

“YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST” -Intercommunion- by Fr. Steve Lape

The question has arisen often for many people attending Catholic Mass, as well as Catholics who sometimes attend Protestant services that may include their own communion: Is it o.k. for non-Catholics to receive Catholic Communion, and is it o.k. to receive communion at Protestant liturgies? The short answer to both questions is: no and no. Even though we have come a long way since the Second Vatican Council of the early 1960s, in which the Catholic Church took greater strides in reaching out to other Christian denominations in encouraging dialogue with our non-Catholic brothers and sisters, and celebrating what we have in common in our beliefs (even having joint prayer services together with them at certain times and places), that doesn't mean that we are all one, fully united together in the Body of Christ, just yet. There are still many theological obstacles that we must continue to pray together and dialogue about, so that we may come to a more united understanding of what Christ desires of us to be truly one as a church. (Recall His prayer for oneness in faith in John's Gospel, chapter 17). It does a great disservice to just wish away all the differences on how we all see theology and morality, pretending like they don't exist, just so that we can all “get along” and “be nice to each other.” True justice goes hand in hand with true love. It's crucial to show love, patience & care to each other, no matter one's religious background (or of no religion). Yet, such true love & justice demand utmost integrity to Christ's Truth, just as He taught His Apostles and continues to teach us through His Holy Spirit in today's Church, through the lawful authority of the Pope, in union with all the lawful bishops and authorities of the Church, which flow from that unbroken apostolic chain that was begun 2,000 years ago by Jesus Himself.

Consider the U.S. Catholic Bishops' “Guidelines for the Reception of Communion” that can be found in the back of the blue Gather books in the pews. It states: “We welcome our fellow Christians to this celebration of the Eucharist as our brothers and sisters. We pray that our common baptism and the action of the Holy Spirit in this Eucharist will draw us closer to one another and begin to dispel the sad divisions which separate us. We pray that these will lessen and finally disappear, in keeping with Christ's prayer for us ‘that they all may be one’ (Jn 17:21). Because Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of the reality of the oneness of faith, life, and worship, members of those churches with whom we are not yet fully united are ordinarily not admitted to Holy Communion.” It goes on to say that there's no objection to certain members of several eastern churches (Orthodox,



Assyrian, Polish National) receiving Catholic Communion, with respect to their own churches' authority. The “Guidelines” imply that this general lack of unity also precludes receiving Protestant communion. Just receiving it to be polite or nice is not what Jesus had in mind regarding truth & faith integrity. Let us keep praying all will be one.