



## **Respect for the Most Holy Eucharist Part II by Joe Sixpack**

Thanks be to God, most people where I've been are generally respectful, but there have been some terrible abuses to the Eucharist reported over the years. For example, it was horrifying to read about pastors finding consecrated Hosts stuck beneath the pews like chewing gum, or people putting Hosts in their pockets. This sort of thing comes from two factors: a lack of solid catechesis about the Real Presence of Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist, and feeling pressured to receive Jesus during Communion time at Mass.

Surveys show that a full 70% of Mass attending Catholics in America don't believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Most believe It is merely a symbol and nothing more. Of course, in previous articles we have seen that Jesus is really and truly present in each particle of the consecrated Host and each drop of the consecrated contents of the chalice. For those of you who previously thought the Eucharist is merely a symbol...well, now you know better. But what about those who feel pressured to received Communion?

Large parishes often have ushers who direct each pew to the isle to get in line for Communion. This practice puts pressure on people to get up and go to Communion, and some of these folks know they can't receive because of the state of their soul. And how many good non-Catholics are there being herded to Communion by ushers; people who are not at all eligible to receive?

In small or rural parishes, ushers usually aren't used. However, there is a pressure nonetheless, and it makes the recipient truly culpable. What I'm talking about is the person who receives Communion because he doesn't want other people in a small parish to think poorly of him for not going to Communion. If you are reading this and fit into that category, you know from previous articles that if your soul is in a state of mortal sin and you still receive Communion you are committing the additional mortal sin of sacrilege. Talk to your priest...in the confessional.

Now let's talk about one more issue concerning Communion, and it's an issue that will upset a few people. I'm talking about receiving Communion in the hand.

*Let me first state emphatically that you do indeed have the right to receive Communion in the hand, provided the priest giving Communion allows it.* However, you may view this practice much differently by the time we finish this article.

Forty years ago, Communion in the hand was absolutely forbidden. After the Second Vatican Council, there were many leaders in the Church who had wrongly decided the Council had given them permission to do about anything they wanted, based on a false interpretation of the

Council's documents. So some bishops and priests across the country instituted the practice of giving people Communion in the hand. Why is it allowed today? Well, by the time Rome found out about this abuse of the Holy Eucharist it was so wide spread the Pope realized that if he tried to stop it his actions could cause mass rebellion. Those of you old enough to remember, the country was generally in a state of rebellion to authority in those days. I certainly remember it, and was one of those rebels, though not yet a Catholic. So the Holy Father decided it was better and safer to legitimize the practice at the time, with the hope of reversing it later in incremental steps.

Modern Catholics have to be asking themselves why it was wrong to receive Jesus in the hand in the first place. Well, the place to begin for that answer is in the ordination of a priest.

Have you ever wondered why some people always kiss the hand of a priest? That is because his hands have been consecrated by the bishop during the priest's ordination. They were consecrated because a priest is a very special man. Think about it. During the consecration of the Mass, he calls God down from heaven, *and God obeys*. The second Person of the Blessed Trinity comes down from heaven at the consecration to where? To rest in those consecrated hands of the priest.

The Church so deeply reverences the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist that the patten upon which the Host rests must be made of gold or heavy gold plate. The inside of the chalice must be lined with gold. And the priest's hands must be consecrated by the bishop, who is acting *in persona christi*; that is, in the person of Christ.

What moral right do the laity have to hold the Body of Christ in our hands? We have no moral right at all, even though we now have a conditional canonical right. We aren't worthy of holding His Body. The priest is no more worthy than we are, as he is just as human as we. That is why the bishop consecrates his hands, so that at the hands holding Him are holy through that consecration.

Even now you only have the canonical right to receive Jesus in the hand if the priest celebrating the Mass allows it. Case in point is a modern pontiff. I recall seeing him say a Mass on television before I was a Catholic, hearing the story behind it after I became a Catholic. The Holy Father was in America for one of his visits. A certain number of people were called upon to receive Communion directly from the Pope himself, and this select group was told ahead of time not to attempt to receive in the hand. At Communion time, one man decided to test the issue. He stood before the Pontiff with his hands extended to receive the Host. The Holy Father stood motionless with the Host in a position to place it on the man's tongue. It seemed like an hour passed as the man stubbornly stood with his hands extended, and the Pope stood equally fixed to place Our Lord on the man's tongue. The will of Pope St. John Paul II finally won out, and the man accepted Christ on his tongue.

The will of the Church is to allow us to receive Communion in the hand, but only because of the abuses heaped against the Holy Eucharist a lifetime ago. The heart of the Church, though, is for us to receive Jesus on the tongue, as St. John Paul II demonstrated.

Now let me ask you something. If one of your elderly or ill parents asked you to clean the kitchen or garage because he or she was physically limited to do the job properly, would you do it only well enough to get by, or would you do it the way you knew the parent would do it? If you love your parent, you would do it the way he or she would want it done. Since you now know how your Holy Mother the Church prefers us to receive Christ, do you really want to continue to receive Him in your hand? Think about it. This is What We Believe...Why We Believe It.

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