

“How can I receive Holy Communion without making physical contact with the priest?”

Last weekend, I ran a private experiment while distributing Holy Communion. The majority of us at St. Hubert receive Holy Communion regularly in the hand, and a minority regularly receive on the tongue. As I fed you with the Precious Body of Christ, I paid attention to the various ways people receive in the hand or on the tongue, and I made mental notes of two things: how I need to adjust the way I give the Precious Body, and how we all can adjust the way we receive the Precious Body, so that I could feed you the Bread of Life without actually touching you. Believe it or not, it’s actually possible to receive Holy Communion either in the hand or on the tongue without making *any* physical contact with the priest or extraordinary minister. I will have a separate set of recommendations for our Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion so that they know what adjustments they can make for their part. Here are my recommendations for you to minimize your contact with the priest or extraordinary minister as we receive Holy Communion.

For those who receive Holy Communion in the hand:

- Remember to make a sign of reverence to the Most Holy Eucharist by bowing as you approach the priest or extraordinary minister.
- Hold your hands in front of you at chest height.
 - o When hands are either held too low or too high, it increases the likelihood that our hands will contact each other.
- Place one hand on top of the other.
 - o Avoid having your hands side-by-side. This increases the likelihood that our hands will contact each other.
 - o I recommend placing your dominant hand *under* your non-dominant hand, so that you will grab the Host with your dominant hand.
- Hold your hands as flat as possible.
 - o When you cup your hands or curl your fingers, it forces me to reach around them, which increases the likelihood that our hands will contact each other.
 - o Avoid grabbing after the Host with your fingers; some will do this as an alternative to holding out their hands. Grabbing with your fingers almost guarantees that our hands will contact each other. It is also a better spiritual practice to receive Our Lord in hands held out rather than grabbing after Our Lord.
- Allow the priest or extraordinary minister to place the Host on your hand before moving your hands or fingers.
 - o Many will begin to grab the host while I am placing it in their hands, which almost guarantees that our hands will contact each other.
- Remember to say, “Amen,” as you receive the Host into your hand.

For those who receive Holy Communion on the tongue:

- Remember to make a sign of reverence to the Most Holy Eucharist by bowing as you approach the priest or extraordinary minister.
- Stand upright, directly in front of the priest or extraordinary minister, and facing directly towards them.

- Some will stand at an angle towards me. This makes placing the Host on the tongue more difficult, and increases the likelihood that I will touch your mouth.
- Remember to respond, “Amen,” before receiving the Host.
- Open your mouth wide.
 - When your mouth is not open very wide, I have less “room for error” when placing the Host in your mouth, which increases the likelihood that I will touch your mouth.
- Stick your tongue out of your mouth as far as possible, keeping it as flat as possible.
 - I am trying to place the Host on your tongue; if your tongue is inside of your mouth, then I need to reach inside of your mouth, which almost guarantees that I will touch the inside of your mouth.
 - Some will stick out their tongues in a downward direction. This increases the likelihood that the Host will fall off of the tongue and back into the paten or onto the floor.
- Allow the priest or extraordinary minister to place the Host on your tongue before taking the Host into your mouth.
 - Some will begin to curl their tongue as I place the Host on it, as if they are “grabbing” the Host with their tongue. Please do not do this; it almost guarantees that my finger will be licked.
 - Some will bite down as the Host is placed on their tongue. Please do not do this; it guarantees that my fingers will come in contact with your mouth, and it hurts my fingers.

Many of us have well-developed habits in the way we receive Holy Communion. Taking on these practices is important, especially in these days when sensitivity to physical contact with others is strong, and it will take intentionality from all of us. Please share these recommendations with your children and other family or friends who may want them. As we take important steps to prevent the spread of germs and illness in all areas of our parish life, it is even more important that we continue to receive the Bread of Life to strengthen our hope and to rest in the peace that we only receive when we receive Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist.