by a secret vote and with a two-thirds majority the episcopal conference petitions Rome, c) then Rome would grant the necessary permission, (d) once the permission was granted, several conditions had to exist simultaneously (among these conditions, no loss of sacred particles and no loss of faith in the Real Presence) (*En réponse à la demande*). If any of those conditions were not met than Communion in the hand was not permitted, even with the indult. These restrictions are part of the Pope’s instructions which are found attached to his document *Memoriale Domini*.

However, the American bishops successfully managed to maneuver around Pope Paul VI’s restrictions. The late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, the then president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, unsuccessfully attempted twice to establish Communion in the hand in America, in 1975 and 1976. Unfortunately, he finally prevailed in May 1977 when Communion in the hand was

illegally authorized in the United States. The bishops totally ignored Pope Paul VI's requirements expressed in his indult about not allowing the practice of Communion in the hand where it was not already established.

Proceeding on their own initiative, the American bishops decided to vote on whether not they could get this disobedient practice introduced into their own country, despite all the historical evidence and warnings by Saints and Doctors of the Church throughout Her two thousand year history, warning against such a practice.

After the initial voting had concluded, Archbishop Bernardin reported that the vote had fallen short of the required two-thirds of all legally present members and that the matter could not be concluded until the absent bishops were polled. Bernardin was dead-set on getting Communion in the hand one way or another, even if it had just been voted down. To get around the lack of votes, bishops who were not present, retired, or even dying, were polled illegally.

Canon lawyer, Fr. Kunz, has stated that obtaining votes from absent bishops absolutely invalidates the petition for an indult, making the indult non-void. This tactic manipulated and masterminded by Cardinal Bernardin to acquire the votes simply makes the indult invalid, since only members present at the meeting could legally vote. Renowned theologian Fr. John Hardon, S.J., stated in 1997, "To get enough votes to give Communion on the hand, bishops who were retired, bishops who were dying, were solicited to vote to make sure that the vote would be an affirmative in favor of Communion in the hand. Whatever you can do to stop Communion in the hand will be blessed by God."

The result of Cardinal Bernardin efforts in swaying the American bishops into promoting Communion in the hand, resulted in the Holy See granting permission for the indult which allowed Communion in the hand in the United States. The National Catholic Register quotes Bishop Blanchette:

"What bothers me is that in the minds of many it will seem that disobedience is being rewarded. And that troubles me because if people persist in being disobedient, and that is used as a reason for changing the discipline, then we're very close to chaos or what I would call selective obedience, which is no obedience at all." (National Catholic Register, "Bishop Blanchette: A Clear Call for Obedience," June 12, 1977)

Having been a Catholic for eight years, I have witnessed the lack of reverence and indifference among Catholics who go to Communion. The majority receive in the hand, their body language and stance clearly shows that they either don't believe in the Eucharist, or simply haven't been told about Who and What It truly is. All polls are consistent with what I and other Catholics have suspected all along. Since the illegal introduction of Communion in the hand, belief in the Real Presence has not only plummeted, it is simply not being taught nor emphasized.

It wasn't until October of 2008, over four years of being a Catholic, did I have the good fortune of meeting a traditional Catholic Priest, Fr. Isaac Mary Relyea, who not only instructed me properly on this Church teaching, but on many others as well.

Communion in the hand, and the lack of solid Catholic formation, has certainly attributed to this loss of faith. Fr. John Hardon has affirmed, "Behind Communion in the hand, I wish to repeat and make as plain as I can, is a weakening, a conscious, deliberate weakening of faith in the Real Presence."

So today it seems we are stuck with Communion in the hand. Pope Benedict XVI has spoken out numerous times that he is not in favor of this practice. He has even made it known that anyone attending his Mass in Saint Peter's Square must receive Holy Communion kneeling and on the tongue. It would be wonderful if the holy Father would entirely do away with this practice, most especially since it was only granted permission through an illegal voting process, and since it was introduced through an act of disobedience.

Faithful Catholics like myself either look the other way, try to educate others, or simply avoid a Mass that allows Communion in the hand. Today, I have taken the last option and attend only the Tridentine Mass, or the Extraordinary Form of the Mass, codified by Pope Pius V in 1570. There is nothing in the rubrics that will allow Communion in the hand, it is the most ancient form of the Mass in existence, having been instituted over 1,500 years ago. Myself, and others pray for the day the Church fully returns to Her traditional practices and Communion in the hand is nothing more than a bad footnote in Church history, and an extinct one at that!

How to Receive Holy Communion on the Tongue

By Deacon Michael Bickerstaff

I have noticed, over the past few years, an increase in the number of people who are electing to receive the Sacred Host on the tongue directly from a priest, deacon or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion at Holy Mass instead of in the hand.

Unfortunately, many of those who have now elected to receive Holy Communion on the tongue. In the past, people received while kneeling at the communion rail. Now, for the most part, those receiving on the tongue do so while standing before the minister. This presents some challenges to the minister, but they are simple to overcome if several simple guidelines are followed by both the minister and the communicant.

I hope you find these suggestions helpful if you choose to receive on the tongue.

1. First, regardless of how you receive, approach the Sacrament with reverence and humility; in a state of grace and properly disposed. One should never be interiorly casual or ambivalent about receiving Our Lord. One's interior disposition often manifests itself externally. If you are aware of having committed a mortal sin you have not confessed in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, don't receive. Instead, make an Act of Spiritual Communion (see below).
2. As with any reception of Holy Communion, after the priest or other minister has said, "The Body of Christ," respond with "Amen."
3. Then, with head straight or tilted slightly back, open your mouth wide and extend your tongue – the tongue need not protrude far out of the mouth, but it should block the view of the lower lip. The minister will place the Sacred Host on your tongue. Two things are very important here – open wide and extend the tongue. I have noticed that many people only slightly open the mouth and others do not extend the tongue; others do both. It is difficult and sometimes impossible for the minister to safely place the host on the tongue under these circumstances.

