

**Directory of the Church in Japan
Concerning the Distribution and
Reception of Holy Communion
during Mass**

Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan

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I. The Aim of This Directory

1. At the Last Supper the Lord Jesus in the company of his apostles instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood and commanded them to do this in memory of him until he should come again (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23-26). The church, faithful to the Lord's commandment, has continued to celebrate the Mass as a memorial of the Lord's sacrifice. When the faithful receive the bread and wine that have been consecrated during Mass and become the Body and Blood of Christ, they become one body united with their head, Christ. Then "the unity of believers, who form one body in Christ (1 Cor. 10:17), is expressed"¹, and the faithful grow as a community of love.

The aim of this Directory is to make clear the meaning of Holy Communion and to ensure that faith and reverence for the Eucharist are shown when receiving it, so that the faithful may receive the Body and Blood of Christ without anxiety and confusion.

II. Matters to be Considered in Advance

Catechesis concerning Holy Communion

2. Those responsible in parishes and religious communities must teach community members, at a suitable time and in a practical way, the meaning of Holy Communion and how it should be received. Also catechumens, those of separated ecclesial Communities who wish to be members of the Catholic church, and children who are preparing to make their first Holy Communion must all be taught at a suitable time what they need to know about Holy Communion and how it is to be received.

¹ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, November 21, 1964, n. 3.

Regarding the posture at the moment of receiving Holy Communion

3. Regarding the posture of communicants the *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* states that “the faithful communicate either kneeling or standing, as determined by the Conference of Bishops.”² According to this norm, in Japan, depending on the place where the Mass is to be celebrated and except in the case of those who are unable to stand for some special reasons, as a general rule, Holy Communion is received standing. When the faithful communicate with a common posture, as well as showing a sign of the unity among those attending Mass,³ it also helps towards a smooth flow of the procession of the faithful. However, it is not licit to deny Holy Communion to any of Christ’s faithful solely on the grounds that the person wishes to receive the Eucharist kneeling.⁴

4. Those who wish to receive Holy Communion, as a rule, come forward in a procession⁵. Then communicants, with hands joined, bow to show respect for the Eucharist and stand before the minister of Holy Communion.⁶

Receiving Communion in the hand

5. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Japan in a letter of June 20, 1970, requested of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship that the faithful in Japan might receive Communion in the hand. The permission was granted on June 27 (Prot.n.2286/70). Regarding a practical way of reception of Communion in the hand, see this Directory, n. 11.

The minister of Holy Communion

6. The ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are: bishops, priests or deacons.⁷ Bishops and priests in virtue of the sacred Ordination they have received offer the Sacrifice of the Mass in the person of Christ.⁸ Accordingly, it was originally the duty of bishops and priests to distribute Communion. If a deacon were present, he could assist the Bishop and priest in distributing Communion.⁹

² *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* [=IGMR] (2002), n. 160.

³ Cf. IGMR, n. 42.

⁴ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Instruction, *Redemptionis Sacramentum: On Certain Matters to be Observed or to be Avoided Regarding the Most Holy Eucharist* [=RS], March 25, 2004, n. 91.

⁵ Cf. IGMR, nos. 44 and 160.

⁶ Cf. IGMR, n. 160.

⁷ Cf. *Codex Iuris Canonici*, can. 910§1; RS, n. 154.

⁸ Cf. IGMR, nos. 4 and 93.

⁹ Cf. IGMR, nos. 94, 171e, 182.

When Holy Communion is being distributed under both kinds, “the chalice is usually administered by a deacon or, when no deacon is present, by a priest, or even by a duly instituted acolyte or another extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, or by a member of the faithful who, in case of necessity, has been entrusted with this duty for a single occasion.”¹⁰

7. Bishops, priests or deacons present in the congregation can assist the celebrant in distributing Holy Communion. If there are no ministers of Holy Communion present who can assist the celebrant, when the number of communicants be large or the celebrant cannot distribute Communion because of special circumstances such as a sickness or advanced age, he “may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him, i.e., duly instituted acolytes or even other faithful who have been deputed for this purpose.”¹¹ In case of necessity, the celebrant may depute suitable faithful as extraordinary ministers and ask them to distribute Communion.¹²

Bread and Wine

8. When we receive Communion, we participate in the sacrifice actually being celebrated. It is important that the signs of this be clearly shown. ¹³ “It is appropriate that at least some parts of the Eucharistic Bread coming from the fraction should be distributed to at least some of the faithful in Communion. Small hosts are, however, in no way ruled out when the number of those receiving Holy Communion or other pastoral needs require it, and indeed small hosts requiring no further fraction ought customarily to be used for the most part”.¹⁴

When Communion is given under both kinds, care should be taken lest too much of the Blood of Christ remains to be consumed at the end of Mass. So a suitable amount of wine is to be prepared before Mass.¹⁵

Paten and Chalice

9. In order to show that the faithful receive the Body of Christ through breaking one Bread, “for the consecration of hosts, a large paten may

¹⁰ *IGMR*, n. 284a. Cf. *IGMR*, nos. 94 and 182.

