

As we continue this series, presenting the results of our recent Liturgical Questionnaire, we turn now to the topic of the manner of receiving Holy Communion. No one can doubt that in our day, the Church suffers from a grave lack of understanding of the nature of the Blessed Sacrament, the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Study after study has revealed to us that fewer and fewer Catholics believe that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. It is my assertion, and I am not alone in making it, that the lack of Eucharistic piety and practice has led to this erosion of Catholic faith in the Sacrament that the Second Vatican Council famously called “the source and summit of the Christian life.” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* §11-13, 14)

Altar Rail and Reception of Holy Communion

82% of respondents (4 in 5) said that they appreciate the opportunity to **receive Communion kneeling at the altar rail**. Support for this practice is even stronger among those who support the parish or attend regularly, those under age 45, and especially the 11:30 Mass and the *Missa Cantata*. Support is a little less, yet still very strong, among visitors (70%), those who attend the 5:30 Mass (73%), and ages 45 and up (77%).

Similarly, 80% of respondents are **not opposed to the reception of Communion kneeling**. Support for this practice is even stronger among those who support the parish (87%) or attend regularly (82%), those under age 45, and especially the 11:30 Mass (84%) and the *Missa Cantata* (94%). Support is a little less, yet still very strong, among visitors (72%), those who attend the 9:00 Mass (77%), and ages 60 and up (70%).

Overall, 3 out of 5 respondents **prefer to receive Communion on the tongue**. Among visitors and those who attend the 5:30 and 9:00 Masses, only about half of respondents indicate a preference for receiving Communion on the tongue. The strongest preference for receiving on the tongue is demonstrated by those who attend the 11:30 Mass (67%) and the *Missa Cantata* (92%), and the age 30-44 bracket (69%).

Overall, only 1 in 3 respondents (36%) report that **receiving from the Chalice, as opposed to the Host only, is important to them**. Slightly higher preference for receiving from the Chalice is given by those ages 45-59 (42%) and 9:00 Mass attendees (40%). The only group that places significantly less importance on receiving from the Chalice is those who attend the *Missa Cantata* (22%), where, by tradition and rubric, the Chalice is not offered.

Only 29% of respondents agree that they **prefer not to receive from the Chalice for reasons of health**. Visitors (20%), under age 30 (21%), and *Missa Cantata* attendees (23%) are even less likely to indicate health concerns as a factor.

78% of respondents say that they are **familiar with the Catholic doctrine of concomitance, which defines that reception of either the Host or the Chalice alone confers the whole Christ and no grace is withheld**. The segments that indicate slightly less understanding of this doctrine include the 5:30 Mass attendees (65%), visitors (66%), and ages 60 and up (73%). Those who indicate greater familiarity with the doctrine include those who attend the *Missa Cantata* (94%) and supporters of the parish (86%).

Almost no one (less than 1%) disagrees with the statement that **Holy Communion is a time to judge one's neighbor's manner of reception of Holy Communion**. This question was included as a matter of catechesis and also served as a control to show that respondents were actually paying attention to the questions and not answering blindly.

Most of the 30 write-in comments in this category, which represented 13% of all comments submitted, reflect personal preference for one practice over another, rather than judgments about the best practice for all. Several commenters request that a padded kneeler be added to the altar rail so that they might take part in kneeling at the altar rail. I am happy to note that the pad has been ordered and will be here, hopefully, for Easter.

So once again, we discover a great unity in our parish concerning Eucharistic piety and belief. Furthermore, this unity is carried out in the desire for the more traditional expressions of our faith, which bolster the faith we profess. In an attempt to “be balanced” we had implemented the use of the altar rail only at the 11:30 and 1:30 Mass, leaving things as they had been at the other Masses. However, based on these results, it would seem there is great support for us making the full use of the altar rail available at all Masses. I would encourage anyone at the 5:30 or 9:00 Mass to spread out along the rail if they are so moved, and perhaps from a grassroots origin, this practice of receiving along the rail can become standard at all our Masses.

Sincerely in Christ Jesus,



Rev. J. David Carter, JCL, Pastor and Rector