

Why are Catholic lay people usually given Holy Communion only under the one form of bread? By not giving the consecrated bread and wine, isn't the Catholic Church depriving its people of the full benefit of Holy Communion?

In the Catholic Church the congregation is usually given Holy Communion only under the one form of bread because, if the consecrated ``bread" is accidentally dropped on the floor in the serving, it can be wholly retrieved--particles of the Body of Christ would not be left on the floor to be desecrated. If Holy Communion were given under both forms, and if the consecrated ``wine" were accidentally spilled on the floor in the serving, it would be a virtual impossibility to retrieve all of the precious Substance--some part of the Blood of Christ would, through smearing and absorption, inevitably be desecrated. By not giving the congregation Holy Communion under both forms, the Catholic Church is not cheating anyone, because in receiving *either* the consecrated ``bread" *or* the consecrated ``wine," the communicant receives the complete Body of Christ, including His Flesh *and* His Blood, His Soul and His Divinity. The consecrated ``bread" by itself imparts a true Holy Communion with Christ, a full measure of sanctifying grace, even as Christ said: ``The *bread* that I will give, is my flesh, for the life of the world.... He that eateth this *bread*, shall live for ever." (John 6:52,59). And the Apostle Paul: ``Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread, *or* drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord." (1 Cor. 11:27). After the Consecration the priest receives Holy Communion under both forms, and this suffices to complete the Holy Communion part of the Mass service.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Catholic Church courtesy of The Augustine Club at Columbia University.

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