

## ***Norms for the Sign of Peace and the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion in the Diocese of Juneau***

### **Introduction**

Almost a year ago, in response to the H1N1 flu pandemic, many dioceses, including the Diocese of Juneau, temporarily stopped the sign of peace and the distribution of the Precious Blood from the chalice, with the assurance that once the pandemic was over, these would be restored.

After discussion with all the full-time ministers and the priests of the Diocese, Bishop Burns has asked that we resume with the peace rite and the distribution of Holy Communion in both kinds beginning this Ash Wednesday (February 17, 2010).

As we begin Lent and resume these traditions, it is appropriate to re-visit and re-familiarize ourselves with the universal and diocesan norms which address the sign of peace and the distribution and reception of Holy Communion.

### **Sign of Peace**

The Rite of Peace follows the Our Father, by which the Church asks for peace and unity for herself and for the whole human family, and the faithful express to each other their ecclesial communion and mutual charity before communicating in the Eucharist. The manner in which the sign of peace is offered should reflect the solemn nature of the Mass and norms of the Church. The sign of peace is intended to be brief and should not be prolonged so as to interrupt the Communion Rite or be experienced by the assembly as an "intermission" in the celebration of the Mass.

Our participation in the sign of peace should be extended to those around us without leaving our places in the assembly or at the altar. In order to respect the sacredness of the Mass, the sign of peace is given in a solemn manner to those around us. The sign of peace can be expressed with a handshake, an embrace, a slight bow, and/or a simple verbal exchange such as, "Peace be with you." It may be the case that some people are not comfortable shaking hands.

### **Dispositions for the Reception of Holy Communion**

At the Last Supper Christ instituted the Paschal Sacrifice and banquet by which the Sacrifice of the Cross is continuously made present in the Church whenever the priest, representing Christ the Lord, carries out what the Lord himself did and handed over to his disciples to be done in his memory.

For Christ took the bread and the chalice and gave thanks; he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat, and drink: this is my Body; this is the cup of my Blood. Do this in memory of me." Accordingly, the Church has arranged the entire celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist in parts corresponding to precisely these words and actions of Christ.

Through the reception of Holy Communion, the faithful, though they are many, receive from the one bread the Lord's Body and from the one chalice the Lord's Blood in the same way the Apostles received them from Christ's own hands.

- Therefore, each person should examine him or herself in depth prior to receiving Holy Communion. Anyone conscious of grave sin should not receive the Body of the Lord until they have celebrated the Sacrament of Penance.
- However, in a situation in which confession is not possible, (for example, at a Communion service in a mission community) a penitent may receive Holy Communion after making an act of perfect contrition, (which includes the intention to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation as soon as possible). (81 RS)

### **Who May Receive Holy Communion**

#### **For Catholics:**

As Catholics, we fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist when we receive Holy Communion. We are encouraged to receive Communion devoutly and frequently. In order to be

properly disposed to receive Communion, participants should not be conscious of grave sin and normally should have fasted for one hour. A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord without prior sacramental confession except for a grave reason where there is no opportunity for confession. In this case, the person is to be mindful of the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition, including the intention of confessing as soon as possible (canon 916). A frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance is encouraged for all.

**For our fellow Christians:**

We welcome our fellow Christians to this celebration of the Eucharist as our brothers and sisters. We pray that our common baptism and the action of the Holy Spirit in this Eucharist will draw us closer to one another and begin to dispel the sad divisions which separate us. We pray that these will lessen and finally disappear, in keeping with Christ's prayer for us "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21).

Because Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of the reality of the oneness of faith, life, and worship, members of those churches with whom we are not yet fully united are ordinarily not admitted to Holy Communion. Eucharistic sharing in exceptional circumstances by other Christians requires permission according to the directives of the diocesan bishop and the provisions of canon law (canon 844 § 4). Members of the Orthodox Churches, the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Polish National Catholic Church are urged to respect the discipline of their own Churches. According to Roman Catholic discipline, the Code of Canon Law does not object to the reception of communion by Christians of these Churches (canon 844 § 3).

**For those not receiving Holy Communion:**

All who are not receiving Holy Communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another.

**For non-Christians:**

We also welcome to this celebration those who do not share our faith in Jesus Christ. While we cannot admit them to Holy Communion, we ask them to offer their prayers for the peace and the unity of the human family.

**Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**

In the case of necessity (e.g.: a large number of communicants or distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds), priests and deacons, who are the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion, may be assisted by members of the faithful who have been commissioned to serve as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

**The Communion of the People**

The priest celebrant takes the paten or ciborium and (as necessary) accompanied by other ordinary and extraordinary ministers of communion, goes to the communicants, who, as a rule, approach in a procession. (GIRM 160)

**Reception of the Body of the Christ**

When approaching the minister of Holy Communion, each communicant should bow his or her head before the Sacrament as a gesture of reverence. (GIRM 160)

- o A profound bow from the waist is not necessary.
- o The consecrated host may be received either on the tongue or in the hand, at the discretion of the communicant.

The minister of Holy Communion raises the host slightly above the paten or ciborium and says:

"The Body of Christ." The communicant should reply: "Amen".

If the communicant is receiving the consecrated host in the hand, the dominant hand should be under the other so that the host may be placed in the palm. Only one palm is presented for receiving the Eucharist (opened flat and level) with the other palm placed under the hand receiving Holy Communion. The communicant then takes the dominant hand from underneath to take the Eucharist from the palm and place it upon their tongue for consumption.

- o As soon as the communicant receives the host, he or she should immediately consume it entirely before returning to their place in the assembly. (GIRM 161) The communicant should consume the host in the presence of the minister and should never return to their place in the assembly with the host still in their hand, unconsumed.

### **Receiving the Precious Blood of Christ from the Chalice**

“Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it is distributed under both kinds. For in this form the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clear expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord, as also the relationship between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Father’s Kingdom.” (GIRM 281. Cf no.32 Eucharisticum mysterium 1967) It should be remembered that receiving only the Body of Christ is also sharing in the fullness of Christ.

For this reason, ordinarily the Blessed Sacrament is distributed in the Diocese of Juneau under both species of Christ’s Body and Blood.

### **Communion of the Blood of Christ by Drinking from the Chalice**

Each communicant, after receiving the Body of Christ, moves in procession and stands facing the minister of the chalice. After the communicant has made their reverence, the minister says, “The Blood of Christ.” The communicant responds, “Amen” and the minister hands over the chalice, which the communicant raises to his or her mouth. After drinking a little from the chalice, he or she hands it back to the minister, and then withdraws. The minister then wipes the rim of the chalice with the purificator. (GIRM 286)

Self intinction (when the communicant dips the consecrated host into the Blood of Christ) is not permitted.