



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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### **Pastoral Letter on Holy Communion**

Our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, said during a Wednesday Audience about the disciples preparing the Upper Room that “[t]oday ... there is a supper to prepare. It is not only a matter of the liturgy, but of our readiness to enter into a gesture that transcends us. The Eucharist is not celebrated only at the altar, but also in daily life, where it is possible to experience everything as an offering and giving of thanks.”<sup>1</sup> In this great Jubilee Year of Hope,<sup>2</sup> we are experiencing new dimensions of the Holy Spirit at work in the entire Church and in our local church of Charlotte. As missionaries of hope, our Eucharistic life is oriented toward living the sacrifice and banquet with others. For this reason Jesus says “you are the light of the world.”<sup>3</sup> In the same way, the course of our National Eucharistic Revival reminded us that a Eucharistic missionary<sup>4</sup> is sent forth by the sacramental presence of Christ, transformed by Communion and prayer, to go forth and be that presence of Christ for others that they too might know our Eucharistic Lord.

The presence of God extends to every space and time. In a special way, though, the Son of God is present truly and substantially in the Most Blessed Sacrament. As Our Holy Father’s motto – *In illo unum uno* – reminds us, “In Him who is One (Christ), we are One,” the one mystical body of Christ approaches the sacramental Body of Christ in the one sacrifice offered by the Church on one altar and, in turn, given to us as food for the journey in the one spiritual banquet of Holy Communion. Throughout the ages and within the context of our rich liturgical traditions from the East to the West, our unity as believers in Holy Communion is expressed through our postures and gestures that reflect our mystical communion and unity as fellow believers.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Leo XIV, Wednesday Audience, <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/audiences/2025/documents/20250806-udienza-generale.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, Papal Bull *Spes non confundit*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Matt 5:14.

<sup>4</sup> “Become A Eucharistic Missionary,” [www.eucharisticrevival.org](http://www.eucharisticrevival.org).

<sup>5</sup> “It is difficult for some of us to embrace this emphasis on Mass as the action of a community rather than an individual act of my own faith and piety, but it is important that we make every effort to do so. Christ himself at the Last Supper pleaded with his Father: ‘Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as

In accord with universal and episcopal conference norms, I offer the following norms and guidelines for all public celebrations of the Most Holy Eucharist in the Diocese of Charlotte.

## **Manner of Receiving Holy Communion**

According to liturgical norms, regional episcopal conferences are entrusted with establishing more precise norms for the reception of Holy Communion.<sup>6</sup> The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), with the approval of Rome, has established "[t]he norm... that Holy Communion is to be received standing, unless an individual member of the faithful wishes to receive Communion while kneeling" and that a bow is the act of reverence made by those receiving.<sup>7</sup> The normative posture for all the faithful in the United States is standing, it is nonetheless the free choice of an *individual member* of the faithful to kneel, and Communion cannot be denied this individual solely based on their posture (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*, n. 91).

A normative posture is not only given so that we may be united in how we receive Holy Communion, but also as an aide to direct our catechesis and sacramental preparation. While it is the right of an individual member of the faithful to kneel, pastors should not direct their faithful to do so as something that is "better". It is the responsibility of those in a pastoral or teaching role to instruct those in his/her care the episcopal conference norms for reception without prejudice. Doing otherwise disrupts the harmony and unity that the Bishops have legitimately set forth for the manner of distribution of Holy Communion in the United States. The faithful who feel compelled to kneel to receive the Eucharist as is their individual right, should also prayerfully consider the blessing of communal witness that is realized when we share a common posture.

The episcopal conference norms logically do not envision the use of altar rails, kneelers, or priedieus for the reception of communion. Doing so is a visible contradiction to the normative posture of Holy Communion established by our episcopal conference. Instead, the instruction emphasizes that receiving Holy Communion is to be done as the members of the faithful go *in procession*, witnessing that the Church journeys forward and receives Holy Communion as a pilgrim people on their way.<sup>8</sup> The USCCB in its explanation for the norms governing reception of Holy Communion

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we are... as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us...' (John 17:11, 21). Baptism has joined us to Christ and to one another as the vine and its branches. The life of Christ, the Holy Spirit, animates each of us individually, and all of us corporately and guides us together in our efforts to become one in Christ" (USCCB, "The Reception of Holy Communion at Mass," <https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/order-of-mass/liturgy-of-the-eucharist/the-reception-of-holy-communion-at-mass>).

<sup>6</sup> GIRM, no. 390.

<sup>7</sup> GIRM, no. 160.

<sup>8</sup> "The Church understands the Communion Procession, in fact every procession in liturgy, as a sign of the pilgrim Church, the body of those who believe in Christ, on their way to the Heavenly Jerusalem. All our lives we who believe in Christ are moving in time toward that moment when we will be taken by death from this world and enter into the joy of the Lord in the eternal Kingdom he has prepared for us. The liturgical assembly of the baptized that comes together for the celebration of the Eucharist is a witness to, a manifestation of, the pilgrim Church. When we move in procession, particularly the procession to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Communion, we are a sign, a symbol of that pilgrim Church 'on the way.'" (USCCB, "The Reception of Holy Communion at Mass"). Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 48.

reminds us of the beauty of this procession: “In fact, each time we move forward together to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord, we join the countless ranks of all the baptized who have gone before us, our loved ones, the canonized and uncanonized saints down through the ages, who at their time in history formed a part of this mighty stream of believers.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore:

1. Clergy, catechists, ministers of Holy Communion, and teachers are to instruct communicants according to the normative posture in the United States. They are not to teach that some other manner is better, preferred, more efficacious, etc.
2. The use of altar rails, kneelers, and prie-dieus are not to be utilized for the reception of Communion in public celebrations by January 16, 2026.
3. Temporary or movable fixtures used for kneeling for the reception of communion are to be removed by January 16, 2026.

### **Holy Communion Under Both Kinds**

With the precautions taken in 2020 and 2021 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the ability to receive Holy Communion under both kinds was suspended. In my experience here in the Diocese of Charlotte, a significant number of parishes have not returned to distributing the Chalice to the faithful. A few pastors and many of the lay faithful have inquired about the return of the Chalice. The practice of receiving under both kinds is a “fuller sign” of the Eucharist and adds greater solemnity to the Mass.<sup>10</sup> Though I understand the genuine desire on the part of the faithful to receive under both kinds, I also recognize that such decisions are made locally.<sup>11</sup>

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, however, instructs local bishops to create norms in his own diocese for distribution under both kinds. I encourage Holy Communion under both kinds in the Diocese of Charlotte, whenever the Pastor deems it appropriate and fruitful, provided that the faithful have been well-formed, there is no danger of profanation of the Eucharist, or it would be difficult to efficiently distribute Holy Communion in a reasonable time because of the number of faithful.<sup>12</sup>

### **History of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds**

The practice of receiving Holy Communion under both kinds—under the forms of bread and wine—has its origins in the earliest days of the Church,<sup>13</sup> reflecting the Last Supper itself when Jesus offered his disciples both the Eucharistic Bread and the Wine-Turned-Blood. In the first centuries of Christianity, it was the common custom for all the faithful to partake of both species. Over time, especially by the Middle Ages, the practice shifted in the Latin Church, and reception under the

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<sup>9</sup> USCCB, “The Reception of Holy Communion at Mass.”

<sup>10</sup> *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, no. 100. USCCB, Norms for the Distribution of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds, no. 16.

<sup>11</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 55. GIRM, no. 283.

<sup>12</sup> USCCB, Norms for the Distribution of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds, nos. 23-24.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, no. 16.

form of bread alone became the norm for the laity, with distribution of the Chalice being reserved only for clerics and, on rare occasions, for special feasts or circumstances. This change arose from pastoral concerns, including reverence for the Sacrament, practical difficulties, the spread of communicable diseases, and the desire to avoid profanation.

