

The Source and Summit of Christian Life No. 8

Flowing from the Eucharistic prayer that emphasises as we have seen the fact that we are a community and that we are ourselves the Body of Christ we move to the prayers of preparation for receiving who we are in Holy Communion. It begins with the prayer that unites us all in the “Our Father.” The prayers that the priest says are ones that further emphasise that fact that we are a community each with our particular roles. We are, ordained and laity together, equally the family of God.

The Bread is broken and ready to be shared. It is recommended that the bread is a large loaf that is broken and that it has the appearance and taste of bread but made solely from wheat flour and water. The whole community are invited to share and together they respond to that invitation with a short prayer altogether. This prayer emphasises the whole healing and nourishing quality of the Eucharistic meal.

The Communion procession like all the processions is accompanied either by an antiphon or a hymn. So we normally have a hymn on our Sunday worship in which case we DO NOT say that Communion antiphon but all join in the hymn that accompanies the procession to the altar. This again emphasises that this is a communal action and this is not the time for our personal and spate devotion. The time for this in the long silence that is required by the rubrics when all have received communion.

It is worth noting the way that one should receive this Communion. When you come to the Communion minister with either the Bread or the Cup you should have a warm smiling face after all you are coming to meet in a special way your friend and brother Jesus Christ. As you look at the minister he or she will say “The Body of Christ” or “The Blood of Christ” to which you respond “Amen” which implies a recognition that not only the sacred species you are to receive is the presence of Christ but so is the minister and so are you. As St. Augustine so beautifully said “See who you are, be what you see.”

The silence is concluded with the prayer after Communion and then the liturgy moves into a brief dismissal rite. This rite is extremely important however and we need to recall that it really is an act of being sent by God. Being sent means being assigned to carry on the mission of the church. It means actualising in our lives what we have realised in the communal celebration of the Eucharist. It is not an ending but rather a beginning. Here are some words by Pope John Paul II in *Dies Domini*.

Like the first witnesses of the Resurrection, Christians who gather each Sunday to experience and proclaim the presence of the Risen Lord are called to evangelise and bear witness in their daily lives. Given this the Final Blessing and the Dismissal need to be better valued and appreciated, so that all who have shared in the Eucharist may come to a deeper sense of the responsibility which is entrusted to them. Once the assembly disperses, Christ’s disciples return to their everyday surroundings with the commitment to make their whole life a gift, a spiritual sacrifice pleasing to God.

Although we seem to have developed the habit of having a concluding hymn it is really unnecessary and in many ways it would best if this was omitted.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. In what ways do the Lord’s Prayer, the sign of peace and the breaking of the Bread help you to remember your unity with your brothers and sisters in Christ?
2. Do you participate as required in the Hymn for the Communion Procession? Do you understand the need to approach communion with great joy and openness in facing and looking at the Sacred Species and the Minister?
3. At the dismissal do you feel that you are sent on a mission?