



NATIONAL
**Eucharistic
Revival**

**Step-by-Step Walk Through the Mass
Do This in Remembrance of Me, Part 70,
USCCB Guideline for Receiving Holy Communion
by FR. LUKE SPANNAGEL**



What are the Official Guidelines for Receiving Holy Communion? Last time, we looked at the three requirements for receiving Communion: being a Catholic, in the state of grace, and observing a one-hour fast beforehand. To help people understand and to be clear, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops put together a listing of guidelines that would cover anyone who might happen to be at Mass. Sometimes you will see these guidelines printed on programs of special Masses or often on (or inside) the cover of the Missalettes. Since we covered them a bit last time, hopefully the first two sections will sound familiar. For a closer look at the USCCB guidelines, they are listed here:

FOR CATHOLICS: As Catholics, we fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist when we receive Holy Communion. We are encouraged to receive Communion devoutly and frequently. In order to be properly disposed to receive Communion, participants should not be conscious of grave sin and normally should have fasted for one hour. A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord without prior sacramental confession except for a grave reason where there is no opportunity for confession. In this case, the person is to be mindful of the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition, including the intention of confessing as soon as possible ([Code of Canon Law] canon 916). A frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance is encouraged for all.

FOR OUR FELLOW CHRISTIANS: We welcome our fellow Christians to this celebration of the Eucharist as our brothers and sisters. We pray that our common baptism and the action of the Holy Spirit in this Eucharist will draw us closer to one another and begin to dispel the sad divisions which separate us. We pray that these will lessen and finally disappear, in keeping with Christ's prayer for us "that they may all be one" (John 17:21). Because Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of the reality of the oneness of faith, life, and worship, members of those churches with whom we are not yet fully united are ordinarily not admitted to Holy Communion. Eucharistic sharing in exceptional circumstances by other Christians requires permission according to the directives of the diocesan bishop and the provisions of canon law (canon 844 § 4). 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 (canon 844 § 3).

FOR THOSE NOT RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION: All who are not receiving Holy 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 Christ. While we cannot admit them to Holy Communion, we ask them to offer their prayers for the peace and the unity of the human family.

What about those who are not able to receive Communion? As we can see here from the USCCB directives, we are asked to pray for true unity and a lessening of divisions. Recall that Jesus prayed for unity at the Last Supper, "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us" (Jn 17:20). It is the Lord's desire for us to be united together. It is a great challenge for us to be mindful of this prayer of Jesus and to be joined with him in praying for a true growth in unity. For those not able to receive Communion at this time, there is also what is called a prayer of Spiritual Communion. We'll take a closer look next week!