

BULLETIN INSERT

POSTURES WHEN RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

CONCERNING THE POSTURES WHEN RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

The *INSTITUTIO GENERALIS MISSALIS ROMANI 2002 (GIRM)* number 160 gives four postures involved in the action of receiving Holy Communion.

1. PROCESSING

The communion procession is an action of the Body of Christ. At Christ's invitation, extended by the priest acting in the person of Christ: *happy are they who are called to his supper*, the members of the community come forward to share in the sacred meal. The Communion procession should move with such dignity.

2. BOWING OF THE HEAD

The *General Instruction* directs the communicant to make a sign of reverence, to be determined by the bishops of each country or region, before receiving Communion while standing. The bishops of this country have determined that the sign is to be a bow, a gesture through which we express our reverence and give honor to Christ who comes to us as our spiritual food. The GIRM, 275 explains two kinds of bows: a bow of the head and a bow of the body. The US bishops have determined that the sign of reverence to be made before receiving communion is a BOW OF THE HEAD.

3. STANDING

The norm for reception of Holy Communion in the dioceses of the United States is standing.

4. RECEPTION OF THE SACRAMENT

Holy Communion under the form of bread is offered to the communicant with the words "The Body of Christ." The consecrated host may be received either on the tongue or in the hand, at the discretion of each communicant (GIRM 160). When receiving the sacrament in the hand, one hand is placed palm up, on top of the other hand. Ancient writers called this gesture making a throne for Christ the King. After receiving the sacrament in the hand, the communicant takes a short step to the side, stops for a brief moment and then reverently takes the consecrated host using the hand which is under the hand holding the host, places it in the mouth and consumes the host. The chalice is offered to the communicant with the words "The Blood of Christ," to which the communicant responds, "Amen."

REMEMBER...attention should be paid to what is determined by the *General Instruction*... rather than private inclination or arbitrary choice.

A common posture, to be observed by all participants, is a sign of the unity of the members of the Christian community gathered for the sacred Liturgy: it both expresses and fosters the intention and spiritual attitude of the participants. (GIRM 42)