

# Holy Communion

## FOR PARISHIONERS:

**Our program works to prepare our 2nd grade students for the Sacrament of Holy Communion by teaching them through words, experiences, and actions what it is to be a disciple in community.**

**Students are to participate in Religious Education through our PSR program or by attending our school.**

**We also offer RCIA for adults seeking to become a Catholic or continue their preparation to become a Catholic.**

**Holy Communion is celebrated in the Spring and takes place at our church.**

**Please contact the parish office @ 573-483-2555 to talk with our Priest.**

Below is some information about the Sacrament of Confirmation. To learn more about this special sacrament, please read.

## About the sacrament

The Sacrament of Holy Communion is the third of the Sacraments of Initiation. Even though we are required to receive Communion at least once per year (our Easter Duty), and the Church urges us to receive Communion frequently (even daily, if possible), it is called a sacrament of initiation because, like Baptism and Confirmation, it brings us into the fullness of our life in Christ.

In Holy Communion, we are eating the True Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, without which "you shall not have life in you" (John 6:53).

## Who Can Receive Catholic Communion?

Normally, only Catholics in a state of grace can receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion. (See the next section for more details on what it means to be in a state of grace.) Under certain circumstances, however, other Christians whose understanding of the Eucharist (and the Catholic sacraments generally) is the same as that of the Catholic Church can receive Communion, even though they are not in full communion with the Catholic Church.

In their Guidelines for the Reception of Communion, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops notes that "Eucharistic sharing in exceptional circumstances by other Christians requires permission according to the directives of the diocesan bishop and the provisions of canon law." In those circumstances,

Members of the Orthodox Churches, the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Polish National Catholic Church are urged to respect the discipline of their own Churches. According to Roman Catholic discipline, the Code of Canon Law does not object to the reception of Communion by Christians of these Churches.

Under no circumstances are non-Christians allowed to receive Communion, but Christians beyond those mentioned above (*e.g.*, Protestants) can, under canon law (Canon 844, Section 4), receive Communion in very rare circumstances:

If the danger of death is present or other grave necessity, in the judgment of the diocesan bishop or the conference of bishops, Catholic ministers may licitly administer these sacraments to other Christians who do not have full Communion with the Catholic Church, who cannot approach a minister of their own community and on their own ask for it, provided they manifest Catholic faith in these sacraments and are properly disposed.

## Preparing for the Sacrament of Holy Communion

Because of the intimate connection of the Sacrament of Holy Communion to our life in Christ, Catholics who wish to receive Communion must be in a state of grace—that is, free of any grave or mortal sin—before receiving it, as St. Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29. Otherwise, as he warns, we receive the sacrament unworthily, and we "eateth and drinketh damnation" to ourselves.

If we are aware of having committed a mortal sin, we must participate in the Sacrament of Confession first. The Church sees the two sacraments as connected, and urges us, when we can, to join frequent Confession with frequent Communion.

In order to receive Communion, we must also abstain from food or drink (except for water and medicine) for one hour beforehand. (For more details on the Communion fast, see What Are the Rules for Fasting Before Communion?)

## Making a Spiritual Communion

If we cannot receive Holy Communion physically, either because we cannot make it to Mass or because we need to go to Confession first, we can pray an Act of Spiritual Communion, in which we express our desire to be united with Christ and ask Him to come into our soul. A spiritual communion is not sacramental but prayed devoutly, it can be a source of grace that can strengthen us until we can receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion once again.

# The Effects of the Sacrament of Holy Communion

Receiving Holy Communion worthily brings us graces that affect us both spiritually and physically.

Spiritually, our souls become more united to Christ, both through the graces we receive and through the change in our actions that those graces effect. Frequent Communion increases our love for God and for our neighbor, which expresses itself in action, which makes us more like Christ.

Physically, frequent Communion relieves us of our passions. Priests and other spiritual directors who counsel those who are struggling with passions, especially sexual sins, often urge frequent reception not only of the Sacrament of Confession but of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. By receiving Christ's Body and Blood, our own bodies are sanctified, and we grow in our likeness to Christ. In fact, as Fr. John Hardon points out in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, the Church teaches that "A final effect of Communion is to remove the personal guilt of venial sins, and the temporal punishment [earthly and purgatorial] due to forgiven sins, whether venial or mortal."