

The Deacon's Bench



by Deacon
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July, The Month of the Precious Blood of Jesus

Reflections
on Sacred
Scripture

Just as May is the month of Mary, and November is the month to remember the dead, July is the month of the Precious Blood of Jesus. Why a special month to honor the Precious Blood and its sacramental presence at Mass? Blood, in the Hebrew understanding, is the 'life' of a person or an animal. This is why Kosher requirements prohibit the eating of blood, out of a profound respect for life – all life. The Blood of Christ that is poured out for us in Holy Communion is his life itself made present to us.

Jesus tells us, "Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you will not have life in you (Jn. 6:53)". This is why we receive him in Holy Communion, to have his life in us and to share that life it with others. In communion, Jesus heals us, reconciles us, and takes us to himself. He empowers us to live in the Kingdom of God here and now. "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done...", we say each week. Holy Communion is the 'real food' essential to live our life in Christ. And the liturgy itself invites us to receive under both kinds, the body and the blood. But many don't take the Blood of Christ.

There are reasons why taking the cup is avoided. Some of us are unable to take alcohol of any kind, others have medical conditions that preclude receiving the chalice at Holy Communion. But for many of us the choice not to receive from the chalice is a matter of habit, or lack of experience in taking the cup – something we may have never done. Some find the idea unsanitary, but "... no episode of disease attributable to the shared communion cup has ever been reported".¹ The Church encourages us to do so, and as a deacon of the Church, who ministers the Precious Blood, I invite each of you to consider taking the chalice at Holy Communion. Let's look together at what the Church has to say.

The norm established for the Dioceses of the United States of America is that Holy Communion is to be received standing, unless an individual member of the faithful wishes to receive Communion while kneeling. In the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Communion under both kinds, the Body and Blood of Christ, is normative on Sundays and holy days – as well as at weekday Masses. Saint Mel Parish makes both species available at every Mass.

Each communicant is free to choose or not to choose Communion under both kinds. "But 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 between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Father's Kingdom (GIRM #281)."²

After each person has received the Precious Blood, the minister wipes both the inside and outside of the rim of the chalice with a purificator and turns the chalice slightly before repeating the procedure for the next communicant. I share this with you as a deacon because, "If Communion is given under both kinds, the Deacon himself administers the chalice to the communicants ..." (GIRM, #182).

It is my joy and privilege to do so.

¹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/3284951/>

² General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20030317_ordinamento-messale_en.html