

Pastor's Message

After we have sung or said the Our Father together, the presider invites the community to both accept the gift of peace that Jesus left us and to offer that peace to one another. When the Mass was being revised during the Second Vatican Council a disagreement arose about where to put the "Kiss of Peace". The Rite of Peace comes from the command that Jesus gives us: *If you present your offering at the altar and there remember that your brother (or sister) has something against you, leave your offering at the altar and go first to reconcile yourself with your brother (or sister)* (Mt. 5:23-24). The first option for the Sign of Peace was in the very beginning of the Mass as we gather and ask God's mercy on our gathering. Should we not then offer the sign of peace to each other before we do anything else? The second option was to offer a sign of peace to one another before we approach the altar/Table of the Lord and receive his Body and Blood. It was decided to place this little rite here during the Communion Rite. Any appropriate sign of peace can be exchanged.

Next we celebrate the Rite of the Breaking of the Bread. The priest presider raises the host and breaks it as Jesus did at the Last Supper so that all might share in one Body of Christ. As St. Paul writes: *Is not the bread that we break a communion in the body of Christ? Since there is one loaf, we all form only one body, for we all partake of the one loaf* (1Cor. 10:16-17). In the early church the bread was baked by someone in the congregation and was in fact one loaf. The bread looked and tasted like bread eaten at any table. But as churches increased and the breaking of the bread took longer most of the bread was broken before the Mass began and so the sign that we are one in the body of Christ has been diminished if not lost.

Sometimes you will see a priest take a small piece of the consecrated host and place it in the chalice of wine. This little gesture called the Rite of Commingling comes from an ancient habit where a piece of the host at the Pope's Mass was carried and shared with other churches in Rome to signify the unity between the churches and the Pope. Since that is no longer the case I find that the significance of this little gesture is anachronistic.

Then together we ask the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God who took upon himself our sins and was sacrificed for our salvation "Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us" three times (or as long as it takes to break the bread). The priest next invites us to "Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are we who are called to the supper of the Lamb". Having recognized Jesus who has given his life for us as the lamb once slain and now risen and present to us in bread and wine we are ready to receive his Body and Blood in a truly holy communion. Receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

Fr. Chris