

Liturgy Matters

This excerpt is the final part to the Order of the Mass.

Communion Rite

This part of the liturgy of the Eucharist is made up of gestures or expressions: the Our Father, the peace greeting, the breaking of the bread, and the reception of communion (Keifer 154). It centers on our immediate preparation for and reception of communion as the food of eternal life. The Mass is the paschal meal in which the Lord's body and blood are received as spiritual food in accordance with his command (GIRM no. 80).

The Lord's Prayer

This prayer is a petition both for daily food, the Eucharistic bread, and for the forgiveness of sin, so that what is holy may be given to those who are holy (GIRM 56a). The prayer also reminds us that we are to find peace and unity with our neighbor through forgiving "those who trespass against us." (Johnson 117)

*The priest, along with the faithful, prays the Lord's Prayer with hands outstretched (orans position). He alone adds the embolism (**Deliver us Lord from every evil....**) after which the people make the acclamation, **for the kingdom...the power...***

Greeting of Peace

Before the faithful share in the same bread, they implore peace and unity for the church and for the whole human family and offer some sign of their love for one another (GIRM 56b).

Peace, resulting from the mutual pardon articulated in the Lord's Prayer, leads to unity. Thus the sign of peace is both a call to as well as a sign of that oneness resulting from membership in the body of Christ. The gesture also gives witness to what it means to be a eucharistic assembly whose members are at peace with one another and who pray and work for the peace of the whole human family (Johnson 120).

Lamb of God

The singing or recitation of this litany by the assembly accompanies the breaking of the bread by the priest (ORDO 30).

In apostolic times, the breaking of the bread by Christ at the last supper gave the entire Eucharistic action its name. This rite is not simply functional but is a sign that in sharing the one bread of life, which is Christ, we who are many are made one body (see 1 Cor 10: 17) (GIRM 56C). The breaking of the bread is not only the earliest rite of preparation for communion, but it is also a powerful symbol of the assembly's oneness in the Eucharistic sharing (Johnson 124).

Following the breaking of the bread, the priest prepares himself with a private prayer as he receives the body and blood of Christ

Communion

When the faithful receives communion, the Eucharistic ministers offer the body and blood of Christ by saying, the body of Christ...the blood of Christ and the appropriate response is AMEN. [To prepare yourself for receiving the body and blood of Christ, no chewing gum or candies should be in your mouth. The consecrated host needs to be consumed when it is received.]

Upon returning to their seats, the faithful are strongly encouraged to remain standing and singing the communion song until everyone has been fed at the Lord's Banquet Table. Standing during this time is our ancient tradition. During Communion we are concentrating on what brings us together. Our source of unity is in the presence of Jesus Christ in the Church, the gathered congregation.

Standing during Communion, however, was forgotten in the West because of a strong emphasis on private prayer, individual piety expressed in the heart. For about the past 800 years, this piety was associated with Communion because people received only once or twice a year. Standing is the moment of communion not only with God but with each other: one mind, one heart, one voice lifted in song, one posture taken, a unified stance - bodies acting as one body. We stand in song and in solidarity with one another. (As always, those who are unable to stand due to frailty are invited to be seated.) After everyone in the community has been nourished with food, drink, and song, only then do we enter into our own personal prayer. Many parishes do stand but in this diocese this ritual has yet to be rediscovered.

Silent Prayer

After the community finishes eating, drinking and singing, when the presider (priest) sits, all sit for personal prayer. Sacred silence is observed after everyone has received communion. Kneeling at this time is appropriate.

Prayer after Communion

After all have prayed personally, the presider gathers those prayers together with the Prayer After Communion. The priest says this prayer at the chair or at the altar, asking God to give us the effects of the mystery we have celebrated. The people make the prayer their own by their acclamation (GIRM no. 89).

Concluding Rites

Announcement

Only those notifications that are absolutely necessary are given. It is also a suitable time for reading letters and other communications from the bishop. However, in this parish we chose to make announcements before mass, so those leaving early (not a sign of unity) can hear them.

Greeting

The traditional "The Lord be with you" with its response serves as a formal introduction to the blessing.

Blessing

The blessing is given in either simple or expanded forms. With hands extended out and over the people, the priest prays that God may continue to send God's power and strength to the worshipping community. Whatever form of blessing, the presider always calls upon the Trinity as he makes the sign of the cross.

Dismissal

The deacon or the priest sends every member of the worshipping community to carry on the work of God's people by doing good works and praising the Lord (Constitution on Sacred Liturgy no. 9-10)

References:

Adam, Adolf. The Eucharistic Celebration: The Source and Summit of Faith. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1994.

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Johnson, Lawrence. The Word and the Eucharist Handbook. San Jose, California: Resource Publications, Inc., 1998.

Keifer, Ralph A. To Give Thanks and Praise: General Instruction of the Roman Missal with Commentary for Musicians and Priests. Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1980.