

## RECOVERING A SENSE OF THE SACRED IN OUR WORSHIP

One of the "hottest" topics of discussion in the Church today is the problem of the loss of the sense of the sacred in our worship at Mass. The Holy Father as well as the US Catholic bishops are at present discussing the causes of this problem so as to offer concrete steps toward recovering a sense of the sacred while at Mass. In the meantime, there are steps that we ourselves can take. The following guidelines are gathered from various sources. Remember, the keyword is *reverence* for the Eucharist.

1. Remember that the Eucharist is not merely a sign or symbol: it is the *actual* Flesh and Blood of Christ. It is Jesus, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity.
2. Proper signs of reverence for the Eucharist must always be shown. Before coming to Mass, take care to dress in clothes that demonstrate reverence and which are appropriate for Mass. Whenever you enter or leave Church and anytime you pass the Tabernacle, remember to genuflect while facing the Tabernacle. Whenever you pass the altar, remember to bow.
3. Those who are eligible to receive Communion (see guidelines below) should display reverence while in line. Before receiving, make some sign of reverence, such as a bow or genuflection. Give a clear indication to the priest, deacon, or Eucharistic minister as to whether you wish to receive on your tongue or in your hand. If you wish to receive on the tongue, open your mouth and extend your tongue sufficiently. If you will receive Communion in the hand, lift your hands high - chest level - place one hand *under* the other, making a throne for the King of Kings, and wait for the Eucharist to be placed in your hand. Do not grab the host out of the priest or minister's hand.
4. Before the Eucharist is placed in your hand or on your tongue, the words "The Body of Christ" are stated by the minister. We respond with the word "Amen" (not "thank you" or anything else we might think appropriate.) "Amen" is the word the Church has chosen because it means, "So be it, I believe this to be true." It is an affirmation on our part that we truly believe that the Host is the actual Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus, the Son of God.
5. After receiving Communion, return to your seat, say a prayer of thanksgiving to God, and then join in singing the Communion Hymn. Only in an emergency should anyone leave immediately after Communion. Proper reverence for worship dictates that we remain until Mass is over, which is not until the priest is in the rear of the church (or outside greeting people) and the recessional hymn, our final prayer, has finished.

## GUIDELINES FOR RECEIVING COMMUNION

The following are the official guidelines for receiving Communion as promulgated by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 8, 1986:

**For Catholics:** Catholics fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist when they receive Holy Communion in fulfillment of Christ's command to eat His Body and drink His Blood. In order to be properly disposed to receive Communion, communicants should not be conscious of grave sin, have fasted for one hour, and seek to live in charity and love with their neighbors. Persons conscious of grave sin must first be reconciled with God and the Church through the sacrament of Penance. A frequent reception of the sacrament of Penance is encouraged for all.

**For Other Christians:** We welcome to this celebration of the Eucharist those Christians who are not fully united with us. It is a consequence of the sad divisions in Christianity that we cannot extend to them a general invitation to receive Communion. Catholics believe that the Eucharist is an action of the celebrating community signifying a oneness in faith, life, and worship of the community. Reception of the Eucharist by Christians not fully united with us would imply a oneness which does not yet exist, and for which we must all pray.

**For Those Not Receiving Communion:** Those not receiving sacramental Communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another.

**For Non-Christians:** We also welcome to this celebration those who do not share our faith in Jesus. While we cannot extend to them an invitation to receive Communion, we do invite them to be united with us in prayer.