

Liturgy Matters: Celebrants or Consumers? It matters!

Part 6: Communion

Liturgical Texts for Reflection

Communion

What we call Communion could be said to comprise four moments.

Preparation

There are preparatory actions that begin after the Lamb of God. The (GIRM) says,

The Priest prepares himself by a prayer, said quietly, so that he may fruitfully receive the Body and Blood of Christ. The faithful do the same, praying silently.

Then the Priest shows the faithful the Eucharistic Bread, holding it over the paten or over the chalice, and invites them to the banquet of Christ; and along with the faithful, he then makes an act of humility, using the prescribed words from the Gospels. (a. 84)

The 'act of humility' takes the form of a dialogue.

*Presider: 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.*

*All: Lord, I am not worthy
that you should enter under my roof,
but only say the word
and my soul shall be healed.*

Communion

Communion begins immediately with the presider's Communion. He then moves to distribute Communion to the faithful. We know the accompanying dialogue so well.

Minister: The Body of Christ

Response: Amen

Minister: The Blood of Christ

Response: Amen

The GIRM a. 85 says about communion,

It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the Priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord's Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the cases where this is foreseen, they partake of the chalice (cf. no. 283), so that even by means of the signs Communion may stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated.⁷³

Singing is an important part of communion. The Missal (a. 136) makes a brief statement in a rubric.

While the priest is receiving the Body of Christ, the Communion Chant begins.

The GIRM goes into more detail.

86. While the Priest is receiving the Sacrament, the Communion Chant is begun, its purpose being to express the spiritual union of the communicants by means of the unity of their voices, to show gladness of heart, and to bring out more clearly the 'communitarian' character of the procession to receive the Eucharist. The singing is prolonged for as long as the Sacrament is being administered to the faithful.⁷⁴ However, if there is to be a hymn after Communion, the Communion Chant should be ended in a timely manner.

Care should be taken that singers, too, can receive Communion with ease.

87. ... However, if there is no singing, the antiphon given in the Missal may be recited either by the faithful, or by some of them, or by a reader; otherwise, it is recited by the Priest himself after he has received Communion and before he distributes Communion to the faithful.

After Communion

This is the time for personal prayer and reflection. It is worth considering what the Missal and GIRM say.

The rubric in the Missal says in a. 138,

Then the Priest may return to the chair. If appropriate, a sacred silence may be observed for a while, or a psalm or other canticle of praise or a hymn may be sung.

The GIRM says in a. 88 – 89

88. When the distribution of Communion is over, if appropriate, the Priest and faithful pray quietly for some time. If desired, a Psalm or other canticle of praise or a hymn may also be sung by the whole congregation.

89. To bring to completion the prayer of the People of God, and also to conclude the whole Communion Rite, the Priest pronounces the Prayer after Communion, in which he prays for the fruits of the mystery just celebrated.

At Mass a single Prayer after Communion is said, and it ends with the shorter conclusion ...

Mystagogical reflection

Choose any of the texts above and then reflect mystagogically to explore what God is revealing:

- What do you notice?
- What does it reveal to you/us (about God, Christ, the church, the liturgy ...)?
- What does it ask of you/us?