

# Some Thoughts on Communion in the Hand.

By

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## Introduction.

To my many readers, it must have become apparent over the years that, whenever I felt it necessary to put some thoughts on paper, I did so only when confronted with false representations of Catholic Doctrine or of Catholic Faith, or when I was forced to take issue with the inevitable consequences of these false teachings. I have remained constantly on my guard not to be drawn into arguments over Church practices or to take sides in disputes about the many aspects of Church discipline. And so the present article could be viewed by some as a departure from this sound rule of conduct, getting myself embroiled in the very area where, according to many good Catholics, the only correct attitude would be one of obedience and submission.

With this we have landed with great precision on the narrow landing-strip from which alone any discussion on Communion in the hand can take its starting point, the bridge-head from where any counter-offensive can safely be launched: the **fact** that *Communion in the hand is neither Church discipline nor Church practice*, but *merely a practice in the Church, an exception to the Rule*, which exception the Holy Catholic Church neither enforces nor encourages; but, on the contrary, deplores and tolerates with regret. Communion in the hand is so interwoven with disobedience, stubbornness, false teachings and subterfuge – as can be clearly gleaned from even a cursory glance at the short history of this latest attack on the Blessed Eucharist – that every treatise exposing its shaky foundations and fallacious claims can only help to immensely fortify the beautiful Catholic Faith of the true children of Our Lady, those magnificent men, women and children, who have up till now resisted and unmasked every conceivable pitfall and snare the Evil One has laid in our paths. They refused to follow bad Pastors; they rejected bad catechetics; they withstood the temptation to join the charismatic movement to find relief in emotionalism, or to join the Latin Mass Association in blaming the Holy Father for all the evils in the Church; they categorically refused to let go of the Cross and take ‘an armchair ride to omega-point’, offered by the false teilhardian evolutionism; they did not fall for the rampant false ecumenism, pluralism, relativism, private interpretations of *Humanae Vitae* at variance with Papal teaching, modernism in any shape or form; these seasoned, well-trained fighters for the Mind of the Church, the Honour of Our Lady and the undying Love for the Rosary are the very last people to tremble before the ridicule associated with the continued practice of the reception of Holy Communion, their Lord and their God, on their tongue, now that the hour has finally arrived to separate the men from the boys. Only they know that in the years to come, worse forms of singling out will follow, and that they will be called upon to defend more than an Ancient Custom which is still the undisputed Rule in the Church. And so they do not decline the opportunity of showing where their true loyalty and strength lie. Arming themselves with a fortitude, needed for the inevitable hour when they will be called upon to fight the battle of their life: the Battle for the very Life of the Church against the mighty ‘church of darkness’.

To the alert Faith of these unsung heroes and heroines, these few pages are dedicated....

## I The Heart of the Matter.

On May 29, 1969, the Holy See issued a remarkable document called *Memoriale Domini*, *The Memorial of the Lord*, in which certain matters relating to the distribution of Holy Communion were put before the attention of the Catholic Church. In this document the Holy Father [Pope Paul VI] recorded for all the Bishops and Priests and faithful of the world his considered decision **not to make any change**, with the following words:

“In view of the gravity of this matter and the weight of the arguments proposed, the Sovereign Pontiff has decided that the long received manner of distributing Holy Communion to the faithful **is not to be changed.**”

With these words, the Holy See has gone to the heart of the matter. Anyone following these words is obeying the Holy Father and is expressing his living Faith in the teaching Authority of the Church, no matter how persuasively arguments to the contrary are being put to him. The Holy Father expressly states here **that he has heard all these arguments himself and is unmoved by them**: they did not carry sufficient weight. It is in the searching Light of these clear words of the Holy Father that any nameless vote of a faceless majority of an anonymous bishops’ conference must be viewed, requesting from the Pope an exemption from a Universal Rule, for which request they had never obtained a mandate from the Catholics under their care. If the Holy Father had heard all the arguments in its favour and rejected them as carrying no weight, then what arguments could a majority of bishops bring forward in support of a claim to make Him change His mind? Apparently **none**. What sort of example is this? To put the Holy Father in such a predicament. No wonder after the furtiveness of the request, the stealth of its implementation.

