



Faith in Five – Adults

Sacrament of Holy Communion / Feast of Corpus Christi

1. **What is the sacrament of Holy Communion?** It is the sacrament where we are invited into a personal encounter and union with Jesus, recalling Christ giving us His body and blood at the Last Supper. In Holy Communion, we are in communion with the Church. The Church is strengthened through this union. We become one with Christ and His Church through the reception of the Holy Eucharist.

The Holy Eucharist is the actual consecrated Host - Jesus Christ, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. The word Eucharist means Thanksgiving in Greek. The Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life” (CCC,1324). As Catholics it is the core of our belief and reality, that God Incarnate - Jesus- is truly and substantially present in the forms of bread and wine. The principal fruit of receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion is an intimate union with Jesus Christ (CCC, 1391).

The Christian faithful are to hold the Most Holy Eucharist in highest honor, taking an active part in the celebration of the most august (i.e., noble) sacrifice, receiving this sacrament most devoutly and frequently, and worshiping it with the highest adoration (Canon 898).

2. **How are bread and wine changed into Jesus Christ?** This consecrated change is called **transubstantiation**, where the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of the priest *in persona Christi* (in the person of Christ). The bread and wine used in communion become the glorified Christ who rose from the dead. To the catholic believer, the Eucharist is not a symbol, but truly the Body and Blood of Christ. Catholics believe this Truth, whether the recipient believes it or not.

At the Last Supper, Jesus did not say of the bread, “This is a symbol of my body” nor of the wine, “This is a symbol of my blood”. In John 6:30-65, Jesus repeatedly uses these words: eat my flesh. He did not speak in parables regarding this teaching. Jesus emphasizes to his disciples the importance of eating His flesh for eternal life. Jesus says “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53). This teaching upset many disciples that they grumbled, left and no longer went with Him (John 6:66). God is the God of I AM (Exodus 3:14). Jesus says I AM the Bread of Life (John 6:35). It is Jesus’ body; it is His blood as He gave to his disciples then and gives to us today.

Jesus offered only one great sacrifice of Himself for us all on the cross (Romans 6:10). Jesus is not being sacrificed over and over in the Eucharistic celebration for our sins. Rather, the priest *in persona Christi* re-lives the sacrifice and re-presents the total gift of Himself to the Father. We are in union with the living Christ sacramentally in the Eucharist to the Father. Jesus gave us specific commands as we remember Him in His Body and Blood. He tells his disciples to “Go make new disciples...and teach them all that I have taught you” (Matt. 19:14).

3. **Why is it so important to receive the Holy Eucharist?**

We will not have eternal life unless we eat His flesh and drink His blood. To take His Body and drink His blood is part of the new covenant (Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:14-20). We are nourished and strengthened by His heavenly food.

The Church encourages Catholics “to receive frequent Communion, even daily Communion if possible, and mandates reception of the Eucharist at least once a year during the Easter season” (Canon 920 §1). After being initiated into the Most Holy Eucharist, each of the faithful is obliged to receive holy communion at least once a year.

4. Who is able to receive Holy Communion? The administration of the Eucharist to children requires that they have sufficient knowledge and careful preparation. They should be able to understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity and receive the body of Christ with faith and devotion (Canon 913 §1). Prior to their first Holy Communion, children should complete the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Anyone older than age 8 who has fulfilled the Church’s requirement may receive their first Holy Communion. Not all Catholics can receive communion, only those in full communion with the church and those in the state of grace (free from mortal sin). If one is conscious of serious sin, he should receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before approaching Holy Communion.

St. Paul tells us that those who do not discern the Body of the Lord brings judgment on himself. We are warned to examine ourselves carefully before Holy Communion: “Whoever, therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and the blood of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:27-30). Those who do not believe in the real Body and Blood of Christ are asked not to partake of Holy Communion in the Catholic Church.

