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# How to receive the Eucharist worthily

If we approach the Eucharist unworthily, we not only offend God but also harm ourselves.

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In the Eucharist, we possess the greatest gift. Within it, Jesus gives us his entire self — body, blood, soul, and divinity — to be consumed under the appearance of bread and wine. But, as the saying goes, with great gifts comes great responsibility. To receive the fruits of this gift, we need to prepare ourselves and then live our lives in accord with it. If we approach the Eucharist unworthily, we not only offend God but also harm ourselves. Even Hollywood can see that on occasion, as the knight in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* explains, “For the unrighteous, the Cup of Life holds everlasting damnation.

Let’s think of some other examples. Can you imagine showing up to your wedding while being engaged to someone else? What if you arrived at your first day of work in your pajamas? How about going to a fancy restaurant and putting your food on a paper plate? More seriously, imagine a general revealing your country’s plans to the enemy. The most important things in life require commitment, comportment, dignity, and fidelity. Therefore, we need commitment to Christ and cannot be attached to anything above him. We must be clothed in his grace and preserve the purity

of our baptism. When we come to eat the Lord's body, we need to come prepared as a worthy vessel that can hold the gift, rather than a leaky container. And we can't take the gift and turn it over to the enemy by falling into sin.

St. Paul warns us of the consequences of receiving the Lord unworthily in his first letter to the Corinthians: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died" (1 Cor 11:27-30). Paul foresees serious consequences for profaning the Eucharist. How, then, should we receive the Eucharist worthily?

First, we need faith in Jesus's true presence in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is not a symbol. It is the body and blood of Jesus that he offers us to enter into communion with him. In John 6, Jesus explains how he gives us his very self to eat as our new Passover lamb: "For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" (Jn 6:55). Without faith in this true presence, we approach the Eucharist as if we were eating a regular piece of bread, dishonoring Jesus's gift of himself in the sacrament. Faith enables us to discern his body, as Paul says, opening our hearts to Jesus's love and grace.

Second, we also need to remove obstacles to receiving the grace of Jesus's presence. If we are in a state of serious, mortal sin, we are not able or ready to enter into the communion that Jesus offers us. The Church offers us the Sacrament of Confession to bring us into right communion with God. In fact, the Church requires us to confess our sins once a year, because we all are in need of mercy and forgiveness. God enables us to lay our burdens aside and to come to him with a clear conscience. Going to confession creates the right disposition of openness and purity so that we can examine ourselves, as Paul instructs us.

Third, devotion enables us to honor Jesus's presence by approaching him with reverence and love. We build devotion through prayer, including before and after Mass, by uniting ourselves to Christ's offering of himself at Mass, and even by our posture and attitude. Do we act like Jesus is really present at Mass? Do we come to communion like we are approaching the king of the universe? If we come to communion solely out of a routine habit, with a casual or mundane disposition, it would be hard to "discern the body" of Jesus. Rather, we should approach Mass with the greatest expectation as the most important moment of our week when we meet the Lord and become one with him.

Finally, receiving worthily flows from a life lived in conformity to the Eucharistic gift. We should not confine communion with Jesus to an hour a week. It should blossom into a Eucharistic life, with Jesus's presence abiding in us and reaching out to others. If our life is going in a different direction, we

need to turn back in the right direction to make a worthy communion. The Eucharist requires continuous conversion, turning away from the world and toward Jesus, allowing his grace to shape everything that we do.

The Eucharist is a source of life, not death. If we approach it worthily, we can profess that for the righteous, for those who receive the Lord's mercy and approach with faith and devotion, the Cup of Life holds everlasting salvation.

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