

IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH: THE MASS

Lamb of God and Fraction

This is article 17 of 22 of the Mass series
(yes we added another article in the series)

During the Communion Rite of the Mass, we prepare ourselves to receive the Holy Eucharist in a very particular way. First, we sing, “Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us,” three times, though modified the last time to “...grant us peace.” While we do so, the priest breaks the consecrated host and places a small part of the host into the chalice. What does all of this mean? The Scriptures will help us out.

“Lamb of God...” St. John the Baptist once pointed to Christ and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God” (John 1:36). In the visions of Heaven described in Revelation, Christ is described as a Lamb who had been slain (5:6) In the Bible, lambs were offered in sacrifice. Christ is the new and perfect Lamb, who frees us from our ultimate enemies, Sin and Death, by sacrifice of His own life on the Cross.

As we repeat that phrase, “Lamb of God,” we prepare our hearts for Christ, to recognize the Person of Christ, who gave His life for us and now reigns in Heaven. We need that repetition, to prepare ourselves for this encounter with Him.

“The Breaking of the Bread” Watch as the priest breaks the Host and places a small piece into the chalice. This gesture of “breaking bread” is rooted in what Christ did at the Last Supper. He “took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, ‘Take and eat; this is my body’” (Matthew 26:26). Christ revealed Himself to two of His disciples “in the breaking of the bread” (Luke 24:35). The first followers of Christ “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). When the priest takes a small piece of the host and places it in the chalice, we are reminded of the unity of His Body and Blood (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 83). In every host and in every cup, the whole of Christ is there.

We are profoundly united to our brothers and sisters through Christ in the Eucharist. He makes us one. His love transforms us and helps us love like Him.

This week's *In Spirit and Truth* is written by Fr. Matthew Murray