

Receiving Jesus with Faith and Devotion.

Preparation before Mass

“The Lord addresses an invitation to us, urging us to receive Him in the Holy Eucharist: ‘Truly, I say to you, unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you’ (John 6:53). To respond to this invitation we must *prepare ourselves* for so great and so holy a moment” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraphs 1384-1385. Hereafter noted as CCC)

We need to recognize that Jesus is truly present in the tabernacle in a Catholic Church. The red sanctuary candle that continually burns reminds us that the true Presence of Jesus in Holy Communion is reserved in the tabernacle. As we enter a Catholic Church, we want to genuflect to honor and worship the Son of God who is truly present. As we genuflect, we may offer Jesus fitting praise by praying a phrase such as “I worship You, Jesus.” The presence of Jesus in this Sacred Place of the Church makes this building different from any other building. We do not want to be distracted by matters that can be thought about or discussed at a later time. Remaining quiet and recollected will help us to be aware of and to stay focused on the true Presence of Jesus.

As we kneel in the pew to prepare for Holy Mass, it is an important to think about what will take place in this Sacred Place. We will hear Jesus’ words in the Gospel. Moreover, the bread and wine will be changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. During the time of prayer before Mass, we ask the Holy Spirit to help us remember Who it is that we will be receiving. The Holy Spirit will assist us to be aware that during the sacrifice of Mass, we will receive Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Our posture of prayer will help us to enter into this sacred time. Folding our hands, bowing our head and/or closing our eyes will lead us to be more focused and to resist distractions. Praying the Our Father or another memorized prayer or any spontaneous prayer is most appropriate during this time of preparation.

“To prepare for worthy reception of this Sacrament, the faithful should observe the fast required in the Church. Bodily demeanor (gestures, clothing) ought to convey the respect, solemnity, and joy of this moment when Christ becomes our guest” (CCC 1387).

During Mass: Preparing to Receive Jesus in Holy Communion

In the time of silence in the pew and in walking up to receive Jesus, we want to repeat silently in our hearts the words “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” These words from Matthew 8:8 remind us that we are sinners. God gives us this holy and sacred Gift, the Gift of Jesus Christ His Son, out of love.

These words before receiving Holy Communion also remind us that we need to be disposed properly to receive Jesus in a humble and holy way. St. Paul’s words to the Corinthians tell us

that we cannot receive the Holy Eucharist if we are conscious of any serious (mortal) sin on our soul that has not been confessed in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. “Whoever, therefore eats this Bread, or drinks the chalice of the Lord in an unworthy manner, will be guilty of profaning the Body and Blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the Bread and drink of the Chalice. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself” (1 Corinthians 11:27-29; CCC 1385).

Receiving Jesus in Holy Communion

The way in which we receive Our Lord shows the deep respect and depth of our belief that this is Jesus, truly present in the Eucharist. (CCC 1061-1065) This should include being recollected and focusing on Our Lord, in approaching Jesus, we reverence Him with a bow, receiving Him reverently either on our hand, which should form a throne or on the tongue and saying the word Amen (I believe) in response to the priest saying “The Body of Christ.” We also reverence the Precious Blood of Christ with a bow, and respond “Amen” as we receive from the chalice.

Thanksgiving after Receiving Jesus in Holy Communion

Once we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, we kneel down in prayer and thanksgiving. We may close our eyes to give Him our full attention. Eucharist means thanksgiving. We have been given a Gift that we cannot earn. The response called forth from receiving Jesus’ Body and Precious Blood is thanksgiving. This time of communion with Jesus is very precious. Our posture of prayer is very important as we do not want to be distracted. We desire to be one with Him Whom we have received into our hearts. When someone comes to visit us, we welcome them. Similarly, in receiving Holy Communion, we are to welcome Jesus and acknowledge our need for His help to live the Christian life every minute of the day... Indeed, we are asking Him increasingly to live out His life in us. It is appropriate to ask Him to remain with us till we can receive Him again. We want to treasure His Presence and speak to Him about issues and/or concerns in our everyday life. Jesus is pleased when we share our life with Him. We also need to listen to Jesus. (CCC 2637)

We realize that Jesus is present in the Church, even after Mass, because the consecrated hosts are reserved in the tabernacle. We may be with Jesus and adore Him in Church at any time. The sanctuary candle that is lit means Jesus is present in the tabernacle. (CCC 1377-1381)