**Why We Do What We Do VIII: The Liturgy of the Eucharist, Part 4**

*Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over—twelve wicker baskets full.*

Matthew 14:19-20

*Since the Eucharistic Celebration is the Paschal Banquet, it is desirable that in keeping with the Lord's command, his Body and Blood should be received by the faithful who are properly disposed as spiritual food. This is the sense of the fraction and the other preparatory rites by which the faithful are led directly to Communion.*

(General Instruction of the Roman Missal)

We continue our reflection on what we do during the Mass. Currently we are reflecting on the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and today we take a look at the Communion Rite itself. The Communion Rite includes the Lord’s Prayer, the Sign of Peace, the Fractioning Rite, and distribution of Holy Communion.

We begin with the Lord’s Prayer, the prayer that our Savior himself taught us. The Lord’s Prayer prepares us for Holy Communion, by placing our trust in God, asking him to give us what we really need, and begging his forgiveness for our sins.

During the Sign of Peace, we continue to act on the forgiveness we receive in Christ, by extending Christ’s own peace to one another. The words we speak to one another help us to extend that peace, and we symbolize it with a hand shake, an embrace, or a kiss, depending on our custom.

Then the Eucharist is prepared for Holy Communion. The priest breaks the large host. A small fraction of the host is placed in the chalice, symbolizing the unity of the Body and Blood of Christ in accomplishing the work of salvation. During this time, we sing the “Lamb of God,” calling on God for mercy and grace.

Then comes the moment we have all been waiting for: the reception of Holy Communion.

We come to the Altar together, to receive the source and summit of our Christian life, bowing the head before we receive the Body or the Blood of Christ, and clearly saying “Amen” in response to the invocation “The Body of Christ” or “The Blood of Christ.” The Communion Rite concludes with the Prayer after Communion.

This entire Communion Rite is the high point of our action in the Mass. This is what we were created for: total communion with our God who gives himself freely to us. Prepared by the Word of God, we now are fed on the very Body and Blood of Christ our God. The grace we receive makes us the Body of Christ, formed to bring God’s presence into our homes, our businesses, our schools, and wherever our week takes us.