

HOW TO RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION

There are two options for receiving the Body of Christ: in the hand or on the tongue (*Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion*, 41). Reception in the hand is the most ancient option, though both are fully approved by the Church. One's personal choice should be honored, but language suggesting a superior way is to be avoided. Any source that declares one or the other practice is invalid or inappropriate is contradicting the practice of the Universal Church.

Whether an individual chooses to receive Holy Communion in the hand or on the tongue, there are two practices that remain the same:

- **Fast** — at least a one hour fast is to be observed before receiving Holy Communion. This does *not* include fasting from water or medication. An exception is made for the elderly, sick, and those who care for them. (Canon 919 §1, §3)
- **Bow** — the communicant bows his or her head before the Sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives the Body of the Lord from the minister. When Holy Communion is received under both kinds, the sign of reverence is also made before receiving the Precious Blood (GIRM 160).

RECEPTION IN THE HAND

- “If Communion is received in the hand, the hands should first of all be clean. If 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” (USCCB, *The Reception of Holy Communion*). St. Cyril of Jerusalem states, “When you approach, take care not to do so with your hand stretched out and your fingers open or apart, but rather place your left hand as a throne beneath your right, as befits one who is about to receive the King. Then receive him, taking care that nothing is lost.”

RECEPTION 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. Please note that it is important to extend the tongue, not just open the mouth. Do not close the mouth or move the head while the minister is placing Communion on the tongue.

