

Some Questions on Holy Communion.

1. Is it all right to smoke before Holy Communion?

There is no law against smoking as such, but if the Holy Father knew the extent to which smoking before Holy Communion has been carried at Notre Dame, we would receive a reprimand, if not a new law. The law of fast was enjoined out of respect for the Blessed Sacrament; the same respect should keep us from smoking. A solid reason for indulging in a smoke without any implication of disrespect would be a very long fast, the tension of which would be somewhat relieved by a smoke.

2. How long should one's thanksgiving be?

The decree on frequent Communion states: "...care is to be taken that Holy Communion be preceded by careful preparation, and followed by a suitable thanksgiving, according to each one's strength, circumstances and duties."

Our Lord remains present as long as the species remain incorrupt on your stomach, and the change in the species requires from seven to ten minutes in the normal, healthy person. At least this much time should be spent in fervent prayer. It would be gross disrespect to take food within this interval.

No one need remain away from Holy Communion if his "strength, circumstances and duties" prevent his fulfilment of his ideal in the matter of preparation and thanksgiving; but his life should give evidence of constant preparation and thanksgiving.

3. Is it permitted to brush one's teeth before Holy Communion?

Respect for the Blessed Sacrament demands cleanliness of body. One may always receive in case of doubt; he must abstain only when he is sure that he has broken his fast. If a trifling amount of water is swallowed mixed with saliva, it is not considered a breaking of the fast. Brush your teeth, don't swallow any water, and don't worry about it.

4. Is it perfectly proper to receive after going to a dance the night before?

Why not? if your dancing has been honest recreation, such as you could and should have offered for the honor and glory of God, it should be far enough out of your mind the next morning not to constitute even so much as a distraction to Holy Communion. If it has not been honest recreation, it should not have been indulged in by Christians; and a necessary condition to the absolution that must precede Holy Communion is a resolution against a return to an occasion of sin.

5. How often must a daily Communicant go to confession?

Confession is required before Communion only when one is in the state of mortal sin. Frequent communicants will find it useful to go to confession every week or two. The Sacrament of Penance takes away temporal punishment due to sin, is an aid to the wiping out of daily faults and imperfections, gives strength against new temptations, increases sanctifying grace and supernatural merit, and aids the soul in the solid establishment of virtue. If one has committed no sins since his last confession he may tell a sin from his past life, already confessed, and receive all the graces of the Sacrament.