4. Wait until the Sacred Host is safely placed on the tongue and only then return your tongue and close your mouth. It is not proper to use your teeth to receive and it is never a good idea to bite the minister's fingers. So wait until the Sacred Host is safely on your tongue before moving.
5. Speaking of moving, it is also impossible for the minister to "hit" a moving target. This is where standing is at a disadvantage over kneeling at a rail. First, it is more difficult to remain motionless while standing. But secondly, I have noticed a tendency for the communicant to move their head towards the Sacred Host as if "to help" the minister to distribute. This does not work. The minister needs a stationary target, so remain motionless, head straight or tilted slightly back, mouth wide open and tongue extended. For some people, it may help to close your eyes; for others, look above the minister and don't watch the Sacred Host.
6. On the part of the priest, deacon or extraordinary minister, it is a good idea to allow the communicant achieve this posture before attempting to place the Sacred Host on the tongue.

I mentioned above that if you are unable to receive Holy Communion (due to mortal sin, having not kept the communion fast, being non-Catholic, or some other reason) it is a good practice to make a Spiritual Communion. The following is a simple, yet profound Act of Spiritual Communion you can pray while kneeling in your pew:

An Act of Spiritual Communion

"My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen."

Holy Communion in the Hand?

By Paul Kokpski

Father Regis Scanlon, who is spiritual director for Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity, has said that "the doctrine of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is one of those wonderful truths by which Christianity shines forth as a religion of mysteries far exceeding the capacity of the human mind. The Catholic Church has defined the dogma of the real presence by stating that Jesus Christ is present whole and entire under the appearances of bread and wine following the words of consecration at the Eucharist."¹

The reception of Holy Communion at Mass has always been a moment of tremendous reverence and awe, traditionally preceded by the ringing of the bells, burning of incense and observation of silence.

Sadly there are many Catholics who no longer believe in the real presence. No doubt this has been due to the toning down, and in some cases the deletion, of these and many other symbols and signs of adoration. One such sign of adoration that has been drastically toned down is the practice of receiving Holy Communion on the tongue.

This has led Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith, secretary of the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, to recently suggest the policy of giving Communion in the hand be revised or "abandoned altogether."² It is Archbishop Ranjith's belief that the introduction of this practice after Vatican II has resulted in indifference, outrages and sacrileges toward our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, causing great harm to both the Catholic Church and to individual souls.

In the preface to a new book by Bishop Athanasius Schneider of Kazakhstan, *Dominus Est: Meditations of a Bishop from Central Asia on the Sacred Eucharist*, Archbishop Ranjith notes that the practice of receiving Communion in the hand was not mandated by Vatican II, nor was it introduced in response to calls from the laity. Instead, he argues, the established practice of piety — receiving the Eucharist kneeling, on the tongue — was changed "improperly and hurriedly," and became widespread even before it was formally approved by the Vatican.³ In this essay I will briefly discuss Archbishop Ranjith's claims from the perspective and situation of the Catholic Church in **Canada** — which I suspect is essentially the same or very similar to the situation in the U.S. and in other countries where Communion in the hand was adopted.

The practice of receiving Holy Communion in the hand first began to spread in Catholic circles during the early 1960s, primarily in Holland. Shortly after Vatican II, due to the escalating abuses in certain non-English speaking countries (Holland, Belgium, France and Germany), Pope Paul VI took a survey of the world's bishops to ascertain their opinions on the subject. On May 28, 1969 the Congregation for Divine Worship issued *Memoriale Domini*, which concluded: "From the responses received, it is thus clear that by far the greater number of bishops feel that the present discipline [i.e., Holy Communion on the tongue] should not be changed at all, indeed that if it were changed, this would be offensive to the sensibility and spiritual appreciation of these bishops and of most of the faithful."⁴ After he had considered the observation and the counsel of the bishops, the Supreme Pontiff judged that the long-received manner of ministering Holy Communion to the faithful should not be changed. The Apostolic See then strongly urged bishops, priests and the laity to zealously observe this law out of concern for the common good of the Church.

Despite this statement of the Holy See, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) decided at its Plenary Assembly of November 1969 to submit a formal request to the Holy Father for permission to distribute Holy Communion in the hand. The CCCC informed its members that "the growing participation in the Eucharist, especially by sacramental communion, has created within man the desire to see re-established the venerable custom of receiving the Eucharistic Bread in their hands."⁵ The CCCC further advised its members that "the Pope thought it better not to change the [old] discipline for all the Church, but, rather, to study on an individual basis the requests submitted to him by national conferences of bishops."⁶ What Pope Paul VI actually said in *Memoriale Domini*, however, was "if the contrary usage, namely, of placing Holy Communion in the hand, has already developed in any place [it had not, at that point, in Canada] . . . the Holy See will weigh the individual cases with care."⁷

Permission for Communion in the hand was eventually granted to the Canadian bishops on several strict conditions, including that "the new manner of giving Communion must not be imposed in a way that would exclude the traditional practice."⁸ The Canadian bishops nonetheless advised its instructors of the new practice to provide the faithful with only the "good reasons which justify the introduction of the new rite."⁹ While not explicitly forbidden Communion on the tongue, the faithful — especially first communicants and converts — were "encouraged to receive the Eucharistic Bread on the flat palm of the hand."¹⁰

This movement toward adopting a new, single policy was reinforced by the removal of the Communion rail, which is compatible with receiving Communion on the tongue. For those not familiar with the Communion or altar rail, it is an architectural feature, usually made of marble or some other precious material, that separates the sanctuary from the body of the church. A clean white cloth of fine linen, which was usually fastened on the sanctuary side of the rail, would be extended over the length of the rail before those who receive Holy Communion to act as a sort of corporal to receive any particles that may by chance fall from the hands of the priest. The communicant would kneel, take the cloth in both hands and hold it under his chin.