¹¹ *IGMR*, n. 162.

¹² Cf. *IGMR*, n. 162; *RS*, nos. 155-160.

¹³ Cf. *IGMR*, n. 85.

¹⁴ *RS*, n. 49. Cf. *IGMR*, n. 321.

¹⁵ Cf. *IGMR*, n. 285a.

appropriately be used; on it is placed the bread for the priest and the deacon as well as for the other ministers and for the faithful".¹⁶ If the paten is not sufficient for distribution of the Body of Christ, a pyx (ciborium) can be prepared. The celebrant, a deacon or a concelebrant can break or divide the hosts and place them into the pyx (ciborium).¹⁷

It is recommended that a large chalice be prepared.¹⁸ When several chalices are necessary for Holy Communion under both kinds, because of the value to be given to the signs, it is desirable to use a main chalice of larger dimensions and prepare smaller ones as needed.¹⁹ However, after the consecration, the pouring of the Blood of Christ from one chalice to another should be avoided.²⁰

III. Communion under Only One Kind

Receiving the fullness of Christ

10. The Council of Trent says that "Christ, whole and entire, and the true Sacrament, is received even under only one species, and that as far as the effects are concerned, those who receive under only one species are not deprived of any of the grace that is necessary for salvation."²¹ The pastor is required to teach this to the faithful.

Communion under only the form of bread

11. As mentioned in this Directory, n. 4, a communicant who wishes to receive the Sacrament in the hand stands before the priest with hands joined. Then placing one hand under the other extends them. The priest raises the host slightly and shows it to the communicant saying: 'The Body of Christ'. The communicant responds: 'Amen'. The priest then places the host in the hand of the communicant. The communicant moves aside to make room for the next person and reverently takes the host in the fingers of one hand and while holding the other hand underneath, receives on the tongue. The communicant

¹⁶ IGMR, n. 331.

¹⁷ Cf. IGMR, n. 240.

¹⁸ Cf. IGMR, nos. 207b and 285a.

¹⁹ Cf. RS, n. 105.

²⁰ Cf. RS, n. 106.

²¹ IGMR, n. 282. Cf. Ecumenical Council of Trent, Session XXI, *Doctrina de communione sub utraque specie et parvulorum*, July 16, 1562, chapters 1-3: Denz-Schön 1725-1729.

then consumes the host entirely and returns to the pews.²²

In the distribution of Communion, it is not permitted for the communicant to take the host shown by the priest with his or her fingers.²³

12. As mentioned in this Directory, n. 4, the communicant who wishes to receive the Sacrament on the tongue stands before the priest with hands joined. The priest raises the host slightly and shows it to the communicant saying: 'The Body of Christ'. The use of the communion-plate, held by a minister under the communicant's mouth should be retained, so as to avoid the danger of the sacred host or some fragment of it falling.²⁴ The communicant responds: 'Amen', and receives the host on the tongue. Then moving aside to make room for the next person, the communicant consumes the host entirely and returns to the pews.²⁵

Communion under only the form of wine

13. In special cases when the Sacrament cannot be received under the form of consecrated bread it can be given under the form of consecrated wine. In such cases, in keeping with this Directory, n. 20, a chalice is used from which the communicant can receive the Precious Blood.

In the case of a sick or elderly person a tube or spoon can be used to give the Blood of Christ.²⁶ In such cases a communion-plate and purificator should be held under the communicant's mouth. The celebrant should be careful that none of the Precious Blood is spilt.

IV. Holy Communion under Both Kinds

Holy Communion under both kinds

14. "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

²² Cf. *IGMR*, n. 161.

²³ Cf. *IGMR*, n. 160.

²⁴ Cf. *IGMR*, n. 118; *RS*, n. 93.

²⁵ Cf. *IGMR*, n. 161.

²⁶ Cf. *IGMR*, n. 245.

between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Father's Kingdom."²⁷

When Holy Communion may be received under both kinds

15. According to the rules of the *Instructio Generalis Missalis Romani* regarding Communion under both kinds, the following points are to be kept in mind.

"In addition to those cases given in the ritual books,²⁸ Communion under both kinds is permitted for:

- a) priests who are not able to celebrate or concelebrate Mass;
- b) the deacon and others who perform some duty at the Mass;
- c) members of communities at the conventual Mass or 'community' Mass,²⁹ along with seminarians, and all who are engaged in a retreat or are taking part in a spiritual gathering."³⁰

16. Furthermore, the *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* indicates that "the diocesan Bishop is also given the faculty to permit Communion under both kinds whenever it may seem appropriate to the priest to whom the community has been entrusted as its own shepherd, provided that the faithful have been well instructed and there is no danger of profanation of the Sacrament or of the rite's becoming difficult because of the large number of participants or some other reason."³¹

Based on the above norms, in Japan, it is left to the judgment and to the responsibility of the priest celebrant to decide when to distribute Holy Communion under both kinds to the faithful participating in the Mass.

