

## Catholic truth on Communion belongs in public square

Every Sunday, I think: Have I committed a serious sin?

That might seem like a ludicrously dour tradition, but for me, it's not about the sins, but about what I do every Sunday: Attend Mass and receive the Holy Eucharist.

Amid the U.S. Catholic bishops' decision last week to write a document about the Eucharist, or Communion, news outlets have focused on whether someday pro-abortion politicians like President Joe Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi will no longer be permitted to receive Communion.

But as a Catholic, I've been stupefied by the news coverage and punditry, which lacks awareness of what the Catholic Church teaches, what the Eucharist is and, yes, what it means to be a practicing Catholic.

In a way, I'm not surprised. Polls regularly show a gulf between the values of many American Catholics and the teachings of the Catholic Church. For instance, more than two-thirds of American Catholics support legalized same-sex marriage, according to a 2020 Gallup survey. Fifty-six percent of American Catholics agree with Biden and Pelosi, backing abortion being legal in most or all cases, per a 2019 Pew Research Center survey.

And when it comes to the Eucharist, plenty of Catholics aren't even aware what the Church teaches, namely that the Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood of Jesus. Only half of Catholics know what the Church teaches, according to a 2019 Pew Research Center poll, which also found that 69% of American Catholics don't believe the Eucharist is the real presence of Jesus.

### Education in faith tradition

For American Catholic priests and bishops especially, all those numbers should be sobering. Where are the mentions during the homily in Sunday Mass about what the Church teaches? Where are the explanations of how the Church's teachings are ultimately designed to promote happiness? Why are so few American Catholics educated in their own faith tradition?

Of course, it's not just up to the clergy alone – parents, lay catechism teachers, godparents and a host of others have crucially important roles to play in faith formation – but the parish church, and what its priests say, can be especially important.

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