



FR. DANIEL'S CORNER

Mass Moment: Part 26

THE COMMUNION RITE:

After the Great Amen of the doxology (see previous entry), the assembly stands before the throne of God to begin another unit of the Mass known as the Communion Rite. This consists of the Lord's Prayer and Embolism (deliver us, Lord, we pray from every evil...), the rite of the Sign of Peace, the Breaking of the Bread (Fraction), the Proclamation of the Lamb of God (Agnus Dei), the Presentation of the Lamb of God, the Reception of the Holy Communion, and the Prayer after Communion. The climax of this unit is our eating and drinking of the Lord's body and blood, which accomplishes our participation in the sacrifice of Christ.

At the heart and the reality of the word "communion" is "union." Our Eucharist leads to union. Our personal union with Christ at the time of **Communion** is pivotal. However, the goal is not just union with Christ, but union in Christ. The Communion Rite is about shared life. It is about sharing life with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and with each other in Christ and through Christ. It is also about a unity that is made possible and brought about by the Holy Spirit.

The first part of the Communion Rite is the Lord's Prayer (Our Father) and has been a part of the Eucharistic Celebration from Apostolic times. The priest uses the following words to invite the congregation to join in the Lord's Prayer, "At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say..." From the beginning of the prayer, "Our Father" establishes our familyhood as the people of God. Calling God 'Father' makes us sisters and brothers of the Lord himself. This unique prayer, taught to the disciples by the Lord himself, changed the way in which the disciples, within their Jewish worldview, perceived Yahweh.

Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation and God was too 'almighty' to be seen in such a familiar and family-like relationship (Lk 11:1-4). In the writings of the great fathers of the Church, like Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Aquinas, and many others, they connect the Lord's Prayer with the Mass and there are suggestions that the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," is a prayer for the gift of the Eucharist, wherein we are given the *supersubstantial* bread of life. The GIRM confirms this: "for Christian [it] means principally the Eucharistic Bread" (#81).

It is a common practice in many places to see people hold their hands extended outwards. It is a gesture of asking humbly from the Father of all blessings. Then the priest alone adds the Embolism, "deliver us Lord, we pray, from every evil...as we await the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ" to which the people conclude by means of the doxology— "For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever." This response is taken from the heavenly liturgy of the angels in the book of Revelation. Other Christian bodies include it as part of the Lord's Prayer. However, there is no scriptural evidence to support the idea that Christ added these words to the prayer he taught his disciples.

The 'coming of our Savior' in the Apostolic Age could reflect different meanings, such as the Second Coming (Parousia) or just the presence of the resurrected Lord among the Church. St. Paul uses the same expression in some of his letters, for instance, "...as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). The priest continues the Embolism, "...Peace I leave you, my peace I give you..." Edward Sri opines that the peace spoken of here, "shalom," is deeply personal and spiritual. It is not merely an absence of war or violence; rather it is an inner calm, wholeness that comes from faithfulness to God's reciprocal love (A Biblical Walk Through the Mass, p.127).

And that is your Mass Moment for the week.