

RECEIVING THE EUCHARIST

What We Believe:

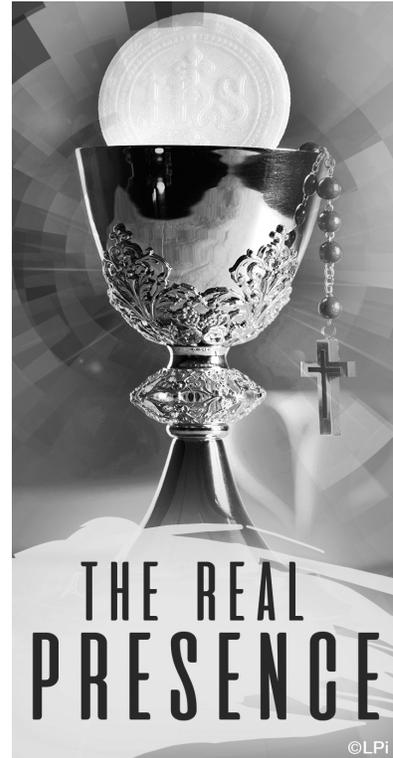
A *USA Today* survey of Catholics found that 40% reported that a person could be a good Catholic without believing the bread and wine really become the body and blood of Christ during Mass—a core doctrine of Catholicism.¹ This is counter to one of the basic beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church. We are told in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*²: “At the heart of the Eucharistic celebration are the bread and wine that, by the words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become Christ's Body and Blood.” (Catechism ¶1333)

Also from our *Catechism* (see ¶1412-1416):

- “The essential signs of the Eucharistic sacrament are wheat bread and grape wine, on which the blessing of the Holy Spirit is invoked and the priest pronounces the words of consecration spoken by Jesus during the Last Supper: ‘This is my body which will be given up for you.... This is the cup of my blood’....
- By the consecration the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is brought about. Under the consecrated species of bread and wine Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1640; 1651).
- As sacrifice, the Eucharist is also offered in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead and to obtain spiritual or temporal benefits from God. Anyone who desires to receive Christ in Eucharistic communion must be in the state of grace. Anyone aware of having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received absolution in the sacrament of penance.
- Communion with the Body and Blood of Christ increases the communicant’s union with the Lord, forgives his venial sins, and preserves him from grave sins. Since receiving this sacrament strengthens the bonds of charity between the communicant and Christ, it also reinforces the unity of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ.”

What We Do:

When you go up to either a priest or an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, they will hold the Host before you and say “The Body of Christ.” You should bow slightly in reverence of Christ’s body being before you and say “Amen.” By saying “Amen” you are acknowledging that you agree that this is indeed Christ’s body that you are receiving in forgiveness of your sins.



¹ Cathy Lynn Grossman, “Survey: Religious Identity Slips Among U.S. Catholics,” *USA Today*, <http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/story/2011-10-24/catholic-religious-identity-survey/50891152/1?csp=34news>, accessed 10/24/11.

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P44.HTM accessed 10/25/11.

You may choose to receive the host either on your tongue or in your hand. If you choose the latter you should be sure to handle it with reverence and that no crumb goes unconsumed. St. Cyril outlined the proper method for receiving communion this way:

“When you approach (Communion) do not come with your hands outstretched or with your fingers open, but make your left hand a throne for the right one, which is to receive the King. With your hand hollowed receive the body of Christ and answer Amen. After having, with every precaution, sanctified your eyes by contact with the holy body, consume it, making sure that not a particle is wasted, for that would be like losing one of your own limbs. . . . After receiving the body of Christ, approach the chalice of his Blood. Do not stretch out your hands, but bow in an attitude of adoration and reverence, and say Amen.”³

If you choose to also receive the Blessed Blood of Christ, the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion will hold the chalice before you and say “The Blood of Christ.” Again you should bow in reverence and say “Amen.” Be sure you have the chalice secure in your hands before you drink and also be sure that chalice is securely returned to the minister’s hands. Remember, this is the Blood of Christ and should be handled with all reverence.

If you are feeling ill, do not receive from the common chalice out of consideration for the members of the congregation who will receive after you. Receiving just the Body of Christ is sufficient. Whatever you do, intinction (dipping a host into the sacred blood) is not allowed. Only the priest may do this.

Jesus said: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; . . . he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and . . . abides in me, and I in him.” (Jn. 6:51, 54, 56).

³ *Mystagogic Catechesis* as quoted in *An Important Office of Immense Love: A Handbook for Eucharistic Ministers*, Joseph M. Champlin, (New York: Paulist Press 1980) page 7.