Once the faithful were effectively forced to stand for Holy Communion¹¹ and the practice of receiving in the hand became the norm, lay people were then invited to come up to the altar and distribute Holy Communion. Eventually and unfortunately this practice also became normalized.

One of the major arguments given for supporting the practice of receiving Holy Communion in the hand was that it "emphasizes an active personal involvement, one of the goals of liturgical renewal."¹² If, however, this was one of our bishops' primary motivations behind their quest for legitimate renewal, one has to wonder why the most solemn act of kneeling at the moment of Holy Communion was considered expendable when for centuries it was employed because of its immeasurable benefit of predisposing one to holiness.

Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, has noted that kneeling is "an expression of Christian culture, which transforms the existing culture through a new and deeper knowledge and experience of God."¹³ He reminds us that "the word *proskynein* alone occurs fifty-nine times in the New Testament, twenty-four of which are in the Apocalypse, the book of the heavenly liturgy, which is presented to the Church as the standard for her own liturgy."¹⁴

In his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, the Pope speaks of a "story that comes from the sayings of the Desert Fathers, according to which the devil was compelled by God to show himself to a certain Abba Apollo. He looked black and ugly, with frightening thin limbs, but, most strikingly, *he had no knees*. The inability to kneel is seen as the very essence of the diabolical."¹⁵

Ironically, while the practice of kneeling is widely accepted in secular circles such as those instances when one is in the presence of state royalty or some other important dignitary, our Catholic bishops make no such stipulation when one is in the presence of God himself in the Blessed Sacrament.

Though modern liturgical theorists, designers and consultants tout the newer practice, which opposes the Communion rail and its conduciveness to receiving Holy Communion on the tongue, there has been no ecclesiastical document that has come out against the Communion rail or one that sanctions its removal from churches.

St. Thomas Aquinas reminds us, with respect to Communion in the hand, that reverence demands that only what has been consecrated should touch the Blessed Sacrament. He writes:

The dispensing of Christ's body belongs to the priest for three reasons. First, because . . . he consecrates in the person of Christ . . . Secondly, because the priest is the appointed intermediary between God and the people, hence as it belongs to him to offer the people's gifts to God, so it belongs to him to deliver the consecrated gifts to the people. Thirdly, because out of reverence toward 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.¹⁶

Any emergency justifies that the privilege be extended to a lay person because emergencies do not imply a lack of respect for the holy body of Christ. This aside, there is no reason for receiving Communion in the hand; only an immanent spirit of paltry familiarity with our Lord.

In his apostolic letter *Dominicae Cenaе*, Pope John Paul II also states: "How eloquent, therefore, even if not of ancient custom, is the rite of the anointing of the hands in our Latin ordination, as though precisely for these hands a special grace and power of the Holy Spirit is necessary. To touch the sacred species, and to distribute them with their own hands, is a privilege of the ordained, one which indicates an active participation in the ministry of the Eucharist."¹⁷

During the reception of Holy Communion it is Jesus who transforms us into himself, and not we who transform him into our substance. The superior being is the one to assimilate the inferior. Is not Communion on the tongue (where one receives directly from the priest *in persona Christi*) more expressive of this theology and hence more reverent than Communion in the hand (where one takes and gives to oneself)? One of our esteemed high-ranking clergy rejected this latter argument that Communion in the hand is equivalent to "self-communicating." He commented: "If I offer you something to eat, and you accept it in your hand, as is normal, then it is I who am giving and you who receive. Only if you were to help yourself to something in the kitchen, would you be 'taking and giving to yourself.'"¹⁸ This may sound coherent but the various bishops and bishops' conferences obviously believed otherwise when they made an appeal for the new practice on the grounds that it represented

an "active personal involvement" of the laity. Implicit in this argument is the admission of there being an additional "active" step taken by the communicant during the transfer of the Sacred Host from the priest to the recipient — a step supporting the idea that Communion in the hand is a form of self-communicating. If this were not the case then there would have been no need to introduce it in the first place. In any event it would seem the introduction of this practice was unwarranted.

The "kitchen" example does, however, raise a new concern. That is exactly what happens when — during the Mass and after the consecration — a member of the laity opens the tabernacle, takes the Sacred Host and distributes it to the faithful. This practice, which is becoming more and more common, would not have been possible had it not been for the prior legitimization of the practice of receiving Holy Communion in the hand. This demonstrates how easily the practice of Communion in the hand can and in fact does open the door to all sorts of accidental and even intentional abuses.

Our bishops have argued that Communion in the hand is the proper way for the faithful to respond to our Lord's invitation: "All of you, take and eat this." What the bishops overlook is the fact that while our Lord did speak these words he issued them within the context of instituting the sacrament of holy orders. These words were addressed to the apostles and not to all Christians indiscriminately.

