INTRODUCTION
There are gestures that say it all. A handshake, a gaze, a genuflection… and at the heart of the Catholic faith, one gesture sums everything up: how we receive God Himself made Bread. In the rush of modern life, amid fast-paced Masses and large Communion lines, many faithful don't even ask the question: hand or tongue? Is it the same? Does it matter? What does Tradition say? What do theology and the saints teach us?

This article is not meant to stir controversy, but to form, to inspire, and perhaps move hearts to rediscover the deeper meaning of the sacred.

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1. **WHAT IS COMMUNION, AND WHY DOES THE MANNER OF RECEIVING IT MATTER?**

Receiving Holy Communion is not just another ritual. It is the climax of the Holy Mass: the very moment when the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ enters the soul of the faithful.

What is at stake is not merely an external form, but an inner disposition—an attitude of the heart reflected in our posture.
As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (n. 1384) says, **"the Lord addresses an invitation to us, urging us to receive him in the sacrament of the Eucharist."** But like every great mystery, it calls for preparation, reverence… and humility.

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2. **A BIT OF HISTORY: DID EARLY CHRISTIANS RECEIVE COMMUNION IN THE HAND?**

One of the most common arguments in favor of Communion in the hand is that it was supposedly practiced in the early Church. However, this requires clarification.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (4th century) is often quoted for saying:

> *"Make your left hand a throne for the right, as it is about to receive*

> *the King."*

But this quote, taken out of context, can be misleading.
Serious studies show that this practice was highly ritualized: the faithful would wash their hands, bow deeply, would not touch the Body of Christ with their fingers, would pick it up directly with the tongue from the palm, and would then purify any remaining particles. **This was not at all the casual "Communion in the hand" we often see today.**

Moreover, the Church quickly abandoned this form, partly due to abuses, but above all out of a growing awareness of the **Real Presence** of Christ in the Eucharist.

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3. **THE EVOLUTION TOWARD COMMUNION ON THE TONGUE**

From the 7th century onward, and more universally by the 9th century, **the Church adopted the practice of Communion on the tongue**, not as a trend or clerical imposition, but as the fruit of a deeper understanding of the Eucharistic Mystery.

The reasons were clear:

- **To prevent profanation of the Blessed Sacrament.**
- **To safeguard against the loss of fragments.**
- **To foster an attitude of humility and adoration.**

St. Thomas Aquinas explained:

> *"The minister gives the Body of Christ to the faithful, and they do not take it for themselves; and this out of reverence for this sacrament" (S.Th., III, q.82, a.3).*

Thus, Communion on the tongue was not a late invention, but a liturgical expression fully coherent with the Church's deepest Eucharistic theology.

4. **THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL AND THE SHIFT IN PRACTICE**

It's important to clarify that **the Second Vatican Council did not introduce Communion in the hand.**
What happened was that, in some European countries during the 1960s, this practice began **illegally**, without Rome's approval.

Faced with this disobedience, Pope Paul VI, through the Instruction *Memoriale Domini* (1969), consulted the world's bishops. The overwhelming majority **rejected Communion in the hand.** Nevertheless, Rome allowed it as an exception in certain places, **not as the norm.**

Since then, what began as a pastoral tolerance has become—often without theological reflection or catechesis—the standard practice in many parts of the world.

5. **WHAT DOES THE CHURCH TEACH TODAY?**

The Church **permits both forms**: Communion on the tongue and in the hand. But that does not mean they are theologically or liturgically equal.

The official document *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (2004) from the Congregation for Divine Worship says:

> *"Although each of the faithful always has the right to receive Holy Communion on the tongue, if they wish to receive it in the hand, care must be taken to ensure that no particles of the sacred host are lost."*

The main concern is the **respect for Eucharistic particles**, each of which contains **the whole Christ**. A single crumb is not "a little bit of Christ"—it is Christ Himself.

And here lies the core issue: **Communion in the hand, as commonly practiced today, often facilitates—unintentionally—irreverence and the loss of particles.**

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6. **WHAT DID THE SAINTS SAY—THOSE WHO LIVED THE EUCHARIST FULLY?**

The saints are not nostalgic figures but models of the Gospel lived in fullness. And many of them showed extraordinary reverence for the Eucharist:

- **St. Francis of Assisi** insisted that all altar cloths and sacred vessels be treated with the utmost care, as if they contained precious gold.
- **St. Teresa of Ávila** was moved to tears when meditating on the Real Presence of Jesus in the tabernacle.
- **St. Pio of Pietrelcina** only allowed Communion on the tongue, and with overwhelming reverence.
- **Blessed Teresa of Calcutta** openly opposed Communion in the hand, saying: “The greatest evil in the world today is Communion in the hand.”

Shouldn’t we take their words seriously?

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7. **THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL PERSPECTIVES: WHAT’S REALLY AT STAKE?**

This is not about condemning or judging someone who receives Communion in the hand with genuine devotion. The Church **does not forbid** that form. But we are called to rediscover the sacred, to **form consciences**, and to remember that **outward gestures shape inward attitudes**.

When we receive Communion kneeling and on the tongue, we are not only receiving Christ—we are telling Him with our whole body: “I am small. You are Lord. I adore You.”

Moreover, in a world where the sacred is trivialized and the sense of sin is fading, **returning to clear signs of adoration is a necessary spiritual medicine.**

8. **WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A CATHOLIC FAITHFUL?**

1. **Get informed and form your conscience.** Don't act out of habit, but out of faith.
2. **Examine your heart.** How do you receive Jesus? With what preparation? With what reverence?
3. **Rediscover Communion on the tongue.** Try it. Ask God to open your eyes to the mystery.
4. **Teach with charity.** Don't judge, but don't remain silent. Many people simply don't know.
5. **Be a witness with your body.** Your gesture may inspire others toward greater reverence.

CONCLUSION:

Devotion or irreverence? It all depends on the heart… but also on the gesture.

Now more than ever, the Church needs to return to what is essential. Communion is not a symbol, not a right, not a social act. It is the living God who gives Himself to us.
And if we truly believe He is there—present, entire, real—then **no reverence is too much.**

Because it's not about our hands… it's about His Majesty.

Will you take a step further in your journey of faith? Will you rediscover the holy trembling before the Eucharist? Jesus is waiting. Always.
But… how will *you* respond?