



A small gesture... with infinite depth

Few seemingly “simple” questions reveal as much about our faith as this one: **Can the consecrated Host be chewed?**

Some ask it timidly, others with concern, others even with a sense of guilt. And understandably so: we are speaking about the **Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar**, about the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

This article seeks to **educate, enlighten the conscience, and offer a clear spiritual guide**, without moralism, without fear, but with all the **theological seriousness and reverent love** that the topic deserves. Because this is not merely about *how* we receive Communion, but about **Whom we receive**.

1. The heart of the matter: what is the consecrated Host really?

Before answering *whether it can be chewed*, we must answer something prior:

□ **What is the consecrated Host?**

The Catholic faith teaches—and this is neither symbolic, poetic, nor metaphorical—that after the consecration:

*The substance of bread ceases to exist
and is truly converted into Christ Himself.*

This mystery is called **Transubstantiation**, solemnly defined by the Council of Trent.

Although the **sensible appearances** remain (taste, texture, form), what we receive is **Christ living and glorified**.

For this reason Saint Paul warns with striking severity:



“Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.”
(1 Corinthians 11:27)

2. What did Jesus do at the Last Supper? The key verb in Greek

Here we enter a fascinating—and little-known—point of the original biblical text.

In the Gospels, Jesus says:

“Take and eat.”
(Matthew 26:26)

In Greek, the verb used is:

φάγετε (phágete)

Imperative of the verb **φαγεῖν (phageîn)**

This verb **literally means “to eat,”** not “to swallow without chewing.” It is the same verb used for eating bread, fish, or any ordinary food.

But there is more.

In the Bread of Life discourse (John 6), when many are scandalized, Jesus does not soften His language; He **intensifies it**:

“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.” (John 6:54)



Here the verb changes:

τρῶγω (trógō)

Which means **“to chew, to gnaw, to crunch.”**

It is not a refined verb. It is **raw, physical, realistic.**

□ **Jesus deliberately chooses a verb that implies chewing.**

This decisively dismantles the idea that chewing the Host is, in itself, disrespectful.

3. So... yes or no? A clear answer from Catholic theology

Yes, the consecrated Host may be chewed.

It is not a sin.

It is not irreverent *per se*.

It does not invalidate Communion.

The Church has **never taught** that the Host must be swallowed without chewing.

In fact:

- From the earliest centuries, Communion was received as bread is eaten.
- The Fathers of the Church never forbade chewing.
- There is no magisterial document that condemns it.

□ **The problem is not mastication,**

□ **but the interior and exterior attitude with which one receives Communion.**

4. Why, then, do so many think that “it must not be done”?

Here we enter pastoral and spiritual territory.



Over the centuries, in order to **underscore reverence**, very careful devotional practices developed:

- Hosts became increasingly small
- Communion on the tongue
- Avoiding every fragment
- Absolute silence

All of this arises from a **deep love for the Blessed Sacrament**, not from a dogmatic obligation.

But something important happened:

□ **Devotional practice was confused with moral obligation.**

Thus, many of the faithful grew up thinking:

▮ *“If I chew, it is a lack of respect.”*

It is not.

What *would* be irreverent is:

- Receiving Communion distractedly
- Receiving without faith in the Real Presence
- Receiving in a state of mortal sin
- Receiving as if one were merely “taking something”

5. A key truth that few people know

Saint Thomas Aquinas explains something essential:

□ **Christ is present as long as the sacramental species remain.**

When the Host no longer has the appearance of bread (after digestion), **the sacramental presence ceases**, although the spiritual effect remains.



This means something very important:

- Chewing does **not “harm” Christ**
- It does not “break” Him
- It does not “destroy” Him

The glorified Christ **does not suffer**, is not fragile, and is not subject to physical processes like a mortal body.

6. A rigorous practical guide: how to receive Communion reverently today

Here we arrive at the most important part: **pastoral application**.

1. Before receiving Communion

- A serious examination of conscience
- Confession if there is mortal sin
- Eucharistic fast (at least one hour)
- An interior act of faith:
“Lord, I am not worthy...”

2. At the moment of receiving Communion

- Whether on the tongue or in the hand (where permitted)
- With recollection
- Without haste
- Without automatic gestures

3. To chew or not to chew?

- **You may chew gently**, without exaggeration
- Avoid abrupt or careless movements
- Do it with awareness of **Whom you are receiving**

A serene exterior gesture educates the heart.



4. After receiving Communion

This is the great forgotten moment.

□ **The minutes after Communion are pure gold.**

Saint John Paul II said:

“It is the most intimate moment of union with Christ in the entire Mass.”

Silence.

Thanksgiving.

Interior adoration.

7. The real scandal is not chewing... it is forgetting Whom we receive

In our current context—fast-paced, noisy, superficial—the problem is not whether the Host is chewed or not.

The real drama is:

- Receiving Communion without faith
- Receiving without confession
- Receiving without love
- Receiving as an automatic right

Jesus did not say:

“Take and consume a symbol.”



He said:

“*This is my Body.*”

(*Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου - Toutó estin to sōmá mou*)

8. Finally: a spiritual invitation

The next time you receive Communion, remember this:

You are not “doing something.”

You are **receiving Someone**.

You may chew the Host.

But do so as one who receives:

- his King,
- his God,
- his Savior,
- the Friend who makes Himself Bread.

Because in the end, **it is not the mouth that must be delicate,**
but the **heart that must burn with faith.**

“*Whoever eats this Bread will live forever.*”

(*John 6:58*)