The Eucharist is the new covenant Christ spoke of (Matthew 26:28). Receiving the Holy Eucharist is accepting the reality of oneness in faith, life and worship. Members of churches not in union with these teachings are not admitted to communion in the Catholic church. This is a tradition even the Jews practiced. God provided Moses and Aaron this instruction: no foreigner, temporary resident, hired worker, or uncircumcised male may partake of the Passover. Aliens who wish to partake must have all males in his household circumcised (Exodus 12:43-49), since circumcision marks the covenant between God and Jewish males.

Those who have not made their first communion/adults not able to receive Holy communion can make a spiritual communion *, offer silent prayers for themselves and the world, or sing the communion song with the assembly. At Mass, these individuals may remain in their pew during Holy Communion. They may come forward in the communion line, crossing their arms over their chest in front of the minister to signify they cannot receive the Eucharist but are open to God’s grace. There are situations where non-Catholics may receive, in grave situations (Canon 844.4) or if they believe Catholic teaching on the Eucharist and cannot receive in their own church.

5. How should one prepare and receive Jesus? To prepare to receive the Lord, one must be in a state of grace. This preparation involves an examination of conscience and reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation for grave sin. There is a fast of at least one hour before receiving Communion (Canon 919). This fast includes all food and drink except for water and medicine, but it does not apply to the ill or elderly. Fasting can be done for longer than one hour and some may fast from the night before.

When one proceeds to receive Holy communion, the minister of the Eucharist will raise the Presence of Jesus and proclaim to the faithful receiving, “The Body of Christ”; the minister of the Cup says, “The Blood of Christ”, to which the communicant responds “Amen”. Depending on

one's culture, region, or diocese, the communicant may genuflect or even kneel to receive Communion. When standing, it is appropriate to make a sign of adoration before receiving the Holy Eucharist or Precious Blood. A bow of the head is an accepted gesture of reverence.

After saying "Amen" when receiving the Holy Eucharist on the tongue, the communicant should open the mouth wide and extend the tongue far enough so that the Sacred Host can be placed upon it without danger of falling. (This should be done as reverently as possible!)

If receiving in the hand, the hands should first be clean. When one is right-handed, the left hand should rest upon the right. The host will then be laid in the palm of the left hand and then taken by the right hand to the mouth. If one is left-handed this is reversed. It is not appropriate to reach out with the fingers and take the host from the person distributing.

Today the US Conference of Catholic Bishops makes it clear that the Holy Eucharist may be received in the hand or on the tongue, a decision that is to be made by the individual receiving Communion, not by the minister distributing it. There have been divisions over the proper way to receive (by tongue or in the hand). Let us be mindful not to judge others, bringing sin upon ourselves - or worse, to distract ourselves from receiving the gift of Jesus Christ our Lord!

After reception of the Holy Eucharist, the recipient returns to the pew in reverent adoration and praise of our Lord. This is a time for quiet meditation and prayers of thanksgiving which is most appropriate after receiving Jesus!

6. * **How to make a spiritual communion** This is a prayer expressing our desire to be close to Jesus Christ and receive God's grace. A spiritual communion can be done anytime, anywhere; in fact, it can be done several times during the day! To make a spiritual communion, one should prepare by examining themselves just as they would prepare for sacramental communion. St. Alphonsus Liguori outlines three simple steps, combined into one prayer: 1) make an act of faith acknowledging the real Presence of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament, 2) express sorrow for sins and a desire to be close to Christ, 3) make an act of thanksgiving just as if you received Jesus sacramentally. Some faithful make their prayer towards the direction of the Blessed Sacrament nearest them, wherever they may be.

[An Act of Spiritual Communion Prayer](#)



7. **The Feast of Corpus Christi** is also known as the **Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ**. The feast celebrates the real Presence of Jesus Christ, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Eucharist. It is usually celebrated the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. In 2022, the Solemnity of Corpus Christi is on June 16, but it is transferred to Sunday, June 19 in some dioceses. There may be a procession of the Blessed Sacrament, where the consecrated Host is displayed in the monstrance.

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