And now are put before the faithful all the same trite arguments the Holy Father has heard before and – on His own pronouncement – found wanting. We are now made to believe **that the request was acceded to on the strength of arguments put forward**, contrary to what the Holy Father himself has written. But that is putting before the faithful a contradictory Pope, one of the most dangerous things bishops, priests and catholic educators can do. Because there are no two ways about it: **pressure *is*** being put on the faithful in schools and from pulpits to obtain uniformity: the very last thing the Holy Father wished to happen. The Bishops of Australia have never published this remarkable document: *The Memorial of the Lord*, with its uncompromising stand against ‘renewal’ so-called. The true mind of the Holy Father was never revealed to us in Australia.

Here then are some of the things which have been made crystal clear by *Memoriale Domini*:

1. Communion on the tongue is to be kept as the Universal Law in the Latin Church, as it has for the last 1100 years. It is not to be changed....
2. Only the Holy Father can alter it. Only a Pope is competent to change such a universal law. He clearly stated that he refused to do so.

3. Communion in the hand, therefore, **becomes and remains the exception**. ‘Permission’ for it can only be regarded as a permission to break the Law without committing a mortal sin of sacrilege. According to the Holy Father, no argument in its favour can be brought out to recommend the practice: *permission is not granted on the weight of argument*: the Holy Father tells us himself.
4. Therefore, if arguments brought out in favour of the practice have been rejected by the Pope, then it is clearly the wish of the Pope that the same trite arguments which failed to convince him, must now not be put to the faithful *without telling them that these arguments did not carry weight with him to change the Law*.
5. Failing to tell the faithful:
  - (a) that the Holy Father refused to change the law, and
  - (b) was unconvinced by the arguments put before him, and
  - (c) that he has made this known to the Universal Church
 is an act of insincerity and dishonesty on the part of the bishops of Australia who secretly voted in favour of a change that the Holy Father himself had rejected.
6. Furthermore, in asking for the change, the majority of the bishops of Australia have shown that, contrary to the Holy Father, they **are** convinced by arguments the Pope had rejected, but they have steadfastly refused to divulge these extremely grave reasons that compelled them ... to disregard a ruling by the Pope. The conclusion is by now inescapable that ‘permission to break the law’ is only *wrenched from the heart of the Holy Father to avoid the greater evil of bishops and priests going it alone*. That the Holy Father has absolute reason to fear such disobedience becomes immediately apparent to anyone who takes the trouble of reading up on the history of Communion in the hand in the last few years.

## II Some Historical Considerations.

If by now we have reached a stage in the Catholic Church, that concessions to break the law with impunity are being hailed as a major break-through and ‘steps in the right direction’, then it has become imperative to show just how much disobedience and disloyalty are associated with the spread of this practice of Communion in the hand.

1. Before Vatican II, that is, during the 1950s, liturgists not only began advocating in periodicals a return ‘to the ancient practice’, but through seminars and lectures were openly agitating for a change. This movement received great impetus during and immediately after the Second Vatican Council. This coincided with great interest in transignification theology and moves to inter-communion.
2. During 1965-1968, the practice was not only advanced by ideas, but **was illegally put into practice** in certain parts of Europe: parts of Holland, Germany, Switzerland (Basle!), France.

