



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

After the "Kiss of Peace," the priest begins the Fractioning Rite. This takes place during the "Lamb of God." The priest takes the presider's host and breaks it, and places a small piece of the host in the chalice saying,

May this mingling of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ bring life to us who receive it.

This hails back to the early Roman Church when the deacons at the Pope's Mass would take hosts from the altar to other Churches in Rome, and the priests in each church would place a small piece of that host in the chalice at their Mass, symbolizing the unity between what they were doing and their bishop.

The Lamb of God hearkens to John the Baptist's words about Jesus: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, cf. 1:36, and many references in Revelation). The prayer is, again, one of the few in the Mass directed to Jesus, and not to the Father. We beg His mercy upon us, as well as His peace.

After the Fractioning Rite, the priest quietly prays a prayer asking Jesus to heal his sin and prepare Him for Communion:

May the receiving of your Body and Blood, Lord Jesus Christ, not bring me to judgment and condemnation, but through your loving mercy be for me protection in mind and body and a healing remedy.

Then he raises the host either over the paten or over the chalice and says to the assembly: 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.

Again, we hearken back to the words of St. John the Baptist. We are invited to look at Jesus – to behold Him with faith. He truly is the sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away our sins and those of the whole world. The book of Revelation refers to heaven as the "wedding feast of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:9), and we know about the parable of the Wedding Feast, where many are called to enter the feast, but too many refuse to come (Matthew 22). We are invited to the feast – the supper of the Lamb – and Jesus desires for us to be blessed by entering in.

*And together with the people the priest adds:*

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

This prayer of the people comes from Matthew 8:8, where Jesus is going to heal the centurion's servant, but the centurion knows that will make Jesus ritually unclean, and so tells Jesus He doesn't need to come. This prayer is an act of faith on our part, that we believe that, while we are sinful and broken (not worthy), we trust Jesus that His healing is close – He has only to say the word, and we are healed. Do we really trust this? Even if we go to confession right before Mass, there are so many times that we get distracted during Mass, or have a judgmental thought about someone and we allow it to linger in our minds. We might allow an impure thought to remain, or we might become impatient with our kids. All of these things can make us an unworthy tabernacle for the most-pure God, yet, we make this act of trust in our God who heals us.

All of this is to prepare us for the moment of Communion – an intimate union with our God. Next week, we'll begin looking at this great act Communion.