



SESSION FIVE

The Liturgy of the Eucharist: Communion Rite and the Concluding Rites

Elements of the Liturgy of the Eucharist

Communion Rite

- Lord's Prayer
- Rite of Peace
- Fraction, Commingling, and "Lamb of God"
- Holy Communion
- Prayer After Communion

Elements of the Concluding Rites

- Announcements
- Greeting and Blessing
- Dismissal
- Kissing of the Altar

Review the Context

In our last session, we arrived at one “mountain peak” of the Mass: the Eucharistic Prayer. After symbolically offering ourselves through the gifts of bread and wine in the Presentation of the Gifts, we were summoned by the priest to lift up our hearts to heaven—for, indeed, that is where we were headed spiritually in the Mass. We responded by saying, “We lift them up to the Lord,” and we proceeded to join the angels in their praise of God around his throne, singing “Holy, holy, holy Lord ...” All this praise and reverence prepared us for that most sacred moment when the priest recited the words of Jesus from the Last Supper: “This is my body ... This is my blood.” Through these words by which Jesus instituted the Eucharist, our meager gifts of bread and wine on the altar were changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, and his sacrifice on the Cross was made present to us. We responded in awe and wonder over all that had taken place before us at this part of the Mass. When the Eucharistic Prayer ended, we gave our great “Amen”—affirming everything the priest had said and giving “all glory and honor” to the Lord.

Now, in the Communion Rite, we prepare for the most intimate union we can have with our Lord here on earth. In Holy Communion, we receive the very Body and Blood of Jesus truly present under the appearances of bread and wine. The Mass then formally ends with the Concluding Rites, which sends the people into the world to be witnesses to the saving mysteries of Christ’s death and resurrection in which they have just so intimately participated.

Read

Read the prayers for the final part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, known as the Communion Rite, and then read the prayers for the Concluding Rites. This will take you from the Lord’s Prayer and “Lamb of God” prayer before Holy Communion to the priest’s final words, “Go forth, the Mass is ended” and our grateful concluding response to the gift of the Mass, “Thanks be to God.”

In the *Biblical Walk Through the Mass* book, read Chapters 22 through 25 (“The Communion Rite”), and then read Chapter 26, “The Concluding Rites.”

Take a Deeper Look

Answering the following questions will help you understand the scriptural roots of the Communion Rite in the Liturgy of the Eucharist and the Concluding Rites of the Mass. If you do not understand something, make a note to bring it up in your small group discussion.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST: THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord’s Prayer: “Our Father ...”

1. One way the priest invites the people to pray the Our Father is with these words: “At the Savior’s command and formed by divine teaching we dare to say ...” Read CCC 2777–2778. In what sense do we “dare to say” the Our Father? What is so daring about reciting this prayer?

The Fraction: Breaking of Bread

2. Shortly before Communion, the priest breaks the Eucharistic host in a rite known as “the fraction” or “breaking of bread.” The expression “breaking of bread” was associated with Christian worship in the New Testament (see Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7-11).
 - a. Read 1 Corinthians 10:16-17. To what kind of worship does the breaking of bread specifically refer in this passage?
 - b. **Think About It:** In light of this biblical background, what is the significance of the priest breaking the Eucharistic host at this moment before Holy Communion?

Agnus Dei: Lamb of God

In the prayer known as the *Agnus Dei*, the people address Jesus as the “Lamb of God.” This image recalls the Old Testament Passover lamb. On the night of Israel’s liberation from Egypt, God instructed the people to sacrifice a lamb, eat of it, and mark their doorposts with the blood of the lamb. Those who participated in this ritual, called the Passover, would be spared the tenth plague that would soon hit the land of Egypt: the death of the firstborn sons. Each year thereafter, subsequent generations of Israelites celebrated the Passover by retelling and re-enacting the events of that first Passover. This annual Passover feast included the sacrifice of the Passover lambs.

3. Jesus is depicted as a lamb in a number of verses in the Bible.
 - a. Read the following passages. What does the Bible say about Jesus the Lamb in these verses?

John 1:29

Revelation 5:6

1 Corinthians 5:6-7

Revelation 7:9-10

Isaiah 53:7-12

- b. **Think About It:** At this point in the Mass, the priest uses language similar to the angel's invitation to the Wedding Supper of the Lamb. How might the Eucharist be like a marriage feast? More specifically, how might Holy Communion be similar to communion between husband and wife?

