

# *It's The Lord*

## **Communion in the Hand**

Since 1969, the Holy See has approved the practice of in-hand reception of the Eucharist in regions and countries where it had the approval of the appropriate episcopal conferences. The first grant of approval was to Belgium in May 1969. Approval was granted the United States in June 1977.

The vote for in-hand reception of Communion came up at annual national meetings of the United States Bishops two different times, two different years and was defeated each time. Then it came up a third time at the bishops' meeting and there were still not enough votes among those present to pass it. So it was deferred this third time – so that votes on the subject could be collected from absentee bishops; bishops not present at that third attempt. It then narrowly passed.

Shortly before the third meeting Cardinal John J. Carberry, Archbishop of St. Louis was a guest in my rectory in Redfield, SD for several days. He expressed grave concern about Communion in hand that was soon coming up again for a vote at the national bishops' meeting. He wanted me to give him reasons he could present to the bishops of why they should not approve of Communion in the hand. Bishops were being put under greater pressure, from disobedience in many parishes, with an attitude it seemed, “If we do it, they'll have to approve of it.”

Belgium was the first country to have their bishops approve of it. It is interesting that Belgium now has only 5% of its Catholics participating regularly in Sunday Mass. The United States that used to have 70% plus of its Catholics at Mass every Sunday, now has 25% to 30% - depending of which survey you go by, not to mention the millions of former “Catholics” who have alienated themselves from the Church and the Eucharist which they lost faith in. In many of our Catholic schools, both in lower levels as well as higher levels, the education offered is often still simply on the secular level, with little or no mention of the Sacraments; no Catholic history or apologetics are taught. Books offered by state schools are often not faithful to Catholicism or true history. Graduates of such schools often remain in ignorance of the true faith and morals of the Church. Their parents often are not paying attention to see if their children are being taught the basics of the Catholic faith and morals. Thus, formation is sadly lacking in the home where the primary duty to teach and form lies. Let me tell you this: If you are a parent sending your children to “Catholic” grade or high schools, or “Catholic” colleges, in most cases your children are not being taught the Catholic faith. Now we know that there are Catholic schools that are faithful to Church teachings, however even if your children are in a good Catholic school, it is still the parents' duty, to teach and form them in the faith.

## **Actions Speak Louder than Words**

Now add to the above situation, the Eucharist, the source and center of our divine liturgy or worship at Mass, is being handled flippantly by all kinds of people. You are looking at millions of people who have never been taught or formed in the reality of the True Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and His Church. *“Church of the Eucharist”* is the title of the final encyclical by Pope John Paul II.

### **There were those who cautioned us.**

Blessed Mother Teresa was absolutely right in seeing the connection between a crisis of faith of many Catholics and Communion in the hand. **What is being said about one’s faith and love for the Real Presence of the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and the perpetuating, in the Sacrifice of the Mass, of Christ’s infinite Sacrifice of the Cross which redeemed us?** — It is not being professed if the Sacred Host is handled and looked upon as an ordinary little piece of bread quickly disposed of??? Think about that deeply. Do you truly believe? Truly? We must always remember that you cannot be a true Catholic without faith in the Eucharist.

To handle or receive the Sacred Host, which is the living Real Presence of the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ without proper reverence and adoration is not only disrespectful, it is the serious sin of sacrilege. One cannot take lightly or handle carelessly the greatest Gift God has given us. Thus, Mother Teresa openly expressed great sorrow when she witnessed people receiving Holy Communion in the hand. Seeing the irreverence and abuses creeping into the divine liturgy, and the various other problems that have been growing in the Church, attributed it all to Communion in the hand and the consequential weakening and loss of true faith. She is now Blessed Mother Teresa, an honor that adds credibility to her warnings.

### **Why does Pope Benedict XVI not give Holy Communion in the hand?**

Those attending Papal Masses who receive Holy Communion from Pope Benedict XVI must both kneel and receive the Sacred Host on the tongue. *Why?*

Why are the hands of the priest consecrated at his ordination when he receives the Sacrament of Holy Orders? The priest will handle the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Also, multiple graces and blessings will pass through his hands: the Sacraments which he will handle and dispense, the infinite act of the Consecration at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass he will celebrate which perpetuates the Sacrifice of the Cross— all involve the use of his consecrated hands. I remember well during many years of preparation before ordination, when I was then, as I am now, in awe that my hands would be consecrated by the Bishop for these purposes. My awe was that the Church of the Eucharist would make me a **Custodian of the**

**Eucharist**, with the duty of handling with my own hands, and a sense of great reverence and adoration in my soul, the Body of Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity made man. It would be my duty to see that no irreverence was directed to the Most Blessed Sacrament. It is “Most Blessed” because it is the greatest Sacrament with a constant abiding presence of the Son of God incarnate. Jesus said that the Eucharist is necessary if we are to have His life in us. Yes, He did. Read the entire chapter of John 6 prayerfully and you will come to that faith with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Eucharist, Priesthood, Church - go together. All are essential in the life of Christ’s own Mystical Body which He founded and established as the High Priest. Without all three being present, as Jesus established His Church, there is no full expression and life of the one true Church. Without the Eucharist, one does not have the means of rendering God the Father infinite worship in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. If the hands of the Catholic priest are consecrated for the reasons we have been speaking of, and they are, how is it that most everyone today can put out their hands to touch and handle the Eucharist, the Sacrament most holy and divine, containing the infinite Person of God made man? Think again before you extend your hands for the Eucharist. Why does the priest at the altar wash his hands at the beginning of the Eucharistic prayer? What does it symbolize? But the Eucharist is not a mere symbol; it is a divine reality of the REAL PRESENCE.

