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His Holiness Benedict XVI  
Vatican City

Most Holy Father:

Spiritually united to the celebration of the Synod on the Eucharist, Holy Father, I ask to please receive a humble contribution that I believe can illuminate its conclusions for the good of the Church.

I believe that it is of transcendental importance that the *Mysterium fidei* of the Eucharist be recognized not only conceptually, but accepted and coherently expressed in the concrete manifestations of the liturgical celebration and of Eucharistic Communion.

I have read with great joy the words of the *Instrumentum laboris* about the “true language of liturgical gestures oriented to express the right faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist,” among which are listed “the careful purification of the sacred vessels after communion and also when the Eucharistic species fall on the floor...the use of the paten in giving communion.”

The widespread use of giving Communion in the hand, extended to almost all the Dioceses, is a practice that certainly does not contribute to the respect for and veneration of the particles that are separated from the consecrated hosts, and in which the Real Presence of the Lord is found sacramentally, with His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

In San Giovanni Rotondo, where I collaborate in the administration of the Sacrament of Penance, I have the opportunity to see the faithful coming not only from all over Italy but from various parts of the world, and I can testify that the vast majority of those who communicate in the hand do not have an outward attitude that indicates veneration of the august Sacrament, and, on the other hand, there is absolutely no care for the particles that remain in the hands of those who receive Communion or which fall on the ground.

It is unfortunate that there are priests who, from First Communion, guide or force children to receive Communion in the hand; and deny Communion on the tongue to those who request it.

On the other hand, there are not a few priests who (involuntarily) feel like instruments of irreverence from the incessant falling of particles of the Eucharist on the ground, in open contradiction with the respect and veneration that they themselves seek in the Eucharistic celebrations.

I am pleased to inform you that the Book “Communion in the Hand” (I am enclosing a copy), which elaborates juridically on this subject, has already had three editions in Spanish, two in French, and translations into English, German, Polish and Italian are being prepared.

Holy Father, I believe that in the orientations and conclusions of a Synod on the Eucharist there must be a clear reference to faith in the Real Presence of the Lord in the Sacrament, accepted not only in the theological dimension of faith, but also in the consequences or practical manifestations of the sacramental dimension of this faith, in liturgical celebrations and in the respect and way of receiving it eucharistically, highlighting its dimension of divine Mystery.

I also believe that the Synod on the Eucharist should pause and make an examination of conscience regarding the extension of permission to give Communion in the hand to almost all the local Churches, which in 1969 had only been granted to some local Churches of Europe at the particular request of their Pastors.

In Argentina there was certainly no abuse justifying the permitting of Communion in the hand.

On the other hand, nothing was said about the freedom that belongs to each Bishop for considering whether it is necessary for his local Church, as the Pastoral Letter “En réponse” expresses well (page 30 of the enclosed book “Communion in the Hand” by my authorship).

I adhere to the report of the Kazakh Bishop Jan Pawel Lenga, “who does not appreciate it [Communion in the hand] both because it increases the risk of the shattering of the hosts with the loss of particles and the danger of ‘theft’ of the hosts themselves for satanic rites, because in a Muslim and Orthodox environment (such as the Kazakh one), taking the Eucharist in the hand while standing is interpreted as a lack of respect. Lenga then proposed that the Holy See define a ‘universal official norm’ for the distribution of Communion on the tongue and kneeling, inviting local bishops where the new discipline has been introduced to persuade the faithful to gradually return to the old way” (Cf. “Corriere della Sera,” October 6, 2005).

I am grateful, Holy Father, for the attention paid to these lines, asking for the Apostolic Blessing, with the permanent remembrance of your intentions in daily prayer, particularly at Holy Mass and in the Rosary to the Blessed Virgin.

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