

“DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME”

A Class on the Mass

Part 6 Communion Rite & Concluding Rite

The Communion Rite

The **Communion Rite** begins with the **Our Father**, the prayer that Jesus gave us. In this prayer we express our understanding that God is our Father and recognize our call to do our part to bring about his Kingdom by doing his will. We then ask him to take care of us physically and spiritually. The priest then prays the “embolism” emphasizing our petition to be delivered from evil and the worries of life. We respond with a **Doxology** giving God praise by recognizing his power and glory: “For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever”.

The priest introduces the **Sign of Peace** with a reminder that this peace comes from Jesus Christ and is based on our faith and trust in Him. The priest then wishes this peace to the entire congregation who in turn wishes the peace to the priest responding “**And with your Spirit.**” The priest (or deacon) then invites the congregation to offer this peace to one another. We do this with a handshake, hug, or even a kiss, a gesture through which we admit our reconciliation with our neighbors and our desire that they experience God’s peace in their life.

Our preparation for reception of communion continues with the **Lamb of God**, which is said or sung, and in which we seek God’s mercy and peace. During this prayer, the priest breaks the Host and places a small particle in the chalice filled with the Precious Blood. When the priest places the particle of the Host into the chalice he says quietly: “May this mingling of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ bring eternal life to us who receive it.” This practice derived from the early Church when the bishop was the only presider at the Mass, but with the growth of the Church other Masses were celebrated in other locations and the bishop delegated his “Presbyters” or assistants to preside at these Masses. As a sign of unity, pieces of the bishop’s Host were taken to these other locations and the presbyter dropped it into his chalice. (All priests are in reality ordained to the Order of the Presbyterate and given faculties by the bishop to preside at Mass.) The priest then joins his hands and says inaudibly his private preparation for the reception of the Eucharist. He has the option to say one of two prayers: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who, by the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit through your death gave life to the world, free me by this, your holy body and blood, from all my sins, and from every evil. Keep me always faithful to your commandments, and never let me be parted from you.” **or** “May the receiving of your Body and Blood, Lord Jesus Christ, not bring me to judgment and condemnation, but through your loving mercy be for me protection in mind and body and a healing remedy”.

The priest genuflects or bows and then takes the Host and the chalice and raises it showing it to the congregation and proclaims: “Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb”. and we admit: “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.” We admit: “**Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.**” The priest then receives the Body of Christ and says quietly, “May the Body of Christ keep me safe for eternal life.” and then drinks the Precious Blood from the chalice saying: “May the Blood of Christ keep me safe for eternal life.”

During the reception of communion the congregation, as it processes up to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, sings a song to celebrate this experience. As we approach the priest or Eucharistic minister, we do a simple bow and the minister lifts the Host and looks at us and says,

“Body of Christ,” to which we simply respond “Amen,” which is our act of belief that we are receiving the Body of Christ.

We have the option to receive on the tongue or in the hand. If we chose to receive on the tongue we extend our tongue so the minister can place the Host on it. If we are receiving in the hands, which by the way, is the older, more traditional custom of receiving, we place one hand in the other with the palms upward. The minister will then place the Host into our hand. We then consume the Host. As regards to the reception of the Blood of Christ, the minister presents the chalice to us and says “Blood of Christ,” to which we once again respond, “Amen.” Then we take the chalice in our hands and take a sip of the Precious Blood. The sign of communion is more complete when we receive both the Body and Blood of Christ.

(N.B. There are some of us who have added our own private devotions when receiving communion such as kneeling, genuflecting, or responding other than a simple “Amen.” Although these practices may be well intentioned they are not part of the ritual which has been designed to give conformity as a sign of unity.)

If we cannot receive Communion because of age, being non-Catholic, or not worthy because of serious (mortal) sin, we can come forward for a blessing by simply crossing our arms across our chest.

Following the reception of communion a meditation song or a period of silence may be observed. The priest then invites us to pray and says the **Prayer After Communion** which concludes the Communion Rite.

Concluding Rite

The priest once again wishes that the Lord be with us which we extend back to him and then the priest gives us the final blessing. This may be a simple blessing or on major feasts or solemnities more formal. The more formal blessing involves the priest/deacon saying: “Bow your heads and pray for God’s blessing,” followed by several petitions to each of which we respond “Amen.” The priest/deacon then sends us forth with a command to continue the action of the Eucharist in our lives and make Jesus present in our world. The Mass ends with a closing song. We normally leave the church at the **end** of this song.

Reflection Questions:

1. When we pray the Our Father do we really reflect on what we are saying?
2. In extending the Sign of Peace to our neighbors do we mean what we say?
3. How reverently do we receive Communion? Has it become routine?
4. Do we really believe that it is really and truly the Body and Blood of Christ?
5. Does the reception of Communion make any difference in our lives or do we take it for granted?
6. Do we leave early before the blessing and dismissal? Why?