

Who can receive Communion with us?



When may Christians from
other Churches ask to
receive Holy Communion
in a Catholic Church ?



Consultative body to the Bishops' Conference
of England and Wales and consultative status
with the United Nations (ECOSOC).



What do we mean by sharing in Communion?

The Catholic Church's teaching on sharing the Eucharist holds together two important principles.

First, the Eucharist is a sign of unity, the unity of the faith that we share with those who are in communion with us. Secondly, the Eucharist is a gift from God, the spiritual food that helps us to overcome sin and grow in the life of faith. The first principle means that it is not generally appropriate that we share the Eucharist with those with whom we are not in full communion.

For us, this is a painful reminder of our separation, but it also motivates us to continue working for Christian unity, until that day when we can all worship together, fully united.

When can the Eucharist be shared with other Christians?

The second principle means, however, that it is sometimes desirable for the Eucharist to be shared in certain pastoral circumstances.

This could occur while a priest (or deacon) is accompanying an individual or a family in a pastoral context. In such circumstances it might become apparent to the minister that someone who is a baptised Christian, but not a Catholic, has a strong pastoral need to receive the strength and support of the sacrament.

Important family occasions such as Baptisms, First Communion, Weddings, and Funerals can give a particular focus to a family member's strong desire and need to receive the grace of the sacrament with their Catholic family.

In order to give Communion in such a situation the priest must first discern that the person is expressing a great desire and need to receive the sacrament. (For this reason permission is given to individuals, not whole categories of people). Secondly, he must be confident that the person shares the Catholic belief that Christ is truly present in the consecrated bread and wine.



How does one ask to receive Holy Communion?

If a family member who is not a Catholic wants to come to Communion with you for a particular special reason, the first step is for them to approach the parish priest, explain their situation and make this request.

The priest will discern whether to pass the request on to the Bishop or whether general guidelines issued by the Bishop are applicable.

Domestic Church

The Catholic Church considers that the Sacraments of Marriage and the Eucharist are closely linked and that a Christian family is a Domestic Church.

This is particularly significant for interchurch families who already share the sacraments of Baptism and Marriage and who long to share the Eucharist together.

“The close bond between married life and the Eucharist thus becomes all the more clear. For the food of the Eucharist offers the spouses the strength and incentive needed to live the marriage covenant each day as a ‘domestic church’.”

- Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (2016)#318

One Bread, One Body a teaching document of the Bishops' Conference, mentions particular situations when a close family member may feel an intense desire and need to receive Holy Communion, such as:

- The parent of a child being baptised during Mass or receiving First Holy Communion.
- The parent or wife of someone being ordained.
- The close family of the deceased at a Funeral Mass.

This does not exclude other situations.

As Pope St John Paul II notably said:

“It is a source of joy that Catholic ministers are able, in certain particular cases, to administer the sacraments of Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the Sick to Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church but who greatly desire to receive these sacraments, freely request them and manifest the faith which the Catholic Church professes with regard to these sacraments.”

- Ut Unum Sint (1995) #46

“We can now ask how much further we must travel until that blessed day when full unity in faith will be attained and we can celebrate together in peace the Holy Eucharist of the Lord.”

- Ut Unum Sint (1995) #77

“ Several times in our lives we have received permission, for my wife to receive Communion with me.

These were joyous occasions when we could pray together, share peace together and receive Our Lord together. ”

- From an Interchurch couple

This leaflet has been written by the National Board of Catholic Women (NBCW) in consultation with the Association of Interchurch Families, the Department for Dialogue and Unity of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in Rome.

This leaflet is based upon *One Bread, One Body*, the Bishops' Conference teaching document on the Eucharist in the life of the Church.

It is accessible online at:

www.cbcew.org.uk

Then go to: >CBCEW >Documents and Publications

>One Bread One Body - 1998

📍 National Board of Catholic Women: www.nbcw.co.uk

📍 Interchurch Families: www.interchurchfamilies.org.uk

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