

Understanding the Mass Part 5 The Rite of Communion

Introduction

On the Road to Emmaus, the two disciples listened This simple rite has been placed at various points in to their fellow traveler and their hearts burned with- the Mass over the course of Church history—each in them. At table, he gave thanks and broke the with its own significance. For some time it was bread and that action, they recognized the Risen placed at the beginning of Mass between the Peni-Lord. At every Mass, we listen, we give thanks, and tential Act and the Gloria as a way of signifying we share the Body and Blood of Christ so that in unity among the assembly. At other times it was fact we may become what we receive.

The Lord's Prayer

The first preparation for the reception of Holy was, however, Saint Augustine who placed it where Communion is to pray the prayer that Jesus himself we find it today—between the Eucharistic Prayer taught his disciples—reaffirming who we are as and the Reception of Holy Communion. Here, it members of His Body.

should never be taken in vane (Second Command- Christ. ment). It prays for the coming of the Kingdom in its freedom from temptation and evil.

Gestures During the Our Father

No where in the General Instructions of the Roman cold or COVID. Missal are directions given instructing the faithful to join hands for the Our Father. In fact, the practice Fraction is discouraged for the simple reason that joining There are two parts to the Fraction Rite—the breakhands can be considered intimate contact that may ing of the bread and the mingling of the Body with be difficult for some who are expected to hold hands the Blood. with a stranger. While not forbidden, great care tend his hands during the prayer.

tures not called for by the Missal are introduced.

Embolism & Doxology

The words spoken by the priest after the Our Father are called an embolism. With these words, he restates the assembly's request for freedom from evil and sin, for relief from all distress and for peace. For all of this, we must rely upon God's mercy, especially in this present time while we await the second coming of Christ.

The people respond with an antiphon of praise. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever.

The Rite of Peace

placed before the Preparation of the Altar in keeping with the Scriptures that tell us to leave your gift at the altar and go first to be reconciled with your brother. It shows the unity of the assembly created by the Holy United in prayer to "Our Father," the communi- Spirit during the Eucharistic Prayer and which will ty acknowledges the holiness of God's name which be effected by sharing in the Body and Blood of

During this rite, the deacon or priest invites the fullness and that God's will, not our own, be done people, let us offer each other a sign of peace. The sign on earth just as it is in heaven. The community also given has and can be interpreted in accord with the asks for sustenance, most especially in the daily circumstances. While a couple may wish to offer bread of the Eucharist, and seeks forgiveness and each other a kiss, a hand shake or a wave can be sufficient. People should not get upset when the person next to them does not wish to shake hands-they may be trying to preserve you from the common

The Breaking of the Bread signifies that the should be taken not to impose the practice at Mass. many faithful are made one body from the one In the same way, only the priest is instructed to ex- Bread of Life which is Christ. It is Christ Himself who feeds us and who is not diminished by being The question "why?" should be asked when ges- broken just as love given away is never lessened. We each share in the whole Christ.

The mingling of the Body and Blood of Christ is the Host and places it into the Chalice. As he does word and my soul shall be healed. Like the many sinour Lord Jesus Christ bring eternal life to us who receive comed. it. This action has a very long history in the Church's liturgy. In the ancient Church, the bishop The Communion Procession and Song alone celebrated the Sunday Mass in his church. As we have seen with other processions in the litur-When parishes were founded to carry out the work gy, the movement of the faithful towards the altar of the Church more locally, the pastor of every par- for the reception of Holy Communion has a purish participated in the bishop's Mass and carried to pose. It is not a time to greet friends and family or

his parish church a small fragment of the Eucharist. During Mass celebrated at the parish, this fragment was placed into the Chalice to remind all gathered that they were united to their bishop and the other parishes of the diocese. Again, emphasizing the unity of the Church.

The Agnus Dei

The Lamb of God is a 7th C addition to the Mass. Sung or recited during the Breaking of the Bread, it is an ac-

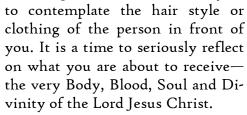
tunity to praise God for the sacrifice of His Son, the Lamb of God, which has won for us the gift of sal- How to Receive vation.

flects.

Elevation of the Body and Blood

priest raises the Host and Chalice and proclaims: which the minister places the Host. Behold the Lamb of God; behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of their "writing hand" under their other hand into the Lamb. The word behold or in Latin Ecce should which the minister places the Host. Then using bring to mind several Scripture passages. The first, their "writing hand," the communicant places the in the Gospel of John-John the Baptist points to Host into their mouth. Jesus and says "Behold the Lamb of God." Then, also in the Gospel of John-Pontius Pilate presents Jesus Body and Blood of Christ. It is incorrect to call the to the jeering crowd saying "Behold the man!" And on Sacred Species the bread and wine and displays a Good Friday we say "Behold the wood of the cross." level of ignorance about what is offered at this most The word "behold" has us fix our gaze on depths of holy time. a mystery—in which is revealed God's love for us.

The only possible response—Lord, I am not worthy that moment when the priest breaks a small piece of that you should enter under my roof, but only say the so, he prays: May this mingling of the Body and Blood of ners Jesus welcomed to his table, so we are wel-



The Communion Song is not simply intended to cover the sound of people moving, it is to encourage contemplation on the Mystery we receive—listening to the words and signing them can help one to prepare their mind and heart to en-

clamation that provides the faithful another oppor- counter the Lord who gives himself to us.



The Church provides two options for receiving the Quietly the priest prays: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of Body of Christ. One may receive on the tongue or the living God, who, by the will of the Father and the in the hand. The priest, deacon or Extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit, through your Death gave life to Minister of Holy Communion presents the Host the world, free me by this, your most holy Body and and states—The Body of Christ. Names are not to Blood, from all my sins and from every evil; keep me al- be used at this moment (the Missal does not call for ways faithful to your commandments and never let me be it) because the encounter is between the Host and departed from you. As a sign of reverence, he genu- communicant—not the with the minister. The communicant should loudly reply Amen! Which means I believe.

If receiving on the tongue, the communicant Having prayerfully prepared his own heart, the opens their mouth and extends their tongue onto

If receiving in the hand, the communicant places

Please remember that what we receive are the

Return to your seat and give quiet thanks to God.