

2017-07-23, Series on the Mass, Part 82

*Communion of the Faithful, cont'd.*

Communion of the sacred Host comes from the Church, and therefore the faithful approach the altar rail to receive communion from a minister of the Church. The priest acts *in persona Christi* and gives himself communion as our Lord did at the Last Supper; then the priest in turn gives communion to the others who approach for communion. This is where we see the dual role of the priest, who is one of the people but chosen from them and set aside to represent them before the altar, and who in turn brings Christ to them through the consecration and communion.

In the liturgy, the priests and other clerics who are going to approach for communion come forward in order of precedence and receive communion at the footpace of the altar. They usually assist at Mass from a place in the sanctuary inside the communion rail. At a Pontifical Mass, when the bishop is distributing communion, it used to be the custom that, after he made the sign of the cross with the host but before giving communion, the communicant would kiss the bishop's ring as a sign of respect, fidelity and affection toward the one who brings us Christ.

When a priest is distributing communion, he simply makes a small sign of the cross with the host and says the formula: "May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve your soul to life everlasting. Amen." Many times during Mass the priest had said "the Lord be with you," and now the moment arrives when this promise is truly fulfilled with communion of the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Savior.

The priest also asks that this sacrament preserve our soul. We receive communion through the body, but it is the soul that is preserved. Our body will fail us eventually, but the soul lives forever. In preserving the soul, our Lord helps us to remain faithful to our baptismal promises and to remain in friendship with Jesus so that when the hour of death arrives, we will be welcomed to life everlasting. The priest also says the "Amen, so be it" confirming, so to speak, the effects that the Eucharist can have in our souls, even if imperceptible to the senses. It is up to each one to realize the effect of these graces in our life.

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