

The Year of Faith

Catechesis on the Mass

The Fraction Rite

This week in our catechesis on the Mass, we cover the Fraction Rite and preparation for Holy Communion.

After the exchange of the sign of peace concludes, the Sacred Host is fractioned. Thus begins the immediate preparation for the reception of Holy Communion, a time when we beg for mercy and peace from the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world and is broken for us before our eyes on the altar. After the chanting of the *Agnus Dei*, the priest recites one of two prayers as he privately prepares for Holy Communion. The broken host is then shown to the people and we hear the word of John the Baptist commanding us to “Behold the Lamb of God!” We respond with the words of the centurion as we proclaim our unworthiness while begging Jesus to heal our soul. How important it is for us to remember that we present ourselves for Communion not because we are worthy, but because we desire healing for our souls.

An important note about the decision to receive Holy Communion: Not every person attending Mass should come forward for Communion! With a few narrowly defined exceptions, only Catholics should come forward for Communion. Furthermore, communicants should be Catholics in good standing. For example, someone who is in an invalid marriage outside of the Church should always remain in their seat. Furthermore, when we have the misfortune of committing a mortal sin, we are unable to receive Holy Communion until we first go to Confession. For example, someone who willfully misses Mass on a Sunday or Holy Day of Obligation while aware that attending Mass is a grave obligation may not receive again until they have confessed that sin and have received absolution. Finally, a one hour fast from food and drink (with the exception of medicine and water) is required in order to receive Holy Communion.

Next week, we will have a refresher on the practical aspects of receiving Holy Communion.

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