

To receive Holy Communion is 'to receive Christ himself who has offered himself for us' [Catechism 1382](#)
From earliest times, Christians have had clear guidelines as to how we should receive Jesus [Catechism 1355](#)

After the Second Vatican Council the Church opened up the option of receiving from the chalice at Mass for the lay faithful as a fuller sign of what takes place at Mass. It also stressed there be a clear understanding that "Christ, whole and entire, and the true sacrament is received under only one species"; we do not *have to* receive from the chalice, nor do we have more grace by drinking from it.

The New Missal recommends when we are to give the chalice at mass ([section 281](#)):

In religious communities (monasteries, convents and seminaries) and special events such as retreats. In most countries of the world today it is kept for these communities and occasions. When the use of the chalice at Mass was first allowed in the 1980's, the Church took her time to give proper guidelines. Lay people were permitted to help with Holy Communion at Mass in 'extraordinary circumstances', such as when a priest becomes frail or there is an unexpected crowd. In many parishes extraordinary ministers gradually took the place of ordinary ministers at Mass on a *regular, everyday basis*. The pope has asked that where this has happened, it be phased out. (*On certain questions regarding the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the sacred ministry of priest 101*). It sometimes takes time for the Church to marry her practice with her teaching.

Didn't Jesus at the Last Supper say: 'Drink this all of you'?

The Church teaches us what Jesus means by those words to the apostles present with him: when the priest drinks from the chalice *he* completes the sacrifice of Jesus' gift of his flesh and blood that were separated for us. But it is not necessary for everyone to drink from the chalice to receive the full grace of Holy Communion. Jesus is in fact present Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity under the forms both of the host and the precious blood. We don't receive any more Jesus or any more grace by receiving the Precious Blood as well as the Host.

Is there anything wrong with having the chalice at every mass?

Nothing in theory. Some worry about hygiene. There is the practical concern as to how much wine should be consecrated; the Church has clarified that only an ordinary minister – a bishop, priest or deacon – may 'purify' the chalice after Holy Communion. It is not right for them to have to finish too much Precious Blood for obvious reasons. But there must be a clear understanding that our encounter with Jesus isn't somehow greater, our holy communion more powerful, when we receive from the chalice; it is merely a fuller sign. We really need ordinary ministers to give the chalice if we wish to have it regularly at Mass; so we need to pray for more priests!

Why worry about this when people are starving to death in other parts of the world!?

The Mass is the most important thing we do as Christians. If we don't care about getting it right, what does it say about our care to do other things right?

Isn't this just going backwards? Shouldn't we moving forwards?

Yes we should move forward *on the right track*. St John Henry Newman showed us how the Catholic Church develops and grows in her teaching, but always in a truly conservative manner, preserving in essence what came before. Sometimes, however the Church can get a bit derailed in her practice; She has occasionally to be put *back on the right track* to move ahead authentically according to her own teaching (Galatians 2:11–14). So according to Catholic teaching, to move forward faithfully we need more priests and deacons if we want the chalice at every mass.

Could we have Holy Communion by 'intinction'?

Yes, the priest can dip the host in the precious blood before giving it to the communicant. It would mean we only receive on the tongue.

To sum up: receiving from the chalice at mass was introduced when practicable to express more fully the sign value of the mass, particularly in religious communities and at pastoral events. Those giving the chalice should be 'ordinary ministers' (bishops, priests or deacons). Extraordinary ministers weren't to be used on a regular basis at mass.

Let's make our encounter with Jesus one that is faithful to what the Church asks. God will bless us for it.