Arguments for Communion in the hand based upon the fact that this practice can be found among the early Christians are also not valid. Pope Pius XII spoke in very clear and unmistakable terms against the idea of re-introducing customs from the time of the catacombs. This is because customs of a previous era can assume completely new functions today. For example, many Protestants right up to the present time receive Communion in the hand as an implicit denial of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. It is in this environment, culture and context, and not that of the early Church, that our Catholic bishops have adopted the practice. One calls to mind the longstanding principle of Catholic worship, "*lex orandi, lex credendi*" — let the law of prayer be governed by the law of belief. Catholics should worship in accordance with what they believe.

The practice of Communion in the hand has been detrimental to Christian unity ever since it was employed, causing divisions within the Church and confusion among those separated brethren who share with us an explicit and orthodox belief in the Holy Eucharist.

Despite the widespread practice of Communion in the hand, the universal discipline of receiving Holy Communion on the tongue has not changed. A bishop, for example, may forbid the practice of Communion in the hand but not the practice of Communion on the tongue. The Church strongly encourages the latter but not the former. With respect to the former, the Church speaks only in a cautionary tone because of the many abuses that often accompany this practice. These include the increased likelihood of dropping or stealing the Sacred Host. This unfortunately has happened in these days of revived Satanism. Consecrated hosts have been known to be sold for blasphemous uses.

Dietrich von Hildebrand asked why ultimately the Church should continue to allow Communion in the hand when "it is evidently detrimental from a pastoral viewpoint, when it certainly does not increase our reverence, and when it exposes the Eucharist to the most terrible diabolical abuses? There are really no serious arguments for Communion in the hand. But there are the most gravely serious kinds of arguments against it."¹⁹

Mother Teresa reportedly said, "Wherever I go in the whole world, the thing that makes me the saddest is watching people receive Communion in the hand."²⁰ Father John Hardon, S.J. also proclaimed, "Behind Communion in the hand — I wish to repeat and make as plain as I can — is a weakening, a conscious, deliberate weakening of faith in the Real Presence . . . Whatever you can do to stop Communion in the hand will be blessed by God."²¹ Even the great Pope John Paul II reportedly said: "There is an apostolic letter on the existence of a special valid permission for this [Communion in the hand]. But I tell you that I am not in favor of this practice, nor do I recommend it."²²

The abusive and hurried manner in which the practice of Communion in the hand was imposed after Vatican II lead to a widespread lack of reverence for the Eucharist and caused great pain for many in the Church. It disoriented many people, who with real justification — especially in light of the recent and overwhelming loss of faith in the Eucharist as the real presence — feared that the very heart of Catholic belief had been compromised. Further, as Communion on the tongue helps to foster a proper sense of reverence and piety, I believe it is high time this practice be returned to its former place of prominence — not only for the greater glory of God but for the salvation of souls.

End Notes

1. Father Regis Scanlon, O.F.M., Cap., "Eucharistic Piety: A Strong Recommendation" (*Theotokos*, the newsletter of the Auraria Catholic Club).
2. Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith, Catholic News Agency (February 1, 2008).
3. Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith, Catholic World News (February 1, 2008).
4. Congregation for Divine Worship, *Memoriale Domini* (May 28, 1969).
5. Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Internal Communication Directive" (March 23, 1970), hereafter cited CCCB.
6. Ibid.
7. *Memoriale Domini*.
8. Congregation for Divine Worship, *En response a la demande* ("To presidents of those conferences of bishops petitioning the indult for Communion in the hand," May 29, 1969: AAS 61 [1969] 546-547; 351-353).
9. CCCB, ref. 628.
10. Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Nation Bulletin on Liturgy* (# 77 P. 31).
11. The Communion rail was effective in serving as a brace for those who had trouble kneeling on their own, especially the frail, weak or elderly. Its removal not only deterred the faithful from kneeling, since one could now approach the altar rail and remain standing for Holy Communion; for those who were infirm and who wished to kneel, it made kneeling practically impossible. In some of the older churches the Communion rail physically remains but is, nonetheless, not usually used for the Novus Ordo Mass.
12. CCCB.
13. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), p. 185.
14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., p. 193.
16. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (III, Q. 82, Art. 3).
17. Pope John Paul II, *Dominicae Cenaes*, no. 11.
18. Comment made by a member of the Pontificium Consilium ad Christianorum Unitatem Fovendam in a personal letter of December 17, 1999.
19. Dietrich von Hildebrand, "Communion in the hand should be rejected," November 8, 1973.
20. As reported by Father George Ruder in his 1989 Good Friday sermon at St. Agnes Church, New York.
21. Father John Hardon, S.J., November 1, 1997, Call to Holiness Conference, Detroit, Michigan.
22. Pope John Paul II responding to a reporter from *Stimme des Glaubens* magazine during his visit to Fulda, Germany in November 1980.

Mr. Paul Kokoski holds a B.A. in philosophy from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

Communion in the Hand, and Other Monumental Mistakes

By Paul Kokoski

A few years ago Pope Benedict XVI decreed that all his communicants should kneel and receive Holy Communion on their tongues. This practice was the universal norm before Vatican II but was widely rejected by most bishops after the Council. The present option or permission of receiving Holy Communion standing and in the hand has largely contributed to a crisis of faith and a loss of the sense of the sacred. The pope is now trying to reverse this trend by calling all Catholics back to a strong sense of their own identity.

Fr. Regis Scanlon, OFM, once said "the doctrine of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is one of those wonderful truths by which Christianity shines forth as a religion of mysteries far exceeding the capacity of the human mind. The Catholic Church has defined the dogma of the Real Presence by stating that Jesus Christ is present whole and entire under the appearances of bread and wine following the words of consecration at the Eucharist."¹

The reception of Holy Communion at Mass has always been a moment of tremendous reverence, traditionally preceded by the ringing of the bells, incense and silence. Sadly there are many Catholics who no longer believe in the Real Presence. No doubt this has been due to the toning down—and in some cases, the deletion—of these and many other symbols and signs of adoration. One such symbol of adoration that has been removed is the architectural feature called the Communion rail.

