

If a Catholic (*cf. Can. 923*) who is baptized (*cf. Can. 912*) and has received his first Communion according to his own Church *sui iuris'* tradition (*cf. Can. 843 §2*) is presented for Communion to a Roman Catholic minister at an appropriate time such as Mass (*cf. Can. 843 §1*), is properly disposed according to his own canons (*cf. Can. 1 & Can. 112 §2*), and is not in a state of public sin or punished with an excommunication (*cf. Can. 843 §1*), then a Roman Catholic minister (*cf. Can. 844 §1*) cannot deny the person the Eucharist and must admit the person to holy Communion (*cf. Can. 843 §1*).

Excerpts from the Latin Code of Canon Law

Can. 1. The canons of this Code regard only the Latin Church.

Can. 112 §2. The practice, however prolonged, of receiving the sacraments according to the rite of another ritual Church *sui iuris* does not entail enrollment in that Church.

Can. 214. The Christian faithful have the right to worship God according to the prescripts of their own rite approved by the legitimate pastors of the Church and to follow their own form of spiritual life so long as it is consonant with the doctrine of the Church.

Can. 383 §2. If he [a diocesan bishop] has faithful of a different rite in his diocese, he is to provide for their spiritual needs either through priests or parishes of the same rite or through an episcopal vicar.

Can. 843 §1. Sacred ministers cannot deny the sacraments to those who seek them at appropriate times, are properly disposed, and are not prohibited by law from receiving them.

Can. 844 §1. Catholic ministers administer the sacraments licitly to Catholic members of the Christian faithful alone, who likewise receive them licitly from Catholic ministers alone...

Can. 846 §2. The minister is to celebrate the sacraments according to the minister's own rite.

Can. 912. Any baptized person not prohibited by law can and must be admitted to holy communion.

Can. 923. The Christian faithful can participate in the eucharistic sacrifice and receive holy communion in any Catholic rite....

Can. 991. Every member of the Christian faithful is free to confess sins to a legitimately approved confessor of his or her choice, even to one of another rite.

Robert J. Flummerfelt, "Reception of the Eucharist in the Latin Church by Eastern Child: CCEO canons 39-41 and 710," *Roman Replies and CLSA Advisory Opinions* (2002): 165-171.

John D. Faris, "Comparative Sacramental Discipline in the CCEO and CIC, A Handbook for the Pastoral Care of Other Catholic Churches *Sui iuris*," *Studia Canonica* 38/1 (2004): 266-269.

When Eastern Catholics Commune at a Roman Catholic Mass



Photo Credit: Fr. Lawrence Lew, OP

In our globalized and highly connected society, the odds are high that your Roman Catholic community will be visited by one of the more than 17 million people who belong to an Eastern or Oriental Catholic Church *sui iuris* (particular ritual churches in full communion with Rome). This guide helps navigate the canonical and practical aspects of being part of a truly universal church.

"...the variety within the Church in no way harms its unity; rather it manifests it, for it is the mind of the Catholic Church that each individual Church or Rite should retain its traditions whole and entire and likewise that it should adapt its way of life to the different needs of time and place." -Paul VI, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*

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What should Eastern Catholics do when visiting a Roman Catholic Mass?

They are to worship like everyone else. If there is an uncommon situation like a communing toddler, they should ideally call in advance or arrive early and introduce themselves to the presiding priest to ask for any directions he wishes to give such as where to sit or how he'd like them to receive.

Is the Eastern Catholic held to western rules when in the Latin Church?

There is no canonical equivalent of, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." When the Eastern Catholic visits a Roman Catholic parish or community, he continues to be governed by the Eastern canon law and by the norms of the Church *sui iuris* in which he is enrolled (*cf.* Can. 1, 112 §2, CCEO Can. 713 §2). Like all worshippers at a Mass, he is expected to follow the liturgical norms (*e.g.*, GIRM) for laity participation such as when to kneel or stand.

What happens when the norms contradict each other?

The norms don't contradict. For example: that a pastor of souls has a duty to catechize his parishioners does not contradict with the ordinary minister of holy Communion's duty to administer Communion to a properly disposed person who approaches at an appropriate time. They're different tasks of priestly ministry with complementary norms and regulations.

Does it contradict the Latin rite's liturgical norms to commune an infant?

No. Who is disposed to receive is an issue of canon law, not liturgy. The Eastern Catholic infant follows the *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium* (CCEO) in determining if he's properly disposed. If so, he may receive in any Catholic Church, assuming he is presented at an appropriate time (like Mass). However, Latin Catholic ministers may not use a Chaldean anaphora prayer or Byzantine leavened bread in the celebration of the Eucharist as *those* are outside the prescriptions of their rites and liturgical norms (*cf.* Can. 846 §2).

Is a person who is under the age of reason properly disposed to receive?

Yes. As an infant is one who habitually lacks the use of reason (*cf.* Can. 9; CCEO 909 §3), an infant is not capable of committing mortal sin. Since one who habitually lacks the use of reason cannot be in a state of mortal sin, that same person is therefore considered to be properly disposed for reception of the Sacraments.

May the priest apply prudential judgment if he thinks the visitor is significantly lacking in knowledge or understanding of the Eucharist?

The Latin canons require that Roman Catholics be able to discern the Eucharist from ordinary bread but the Eastern canons have no equivalent requirement. The Eucharist may not be denied to the fully initiated Eastern Catholic on the basis of age, maturity, or understanding (*cf.* Can. 912, 923).

What if the congregation might be scandalized by a child receiving?

If presented with the choice of potential scandal to a congregation or actual scandal to the family of a child unjustly denied a sacrament, preventing actual scandal and injustice is the higher obligation.

If exceptional circumstances warrant it, the priest might explain the situation to the family and ask if they will voluntarily make alternate arrangements with him for the sacraments or temporarily abstain out of compassion for him until he gets needed support and congregational catechesis in place in the coming weeks. Potential scandal may be averted through regular preventive catechesis for the congregation on the universality of the Church and its sacramental disciplines.

What makes an Eastern Catholic properly disposed to receive?

CCEO, Can. 697 Sacramental initiation in the mystery of salvation is perfected in the reception of the Divine Eucharist, and thus the Divine Eucharist is administered after baptism and chrismation with holy myron as soon as possible according to the norms of the particular law...

CCEO, Can. 712 Those who are publicly unworthy are forbidden from receiving the Divine Eucharist.

CCEO, Can. 713 §2 Concerning the preparation for participation in the Divine Eucharist through fast, prayers and other works, the Christian faithful are to observe faithfully the norms of the Church *sui iuris* in which they are enrolled, not only within the territorial boundaries of the same Church, but, inasmuch as it is possible, everywhere.

CCEO, Can. 719 Anyone who is aware of serious sin is to receive the sacrament of penance as soon as possible; it is strongly recommended to all the Christian faithful that they receive this sacrament frequently especially during the times of fasts and penance observed in their own Church *sui iuris*.

CCEO, Can. 1431 Those punished with a minor excommunication are deprived of the reception of the Divine Eucharist.

How can the Eucharist be administered to an infant or toddler?

For a true newborn, John Huels notes that the priest may dip his finger in the Precious Blood and insert the finger in the infant's mouth. For an infant who cannot take solid food, the Precious Blood could be given in an eye-dropper or similar tube which would be purified later (*cf.* GIRM 202).

For older children, a small piece of the Precious Body proportionate to the size of the child may be given alone or it may be given by priests through intinction. The Blood of the Lord may be received by drinking directly from the chalice or by means of a tube or spoon (*cf.* GIRM 200, 202, 203).