

# Study Shatters Myth of 'Safe' Host in Hand

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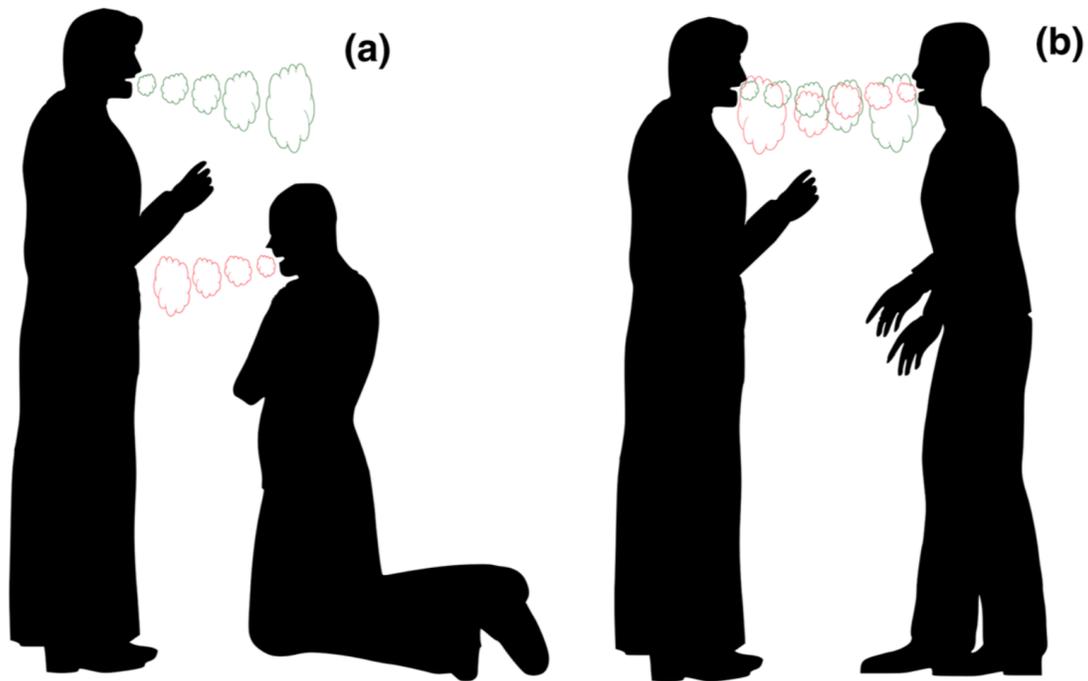
by [Jules Gomes](#) • ChurchMilitant.com • June 2, 2021

## Science shows Communion on tongue, kneeling safest during COVID crisis

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BERGEN, Norway ([ChurchMilitant.com](#)) - A groundbreaking study is smashing the widespread misconception that administering Holy Communion on the hand is safer than dispensing the Sacred Host on the tongue.

The COVID-19 regulations forcing faithful Catholics to receive the Body of Christ on the hand have been enforced by over-zealous bishops and priests against the best available scientific evidence, the peer-reviewed study in the [Journal of Religion and Health](#) demonstrates.



**Fig. 1** Direction of exhaled aerosol while receiving the Communion kneeling (a) and standing (b). The colour of aerosol cloud depicts the level of transmission risk (green low, red high) (Color figure online)

Illustration explaining safety of traditional Communion

Contrary to the prevailing consensus among Catholic bishops, receiving Communion on the tongue and in the kneeling position is scientifically the safest and most hygienic method, which is "unlikely to incur a high risk of infection transmission," the new research shows.

Titled "[Safety and Reverence: How Roman Catholic Liturgy Can Respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)," the paper published last Monday by academic Sergey Budaev, also asks the priest to face the altar and prohibit lay eucharistic ministers from giving Communion during the pandemic for safety.

There is no risk if worshippers remove masks after taking their places, Budaev argues, while insisting on stringently adhering to safety restrictions proposed by health regulators — including social distancing and wearing masks while entering and leaving church.