The Communion rail (sometimes called the altar rail) was introduced into Catholic churches in the ninth century. Its purpose was to set off the sanctuary from the rest of the church and to separate those whose duty it is to perform the sacramental action from those who form the celebrating congregation – a separation which was always taken for granted as essential to the Church's constitution. This was in keeping with the ancient understanding of priest as the appointed intermediary between God and the people. The altar railing became better known as the Communion rail in the Middle Ages, when the faithful more widely began to receive Communion kneeling.

For those unfamiliar with the communion rail – and there are no doubt many today that have not experienced it – the rail is an architectural feature that separates the sanctuary from the body of the church and is usually made of marble or some other precious material. A clean white cloth of fine linen, which was usually fastened on the sanctuary side of the rail, would be extended over the length of the rail before distribution of Holy Communion; its purpose was to act as a sort of corporal to

receive any particles which may by chance fall from the hands of the priest. The communicant would thus take the cloth in both hands and hold it under his chin. There is evidence to suggest that something in the nature of a corporal was used even in the earliest days of Christianity. In more modern times an altar boy carried out the same function by holding a paten under the chin of each communicant.

Even St. Padre Pio Received kneeling and on the tongue. Wasn't he "enlightened", as we are?

At the moment of Communion one can almost visualize the rail as a long table, existing alongside of and in front of the Altar of Sacrifice – a table where the people of God can come to share in the banquet of Our Lord as if present at His Last Supper; a table where one can, at the same time, be present at the unbloody sacrifice of Our Lord's Passion, as if one were actually kneeling before Our Lord on Calvary, ready to receive Him and share in His Sacrifice. How awesome!

Compare this with the rubrics of today that permits standing for Communion. What do we notice? At the moment of Communion the communicant takes the host from the priest with his own hands – as if to negate or minimize the consecration of the priest's hands that took place at ordination.

Most communicants these days depart the front of the church without even acknowledging, by bowing, that he or she has received something – or Someone – sacred. Quite often, no precautions are taken to ensure that particles of Our Lord's Body and Blood are not lost. Absolutely scandalous! Yet this is what many of our liturgical experts and bishops allow and even promote today. It is as if the Mass is little more than a social gathering or a place to meet new friends.

Sadly, the decision to remove Communion rails came shortly after the Second Vatican Council and seems to have been an initiative taken at the local level to introduce architectural changes that were believed to be necessary to implement the liturgical reforms of the Council. While some churches left the altar rail in place, they have largely fallen into disuse, and new church constructions generally do not include them.

Liturgical theorists argued, in conjunction with Vatican II's call for a "full and active participation by all the people" in the liturgy, that the altar rail separated the activity of the clergy from the passivity of the laity whom they **incorrectly** believed were all but excluded from the celebration. Hence its removal was deemed necessary in order to form an integrated or unified space that would remove the focus from the priest and redistribute it equally upon each member of the assembly. This means, incidentally, that although the Church continues to believe that altar boys are conducive to producing priestly vocations, girls must now be included among their ranks since any form of discrimination could be seen as divisive. God forgive us!

At this point, however, everything essential to Catholic faith in the Mass – begins to deteriorate. For example, the priest is no longer seen as an intermediary but rather as the "presider" who must now "face" the people rather than face the Cross of Christ² – as was the case in the Latin Mass. Pope Benedict XVI, argues in his book, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, that this "turning of the priest toward the people no longer opens out on what lies ahead and above [but] has turned the community into a self-enclosed circle."³

Without this "opening out and up" to God, the Sacrifice of the Mass becomes little more than a communal meal whereby it is also important for us to "self -communicate" when receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion, using our hands. This is especially true whenever – as is often the case – a member of the laity takes the Hosts from the tabernacle and gives it to the priest and other members of the laity to distribute. This, we are told, helps "awaken in the Christian a sense of his personal dignity."⁴ As a further testament to this egalitarian "dignity" it also becomes necessary to stand when receiving Holy Communion which in turn eliminates any further reason for keeping the altar rail. Many will recall how the practice of standing for Holy Communion was rigorously and arbitrarily enforced after Vatican II until it became uniformly ingrained in the laity.

How often have we heard since Vatican II that "kneeling doesn't suit our culture... It's not right for a grown man to do this...he should face God on his feet". Or again: "It's not appropriate for redeemed man – he has been set free by Christ and doesn't need to kneel anymore." It is highly presumptuous, however, to act as if we have already received our heavenly reward before we have actually earned it. Though many in the Church deny that pride is at work here, I believe this is the "sin of presumption" rearing its ugly head. St. Paul (Phil 2; 12) tells us that we should work out our salvation in fear and trembling.

