

Receiving Communion: a First Sunday Explanation

The Eucharist (Communion) is the center of our worship tradition. In it God comes to us directly. It is the rite which binds us together as a community and as God's people in the world. Therefore over the centuries of the church many practices have developed to aid our reverence and to help us focus appropriately, to honor God's presence and to enhance our reception. Here are answers to a few frequently asked questions, as they pertain to our worship at Saint James:

Who can give communion? The Body/Bread is given by the priest or deacon. The Blood/Wine may be given by a lay person.

Who can receive communion? Anyone who wishes to be closer to Christ.

Can children receive? Yes, as long as their parents approve.

Don't we need to be confirmed first? No. Baptism brings full membership in the Church. The Eucharist is our special meal, for everyone.

What if I do not want to receive the Wine/Blood for any reason? Anyone who receives even just a little of the bread has complete communion with God, just as if receiving a full piece of bread and some wine. Similarly, it is possible to communicate by receiving only the wine.

What if I do not wish to receive Communion? You may still come to the Altar Rail with everyone else and cross your arms over your chest as a signal that you do not wish to receive. The priest will lay her hands on your head and give you a blessing. This is appropriate for adults as much as for babies or children who do not yet receive.

Do I have to kneel? Many people like to kneel at the Altar Rail as a sign of reverence, but it is also completely appropriate to stand to receive.

Who can give communion? The Body/Bread is given by the priest or deacon. The Blood/Wine may be given by a lay person.

Why do we use silver vessels? We use them as a way to honor God with our very best, but we also use silver because it helps to discourage germs.

What happens to any 'left overs'? Wine that is still in the chalice goes back to the earth, either by being poured directly on the ground, or by being poured into the Piscina, a special sink in the sacristy which goes directly to the ground. Wine that has been blessed by not poured into a chalice, as well as unconsumed blessed bread is put in the special little cupboard called the Tabernacle, to be saved for future communions, particularly communion to be taken to people who are sick or for whatever reason are unable to be with the community for the celebration.

What if I am stuck at home or in hospital - can I still have Communion? Absolutely. Once you let the clergy know of the need, one of them or a specially trained lay person can bring Communion, usually within the week.