

## **The Reception of Holy Communion – “AMEN” = *The one-word profession of faith, hope, & love!***

The distribution and reception of Holy Communion during the Mass is certainly one of the most important moments for everyone. Jesus is fully present under the form of bread (and wine if it is distributed), which has now become the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus for our sake. As someone approaches either the priest, deacon, or extraordinary minister of holy communion, the Catholic Church does have a specific rubric or guide for how to receive Jesus in this most sacred manner.

- First, as each person approaches in line to receive, they are asked to bow during this approach and right before they get to the minister who is distributing holy communion to them (*a good time might be as the person in front of you is receiving*).
  - o This bow is simply encouraged to be a bowing of the head, which is distinguished between a bowing at the waist (*more a solemn bow in that sense*).<sup>\*\*\*</sup> (*see below*)
  - o People are also allowed to kneel as well to receive if they would like!
- Second, they are asked to present their hands in the form of a throne, which traditionally has meant a non-dominant hand resting on top of a dominant hand as carefully and steadily as possible.
  - o If the person chooses to receive on the tongue, which is certainly a beautiful and devotional way of receiving holy communion, then they should keep their hands down and open their mouth with their tongue down and out a bit to help the person distributing to do this as prayerfully and respectfully as possible.
- Third, when the minister says the words “The Body of Christ,” the person about to receive is supposed to respond clearly with the word “Amen.”<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> (*see below for explanation*)
- Finally, if the person is receiving in the hand, then they should receive the host immediately and return to their pew to pray and/or sing the hymn being sung at this time (*you are not supposed to delay in receiving for private prayers while the host is in your hand*).
  - o By the way, doing the sign of the cross after receiving has become a very common practice. This is not in the rubric/guide provided by the church, but if it helps you to pray, this is certainly fine to do this right after receiving if you'd like.

All of these guidelines/rubrics for receiving holy communion are truly meant to help us approach this with the proper disposition of heart. There are definitely practical benefits to having a certain uniformity of practice/ritual when Catholics are receiving the Eucharist (for example, it just helps everyone be on the same page, which can help relax people knowing what to expect). However, the most important thing is the disposition of our hearts as we approach Jesus in Holy Communion. My favorite way to encourage this, is to think about the word “Amen.” Amen is a word that simply means “so be it” or “I believe,” and we say this right before receiving Holy Communion. We are technically saying Amen in at least two ways. First, we are saying it intellectually to say, I agree with what the Catholic Church teaches on the Eucharist and on all doctrines of the faith. On the other hand, we are also saying it about inviting a real Person into our bodies and souls in this moment! I'll reflect more on this next week, but as we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, we receive God become man into our souls; in a sense, He receives us into His very life as well. May we approach holy communion with great reverence, faith, hope, and love, and may we say “Amen” from our hearts at every Mass to partake of Jesus' very life given to us.