Pope Benedict has said that "the kneeling of Christians is not a form of inculturation into existing customs. It is quite the opposite, an expression of Christian culture which transforms the existing culture through a new and deeper knowledge and experience of God."⁵

Kneeling comes from knowledge of God. As the Pope reminds us, "the word proskynein alone occurs fifty-nine times in the New Testament, twenty four of which are in the Apocalypse, the book of the heavenly liturgy, which is presented to the Church as the standard for her own liturgy."⁶

Pope Benedict gives an example of how kneeling, the practice of which in recent years, like the Sign of the Cross, is falling into disuse within the Church. In his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy* the pope speaks of a "story that comes from the sayings of the Desert Fathers, according to which the devil was compelled by God to show himself to a certain Abba Apollo. He looked black and ugly, with frightening thin limbs, but, most strikingly, he had no knees. The inability to kneel is seen as the very essence of the diabolical."⁷

It is not a stretch to suggest that, at least theoretically, those who have abandoned kneeling during the reception of Holy Communion have in fact abandoned the Bible – for if one does not kneel before the Lord, when does one kneel? The Holy Father also points out that "the man who learns to believe learns also to kneel, and a faith or a liturgy no longer familiar with kneeling would be sick at the core."⁸

Though modern liturgical theorists, designers, and consultants claim that their new theology reflects the mind of the Church, there has been no ecclesiastical document that has come out against the Communion rail or one that sanctions its removal from churches. What the Vatican has said is that "When the faithful communicate kneeling, no other sign of reverence towards the Blessed Sacrament is required, since kneeling itself is a sign of adoration. When they receive communion standing, it is strongly recommended that, coming up in procession, they should make a sign of reverence before receiving the Blessed Sacrament."⁹

In his pastoral letter on Eucharistic reverence, Bishop John Keating of Arlington, Virginia, writes: "No bodily posture so clearly expresses the soul's interior reverence before God as the act of kneeling. Reciprocally, the posture of kneeling reinforces and deepens the soul's attitude of reverence."¹⁰

Kneeling, therefore, is the ultimate posture of adoration, submission and surrender. In the Catholic Church we genuflect and kneel to indicate by bodily attitude, a total submission of our minds and hearts to the true Presence of Christ. It is an exterior manifestation of the reverence inspired by His Presence. The Communion rail is the partition that separates the sanctuary from the assembly. Insofar as it thus allows one to visualize that distance that separates heaven and earth, Creator and creature, it is an architectural feature that helps us overcome human pride, enabling us to approach and receive Christ in the Eucharist with the proper disposition and reverence. In an additional sense – to the extent that the bride and groom are consecrated in the sanctuary, the altar rail may also be seen as a powerful visual reinforcement of the sacrament of Matrimony.

The removal of communion rails caused great pain for many in the Church. It disoriented many people, who with real justification – especially in light of the recent and overwhelming loss of faith in the Eucharist as the Real Presence – feared that the very heart of Catholic belief had been compromised. Since the Mass culminates in the sharing of Communion, the rail should be seen as it once was-- as an aid to faith of the highest importance for the faithful. From an authentically Catholic standpoint the ancient architectural feature should return for the salvation of souls.

Notes:

1. Father Regis Scanlon, O.F.M., Cap., "Eucharistic Piety: A Strong Recommendation" (Theotokos, the newsletter of the Auraria Catholic Club).
- 2 Or, more accurately the East. To quote Mgr. Klaus Gamber: "What in the early Church and during the Middle Ages determined the position of the altar was that it faced East. To quote St Augustine, "When we rise to pray, we turn East, where Heaven begins. And we do this not because God is there, as if He had moved away from other directions on earth..., but rather to help us remember to turn our mind towards a higher order, that is, to God". Klaus Gamber, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy*, Una Voce Press, California, 1993, p.80 in chapter, "Mass Versus Populum".
3. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), p. 80. (Hereafter cited as *The Spirit of the Liturgy*).
4. Internal Communication of The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, March 23, 1970.
5. *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. p. 185.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
9. *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, 1967.
10. Pastoral Letter on Reverence for the Eucharist, December 4, 1988.

Only One Way to Receive Holy Communion

By John Paul Wohlscheid

The following is what the early Church Fathers thought concerning receiving Holy Communion in the Hand.

Pope St. Leo the Great (440-461), already in the fifth century, is an early witness of the traditional practice. In his comments on the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John, he speaks of Communion in the mouth as the current usage: "One receives in the mouth what one believes by faith." (*Serm.*91.3) Furthermore, in the ninth century the *Roman Ordo* clearly shows that Communion on the tongue was the manner of reception.

Pope St. Sixtus I (115-125): "it is prohibited for the faithful to even touch the sacred vessels, or receive in the hand";

Origen (185-232 A.D.): "You who are wont to assist at the divine Mysteries, know how, when you receive the body of the Lord, you take reverent care, lest any particle of it should fall to the ground and a portion of the consecrated gift (*consecrati muneris*) escape you. You consider it a crime, and rightly so, if any particle thereof fell down through negligence." (*13th Homily on Exodus*);

St. Basil the Great (330-379), one of the four great Eastern Fathers, considered Communion in the hand so irregular that he did not hesitate to consider it a grave fault (*Letter* 93);

The Council held at Saragozza (380), it was decided to punish with *excommunication* anyone who dared to continue the practice of Communion in the hand;

The local council at Rouen, France (650) stated, "Do not put the Eucharist in the hands of any layman or laywomen but only in their mouths";

The Council of Constantinople (692) which was known as *in trullo* (not one of the ecumenical councils held there) prohibited the faithful from giving Communion to themselves. It decreed an *excommunication* of one week's duration for those who would do so in the presence of a bishop, priest or deacon;

Council of Trent: "To omit nothing doctrinal on so important a subject, we now come to speak of the minister of the Sacrament, a point, however, on which scarcely anyone is ignorant. The pastor then will teach that *to priests alone* has been given power to consecrate *and administer* the Holy Eucharist. That the *unvarying practice of the Church* has also been, that the faithful receive the Sacrament from the hand of the priest, and that the priest communicate himself, has been explained by the Council of Trent; and the same holy Council has shown that this practice is always to be scrupulously adhered to, stamped, as it is, with the authoritative impress of Apostolic tradition, and sanctioned by the illustrious example of our Lord himself, who, with His own hands, consecrated and gave to His disciples, His most sacred body. To consult as much as possible, for the dignity of this so August a Sacrament, not only is its administration confided exclusively to the priestly order; but the Church has also, by an express law, prohibited any but those who are consecrated to religion, unless in case of necessity, to touch the sacred vessels, the linen or other immediate necessities for consecration. Priest and people may hence learn, what piety and holiness they should possess who consecrate, administer, or receive the Holy of Holies." (*Council of Trent, Session 13, Chapter 8*)

Here are quote from more recent leaders in the Church on the same subject.

