

The Eucharist and Catholics with Swallowing Difficulties



Ministry with Persons with Disabilities The Archdiocese of Atlanta

Those with severe swallowing difficulties may only be able to receive from the Chalice. And then only a few drops. If they receive the Host at all, it will need to be a tiny fragment of the Host. It is also permitted for that fragment to be suspended within the consecrated wine. Also, receiving only from the Chalice is every bit as valid a Communion as receiving only the Host.

It is permitted to use a special spoon instead of drinking from the Chalice. That spoon may not be used for any other purpose. It should have the same purification as the other Communion vessels.

It is permitted and often wise to take water immediately before and/or after to assist with the swallowing.

It is not permitted to pour consecrated elements down a feeding tube or IV. This is never to be done, whether or not the feeding tube is in place in the throat, or connected directly through the stomach wall, or intravenous.

It is absolutely forbidden to put the body and blood of Our Lord into a blender; either before or after consecration.

Any tube that is already in place down the throat to the GI tract will greatly interfere with the swallowing. However, even if patients can swallow with such a tube in place, they very well may aspirate portions of the swallowed Host and consecrated wine back up and out of the tube. Therefore, that feeding tube must be clamped before receiving Communion, and the clamp left in place long enough for digestion to occur.

Let us know if these restrictions prove to be a problem. At that point, we may need to seek consultation.