

## Receiving Holy Communion with Reverence

Cardinal Robert Sarah, Prefect of the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has recently been quoted in local papers as author of a foreword to a book on Holy Communion, suggesting 'that receiving communion on the hand was part of diabolical attack on the Church to diminish reverence for God'. It can only be good for baptised members of the Body of Christ to discern anew just how reverently we prepare to receive this Sacrament and how well we prepare both children and adults for the reception of Holy Communion.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal provides a clear and simple instruction, with respectful acknowledgement of both tradition and contemporary practice. It is to be noted however, that our 'contemporary practice' of receiving Communion in the hand, finds its origin amongst the teaching of the earliest Fathers of the Church.

Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386), on Receiving Communion

*...make your left hand a throne for your right hand, since the latter is to receive the King. Then, while answering Amen, receive the body of Christ in the hollow of your hand. Next, carefully sanctify your eyes through contact with the sacred body, then take it into your mouth, being careful that nothing is lost...After partaking of Christ's body, go to the chalice of his blood. Do not stretch out your hands for it. Bow your head and say 'Amen' to show your homage and reverence and sanctify yourself by partaking also of Christ's blood.*

Now look in the 'mirror' of contemporary teaching in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal.

'In the dioceses of New Zealand, standing is the most common posture for receiving Holy Communion, though individual members of the faithful may choose to receive Communion while kneeling. When approaching to receive Holy Communion, the faithful bow in reverence of the Sacrament they are to receive.....the Priest raises the host slightly and shows it to each, saying, *The Body of Christ*. The communicant replies, *Amen* and receives the Sacrament either on the tongue, or on the hand, the choice lying with the communicant.' GIRM # 160-161

In summary:

- Make a simple bow of the head as you approach
- look reverently at the host as it is shown to you
- reply to priest or minister with the word, 'Amen'
- receive the Host on hand or tongue

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdGkTdv4Dt4>