### Scientific Evidence Lacking

"It is particularly upsetting that the impression was created that some in the Church were using the crisis as a chance to settle scores, above all against the traditional practice of receiving Holy Communion on the tongue," Joseph Shaw, chairman of the Latin Mass Society of England and Wales told Church Militant.

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"Concerned Catholics, including the Latin Mass Society, repeatedly asked bishops to show us the evidence upon which they based their attempts to ban the practice — something, in fact, which they lacked the authority to do. It was never provided, and this study confirms that it does not exist," Dr. Shaw, an academic at the University of Oxford, added.

Budaev, a researcher in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Bergen, Norway, also notes that the World Health Organization's (WHO's) recommendation for ministers to wear disposable gloves were applicable only in the context of burials.

Since the priest "takes maximum precaution to keep hands clean as a normal element of reverent treatment of the Holy Sacrament" and doesn't touch contaminated foreign objects during Mass, the need to wear gloves while administering Communion "is questionable," Budaev observes.



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/cA9CEuUWUKg>

Budaev, who specializes in "complex biological interactions in symbiont and parasite communities," also explains how bishops misunderstood the WHO citation of existing practice in certain churches of Communion-in-hand as an endorsement.

"Apparently, this blindly follows the generic recommendations without adapting them to the Roman Catholic Church," he writes, blasting the imposition of Communion-in-hand as "explained by vague hygiene without scientific evidence" and lacking "transparency, discussion and agreement with the whole community."

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"The assumption that Communion in the hand carries no or little risk is not well grounded and may in fact create a false sense of security, potentially provoking more reckless behavior of both the minister and the communicant," he emphasizes.

On the other hand, Budaev notes, "the manner typically used in the Extraordinary rite — the priest approaching an already kneeling communicant — avoids face-to-face contact completely and provides further protection."

## Protection Explained

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The scientist explains why the traditional manner of Communion is safer: First, the Host used in the Latin rite is nearly dry and hence likely to have low adhesion of outside particles, further reducing the infectious risk.



Traditional Latin Mass: Safe and reverential

Second, while receiving the Host, the communicant normally extends the tongue forward, requiring holding breath for a while, thus reducing possible respiratory output (since COVID-19 is mainly transmitted by small respiratory droplets during close face-to-face contact and airborne transmission via exhaled aerosol).

Third, since the faithful is kneeling while receiving the Host, this provides spatial distancing of about 20 inches, and the communicant's face is located at the level of the chest of the priest. Since the communicant says very little, any possible droplets and aerosol are directed at the priest's chest, which poses by far a lower risk than in the face.

In contrast, communicants who received the host standing are in "direct, close, face-to-face interaction" with the priest and any interaction between the priest and communicant would direct the droplets and aerosol directly to the priest's face and the consecrated Host.

If the communicant coughs or sneezes, the priest's face and the hosts become "the direct target of both fine and larger ballistic droplets" which "is very unlikely in the kneeling position," according to the study.

"It can be argued that the long development of the old traditional Latin rite occurred under continuous health threats in absence of vaccination, efficient pharmacological and other technological interventions that we now take for granted," Budaev concludes.

## **'Unprepared' Church's Unlawful Bans**

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"The problem presented by COVID for the liturgy should not have caught the Church so unprepared in light of the 'Swine flu' epidemic in 2007 and the more recent SARS pandemic. Being prepared to think carefully about the specific risks involved, rather than react in a knee-jerk fashion, would have paid particular dividends," Shaw concurs.

It is particularly upsetting that the impression was created that some in the Church were using the crisis as a chance to settle scores.

COVID-coward bishops the world over banned Catholics from receiving Communion on the tongue even at the Traditional Latin Mass (TLM) during the COVID-19 crisis.

Church Militant reported on several cases, including the ban by Bp. Bernard Longley on the world-famous St. John Henry Newman's Birmingham Oratory, which offers the TLM and administers the sacrament on the tongue.

Under Cdl. Vincent Nichols, archbishop of Westminster, official guidelines issued by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (CBCEW) require Communion to be "given silently in the hand only, with the communicant standing and avoiding any physical contact."

Priests or bishops do not have the authority to refuse Holy Communion on the tongue, according to Church law.