

The Year of Faith

Catechesis on the Mass

The Rite of Peace

This week in our catechesis on the Mass, we look at the Rite of Peace, “by which the Church entreats peace and unity for herself and for the whole human family, and the faithful express to each other their ecclesial communion and mutual charity before communicating in the Sacrament.”¹

The Roman Rite is unique among all of the Catholic ritual churches with respect to where the Kiss of Peace occurs; in every other rite the exchange of peace occurs prior to the bread and wine being offered. The Roman church, however, recognizes that we are so frail that such peace is not possible for us unless Christ is present to begin it in us and bring it to completion.

After the priest, in the person of Christ, gives the greeting of peace to the people, they are invited to exchange the sign of peace with each other. The “General Instruction of the Roman Missal” mandates that “it is appropriate that each person, in a sober manner, offer the sign of peace only to those who are nearest.”² The exchange of peace is a liturgical action. Mindful that the peace which we exchange flows from the altar, we do nothing that would distract our attention from the altar: we do not engage in conversation, we do not move so as to offer the sign of peace to additional people, and we always conclude the exchange of peace in a timely manner so as to have our attention fixed on the altar for the Fraction of the Sacred Host, which will be our topic next week.

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¹ “General Instruction of the Roman Missal,” 82.

² *Ibid.*