3. The bishops, whose duty it was to enforce the universal law, failed. But they knew that they were irregularly allowing a bad practice to **establish itself**, and that they themselves were irregular in not adequately using their authority to stop it. This cowardice in the face of being ridiculed and labelled ‘backward’ has had the most disastrous consequences for the whole Church.
4. To regulate themselves, they asked the permission of the Holy See to authorise the practice and to give permission.
5. The Holy See demurred. Permission was refused but, to save the face of the bishops in the mounting evidence that the practice would spread nevertheless, it was decided that the Episcopal Body as a whole should be consulted.
6. A ballot was taken, in 1968, amongst all the bishops of the Latin Church: a vast majority was against Communion by hand and also of the opinion that **Communion in the hand would be seriously upsetting for the faithful**.
7. Publishing [the results of] the vote on May 29, 1969, in *Memoriale Domini*, the Holy Father exhorted the dissident bishops, priests and faithful to accept the majority vote and to **return to the only lawful practice**. He also pointed out that *Communion on the tongue was more humble, more humbly reverent and not opposed to human dignity*. It was a greater safeguard against irreverence, profanation and adulteration of doctrine.
8. The Holy See also added that, if bishops in some areas could not get their priests and other bishops to return to the only lawful practice, then It was prepared to put a compromise, but the burden and responsibility in conscience was to be that of the bishops.
9. The compromise was that **if in dioceses where the illegal practice had taken hold** and where there was opposition to comply with the Church’s ruling, the *episcopal conference decided by a two-thirds majority* that it would be better to leave it, they could then have recourse to the Holy See for permission **exempting them from the law**. And that is all this much-hailed ‘permission’ from Rome is.
10. Several episcopal conferences, in difficulty with regard to bringing their priests and faithful back to obedience, decided to use the compromise. The Holy Father then granted the permission under certain conditions:
  - (a) The faithful were to be given a thorough catechesis (not only information, but also doctrine and instruction) concerning the doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist, Holy Communion and of the discipline of administering the Sacrament.
  - (b) Strict care was to be taken against irreverence and sacrilege.
  - (c) The communicant is not to help himself or herself from the chalice or ciborium, but is to be given the Sacrament at the hand of the proper Minister.
  - (d) Communicants are to have regard to the cleanliness of their hands.
  - (e) The sensibilities of the people are not in any way to be offended.

If the permission is then granted, *the communicant is free to receive either on the tongue or in the hand*. **No bishop is free to forbid Communion on the tongue, but any bishop is free to forbid Communion in the hand in his diocese.** That is, he is free to forbid the exception....

From this factual account, it has become apparent that the origin of the permission is steeped in an unwillingness by bishops to recall their radicals from irregular practices and an unwillingness on the part of priests and faithful to obey the Holy Father and the feeble efforts of their bishops. It was a **pastoral concession** by the Holy Father to help embattled bishops out of a hole, even if their predicament was largely of their own making. Not even by the wildest stretch of the imagination can this emergency measure of the Supreme Pontiff be construed as an encouragement to non-embattled bishops to run up a two-thirds majority and then ask the Holy Father for the same concession. As if this 'holy practice' was inspired by the Holy Ghost and not by disobedience and disloyalty.

So far **only one bishop** in Australia is honest enough and courageous enough to put all the facts before the faithful of his diocese, so that they will be in a true position to weigh all the facts and their consequences, in the sincere hope that, if his flock know and realise how much the Holy Father has already suffered from the flagrant disregard of his teachings and decisions, they will not add to his sorrows, and will not place their own Bishop in the same painful position as the Holy Father has been put by the various episcopal conferences requesting a concession He knows is **not** in the best interests of the Church and was only granted by Him as a last resort to avoid a sin of rebellion.

### **Conclusion.**

1. Are there erroneous teachings on the Blessed Eucharist in widespread circulation? Undoubtedly. Did the Holy Church, in times like that, tighten the mode of distribution of Holy Communion, or did She liberalise it? She tightened it in no uncertain manner. To portray the present 'liberalisation' as coming from the Church and springing from the Mind of the Church is putting before the world a **contradictory church**. *This portrait cannot come from God.*
2. To portray the present 'liberalisation' as coming from the Pope is putting before the world a **contradictory Pope**: one who teaches us that no arguments have been brought forward to make Him change His mind, and one who breaks His own ruling by granting concessions for reasons he previously publicly rejected. *This is intolerable.*
3. The introduction of this practice within the Church is most **divisive**. Divisions within the Church against a Papal ruling *cannot come from the Holy Ghost, nor from the Church Herself*. Bishops clamouring for a concession the Holy Father only meant as an emergency measure are **not** inspired by the Holy Ghost, and so *no good can come from the introduction of this practice.*

## Epilogue.

Many authors in the Catholic Church, starting with the four Evangelists, have brought to our attention how much Christ suffered in His Sacred Passion from the desertion by His chosen Twelve. And yet, bringing home to us this very sad truth has never been equated with disloyalty to the Twelve Apostles. Such a charge of disloyalty or rebellion would have been wholly malicious.