The reforms of the Second Vatican Council encouraged the Church to restore the fuller sign of Communion under both kinds,<sup>14</sup> and today, where it is pastorally appropriate and the faithful are well-prepared, the practice is again permitted, inviting the faithful to a deeper participation in the Eucharistic mystery. The liturgical documents following the Second Vatican Council extended the faculty to Diocesan Bishops to create norms and guidelines for Communion under both kinds in his diocese.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Catholic Doctrine of Concomitance**

The doctrine of concomitance teaches that Jesus Christ is fully present—body, blood, soul, and divinity—in both the consecrated bread and the consecrated wine at Mass. This means that even if someone receives Holy Communion under only one kind—either just the Host or just the Chalice—they still receive the entire Christ, not just a part of him.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Principle of Progressive Solemnity**

The principle of progressive solemnity in the Catholic Church refers to the intentional variation in how Mass is celebrated, depending on the importance of the occasion. Not every Mass is observed with the same level of festivity; rather, the Church increases or decreases the ritual elements—such as music, vestments, use of incense, and participation of ministers—according to the liturgical calendar, distinguishing major Solemnities like Christmas and Easter from ordinary weekdays / ferial days.<sup>17</sup> This approach ensures that special celebrations are marked with greater reverence and visible symbols, while daily worship remains appropriately simple. A “fuller sign” of Holy Communion by distributing under both kinds could be a manner of increasing the solemnity of particular celebrations.

### **Pastoral Considerations**

To foster unity, it is helpful that we all practice a similar way of distributing Holy Communion. Parishioners who travel from parish to parish because of their own needs may otherwise rightly question why the Precious Blood is always available in one church and never available in another. Instead, it is best for each of us to refrain from these two extremes. In addition, the practice of intinction has arisen to distribute under both kinds in a handful of our parishes. While allowed in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, it should not be considered an option in the Diocese of

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<sup>14</sup> Sacrosanctum Concilium, no. 55.

<sup>15</sup> GIRM, no. 283.

<sup>16</sup> GIRM, no. 282.

<sup>17</sup> Musicam Sacram, no. 7. While this principle enters into liturgical use regarding sacred music, the “varying degrees of solemnity” is also applied to other elements of sacred liturgy, employing certain elements in celebrations of greater solemnity and excluding their use in celebrations with lesser solemnity.

Charlotte for distribution to the faithful in public celebrations. Lastly, some priests have commented that they are unable to finish the Precious Blood that is left over after Holy Communion. This is a negligible issue since the ministers of the Chalice are given permission by the rubrics to consume any remaining Precious Blood from the chalice that they are distributing.<sup>18</sup>

### **Diocesan Provisions for the Distribution of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds**

1. In continuity with the documents and ritual books of our Holy Church and keeping in mind the previously mentioned pastoral considerations, I encourage and recommend that every parish distribute the Precious Blood when possible in the following celebrations:<sup>19</sup>
  - a. At least one Mass with the faithful on Sundays, especially at the principal Mass and on the following weekends:
    - i. Divine Mercy Sunday
    - ii. The Solemnity of Pentecost
    - iii. The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity
    - iv. The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ
    - v. The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe
  - b. At the Easter Vigil to all the faithful, especially the newly baptized.
  - c. Christmas Masses.
  - d. On Holy Thursday, at the Mass of the Lord's Supper.
2. I would also ask and encourage each pastor to distribute Holy Communion under both kinds during the celebration of:
  - a. First Holy Communion
  - b. Wedding Mass, even if only for the Bridal Party
  - c. The patronal feast day Mass of the parish or mission
  - d. The anniversary of the dedication of the Church.

### **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**

While the distribution of Holy Communion is part of the very nature of ordained ministry, the role of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion is to be welcomed and used in our parishes, churches, missions, and schools. They are particularly helpful when there is a great number of people at any given celebration and in assisting the ordinary ministers in those celebrations in which the Precious Blood is distributed. To facilitate the timely distribution of Holy Communion and the inherent limitations of how much a communion chalice may hold, those overseeing the ministers who assist with the celebration of Holy Mass are to ensure that there is one minister for roughly 75 communicants.

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<sup>18</sup> USCCB, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Mass.

