

ORDER OF MASS:

The Liturgy of the Eucharist II

WHAT IS THE COMMUNION RITE?

In the Communion Rite of Mass, we fulfill the command of the Lord Jesus at the Last Supper: "Take and eat, take and drink." We are fed by "the bread of life and the cup of eternal blessing." This simple meal is the gift of Christ's very self: "This is my Body, which is given up for you, the cup of my Blood, shed for you and for all."

The components of the Communion Rite are:

- The Lord's Prayer**
- The Rite of Peace**
- The Fraction ("Lamb of God")**
- The Act of Communion**
- Prayer After Communion**

WHAT ARE THE CONCLUDING RITES?

The Concluding Rites of the Order of Mass send the congregation forth "to love and serve the Lord" in their daily lives.

The components of the Concluding Rites are:

- [Announcements]**
- Blessing**
- Dismissal**
- Recessional**

FROM THE TABLE TO THE WORLD

Having remembered in the Eucharistic Prayer the wonderful works of God with praise and thanksgiving, the congregation now prepares for communion with and in Christ. Each in its own way, The Lord's Prayer, the Rite of Peace, and The Fraction put the people in the right frame of mind for the Act of Communion.

In *The Lord's Prayer* we continue our praise of God ("hallowed be Thy name"), but we also make two petitions. We ask for "daily bread," an early description of the eucharistic food, that we might be nourished in spirit. We ask for forgiveness of our trespasses, so that what is holy may be given to people who are holy.

In *The Act of Peace* we ask for peace and unity for the Church and for the whole human family. And we demonstrate our own commitment to be instruments of peace, unity and mutual love through our sharing a greeting of peace with those immediately around us. This act anticipates the unity and reconciliation that are ours in our communion with Christ.

The Fraction, or the breaking of bread, is a simple but powerful action. The one loaf is broken into many pieces just as Christ was broken and his blood poured out for the many; and we, though many, become one with Christ by our sharing this one bread and one cup.

During this action of breaking bread and pouring cups, we sing the litany "Lamb of God," humbly expressing our awe and unworthiness for so great a gift as Christ, the Lamb who was slain for our sake.

The Act of Communion then begins. We process to the eucharistic table to "take and eat, take and drink."

Again, it is a very simple ritual action, but it is brimming with meaning. We are presented with the consecrated bread: "The Body of Christ." We respond: "Amen," as if to say "I believe it to be true, and I accept it and all it means." We are not only saying "yes" to the presence of Christ in the host, the Body of Christ; but we are also saying "yes" to the presence of Christ in the Church, the Body of Christ. Further, we are saying "yes" to that fact that we are the Body of Christ in the world as we share this holy meal.

We are then presented with the consecrated wine: "The Blood of Christ." We respond: "Amen." It is our "yes" to the presence of Christ in the cup, but also our "yes" to serving our brothers and sisters in love just as Christ shed his blood in service of humankind.

Our procession to the eucharistic table is accompanied by our singing, another way of uniting ourselves with our brothers and sisters in Christ. For such a gift as we are receiving in this Act of Communion, how can we keep from singing our praise and gratitude?

When the Act of Communion is over, we pray silently for a moment or two, then stand and collect our prayers together in ***The Prayer After Communion***.

We are then ready to take what we have received in this celebration of Mass out into our daily lives and the world in which we live.

Announcements about the works of Christ in the parish and community may be made. The priest/presider blesses the congregation with the sign of the cross that we began with. Then we are sent forth in peace to bring into the world the Word of God that

we have heard and the unity and reconciliation renewed in us by our communion. We are to take Christ from the table to the world. Or better, because we have shared in the Body and Blood of Christ in our communion, we now ARE Christ's presence in the world as we "go in peace to love and serve the Lord."

The material in this insert is based on paragraphs #80-90 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. The full text is available from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops at 1-800-235-8722 or www.usccb.org.

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