



How to Receive Holy Communion on the Tongue

For centuries on end, the common and accepted way of receiving the sacred Host—the Bread/Body of Christ in the Lord’s Supper—was to receive it directly on the tongue. This time-honored, traditional practice is beneficial for at least a couple of different reasons. First, receiving the Host on the tongue limits the likelihood that crumbs of our Lord’s Body will come off on the hand and/or fall to the floor. This is the true Body of Christ given to us to eat and should be treated with the utmost respect and reverence. Second, receiving the Host directly on the tongue emphasizes that in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, we don’t contribute in any way—we only receive. The Body of Christ is a gift of God given to me for the forgiveness of my sins.

In addition, over the past few months we have had more people in our congregation, especially young people, beginning to prefer receiving the Host in this way. Recognizing that there may be many more who would prefer to receive the Sacred Host on the tongue but may be unsure of how to go about doing so, what follows are some guidelines if you would like to take part in this historic practice.

1. First, regardless of how you receive, approach the Sacrament with reverence and humility. One should never be interiorly casual or ambivalent about receiving Our Lord. One’s interior disposition often manifests itself externally. If you are unrepentant of any sin, don’t receive. We approach the

Sacrament of Our Lord’s Body and Blood to receive real forgiveness for our real sins.

2. As with any reception of Holy Communion, after the pastor has said, “The Body of Christ,” respond with “Amen.”
3. Then, with head straight or tilted slightly back, open your mouth wide and extend your tongue – the tongue need not protrude far out of the mouth, but it should block the view of the lower lip. The pastor will place the Sacred Host on your tongue.
4. Wait until the Sacred Host is safely placed on the tongue and only then return your tongue and close your mouth. It is not proper to use your teeth to receive and it is never a good idea to bite the pastor’s fingers. So wait until the Sacred Host is safely on your tongue before moving.
5. Speaking of moving, it is also very difficult for the pastor to “hit” a moving target. Sometimes, there is a tendency for the communicant to move his or her head towards the Sacred Host as if “to help” the pastor to distribute. This generally does not work. The pastor needs a stationary target, so remain motionless, head straight or tilted slightly back, mouth wide open and tongue extended. For some people, it may help to close you eyes; for others, look above the pastor and don’t watch the Host.
6. Finally, if you do decide to instead receive the Sacred Host in the hand, please do not grab it from the pastor, but hold your hands open in front of you, one hand on top of the other, and wait for the pastor to place the Host in your hand. You can then take it with the other hand and place it in your mouth.

