



Receiving Holy Communion in the Byzantine Tradition

Historically, from the New Testament days on, the central act of worship, the very apex of spiritual sacrifice, took place “on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread.” (*Acts 20:7 NKJV/OSB*). The Eucharist has always been that supreme act of thanksgiving and praise to God and His Church.

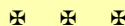
For 2,000 years, the Churches of the Catholic and Orthodox Traditions have received the Holy Gifts of the Body and Blood of Christ as just that: His Body and Blood. They have confessed this as a mystery: The bread is truly His Body, and that which is in the cup is truly His Blood, but one cannot say *how* they become so.

We partake of Communion at the Divine Liturgy, our greatest form of worship and thanksgiving to Almighty God. Therefore, those who have predisposed themselves and who share the Catholic faith, regardless of Rite (Roman, Byzantine, Alexandrian, Antiochene, Armenian, or Chaldean) are invited to approach the altar and receive Divine Eucharist

*“I am the living bread which
came down from heaven.
If anyone eats of this bread,
he will live forever;
and the bread that I shall give
is My flesh, which I shall give
for the life of the world.”*

John 6:51
(NKJV/OSB)

Infants and children of the Eastern Churches (Canon 710) who have received Communion at the time of their Baptism and Chrismation may receive Communion through the faith of their parent. Orthodox faithful may also receive (Canon 671).



In the Byzantine Tradition, the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist involves the use of leavened bread, out of which is cut one major particle, a square “Lamb of God” that bears the imprint *IC XC NIKA* (Jesus Christ Conquers) on it. Out of this Lamb is cut the many

particles that will be consecrated and placed into the holy *paterion* (chalice or cup) containing the consecrated wine.

The priest and the deacon receive the Body of Christ in a dry manner from the hand and drink directly from the chalice. After the priest and deacon have communed, they place both species together in the chalice and cover the Holy Gifts with the communion cloth. The priest or deacon then turns to the faithful and chants, “*Approach with fear of God and with faith.*” The people cross themselves and respond, “*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. God the Lord has revealed himself to us.*” This is followed by the Communion Hymn(s).

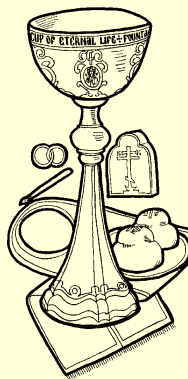
The faithful then approach the Holy Mysteries. Although the sign of the cross is traditionally made prior to receiving communion, please do so at a safe distance from the chalice and not while standing directly in front of the sacramental minister. This will avoid accidentally hitting the chalice or paten.

As you approach, fold your arms in the Cross of Saint Andrew (X) across your chest. Please move in as close as possible to the paten that is being held by the altar server. The priest/deacon will then recite, “*The servant/handmaid of God, (name), receives the most precious and holy Body and Blood of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ for the remission of all his/her sins and for life everlasting. Amen.*”

Tilt your head back slightly and open your mouth widely. Do not extend your tongue. Do not say, “Amen.” The priest/deacon will gently place the Eucharist into your mouth using a spoon. Wait for the priest/deacon to bring his hand away from your face, then close your mouth.

Should any of the sacred particles fall onto your chin, the altar server will offer you the communion cover to collect the fallen particles. Carefully step aside before crossing yourself/bowing. Again, this is to avoid hitting the communion vessels. If you are one of the last several communicants and you feel you will not be able to return to your seat before the Blessing with the Holy Gifts (*Save Your people, O Lord, and bless Your inheritance!*”), then it is proper to stand in the aisle or to the side and face the priest as he gives the blessing. When the priest returns the chalice to the Holy Table, you may return to your seat in preparation for the Litany of Thanksgiving and Dismissal.

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given You thanks [Gr. eucharisteses], He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’”



1 Corinthians 11:23–25
(NKJV/OSB)