<sup>19</sup> GIRM, no. 283.

In the Diocese of Charlotte, I set down the following norms:

1. To serve as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, persons must:
  - a. be practicing Catholics, distinguished in their Christian life, faith and morals;
  - b. be at least 16 years old;
  - c. have received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist;
  - d. demonstrate a deep reverence for and devotion to the holy Eucharist;
  - e. possess the requisite abilities and temperament to carry out their assigned duties;
  - f. have followed current protocols for diocesan safe-environment training.
2. Every priest celebrant has the faculty given by the universal liturgical norms to appoint Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in a particular celebration when there is a need.<sup>20</sup>
3. I grant all pastors and those equivalent to pastors in law the faculty of appointing individuals to serve in a stable way as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in their celebrations of Mass. Those individuals may<sup>21</sup>:
  - a. Assist—not replace—the ordinary ministers in the distribution of Holy Communion;
  - b. Bring the Holy Eucharist from the tabernacle to the altar during the *Agnus Dei*, and return the Holy Eucharist to the tabernacle after the distribution of Holy Communion;
  - c. Assist in the distribution of the Precious Blood to the faithful.
  - d. Take Holy Communion to the sick, dying, and homebound when an ordinary minister is not able, including the purification of the vessel (pyx) in which the Sacred Host is carried.
4. Before Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion begin this ministry, it is appropriate for them to be publicly commissioned according to the texts and prayers provided in the *Book of Blessings*.<sup>22</sup>
5. The term for this ministry is three years from the date of their commissioning. This term is renewable.
6. Parish priests are to ensure that there is an invitation to this ministry and training *at least* yearly for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.
7. Pastors, chaplains, and religious superiors are to ensure that the ministry and performance of their Extraordinary Ministers are reviewed on a regular basis.
8. Extraordinary Ministers are to dress and comport themselves according to the dignity of their role.

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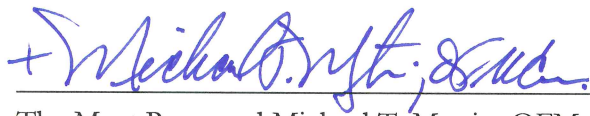
<sup>20</sup> GIRM, no. 162. Cf. Roman Missal, Appendix III, Rite of Deputing a Minister to Distribute Holy Communion on a Single Occasion.

<sup>21</sup> USCCB, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Mass.

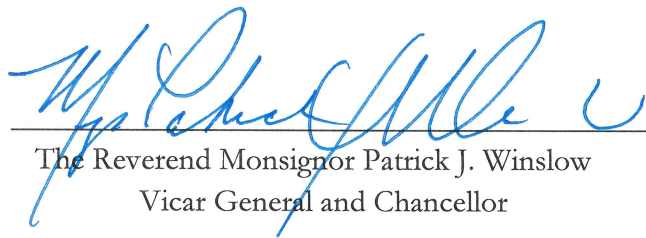
<sup>22</sup> Book of Blessings, nos. 1872-1878.

## Conclusion

The liturgy of the Church is the work of God and the work on behalf of God in the life of the Church.<sup>23</sup> It falls to every member of the Body of Christ to facilitate unity in our celebrations. As bishop and the moderator of the liturgy in the Diocese of Charlotte, it is my intention to continue to facilitate “peace and unity”<sup>24</sup> in our liturgies. These norms for our diocese move us together toward the Church’s vision for the fuller and more active participation of the faithful, especially emphasized by our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, at the beginning of his Petrine ministry.<sup>25</sup>



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Bishop of Charlotte



The Reverend Monsignor Patrick J. Winslow  
Vicar General and Chancellor

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<sup>23</sup> CCC, no. 1069.

<sup>24</sup> *Missale Romanum, editio tertia*, “Ordo Missae,” no. 126.

<sup>25</sup> “Brothers and sisters, I would like that our first great desire be for a united Church, a sign of unity and communion, which becomes a leaven for a reconciled world” (Homily for the Beginning of the Pontificate of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, May 18, 2025).