**Lesson 12: The Communion Rite**

Having offered Christ and ourselves to the Father in praise and thanksgiving, we now prepare to complete the Eucharist by feeding on the food Christ left for us, his Body and Blood, in the Communion Rite. This Rite begins with the Lord’s Prayer (Our Father). This prayer relates to the Eucharist in that we pray that we be given our daily bread, the earthly bread that nourishes our bodies and the spiritual bread that feeds our spirits. We also pray, as we approach the table of the Lord, that we be protected from temptation and evil. At the conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer, the priest prays an additional prayer that introduces a note of peace and hope in the Lord’s coming. The faithful respond with the words of an ancient doxology, “For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.[[1]](#endnote-1)

The Communion Rite continues with the Rite of Peace in which the Church asks God to grant peace and unity to all her members as well as to the whole human family. This prayer is followed by the Sign of Peace which is a symbolic expression of the desire that all may be at peace, not only including those around us, but all those whose lives touch our own and with whom we need to be at peace.[[2]](#endnote-2)

The Breaking of the Bread follows the Rite of Peace. This is an ancient rite which has its origins in the action of the Lord at the Last Supper when “he took bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to his disciples…” Before the distribution of Holy Communion, the priest takes a piece of bread and drops it into the chalice to signify the unity of the Body and Blood of the Lord in the work of salvation. During the Breaking of the Bread, the Lamb of God is sung. It is an acknowledgement that our Lord is the Lamb of God who takes away the sings of the world and an imploring of his mercy upon us as we, his unworthy servants, receive him. This act of humility is reinforced by the response, “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” This entire rite has great symbolic value as a sign that we who are many are made one body by receiving Communion which is Christ, the one Bread of Life. Our common sharing in the life of Christ also unites us to one another. This unity is strengthened each time we receive him in Holy Communion.[[3]](#endnote-3)

The Communion Procession is a specific religious action. It is not mere standing in line, but rather an action that both signifies and fosters our unity with Christ and with one another. We who are united with Christ by our Baptism move toward the Gift we are to receive with solemnity and with the dignity befitting the children of God. The Communion Song represents the communal thanksgiving of the assembly gathered. It expresses the communicants’ spiritual union, joy of heart, and unity with God and one another.[[4]](#endnote-4)

The Communion Rite concludes with the Prayer after Communion, the third of the orations which include the Collect and the Prayer over the Offerings.

1. Sr. Janet Baxendale, SC, *A Walk through the Mass,* p. 9, taken from “Become One Body, One Spirit in Christ” CD resource (International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. 2010). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)