

THE MEANING OF THE MASS

Part Four: *The Communion Rite and Concluding Rites*

When the priest has spoken the words of institution, Our Lord truly is present. Now we prepare to receive Jesus' Body and Blood in Holy Communion so to be fortified to go forth from Mass to advance God's Kingdom as members of His Church, diffusing God's Love everywhere we go.

COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer

- The priest exhorts us to pray together the words Jesus teaches His disciples are to pray: *At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching we dare to say*
- The "*Our Father*" includes seven petitions that we humbly and confidently voice to God the Father (Luke 6:9-13; Matthew 11:1-4).
- The "*Our Father*" sets the pattern of all prayer (Acts 2:42). By means of speaking these hallowed words, everything rightly desired is requested and in right order.

TIP! Make a conscious effort to pray the Our Father with an urgency of pleading to live always and everywhere underneath God's provident goodness as His own.

Embolism & Doxology

- The priest magnifies the final plea from *The Lord's Prayer* – "deliver us from evil" – by imploring the LORD for His gift of peace to be received by all, the manifestation of divine presence and power.
- The faithful respond with a short doxology, that recalls the heavenly liturgy: "*For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever*" (Rev 1:6; 4:11; 5:13; 19:12).

Sign of Peace

- Having first petitioned God the Father for the gift of peace, the priest directly addresses Christ Jesus the Lord by recalling His tender words spoken to the disciples during the Last Supper: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you" (John 14:27).
- The priest greets everyone with the words of the Risen Lord: "The peace of the Lord be with you always" (cf. John 20:21) and invites the exchange of peace, signifying our love for each other in Christ (if present, the deacon gives this instruction).

Breaking of the Bread

- In the earliest Church, the unleavened consecrated bread was broken into pieces as a practical gesture to distribute Holy Communion. So, also, the action recalls blessed moments when Jesus broke bread and symbolizes the unity of many partaking of the same holy source.

Comingling

- After breaking the Sacred Host at the altar, the priest places the smallest of pieces into the chalice while quietly praying, "May this mingling of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ bring eternal life to us who receive it."

Lamb of God [Latin: *Agnus Dei*]

- While the priest performs the breaking ritual of the Sacred Host, all pray the words known as the “Lamb of God”. These words echo the heavenly liturgy proclamation by all the angels and saints who worship the Risen Lord Jesus as the victorious Lamb who was slain (cf. Rev 5:11-12). On Sunday, these words typically are sung.

Communion

- The priest raises the Sacred Host for all to see and recalls the startling pronouncement of John the Baptist: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29).
- The assembly responds first by acknowledging our unworthiness to receive the Lord Jesus and then express our total confidence in Jesus’ call and healing power: “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed” (cf. Mt 8:8).
- The Holy Eucharist connects us to Christ in the most personal of ways. God permits us to experience a deep, mystical and real encounter with Him, understanding, loving and heralding us as His own. *Receiving Holy Eucharist is **the** privileged divine source of comfort and healing.*
- The priest or deacon, or in the absence of an ordinary minister an Extraordinary Ministry of Holy Communion, will slightly raise the Blessed Sacrament as we approach, and state, “The Body of Christ.” We wholeheartedly respond, “Amen”.

NOTE: The act of receiving Holy Communion declares three truths:

- 1) *Belief* that Jesus Christ is truly and substantially present under the appearance of the bread we receive.
 - 2) *Assent* to all that His Body – the Church – professes and teaches is true.
 - 3) *Identifying* as a member of His Body – the Church.
- After the distribution of Holy Communion, the priest (if present, the deacon) collects and returns the remaining Sacred Hosts to the Tabernacle.
 - The priest leads the “Prayer After Communion”, praying expressly for the spiritual fruits of the Eucharist to take effect in our lives.

CONCLUDING RITES

Final Blessing

- Just as the Mass begins with the Sign of the Cross, everyone stands now for its ending, marking themselves again this victorious sign of our salvation the cross as the priest blesses all *in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*.

Sent Forth in Peace

- All that God graciously has made present to us throughout the Mass is done to immerse us ever more deeply into the life and mission of Christ Jesus our Lord and King.

TIP! Having encountered the Risen Lord Jesus together anew, it now is for us to radiate the love of God everywhere we go. Come, Lord Jesus!

The mystery of love we celebrate and receive in the Mass and which we adore in our its Eucharistic Presence in our churches must produce daily fruits and also heal the most widespread ills of our age. It must grow in all of us genuine concern to help our neighbor and to change structures and situations that gravely offend human dignity.