At every Mass, the Church relives the greatest mystery of our faith: the Eucharist. On the altar, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, making present the same sacrifice of Calvary. But many Catholics wonder: **Should we receive communion under both species, bread and wine, or is it enough to receive only the consecrated bread?**

This question has been debated throughout history and still raises doubts today. In this article, we will explore the origin and practice of communion under both species, its meaning, and what the Church teaches about it today.

Biblical Origins: Jesus Institutes the Eucharist

The foundation of the Eucharist is found in the Last Supper when Christ took bread and wine and spoke the words that have shaped the faith of Christians for two thousand years:

> ***"Take and eat; this is my Body (...). Drink from it, all of you, for this is my Blood of the Covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."*** *(Mt 26:26-28)*

Jesus gave His Body and Blood as nourishment for the salvation of the world. At that moment, He instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice and commanded His disciples to repeat this gesture in His memory.

From the earliest centuries, the Church understood that receiving communion under both species fully expressed the sign of the Eucharistic banquet. However, it also recognized that receiving only one species still fully communicated Christ.

The History of Communion Practice

The Early Centuries: Receiving Both Bread and Wine

In the early Christian era, communion under both species was the norm. During celebrations, the faithful received the Body of Christ in their hands and drank from a common chalice.

However, this practice gradually changed. By the fifth century, for practical reasons and out of reverence for the Eucharist, some communities began distributing communion only under

the species of bread.

The Middle Ages: A Pastoral Solution

From the 13th century onwards, the Church in the West generalized communion under the species of bread alone. This was due to several reasons:

1. **To prevent the risk of desecration.** In large gatherings, it was difficult to distribute the wine without the risk of spills.
2. **Logistical ease.** With the Church's growth, administering the chalice to everyone became increasingly difficult.
3. **The development of Eucharistic doctrine.** The Church reaffirmed that Christ is fully present in each species.

It was the **Council of Trent (16th century)** that solemnly defined this teaching, declaring that **Christ is entirely present in both the bread and the wine and that receiving both species is not necessary for full communion.**

> ***"The one who receives only one species is not deprived of any grace necessary for salvation."*** *(Council of Trent, Session XXI, Chapter 3)*

Since then, communion under one species became the norm in the Latin Church, although priests have always received both species, as both are required for the consecration.

Can We Receive Communion Under Both Species Today?

With the **Second Vatican Council**, the Church allowed the faithful to receive communion under both species in certain circumstances. The current **Code of Canon Law** confirms this:

> ***"The faithful receive sacramental communion under the species of bread alone or, where permitted by law, under both species."*** *(CIC, can. 925)*

Today, communion under both species may be given in specific situations, such as:

- **Special Masses:** Weddings, ordinations, First Communions, solemn parish Masses.
- **Small communities:** Where the chalice can be distributed without risk of desecration.
- **Small groups of faithful:** Such as in monasteries or special liturgical gatherings.

However, this practice remains **exceptional**. In most parishes, communion is distributed only under the species of bread.

Is It Necessary to Receive Wine?

No, it is not necessary. The Church teaches that **Christ is fully present in each species.** This means that whoever receives only the consecrated bread receives **the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ.**

In fact, there are many reasons why the chalice is not always offered to the faithful:

- **Risk of spills and desecration.**
- **Hygiene concerns.** (Especially after the pandemic, many dioceses have suspended the use of the common chalice.)
- **Logistical difficulty.** (In large gatherings, distributing the chalice to all would be complicated.)

For these reasons, although it is **beautiful and meaningful** to receive communion under both species, the Church teaches that **it is not mandatory** and that receiving only the bread does not deprive us of any grace.

Conclusion: The Eucharist, the Fullness of Our Encounter with Christ

Communion under both species was the usual practice in the early Church and remains a valid option today. However, the Church has clearly taught that receiving only the consecrated bread is already a full reception of Christ.

The most important thing **is not the manner in which we receive communion, but the disposition of our heart.** As **St. Augustine** beautifully said:

> *“Be what you receive and become what you eat.”*

Every time we approach the Eucharist, we receive Christ Himself, unite ourselves to His sacrifice, and become one with Him. **That is the true miracle of communion.**

So, next time you receive Holy Communion, remember: **whether under one or both species, what matters is that it is Christ Himself who comes to you.**

What do you think about this topic? Have you ever received communion under both species? Share your experience, and let’s deepen our understanding of this mystery of love together.