

## The Posture and Gesture of Reverence for Holy Communion

Standing for Holy Communion, an ancient practice in the Eastern and Western Church, was restored in the liturgical reforms of Vatican II. Just as we stand in reverence and joy to receive the Word of God proclaimed in the Gospel, so we stand in reverence and joy to receive the Lord's Body and Blood in Holy Communion.

The revised GIRM permits the bishops of each country to choose the posture appropriate for the reception of communion. The bishops of the United States have retained the ancient posture of standing as the posture for receiving Holy Communion. It is not in accord with the GIRM to genuflect or kneel. "The norm for the 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" (GIRM #160). In addition, the US Bishops have added a simple bow of the head as an additional sign of reverence before receiving the Sacred Body and again before receiving the Precious Blood. This bow should not delay the distribution of Holy Communion.

So as we come forward, we bow our head in reverence, then lift our head as we gaze on the Lord under the appearance of Eucharistic bread. The minister of communion says, "The Body of Christ," and we respond with our strong "Amen." We then process to the sacred cup where we repeat our gesture and response.

While we receive our Lord, whole and entire, whether we eat his body or drink his blood, "...sharing in both Eucharistic species reflects more fully the sacred realities that the Liturgy signifies" (US Norms #11).

The revised GIRM retains the choice of the communicant to receive the Body of Christ in the hand or on the tongue. This is the choice of the communicant, and not of the minister.

When receiving communion in the hand, we place one hand, palm up on top of the other hand, creating a throne for Christ. We then step to the side and place the host in our mouth and consume it. It is not lawful for the communicant to hold the host in one's hand and wait to consume it until returning to the pew. It is also not lawful for the communicant to dip the consecrated host into the Precious Blood him or herself.

When receiving the Precious Blood, after the bow of the head and the response of "Amen" the communicant takes the cup of the Precious Blood, drinks from it, and returns it to the minister who wipes the outside and inside of the rim of the cup with a purificator and turns the cup a quarter turn to prepare for the next communicant.

Processing, singing, standing, bowing the head, making a throne for Christ, eating and drinking – these are the postures, gestures and actions which embody the community's celebration of Holy Communion.