Saint Pope John Paul II, responding to a reporter from *Stimme des Glaubens* magazine, during his visit to Fulda (Germany) in November 1980. “There is an apostolic letter on the existence of a special valid permission for this [Communion in the hand]. But I tell you that I am not in favor of this practice, nor do I recommend it.”

Pope Paul VI in his instruction *Memoriale Domini* (May 29, 1969): Holy Communion received on the tongue “signifies the reverence of the faithful for the Eucharist ... provides that Holy Communion will be distributed with due reverence ... is more conducive to faith, reverence and humility.... It [Communion in the hand] carries certain dangers with it which may arise from the new manner of administering Holy Communion: the danger of a loss of reverence for the August sacrament of the altar, of profanation, of adulterating the true doctrine.”

Mother Teresa of Calcutta, when was asked by Fr. Rutler, “What do you think is the worst problem in the world today?” without pausing a second she said: “Wherever I go in the whole world, the thing that makes me the saddest is watching people receive Communion in the hand.” She stated that to her knowledge, all of her sisters receive Communion only on the tongue.

Fr. Hardon, S.J., November 1st, 1997 Call to Holiness Conference in Detroit, Michigan, panel discussion. “Behind Communion in the hand—I wish to repeat and make as plain as I can—is a weakening, a conscious, deliberate weakening of faith in the Real Presence.... Whatever you can do to stop Communion in the hand will be blessed by God.”

And The Pope Says:

From the Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of The Supreme Pontiff

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 favor 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.

Altar Rails Are Returning to Use

By Joseph Pronechen

Architects, pastors and parishioners find it enhances reverence in church.

In Tiverton, R.I., when some parishioners suggested returning altar rails to the sanctuary of Holy Ghost Catholic Church, Father Jay Finelli gladly accepted, little knowing shortly thereafter the Pope's 2007 *motu proprio* letter *Summorum Pontificum* would follow and he would be interested in learning how to celebrate the extraordinary form of the Mass.

In Norwalk, Conn., when a groundswell of parishioner support encouraged pastor Father Greg Markey to restore St. Mary Church, the second-oldest parish in the diocese, to its original 19th-century neo-gothic magnificence, he made sure altar rails were again part of the sanctuary.

Altar rails are present in several new churches architect Duncan Stroik has designed. Among them, the Thomas Aquinas College Chapel in Santa Paula, Calif., the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse, Wis., and three others on the drawing boards.

Altar (Communion) rails are returning for all the right reasons. Said Father Markey: “First, the Holy Father is requiring holy Communion from him be received on the knees. Second, it’s part of our tradition as Catholics for centuries to receive Holy Communion on the knees. Third, it’s a beautiful form of devotion to our blessed Lord.”

James Hitchcock, professor and author of *Recovery of the Sacred* (Ignatius Press, 1995), thinks the rail resurgence is a good idea. The main reason is reverence, he said. “Kneeling’s purpose is to facilitate adoration,” he explained.

When Stroik proposed altar rails for the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, “Cardinal [Raymond] Burke liked the idea and thought that was something that would give added reverence to the Eucharist and sanctuary.”

In Eastern Orthodox churches, there is an iconostasis — a wall of icons and religious paintings that separate the nave from the sanctuary — rather than altar rail separating the sanctuary. While the altar rail is usually about two feet high, the iconostasis veils most of the sanctuary. “The altar rail is nothing compared to that,” he says, “and these are our Eastern brethren. We can benefit and learn something.”

Altar Rail History. They may be returning, but were altar rails supposed to be taken out of sanctuaries?

“There is nothing in Vatican II or post-conciliar documents which mandate their removal,” said Denis McNamara, author of *Catholic Church Architecture and the Spirit of the Liturgy* (Hillenbrand Books, 2009) and assistant director and professor at the Liturgical Institute of the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Ill.

Cardinal Francis Arinze strongly affirmed this point during a 2008 video session while he was still prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments: **“The Church from Rome never said to remove the altar rails.”** So what happened? “Unfortunately, democratic ideas came into the situation after Vatican II,” Hitchcock said.

Stroik points some out of these ideas: a general iconoclasm that rejected the past, a desire to make churches into gathering spaces more like Protestant meeting houses, and the argument that kneeling is a sign of submission, which is seen as disrespectful to the modern person — we didn’t kneel before kings and queens, so it was more “democratic” not to kneel.

Added McNamara: “Some people called them ‘fences’ which set up division between Priest and people.” “Of course,” he said, “theologically there is a significant meaning in the distinction between

nave and sanctuary. Just as there was confusion over the roles of ordained and laity at the time, so there was confusion about the architectural manifestation of those roles.”

Altar rails give “a clear designation as to what is the sanctuary,” Father Markey said. “The word ‘sanctuary’ comes from the word ‘holy,’ which means ‘set apart.’ The sanctuary is set apart from the rest of the church because it reinforces our understanding of what holiness is. The sanctuary is symbolically the head of the church and represents Christ as the head.”