In refusing to put before the Australian public the full teaching of Pope PAUL VI regarding Communion in the hand, and in hiding from us the full thrust of the Papal pronouncements on these matters, the Australian bishops who voted in favour of the practice (*i.e.*, the two-thirds majority) have placed before us a caricature of the Pope: a weak man who just gives in to any request from the whim of an episcopal conference. On the surface, this is a most serious sin against the person and the office of Christ's Vicar on earth. To many Catholics, the introduction of Communion in the hand is perplexing, because they somehow *know* that the Holy Father is against it. It is not the fault of the Holy Father that He is depicted as incomprehensible in this whole matter surrounding the introduction of Communion in the hand....

The Holy Father has clearly refused to introduce this practice within the Catholic Church and has disallowed all arguments allegedly in favour of it. Yet, in country after country, the practice is spreading, achieving the direct opposite of what the Pope had decreed, making a mockery of the Papal refusal to allow its spread. Spread by bishops who would not abide by the Papal ruling, and by means which would, in all other circumstances, be called devious. And so it is not surprising that the reprehensible way by which Communion in the hand is now being introduced, surreptitiously and for no other reason than whim and sheer force of numbers, has become **divisive**, creating within the Holy Catholic Church tensions, divisions and dissension **not willed by the Holy Father**. This too is a most serious matter....

Serious as all this is, there is yet one other aspect associated with the introduction of this practice in Australia, which, to my mind, is the worst of the lot: the utter callousness with which thousands of educators at the local level are now forced to contradict Pope PAUL VI.

In putting before the faithful the reasons, whereby the introduction of the practice must be given **some** semblance of credence, they cannot fail but to contradict the Holy Father who taught the whole Church categorically that **there are no valid arguments** for the recommendation of the practice, **and that no permission is given on the strength of argument.** Bishops, who themselves voted in the safety of complete anonymity, and after that remained completely silent and aloof and most unhelpful in the job of its introduction, are now leaving this distasteful task to hapless men and women **who had no say in its introduction and who, in their ignorance of the truth, think they are implementing the wish of the Pope**. This is not only callous in the extreme: this is abdication of pastoral responsibility. This is not only the greatest sign how ashamed the bishops really are of their collective action of thwarting the Holy Father: this is also by far the most serious charge that Heaven at present will level against the majority of the Australian Hierarchy....

For what appears to be the truth here?

The bishops remain silent, because they know that they cannot advance a single reason without seriously contradicting the Holy Father, making a mockery of *Memoriale Domini*. But, in now leaving this distasteful task to others **in the hope that they have enough ignorance of what the Holy Father really has said**, so that they will not make too bad a job of **convincing** the people, the bishops are now **knowingly** allowing other people in their charge to contradict the Pope in putting up arguments ostensibly in favour of Communion in the hand. This not only directly affects the conscience of thousands of Catholics in Australia: this touches on our Catholic Faith by which we accept the words and teachings of the Vicar of Christ on earth. Thousands of little children are now being taught to accept the practice and the spurious reasons advanced for its acceptability, **but they are not told what the Holy Father had to say on it....**

On the very first Good Friday, **there was only one person who fully understood**, Who did not contribute to the humiliations, afflictions, desertions, passion and death, suffered by Her Divine Son, but who *sacrificed Herself with Him for us*. That very same person has told us at Fatima, from God, that the Holy Father would have much to suffer, and that, if we were to avoid hurting him and the Holy Church, we were to stay very close to Her Immaculate Heart, and to develop a great, personal devotion to Her. This was meant to be taken literally – by bishops as much as by any other person. **No one was meant to go through the Good Friday of the Church without Our Lady.**

It is of great significance that, after the desertion by the Apostles, Saint JOHN gets a mention on Calvary, and is spoken to by Our dying Lord **only after he had publicly identified himself with Our Lady**. That is why, in the Introduction to this little treatise, I wanted to point to that magnificent Faith that Our Heavenly Mother obtains for all Her children and by which we have recourse to Her in all our suffering. That Faith, and the great love it gives us for Our Blessed Mother, will not only safely guide us through these troubled times, but will make us pray most earnestly for all our bishops and priests. According to the Pope, *Communion in the hand was never meant for us*, but now that we have seen the practice firmly established in Australia, we have lots more opportunities of offering up to God, through His Holy Mother, heroic sacrifices associated with remaining faithful to Papal teaching and to the love we owe to our superiors and to our fellow men.

Pentecost Sunday  
June 6, 1976