

## The Communion Rite

The Communion Rite begins with the Lord's Prayer. "In the Lord's Prayer a petition is made for daily food, which for Christians means preeminently the Eucharistic bread, and also for purification from sin, so that what is holy may, in fact, be given to those who are holy" (GIRM #81).

The sign of peace follows. This is not a secular greeting, not a "Hi, how are you?" not a chance to talk to those whom we missed greeting as we entered the church. It is not a duplication of the gathering rite. We extend to one another a sign of Christ's peace, not our own, for sometimes, we have no peace of our own to give. In their letter The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response, the bishops of the United States wrote, "We encourage every Catholic to make the sign of peace at Mass an authentic sign of our reconciliation with God and with one another. This sign of peace is also a visible sign of our commitment to work for peace as a Christian community. We approach the table of the Lord only after having dedicated ourselves as a Christian community to peace and reconciliation."

Following the sign of peace, the Eucharistic bread is broken and the sacred wine is poured while the assembly sings the "Lamb of God" litany. This action of the breaking of the bread speaks our prayer that even though we are many, we all seek to become one body in the Lord.

After the presider's invitation to eat and drink and our response as an assembly, the Communion procession begins, and with it all join in singing the Communion song. This is not a time for private prayer or silence. It is a time to express our unity in the Lord through joining our voices in sung prayer as we come forward to share and become his Body and Blood and as we return to our places while others continue to receive Communion.

After all have shared the holy meal, communal silence may follow. The Communion Rite ends with the Prayer after Communion prayed by the presider in the name of us all.

The community's act of Holy Communion is the most perfect participation in the Eucharistic celebration.