

## **THE COMMUNION AND CONCLUDING RITES**

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Because of its themes of Daily Bread and mutual forgiveness the Lord's Prayer is the most appropriate preparation for Holy Communion "so that what is holy may be given to those who are holy". The Communion Rite begins with the Lord's Prayer and continues through the prayer after Communion.

### **THE SIGN OF PEACE**

After the Lord's Prayer the Priest prays for peace and unity in the Church. In this prayer pronouns referring to the Church are feminine. This recalls the Church's image as the Bride of Christ. The Sign of Peace is optional but it is normally exchanged. It should only be given to those nearest to you and in a sober manner.

### **THE FRACTION**

The priest breaks the large host to signify that we are part of one body (1Cor:10:17) because we all receive from the 'one loaf'. One of the early names for the entire Mass was 'the breaking of bread'.

The Priest puts a small piece of the Bread into the chalice to signify the unity of Christ's Body and Blood in the work of salvation.

*(The Body and Blood of Christ should only be received by Catholics who are properly disposed. On-going repentance should be a common feature in the lives of Christians. Holy Communion will be more fruitfully received by those who are no strangers to private confession, before which they should make a thorough examination of conscience. We all need to be on our guard against the deadly effects of routine. It was only after the Prodigal Son turned away from his sinful way of life and was reconciled with his Father that a family feast (communion) was in order, but not before. According to Church teaching there are some states of life which deter one from receiving the Holy Sacrament. Non-Catholics are not allowed to receive Holy Communion at the catholic Mass.)*

**WORDS OF WISDOM FROM ST PADRE PIO:** *"My dear daughter, I think that the holy Eucharist is a great means through which to aspire to perfection. But we must receive it with the desire and intention of removing from the heart all that is displeasing to him with whom we wish to dwell". (Letter to Maria Gargani 1917) Saint Pio of Pietrelcina)*

## HOLY COMMUNION

An appropriate hymn, sung by the people whilst coming up to receive Holy Communion is the norm. After the distribution of Holy Communion, however, a period of silence is called for. (Pope Benedict observed quite an extended period of silence after Holy Communion during His Mass at Westminster Cathedral in 2010). What also goes down very well is an uplifting meditative piece sung by the Choir alone when everyone is settled.

## THE CONCLUDING RITE

If the priest is using a solemn blessing he will first say: 'Please bow your heads for the blessing'. The people's answer to each of the blessings is the Hebrew word 'Amen'.

The recessional hymn is optional and may be replaced by organ music. The Mass ends when the priest says: "The Mass is ended, go in peace".

## Questions

1. *The Church is seen as feminine (Holy Mother Church). It is described as the Bride of Christ in Sacred Scripture. Is this one of the reasons why many Catholics are in two minds about women's ordination or is there a deeper reason. Discuss.*

1. *Many people still feel a bit uneasy about the 'sign of peace' before Holy Communion. Is it time to drop it? Discuss.*

2. *Most of the countries in Europe (including Ireland) and South American and Africa do not distribute Holy Communion under 'both kinds' We still receive the 'whole Christ' under the form of bread alone. The Mass would also be considerably shortened. Should congregations not be given a vote on it?*

3. *How do you feel about the words 'Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter 'under my roof' and 'blessed' (instead of happy) are those called to the Supper of the Lamb'. Discuss*

4. *Many people wash their hands before eating. Should we 'wash our souls' in confession more often before we partake in the Eucharistic meal? Discuss*

5. *Pope St John Paul 11 says in his encyclical 'Veritatis Splendour' that couples 'living together' are not to receive the Eucharist. The same applies to couples not married in the Catholic Church. Discuss.*

