



DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



Pastoral Letter on the Distribution of Communion Under Both Species *To the Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, Religious, and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Fort Worth*

October 1, 2026

Dear Friends in Christ,

In recent years, the Church in the United States has given renewed attention to the mystery of the Most Holy Eucharist. As your Bishop, I write to you to reflect briefly on this great sacrament and to provide clear direction regarding the distribution of Holy Communion under both species within the Diocese of Fort Worth. The Eucharist is the heart of the Church's life, and it is my responsibility to ensure that it is celebrated with reverence, doctrinal clarity, and fidelity to the Church's discipline.

The Mystery of the Eucharist

The Most Holy Eucharist is the Church's greatest treasure. In it, Christ Himself is truly present—Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—under the appearances of bread and wine. In every celebration of the Mass, the one sacrifice of Christ in his passion, death, and resurrection is made present sacramentally so that his saving grace may be given to us here and now.

The Eucharist is also the sacred banquet in which the faithful are nourished with the Body and Blood of the Lord. In receiving Holy Communion, we are united more closely to Christ and with each other in the bonds of charity. It must be clearly understood that, by the doctrine of concomitance, Christ is received whole and entire under either species alone. For this reason, nothing is lacking when Holy Communion is received under the species of bread alone or the species of wine alone.

The Eucharist and the Unity of the Church

The Eucharist is the sacrament of unity. It both signifies and brings about communion with Christ and with one another as members of His Body, the Church. Each celebration of the Mass is not a private act but an act of the whole Church, Head and members, offered in communion with the diocesan bishop and the Roman Pontiff.

Since the Eucharist expresses the unity of the Church, its celebration must also reflect that unity in both faith and discipline. The Church's liturgical norms serve this purpose. They are not arbitrary but exist to safeguard the dignity of the sacrament and to ensure that what we celebrate truly reflects what we believe.

THE CATHOLIC CENTER

800 West Loop 820 South • Fort Worth, TX 76108 • (817) 560-3300 • Fax (817) 244-8839 • fwdioc.org
officeofthebishop@fwdioc.org



DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



The Responsibility of the Bishop

As the Bishop of the Diocese of Fort Worth, I have been entrusted with the responsibility to regulate the celebration of the sacred liturgy. This responsibility includes determining when Holy Communion may be distributed under both species (See GIRM #283).

The Church permits the faithful to receive under both species in certain circumstances as a fuller sign of the Eucharistic banquet. At the same time, she teaches clearly that this is not the ordinary manner of reception. The faithful must always remember that reception under one species alone is complete participation in the Eucharist.

In exercising this responsibility, I must ensure that the Eucharist is treated with the reverence it deserves and that its distribution does not give rise to confusion or diminish its dignity.

The Times When Communion Under Both Species Is Permitted

After consultation and careful consideration of the Church's norms, I have determined that within the Diocese of Fort Worth the distribution of Holy Communion under both species will be limited to specific occasions.

Accordingly, Communion under both species may be offered only on the following occasions:

- Priestly or Diaconal Ordinations
- The Chrism Mass
- The Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday
- The Easter Vigil
- At Mass where adults are confirmed and receive first Eucharist (for the newly confirmed)
- The Mass of Holy Matrimony (only for the Catholic bride and Catholic groom)
- Masses of Religious Profession
- The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)
- Masses at convents and retreat centers within the Diocese
- At newly ordained priests' first Mass
- Other celebrations of similar solemnity only with my explicit approval

Even on these occasions, the distribution of the Precious Blood is to take place only when it can be done reverently, when there are sufficient ministers, and when there is no danger of profanation or disorder. If these conditions cannot be met, Communion is to be distributed under the species of bread alone. Outside of these occasions, Holy Communion is to be distributed under one species. Deacons assisting at Mass should receive the Precious Blood from the Chalice (See GIRM 160-164).

THE CATHOLIC CENTER

800 West Loop 820 South • Fort Worth, TX 76108 • (817) 560-3300 • Fax (817) 244-8839 • fwdioc.org
officeofthebishop@fwdioc.org



DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



The Church's discipline regarding the manner of distribution is to be observed in all cases. The Precious Blood is to be administered by an ordinary minister, if sufficient number are not available, then by extraordinary ministers. Practices such as self-service, passing the chalice, or self-intinction are not permitted. In keeping with the rubrics and norms for the Liturgy, only priests, deacons, and instituted acolytes are to purify the vessels. Deacons and instituted acolytes are to purify vessels away from the altar and at the credence table only. Vessels are not to be purified in the sacristy even if purification takes place after Mass (See GIRM 160-164, *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion* #28).

Catechesis and Formation

Proper catechesis is essential. Clear teaching and instruction on the doctrine of the Real Presence, on the meaning sacramental character conferred at priestly ordination, the meaning of the Eucharist as sacrifice and banquet, and the truth that Christ is fully received under either species is to take place at all parishes.

Please remember that reception from the chalice is not required and that no one should feel obliged to receive under both species. Additionally, catechesis is to lead to reverence due to the Blessed Sacrament, both during the liturgy and outside of it.

Those who assist in the distribution of Holy Communion, especially extraordinary ministers, must be properly formed so that their service is carried out with care, dignity, and fidelity to the Church's norms.

Conclusion

The Eucharist is the source and summit of our Christian life. In it, Christ gives Himself to us completely. Our response must be one of faith, reverence, and gratitude.

As we continue to deepen our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, let us remain faithful to the Church's teaching and discipline so that the dignity of this Sacred Mystery is preserved and the Communion of the Church is strengthened.

Entrusting you to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Michael F. Olson

Most Reverend Michael F. Olson, STD, MA
Bishop of Fort Worth

THE CATHOLIC CENTER

800 West Loop 820 South • Fort Worth, TX 76108 • (817) 560-3300 • Fax (817) 244-8839 • fwdioc.org
officeofthebishop@fwdioc.org