With the Eucharist being handled often flippantly by many today—it has contributed greatly to a lessening and loss of faith. It is what Blessed Mother Teresa had in mind when she spoke of her sadness and the abuses resulting from Communion in the hand. It is doubtlessly what Pope Benedict XVI has in mind today when he requires kneeling and reception on the tongue to receive from him the Eucharist, the Body of the Lord.

## **Church of the Eucharist**

The Catholic Church is the Church of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the center and life of the Church. Holy Orders confers on a man the grace and spiritual power to sanctify others, to forgive sin, (Jn 20:21-23) to effect the Eucharist. Only an ordained priest can consecrate bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. When the twofold consecration takes place, it perpetuates what Jesus did at the Last Supper, the first Mass, and which He offered physically on the Cross on the first Good Friday. The same Sacrifice is offered at every Mass. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all speak of the Last Supper and Jesus passing on to the Apostles the power that He had to change bread and wine into His Body and Blood, “Do this in memory of me.” John 6 speaks of the Eucharist in greater detail explaining that it is really Jesus Christ, the “living bread come down from heaven” whom we receive in the Eucharist.

When we receive Our Lord into our heart and soul at the time of Holy Communion, a prayerful and adoring thanksgiving should be made. Jesus is present, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity within us for as long as it takes the body to digest entirely the species of bread and/or wine

that has been consecrated into our Lord. Remember, it is not bread or wine after the consecrations, only the species, appearances, and taste. Metabolisms vary, but the minimum is fifteen minutes, and for some it is even longer that the REAL PRESENCE of Jesus Christ is within them. During all that time, Jesus Christ is pouring ever more sanctifying grace into our souls, making possible more intensive happiness before the vision of God in heaven for all eternity. We receive grace according to the dispositions of our hearts and souls. The Venerable Pope Pius XII said about thanksgiving after Holy Communion, “We ought not to interrupt the hymn of divine praise within us.”

## **Apostolic Chain Needed for the True Eucharist**

In the many denominations separated from the Catholic Church, there is no true Eucharist. They do not have the Real Presence of Jesus Christ and His Sacrifice made present. Why? The Apostolic Chain has been broken for them. Their ministers are not in the unbroken line of the consecration of men in Holy Orders that goes back to Jesus and the Apostles. Every validly ordained Catholic priest has been ordained by a bishop, who was ordained by another bishop, back, back, for two thousand years until we come to the first bishops and priests, namely the Apostles, who were ordained by Jesus Christ Himself. (Jn 15:16). We call that “the Apostolic Chain.” The many non-Catholic denominations were founded by men, not Jesus Christ. Their ministers are not truly ordained because they are not on the apostolic chain. The Sacred Scriptures they have and teach from— their ancestors took with them when they broke from the Catholic Church during the Protestant Revolt early in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They have continued to divide into ever more communities until today there are about 30,000 denominations. The fastest growing is the “nondenominational” community which is another name for another denomination, yet with no particular requirements as to what one must believe. Each one is as it were his/her own church. It offers an easy path, but not what Jesus Christ taught and established. Jesus prayed at the Last Supper “that they may all be one” (John 17). He also said: “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27).

**Why** should we not receive the Eucharist in the hand? **Why** was Mother Teresa of Calcutta so saddened at Communion in the hand? Why is Pope Benedict requiring that this greatest of the Sacraments be received from him while kneeling and on the tongue? The above should tell you why. Now if you are one of those, who receives our Lord in the hand, could you give me a good reason why? Why do you prefer to receive Our Lord on the hand, the very One whom the Shepherds fell on their knees and adored on that first Christmas? Remember that the Church required the Eucharist to be received on the tongue for centuries? Why has reverence and adoration for the Eucharist diminished, which in turn has led many out of the true Church and away from the Eucharist? Does in-hand reception increase your faith and reverence? Or, does it weaken not only your faith but others as well?

When Catholics lose their faith in the Eucharist, they also lose the very life of the true Church. For we are the ***CHURCH OF THE EUCHARIST***.

## *Quotes of Interest.*

Pope Benedict XVI, recalling the words of Saint Augustine: “No one eats that flesh without first adoring it; we should sin were we not to adore it.”

Speaking of Communion-in-the-hand, it is necessary for all to recognize that the practice was introduced as an abuse, and hurriedly, in many places within the Church right after the Council.

This practice contributes to a gradual, growing weakening of the attitude of reverence toward the Sacred Eucharistic Species.

An alarming lack of recollection and an overall spirit of carelessness have entered into liturgical celebrations.

Now, more than ever, it is necessary to help the faithful renew a living faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharistic Species in order to strengthen the life of the Church herself and to defend her in the midst of the dangerous distortions of the faith, which such a situation continues to cause.

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## *More Quotes*

Communion only reaches its true depths when it is supported and surrounded by adoration. “Kneeling is the right, indeed the intrinsically necessary gesture” before the living God.

To the extent that a culture exists that is alienated from the faith and unknowing of the One before Whom it ought to kneel, the liturgical gesture of kneeling “is the right, indeed the intrinsically necessary gesture,” observed Cardinal Ratzinger.

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— *It is the Lord!*

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