

2017-07-16, Series on the Mass, Part 81

*Communion of the Faithful, cont'd.*

The faithful are not required to communicate at Mass, but if they choose to do so, communion of the faithful takes place after the priest's communion of the Chalice. If there are communicants at the Mass, the priest genuflects, takes the ciborium or the paten with a small host elevated, turns to the faithful, and says the *Ecce Agnus Dei* ("Behold the Lamb of God..."). This is what St. John the Baptist said in presenting our Lord to the people.

The faithful respond using the same text as the priest did, which is from Matthew 8:8: "Lord I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, say but the word and my soul shall be healed." In reciting this prayer three times, we recognize that a simple creature is naturally unworthy to receive his Creator; however, by baptism we have become children of God. Secondly, we are unworthy because we were conceived and born in original sin and, as a result of this, there is a disorder in our being. Communion, however, will help re-establish the proper order within us. Finally, we are not worthy to receive our Lord because of our personal sins. Communion will again make us stronger to combat temptations and fight off the tempter. We ask our Lord to say but a word so that we can cease opposing His grace. We have to have confidence in Him, and if we cooperate with Him, we can become a saint.

The faithful approach the altar rail in the Traditional Mass to receive communion kneeling while the altar boy holds the communion paten under the person's chin. The kneeling position shows our humble attitude before God and is the means whereby we acknowledge that we are receiving the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. The communion paten is used to make certain that if the host or even a particle of the host should fall, that it would not fall to the ground. The Church teaches that every particle of the host is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Savior. The communion rail is like an extension of the altar to which it has an intimate relationship. The faithful, in approaching the communion rail, are also approaching the altar. Hence, there is often a communion rail cloth that is used like the one on the altar.

*Rev. Charles Van Vliet, FSSP*

*Pastor, Regina Caeli Parish*