

Reflection

What difference does it make to me that Mass is something we celebrate together as a community united with the whole Church?

In what ways do the readings of the day prepare me for the reception of Holy Communion?

How does my being joined with Christ and the Church in the offering of the Eucharistic Prayer affect my sharing in Holy Communion?

Where do I find it most challenging to live my communion with Christ?

How do I bring these difficulties to prayer?

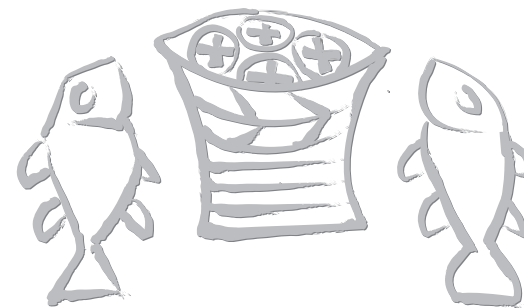
Prayer

Father, in this great sacrament you feed your people and strengthen them in holiness, so that the family of humankind may come to walk in the light of one faith, in one communion of love.

We come then to this wonderful sacrament to be fed at your table and grown into the likeness of the risen Christ,

Why don't you?

- Read and reflect on the story of Jesus washing his disciples' feet (John 13: 1–15).
Do what I have done for you...
- Consider how we are fed by the Lord at Mass and elsewhere.



The Body of Christ. Amen.
The Blood of Christ. Amen.

The eating and drinking together of the Lord's Body and Blood in a Paschal meal is the culmination of the Eucharist. The assembly is made ready to share in this banquet by a series of rites that lead from the Eucharistic Prayer directly to the Communion. The themes underlying these rites are the mutual love and reconciliation that are both the condition and the fruit of worthy communion and the unity of the many in the one. These themes are symbolised at both the natural and the sacramental level in the signs of bread and wine now become the Body and Blood of Christ

*Mutual love and
reconciliation:
the condition
and fruit of
worthy communion*

Looking at the Mass

Introductory Rites

Liturgy of the Word

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of Gifts

Eucharistic Prayer

Communion Rite

Lord's Prayer

Rite of Peace

Breaking of Bread

Communion

Prayer after Communion

Concluding Rite

The Lord's Prayer, Sign of Peace and Breaking of the Bread both lead us to and prepare us for Holy Communion. They are together a transition from one high point, the Eucharistic Prayer, to another, the sharing in Communion.

The Communion of priest and people is helpfully accompanied by prayerful congregational song. This singing is meant to express the communicants' union in spirit by means of the unity of their voices, to give evidence of joy of heart, and to highlight more the "communitarian" nature of the Communion procession.

The Communion procession expresses the humble patience of the poor moving forward to be fed, the alert expectancy of God's

In Communion with Christ

When we receive Christ in the bread of life and the cup of salvation, we do indeed receive him entire, body and soul, his humanity and his divinity. He gives us himself to draw us into communion with himself. He gives himself as gift and we are invited to give

The invitation

to be communion

ourselves to him in response. There is no compulsion, but there is the invitation not just to receive communion but to be in communion.

This Holy Communion is not just between Jesus and any individual. It is between Jesus in his union with the Father and the Spirit, and us in our union with each other. We are invited to share in the communion between God and the Church. And there is more yet – for the Church is called to invite others, indeed the whole world, to enter into this same communion. Not sacrificing our diversity, but entering into a quality of relationship which enables us to recognise in each other a brother, a sister, a child of God.

This is a focus of the Communion rite as a whole: *Our Father*; the exchange of the Sign of Peace and the act of receiving

Holy Communion itself. The Church's teaching stresses this is not a private act but a communitarian act.

This communitarian dimension gets a special focus in the Communion Procession. The Church asks us to make a sign of reverence as we go forward to receive Holy Communion. Our Bishops have stipulated that in England and Wales the sign we are to make is to process reverently together. This is a challenge! How do I process? Mindful and respectful of others? Or pushing my way to the front? Do I have a sense,

The sign we are to make is to process reverently together,

as the Church encourages us to recognise, that this procession is something we all do together? Or do I focus only on my own prayer? These are questions each one should ponder but also the parish as a whole. For although the quality of our communion is something we each contribute to, it is also something we do together and for which the community as a whole needs to take its proper responsibility.

people sharing the Paschal meal in readiness for their journey, the joyful confidence of God's people on the march toward the promised land. In England and Wales it is through this action of walking solemnly in procession that the faithful make their sign of reverence in preparation for receiving Communion.

When Communion is completed, the whole assembly may observe a period of total silence. In the absence of all words, actions, music, or movement, a moment of deep corporate stillness and contemplation may be experienced. Such silence is important to the rhythm of the whole celebration and is welcome in a busy and restless world.

In a final presidential prayer that brings to a close the Communion Rite, the community of faith asks that the spiritual effects of the Eucharist be experienced in its members' lives.

Celebrating the Mass 200–216