

## **Five Questions on the Distribution of Holy Communion from the Tabernacle**

*Over the years, the Secretariat for the Liturgy has addressed the question of the distribution of Holy Communion from the tabernacle on numerous occasions. In the light of the more recent urgings of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and the instruction Redemptionis Sacramentum, the following questions and answers are provided as a resource to our readers.*

### **1. Should Holy Communion be regularly distributed from the tabernacle?**

No. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) makes clear that “it is most desirable that the faithful, just as the priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord’s Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the instances when it is permitted, they partake of the chalice,<sup>2</sup> so that even by means of the signs Communion will stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated.”<sup>3</sup>

### **2. How is the participation of the faithful more clearly expressed by the reception of hosts consecrated at the same Mass?**

This participation is manifested in the two great processions of the faithful at Mass.<sup>4</sup> In the presentation of the gifts first, the faithful present the bread and wine for the sacrifice. Along with the gift of their very lives. The very same bread and wine which they have offered is then consecrated by the action of the Priest and returned to them as the Body and Blood of their Lord when they come forward in procession to receive Holy Communion.

### **3. What is the primary purpose of reserving consecrated hosts in the tabernacle?**

Consecrated hosts are reserved in the tabernacle for the administration of viaticum, the communion of the sick and adoration of the Most Holy Eucharist outside Mass.<sup>5</sup>

### **4. What are the roots of the preference for the distribution of hosts consecrated at the same Mass?**

In 1742, Pope Benedict XIV urging the promotion of frequent reception of Holy Communion, highlights the reception of Holy Communion consecrated at the same Mass when “one and the same sacrifice is shared” by the priest and the faithful.<sup>6</sup> This teaching was echoed by Pope Pius XII in his 1947 encyclical on the liturgy, commending those who “when present at Mass, receive hosts consecrated at the same Mass, so that it is actually verified, ‘that as many of us, as, at this altar, shall partake of and receive the most holy body and blood of thy Son, may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace’ (Encyclical letter *Mediator Dei*, no. 121). The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council thus taught: “that more complete form of participation in the Mass by which the faithful, after the priest’s communion, receive the Lord’s body from the sacrifice, is strongly endorsed.”<sup>7</sup>

### **5. How can this goal be practically achieved?**

Pastors who have implemented this provision advise that the first step is the acceptance of the ideal of enabling the faithful to receive hosts consecrated in the same Mass.<sup>8</sup> The

training of sacristans, ushers, greeters and other ministers in determining the approximate size of the congregation has also been helpful in this regard.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Cf. GIRM, no. 283; *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*.

<sup>3</sup>GIRM, no. 85; cf. *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, nos. 31, 32, and *Immensae Caritatis*, pp. 267-268.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. GIRM, no. 44

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass* (HCWEOM), no. 7, *Eucharisticum Mysterium* #49

<sup>6</sup>*Centiores Effecti*, no. 7

<sup>7</sup>*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 55

<sup>8</sup>Cf. *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, no. 89.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. HCWEOM, no. 7