Necessary preparations before distributing Communion under both kinds

17. When Communion under both kinds is to be given in a community, it is necessary to refer to the *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, the Roman Ritual "Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass", "Catechism of the Catholic Church", or Papal documents³² and Vatican publications³³ regarding

²⁷ IGMR, n. 281.

²⁸ Cf. For example, The Roman Pontifical "Rites of Ordination", The Roman Ritual "Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults", or "Rite of Marriage" etc.

²⁹ This 'community' is not the parish community and indicates a specific group such as a monastery. Cf. IGMR, n. 114.

³⁰ IGMR, n. 283.

³¹ IGMR, n. 283.

³² Cf. For example, Paul VI, Encyclical Letter, *Mysterium Fidei: On the Doctrine and Worship of the Eucharist*, September 3, 1965; John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Dominicae caenae: On*

the Eucharist and to explain the meaning and aim of Communion under both kinds to regular members of the community beforehand.

How Communion under both kinds is to be distributed

18. After the principal celebrant's Communion, the concelebrants in keeping with the *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, nos. 242-249, receive the Sacrament. Deacons and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion do not receive Communion by themselves like the principal celebrant and the concelebrants, but must receive Communion under both kinds from the priest.³⁴

The extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should not approach the altar before the priest has received Communion.³⁵ The deacon or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion having received Communion under both kinds from the priest, the priest celebrant hands the deacon or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion patens (or ciboria) and chalices for distribution to the faithful. When the principal celebrant is giving these vessels to the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, the deacon may assist him.

19. Communicants, according to this Directory n. 4, approach the priest, and following the indication of this Directory, nos. 20 and 21, they can receive the host.

20. When Communion in the form of the Blood of Christ is carried out by communicants' drinking directly from the chalice, each communicant follows the norms given in this Directory, nos. 11 and 12, and having received the Body of Christ, approaches and stands before the minister of the chalice. The minister says: 'The Blood of Christ', and the communicant responds: 'Amen'. The minister hands over the chalice to the communicant. The communicant receives it in both hands and raises it to his or her mouth and drinks a little of the Blood of Christ. Handing the chalice back to the minister, the communicant

the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, February 24, 1980; Id., Apostolic Letter, *Dies Domini*, May 31, 1998; Id., Encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, April 17, 2003; Id., Apostolic Letter, *Mane nobiscum Domine*, October 7, 2004; Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum caritatis*, February 22, 2007.

³³ Cf. For example, Congregation of Rites, Instruction, *Eucharisticum Mysterium: On Worship of the Eucharist*, May 25, 1967; Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Instruction, *Redemptionis Sacramentum: On Certain Matters to be Observed or to be Avoided Regarding the Most Holy Eucharist*, March 25, 2004.

³⁴ Cf. IGMR, nos. 182, 244, 246.

³⁵ Cf. IGMR, n. 162.

returns to the pews. The minister wipes the rim of the chalice with the purificator.³⁶

21. When Communion is carried out by intinction, the priest takes a host, dips it partly into the chalice held by a minister at his side, and, showing it, says: 'the Body and Blood of Christ'. Another minister should place a communion-plate under the mouth of the communicant.³⁷ The communicant responds: 'Amen' and receives the Sacrament on the tongue. The communicant consumes the Sacrament entirely and returns to the pews.³⁸ The host that has been dipped in the chalice must not be received in the communicant's hand.³⁹

22. Even if Communion is distributed under both kinds, the faithful who wish to receive Communion under the species of bread alone should be granted their wish.⁴⁰

23. When Communion is distributed under both kinds, the faithful, except the celebrant and concelebrants, should not make use of the following ways to receive Communion.

- 1) Taking the chalice left on the altar by oneself and receiving the Blood of Christ.
- 2) Dipping the host into the chalice and receiving the Sacrament.
- 3) Having received the Blood of Christ from the chalice, the communicant handing the chalice to the next communicant.⁴¹

In the case of part of the Body of Christ and the Blood of Christ remaining at the end of Mass

24. When the distribution of Communion is finished, the priest or the deacon or the duly instituted acolyte immediately and completely consumes at the altar any consecrated Wine that happens to remain.⁴²

When part of the consecrated hosts remain, any of the above mentioned ministers either consumes them at the altar or carries them to the place

³⁶ Cf. *IGMR*, n. 286.

³⁷ Cf. *IGMR*, n. 118; *RS*, n. 93.

³⁸ Cf. *IGMR*, n. 287.

³⁹ Cf. *RS*, n. 104.

⁴⁰ Cf. *IGMR*, n. 284.

⁴¹ Cf. *IGMR*, n. 160.

⁴² Cf. *IGMR*, nos. 163, 182, 284.

designated for the reservation of the Eucharist.⁴³

V. In Conclusion

25. On any aspect of the distribution and reception of Holy Communion that is not covered by this Directory, the norms of the Church's universal and particular law, the directives of the diocesan Bishop, and the instincts of sound liturgical piety in accordance with these laws and directives are to be followed.

⁴³ Cf. *IGMR*, n. 163.