

REGARDING THE RECEPTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

DOCUMENTS FROM THE HOLY SEE

Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, *Instructione Memoriale Dominici*, On the preparation for this giving communion, 29 May 1969.

In celebrating the memorial of the Lord, the Church brings itself to its faith in and adoration of Christ, present in the sacrifice and given as food to those sharing in the table of the Eucharist.

The Church therefore has an intense concern for the reception of the Eucharist through an exact fidelity to the tradition handed down to us, enriching the Church's practice and life. The pages which follow describe the manner of celebrating and receiving the Eucharist has taken on today, in order to meet the spiritual and psychological needs of the faithful. Changes in rite have been introduced into the Eucharistic celebration. As for the discipline governing the way in which the faithful share in the sacrament of bread and wine, when certain circumstances obtain, which it had fallen after once being quite general and universal at the time of the Council of Trent, which defended it as suited to the conditions of that era.

These measures of reform have made the sign carrying out of Christ's command more explicit and complete sharing in the Eucharistic celebration of prompted a desire in some quarters during the last years of the Eucharistic bread is placed in the hand of the faithful into their own mouth.

Moreover such a rite has even been put into practice, even though the Apostolic See's approval has not been sought, the necessary preparation of the faithful has not been provided.

It is quite true that ancient usage at times allowed the faithful to receive this divine food from the hand and to put it into their own mouth. It is also true that in the past they could take the blessed sacrament away with them from the place of worship, principally in order that they might use it as viaticum in case they had to face danger.

But it is also true that the laws of the Church and the writings of the Fathers give a clear witness to a supreme reverence and utmost caution toward the Eucharist. "No one eats that flesh who has not first adored it; everyone receiving it is warned: 'Receive it with care that nothing of it be lost to you'; 'For it is the body of Christ'";

Further, the care and ministry of the Lord's body and blood were entrusted in a special way to the August sacrament.

doctrine of the Eucharist.

Three questions, therefore, were presented to the conferences of bishops, their replies to them, until they had up to 12 March 1969, were as follows:

1. Do you think that a positive response should be given to the request of Pope Paul VI for receiving communion in the hand?
 In favor: 567
 Opposed 1,233
 In favor with reservations: 315
 Invalid votes: 20

2. Are you in favor, provided the local Ordinary agrees, of prior experiments with this new rite in small communities?
 In favor: 751
 Opposed: 1,215
 Invalid votes: 70

3. Are you of the opinion that the faithful, after well-planned catechetical preparation, would welcome this new rite?
 Yes: 835
 No: 1,185
 Invalid votes: 128

The answers given show that by far the greater number of bishops think that the discipline currently in force should not at all be changed. And the faithful to be shocked and in danger of offense to the sensibilities and spiritual outlook of these bishops and a great many of the faithful.

The Apostolic See earnestly urges bishops, priests, and faithful, therefore, **to obey conscientiously the prevailing law**, now reconfirmed, The view of the judgment rendered by the majority of the Catholic episcopate, the form in use in the tradition of the liturgy and the general good of the Church itself.

Wherever the contrary practice, that is, of communion in the hand, has already come into use, [that is, in direct disobedience to the prevailing law] and the Apostolic See, The order to assist the conferences of bishops to fulfill a pastoral responsibility in the difficult situation of the contemporary state of affairs, entrusts to the same conferences and bishops the duty and task of evaluating any possible special circumstances. This, however, is with the profound hope that they prevent any possible lack of reverence or false ideas about the Eucharist from being engendered in the attitudes of the people and that they carefully eliminate anything which is unacceptable.

In order that this usage will be rightly dealt with, the conferences of bishops should, after will, after previous careful study, come to a decision by secret ballot. Traditionally their decisions must receive two-thirds of the votes cast. The conferences will then submit their decision to the Holy See for the requisite confirmation and will also arrange to send an effective report of the results of the

led to the decision. Mindful of that bond existing between each of them and the universal Church, the conferences of bishops, their replies to them, until they had up to 12 March 1969, were as follows: comes from mutual example.

By giving to the request of Pope Paul VI for receiving communion in the hand, prepared at his command. He directed also that it the presidents of the conferences of bishops.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, **Letter** those conferences of bishops petitioning the indult

In reply to the request of your conference of communion by placing the host on the hand of the

Pope Paul VI calls attention to the purpose of May 1969, on retaining the traditional practice in use account the reasons given to support your request matter. The Pope grants that throughout the territory according to his prudent judgment and conscience

greater number of bishops think that the discipline currently in force should not at all be changed. And the faithful to be shocked and in danger of offense to the sensibilities and spiritual outlook of these bishops and a great many of the faithful.

The following norms must therefore be respected

The view of the judgment rendered by the majority of the Catholic episcopate, the form in use in the tradition of the liturgy and the general good of the Church itself. A new practice is lawfully permitted every one communion on the tongue and even when o

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receiving in the hand and will practice it with the same reverence and utmost caution. This See catechesis must succeed in excluding any suggestion to place the Eucharistic bread in the hand: is a lessening of faith in the Eucharistic presence and is excluded from the laws of the Church: hint of danger of profaning the Eucharist. witness of a supreme reverence and utmost caution

3. The option offered to the faithful of receiving the Eucharistic bread in their hand and putting it into their own mouth must not turn out to be the occasion for the minister and the ordinary bread or as just another religious article. Instead, this option must increase in them a consciousness of the dignity of the sacramental of Christ's Mystical Body, into which they are incorporated by baptism and by the grace of the Eucharist. It must also increase their faith in the sublime reality of the Lord's body. Their attitude of reverence must measure up to the proper reverence to Eucharistic elements and the proper reverence to the priest of the altar. *Alternatively, it is permissible to adopt a simple procedure, namely, allowing the faithful themselves to take the host from the ciborium or paten. [This option is later excluded; see below]* The faithful should consume the host before returning to their place; the minister's part will be brought out by the use of the usual formulary, *The body of Christ*, to which the communicant replies *Amen*.
5. Whatever procedure is adopted, care must be taken not to allow particles of the Eucharistic bread to fall or be scattered. Care must also be taken that the communicants have clean hands and that their comportment is becoming and in keeping with the practices of the different peoples.
6. In the case of communion under both kinds by way of intinction, it is never permitted to place on the hand of the communicant the host that has been dipped in the Lord's blood.
7. Bishops allowing introduction of the new way of receiving Holy Communion should send to this Congregation after six months a report on the results of their concession.

[Since only the 21st paragraph of this document hand, only that paragraph is quoted here.]

Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments, **Instruction Immensae caritatis**, On facilitating reception of communion in certain circumstances, **beginning from 1970, the custom of on the tongue of the communicant is tradition of several centuries.**

[Since only the fourth section of this lengthy document deals with the issue of communion in the hand, only that section is quoted here.]

4. Devotion and Reverence toward the Eucharist in the case of communion in the hand consecrated bread in the hand of the faithful, **provisionally** Ever since the **Instruction Memoriale Dominicae** in the three years of age faithful of the conferences

The faithful, furthermore, **must be taught** that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior and that therefore the worship of *latria* or adoration belonging to God is owed to Christ present in this sacrament.

In either case, communion must be given by the authorized minister, who shows the particle of consecrated bread to the communicants and gives it to them, saying: The body of Christ, to which the communicants reply: Amen. *[This is the change, mentioned above, disallowing the communicant to take the Host from the ciborium]*

In the case of communion under the appearance of wine, the regulations of the **Instruction *Sacramentali Communionem*** of 29 June 1970 are to be followed exactly.