7. Guidelines for Receiving Holy Communion

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued the following guidelines in 1987 for receiving Holy Communion.

FOR CATHOLICS: Catholics fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist when they receive Holy Communion in fulfillment of Christ's command to eat His Body and drink His Blood. In order to be properly disposed to receive Communion, communicants should not be conscious of grave sin, have fasted for an hour, and seek to live in charity and love with their neighbors. Persons conscious of grave sin must first be reconciled with God and the Church through the Sacrament of Penance.

FOR OTHER CHRISTIANS: We welcome to this celebration of the Eucharist those Christians who are not fully united with us. It is a consequence of the sad division in Christianity that we cannot extend to them a general invitation to receive Communion. Catholics believe that the Eucharist is an action of the celebrating community signifying a oneness in faith, life and worship of the community. Reception of the Eucharist by Christians not fully united with us would imply a oneness which does not yet exist, and for which we all must pray.

FOR THOSE NOT RECEIVING COMMUNION: Those not receiving sacramental Communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another.

FOR NON CHRISTIANS: We also welcome to this celebration those who do not share our faith in Jesus. While we cannot extend to them an invitation to receive Communion, we do invite them to be united with us in prayer.