McNamara traces church architecture roots to the Temple of Solomon: The large room corresponded to the church nave; the Holy of Holies, an image of heaven, corresponded to today’s sanctuary. They were separated visually by the great veil, which was torn when Christ died.

“[The altar rail] is still a marker of the place where heaven and earth meet, indicating that they are not yet completely united,” McNamara explained.

“But, at the same time, the rail is low, very permeable, and has a gate, so it does not prevent us from participating in heaven. So we could say there is a theology of the rail, one which sees it as more than a fence, but as a marker where heaven and earth meet, where the Priest, acting in persona Christi, reaches across from heaven to earth to give the Eucharist as the gift of divine life.”

Reverence at Mass: Altar rails have an important role for the extraordinary form of the Mass where, Father Finelli noted, reception of Communion has to be on the tongue. He celebrates the extraordinary form weekly in Advent and Lent and monthly the rest of the year.

Communicants kneel at the oak railing that was crafted by a parishioner who is a professional woodworker. The rail was gilded by parishioners. They crafted a similar altar rail for the Adoration Chapel. The presence of the rails has made an impression on the 2,000-family parish. “So many people kept requesting to use the altar rail,” he recalled, “I decided at the beginning of Lent that people receive at the altar rail.” (The requirement is for all weekday and special feast Masses in the ordinary form too.)

Given the option to kneel or stand, many choose to kneel to receive Communion. While they can receive on the tongue or in the hand, more people are choosing to receive on the tongue.

As Father Finelli put it, “It’s a very strong sign for the love and respect for the Real Presence because it’s really Jesus we’re receiving.”

Father Finelli clarifies that for Latin Catholics to receive the Eucharist while standing and in the hand is an indult, a special permission granted by the Holy See, because the ordinary way by Church law is still to receive while kneeling and on the tongue.

While the extraordinary form is celebrated three times weekly at St. Mary’s in Connecticut, Father Markey says the Communion rails are used for all ordinary form Masses as well. In his 1,000-family parish, parishioners also have the option at the ordinary form to kneel or stand.

This is approved by Rome. He notes the Vatican directive: “In 2003 the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments says in the ordinary form ‘communicants who chose to kneel are not to be denied Holy Communion ... nor accused of disobedience ...’”

Stroik designed St. Mary's renovated sanctuary incorporating hand-carved marble neo-gothic altar rails with brass gates that Father Markey purchased from a church that was closing in Pennsylvania. It beautifully matches the original white marble fixed altar and new marble free-standing altar, which brings another dimension to liturgical symbolism.

"When we gather at the altar rails, we symbolically gather at the altar," Stroik said. Making both altar and rails from the same materials — in this case marble — makes the connection even clearer.

Liturgical architecture expert McNamara agrees. He has found that some old church architecture books consider the rail the "people's altar" and thus was made with the same marble as that of the altar. To add to the symbolic connection, some churches cover the rails during Communion with linens similar to those on the altar.

Drawn to Prayer: There are yet more reasons for incorporating altar rails. In a Cathedral, Basilica or historic Church that receive numerous visitors, and where altar rails have been removed, many visitors don't know how sacred the altar is and wander around the sanctuary. The church has to put up ropes and signs like in a museum to do what altar rails were supposed to do: "create a real threshold so people can tell it's a special place, a holy place set apart."

Stroik says the altar rail is "an invitation for people to come close to the sanctuary, kneel and pray before the tabernacle, a statue of Our Lady or images of saints."

Father Markey said that returning the rails has been a great success.

Longtime parishioners who have attended St. Mary's for 50 years or more regretted the magnificent altar rail being torn out in the 1960s. They now tell him, "Thank God you brought it back, Father."

He also notices worship is enhanced for adults as well as children: "Little children like to kneel and pray there while their mom and dad receive Holy Communion," said Father Markey. "There's almost universal embracing. It's one of the most popular decisions I've made as pastor."

Discerning Whether To Receive Communion In The Tongue vs. In The Mouth

By John Michael, St. Bellarmine Categories Catholic News

By Their Fruits When discerning rather to receive Holy Communion in the tongue or in the hand it's always best to discern the Fruits of the Holy Spirit. It is simpler than one would imagine especially when discerning something with a 40+ year track record.

First of all it is not a sacrilege to receive Communion in the Hand, (since the bishops are allowing it) but it doesn't mean that both methods are equal.

To help your discernment, you can choose these simple questions:

"You shall know them by their fruits." *Matthew 7:16.*

Let's compare Today's average Catholic with Pre-Vatican II average Catholic. (If you are not old enough to remember, ask your parents if they still go to Mass or your Grand parents.

1. Are people *now* more, or less reverent? How do they behave Before, During and After Mass?
2. Which generation had a stronger prayer life?
3. Is the Eucharist the Source and Summit of the Community life?
4. Who displayed more of a posture of reverence? i.e. kneeling, genuflecting properly, hands folded during prayer, vs. beach attire, etc... etc...
5. Who had the higher percentage of believers in the Real Presence of the Holy Eucharist?
6. Who had the higher percentage of believers attending Mass every Sunday?
7. How many of our children who receive First Holy Communion come to Mass the following Sunday?
8. How many of our teenagers who receive Confirmation come to Mass the following Sunday?
9. When did we loose most Priests and Nuns?
10. How casual is our relationship with our Creator?

Do you get the picture? Pretty simple stuff when you look at it.

There is a decision here to be made. Are you willing to take the next step?

Receiving Holy Communion on The Hand vs. Receiving Holy Communion on The Tongue.

You Make the Call. -- But do it in Prayer.

God Bless.