

Fr Andrew Cordonnier Holy Communion Posture Letter:

There have been many questions about how the posture that we should take to receive Holy Communion during this time. I would like to address this issue as best as I can. This is a challenging time for all of us. At all times we are called to follow the norms and guidelines set by our Holy Mother the Church. There are several guidelines for us to consider, and I have reproduced them below.

The Congregation of Divine Worship, which is the office of the church that makes rulings on matters of worship released the document *Redemptionis Sacramentum* in 2004 to clarify certain points that pertain to the reception of Holy Communion and practices that should be followed:

“Although each of the faithful always has the right to receive Holy Communion on the tongue, at his choice, if any communicant should wish to receive the Sacrament in the hand, in areas where the Bishops’ Conference with the *recognitio* of the Apostolic See has given permission, the sacred host is to be administered to him or her. However, special care should be taken to ensure that the host is consumed by the communicant in the presence of the minister, so that no one goes away carrying the Eucharistic species in his hand. If there is a risk of profanation, then Holy Communion should not be given in the hand to the faithful.” -*Redemptionis Sacramentum* paragraph 92 (25 March 2004)

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* governs the churches of the United States, and is promulgated by the Bishops of the United States:

“The norm for reception of Holy Communion in the dioceses of the United States is standing. Communicants should not be denied Holy Communion because they kneel. Rather, such instances should be addressed pastorally, by providing the faithful with proper catechesis on the reasons for this norm.

When receiving Holy Communion, 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. The consecrated host may be received either on the tongue or in the hand, at the discretion of each communicant. When Holy Communion is received under both kinds, the sign of reverence is also made before receiving the Precious Blood.” -GIRM no.160 (November 27, 2011)

In 2009, during the outbreak of H1N1, a clarification of whether Holy Communion should be restricted to only receiving in the hand was sent out by a representative of the Congregation of Divine Worship stating:

No Holy Communion from the chalice by the faithful; concelebrating priests should Communicate by intinction. Holy Communion on the tongue is strongly discouraged.”
-*Guidelines for the Resumption of Public Worship* (May 8, 2020)

We might ask ourselves how to interpret all these documents. According to the Church’s highest liturgical authority, all of Christ’s faithful have the right to receive Holy Communion on the tongue. Therefore, neither I nor Fr. John can deny Holy Communion to someone who makes the choice to receive the Holy Eucharist on the tongue. However, our local bishop, Archbishop Schnurr has asked all his faithful to choose not to receive the Most Holy Eucharist on the tongue at this time. We are called to be obedient to our Bishop. While Archbishop Schnurr cannot forbid people from receiving Holy Communion on the tongue according to the Congregation of Divine Worship, he has asked us to do so as our local ordinary. It is, however, the right of the faithful to receive the Most Holy Eucharist on the tongue if they choose.

It is clear from these instructions that the faithful can choose the posture that they prefer to receive the Most Holy Eucharist. Fr. John and I will take the utmost care in distributing Holy Communion to our faithful no matter which posture they choose. Remember that we are always called to charity towards our neighbor, especially in times of crisis.

Whether reception of Holy Communion on the tongue or in the hand is more hygienic is a matter of science that is still being debated. There are several scholarly articles that argue for one over the other. No matter which posture we choose to receive the Holy Eucharist with, we are always called to do so with the utmost reverence and care. This is a great opportunity to slow down and receive Holy Communion more intentionally and deliberately. Hopefully, this helps to clarify this important issue. Thanks for all your feedback.

Stay holy and healthy!