

SAY AMEN TO WHO YOU ARE: THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

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(article #5 in the series)

In this series about the revised Roman Missal, we have read about the way the Liturgy of the Word creates faith to which we respond in faith in the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is composed of two parts: The Eucharistic Prayer and the Communion Rite. Last week, we reviewed the Eucharistic Prayer that ends with the great Amen.

We stand after singing the "Amen" to the Eucharistic prayer and begin the Communion Rite. This part of Mass includes the "Our Father," the sign of peace, the breaking of the bread, reception of Holy Communion and thanksgiving, and the prayer after Communion.

The Communion Rite starts with the Lord’s Prayer and the sign of peace. The text of the Lord’s Prayer will remain the same. The assembly stands. There is no discussion regarding gestures during this part of the Mass. In some assemblies, people hold their hands outstretched in prayer. Others hold hands. Still others fold their hands during the "Our Father". None of these gestures is mandated or forbidden by the Church. Our guiding principle is respect for the dignity of the Mass and respect for the freedom of our fellow worshipers.

The greeting of peace involves a text, a gesture, and movement. Father leads the Catholic family to practice the gesture of peace giving with an invitation. The priest’s text will be adjusted to better reflect the scriptural basis:

PRESENT TEXT	REVISED TEXT
Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles: I leave you peace , my peace I give you. Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom, where you live forever and ever.	Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles, Peace I leave you , my peace I give you, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will. Who live and reign forever and ever. SOURCE: <i>John 14:27</i>

The text the Christian family uses, “The peace of Christ be with you,” forms us as we remember that Christ is the source of peace and that we are carriers of that peace in body and spirit, here and now. The gesture used in the USA, a handshake, is a visual sign and tactile gesture where two people come together in Christ’s peace. What would the world be like if every handshake or gathering in the world occurred in that spirit?

Then Father leads the family to remember that what they are about to receive is more than the eye can behold and reminds us that we are “blessed.”

PRESENT TEXT	REVISED TEXT
This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper.	Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb. SOURCE: <i>John 1:29 and Is. 52: 13 and 53:6-8</i>

A student from the evangelical tradition once visited the a Catholic Mass and exclaimed, “Wow! That was a lot of people who went forward!” Viewing the communion procession through the

lens of his tradition, the student explained that these people were making their public proclamation of “faith in the Lord Jesus Christ” and accepted Christ as their “personal savior” by standing in the midst of the people and walking forward toward the altar. (Catholics accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior at baptism and renew that commitment at every Mass).

His comments made the Catholics around him reflect upon that action with a renewed perspective.

The Catholics were used to seeing people walking in a procession to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. But this perspective made them realize that even this action was a public display of faith. It is a response in faith to Jesus’ invitation, proclaimed at every Mass, to “Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body . . . Take this all of you and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my Blood.” When we walk forward, our action is an act of obedience to Christ’s command. We seal our faith with another, “Amen”, a word that also means, “I agree, I believe.”



But that is not all that action says. We walk forward like beggars in a line waiting for food and drink. Like the person who has nothing, we hold out our hands and wait to receive the Bread of Life.

Like the one who is thirsty, we dare to *share* the Blood of Christ with our brothers and sisters whose thirst also waits to be quenched.



This action puts us in solidarity with all people on the earth who hunger and thirst for everlasting resolution of chaos, conflict, selfishness, and senseless hate. Receiving Holy Communion, we become one body and blood, the Body and Blood of Christ, and commit ourselves to harmony, peace, sharing behaviors for the common good of all, and love for all peoples. That is a huge agenda but it is the mission Christ draws us into at every celebration of the liturgy.

During the Communion Rite, we respond in faith to that which we have prayed in the Eucharistic Prayer by feasting on the Body and Blood of Christ so that, as St. Augustine said, we may

become what we eat and drink. It is our act of faith to stand up, to walk in sight of all our friends and family, and to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in order to be the Body and Blood of Christ in the world.

The communion rite ends with the prayer after communion, which the Father of the banqueting family leads with the familiar invitation: “Let us pray . . .”

The dismissal rite, the next part of Mass, begins with parish announcements. Then Father blesses his Christian family and sends them to, “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord” every hour of the week through every behavior and, as St. Francis tells us, “when necessary, use words”.

In the end, our response in faith is to accept the mission to carry the presence of Christ in all settings (evangelize).

For more on the revised Mass, see www.usccb.org/romanmissal or www.liturgyalife.com or www.paulturner.org

DID YOU KNOW?

We refer to the book as the “Roman Missal” in every language to indicate our unity with Rome in the celebration of the liturgy. Even in Spanish, its name is *Misal Romano*. The Spanish *Misal Romano* will also be revised.

The USA bilingual bishops of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) met in June, 2011. They approved the proper texts (prayers) and adaptations for the future *Misal Romano, Tercera Edición* (Roman Missal, Third Edition) for Spanish-speaking Catholics in the United States.

The texts were translated into Spanish by the USCCB Subcommittee on Hispanics and the Liturgy and were based on the English texts confirmed by the Holy See in July 2010 for the English *Roman Missal, Third Edition*. They plan to review the newly confirmed *Misal Romano* for use in Spanish-speaking assemblies in the USA.