“Lord, I Am Not Worthy”

In response to the priest's announcement of blessing upon those called to the Supper of the Lamb, the people say, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” In this prayer, the Mass draws our attention to the words of the Roman centurion who came to Jesus with great faith, asking for his servant to be healed.

7. Read Matthew 8:5-10.

- a. How does the centurion exhibit great faith in this passage?
- b. How does the centurion exhibit great humility in this passage?

8. Think About It:

- a. What similarities are there between what Jesus offered to do for the centurion and what Jesus actually does for those who receive him in Holy Communion?
- b. How should we imitate the centurion's response to Jesus' desire to come to his house when we are at Mass?

- 9. **Think About It:** Echoing the words of the centurion, we pray that the Lord “only say the word” and our souls “shall be healed.” From what do we need to be healed as we prepare to receive Jesus in Holy Communion? (See CCC 1385–1386.)

CONCLUDING RITES

“Go Forth, the Mass Is Ended”

10. The whole Liturgy receives its name, “the Mass,” from the closing line of the Latin text, where the word *missa* (Latin for “dismissal” or “sending”) is used to dismiss the people. This points to why the Mass should be seen as a “sending forth.”

- a.** Read the following passages. What is Jesus sending his followers to do?

Matthew 28:19-20

John 20:21-2

Acts 1:8

- b. Think About It:** What are we called to do as we are sent forth from the Mass? (See CCC 1332.)

Application

This exercise will help you apply one of the key themes of the session to your life. After meditating on it, respond to God with a brief written prayer if you choose.

At Mass, the priest calls on us to give the Lord our fullest attention—to raise our thoughts, desires, and emotions to God. He says, “Lift up your hearts.” Yet we often get distracted at Mass. Our minds wander and we might find ourselves halfway through the Eucharistic Prayer without having given the Lord our best. What can you do to enter the prayers of the Eucharistic Liturgy more deeply the next time you are at Mass?

Dear Lord ...

After the small group discussion, watch Dr. Sri’s video presentation for Session Five.

The talk notes that begin on the following page provide an outline of the video presentation.

SESSION FIVE TALK NOTES

The Liturgy of the Eucharist: Communion Rite and the Concluding Rites

I. The Communion Rite

A. The Lord's Prayer: "We dare to say ..."

1. God as our Father
 - a. Mark 14:36 (Aramaic would be "Abba")
 - b. 1 John 3:1: "And so we are"
 - c. Divine life dwelling in us, sanctifying grace—the Catholic understanding of grace
2. God as our Father—communal dimension

B. "For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours ..."

1. Not in the prayer Jesus taught (see Matthew 6; Luke 11)
2. Words used in the very early Church (see *Didache*, prayer of thanksgiving)
3. Old Testament background: 1 Chronicles 29:10-11

C. Sign of Peace

D. *Agnus Dei*: "Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world"

1. Recalls Passover lamb (see Exodus 12)
2. Isaiah 53:7-11: Suffering Servant
3. John 1:29, "Behold, the lamb of God ..."

E. "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9)

1. Passover/Eucharistic imagery
 - a. "Hallelujah" used four times in Revelation 19:1-6.
Recalls *hallel* psalms and Jewish feasts that use them.
 - b. "Supper of the lamb" = Passover
2. Marital imagery: the Passover feast as wedding feast
3. Old Testament images of God and people as Bridegroom and bride
4. At Communion—we are the bride, Jesus the Bridegroom

F. Period of silence and thanksgiving

Mary's first Communion: how Mary anticipates Eucharistic faith
(John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 55–56.)

II. Concluding Rites

“The Mass” (Latin, *Missa*)—connected with *missio* (“sending forth”; see CCC 1332)





Optional Final Session

Many groups schedule an additional session to wrap up this study. This session often includes refreshments or a meal and can be used to build community, provide additional instruction, and promote future programs. With *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, this can provide an ideal bridge from learning more about the Mass to experiencing it in a deeper way. The optional final session can be done in conjunction with a scheduled Mass if you can arrange one for the occasion. Another idea is to invite a priest to share his insights into Scripture and the Mass or ask a liturgist to speak on the role of the Responsorial Psalm and how to participate in it more fully.

SAMPLE AGENDA

1. Welcome and introduction—leader

2. Mass (30 minutes)

3. Group discussion (30 minutes)—**leader or facilitators**

Depending on the size of the group and your goals for the discussion, you may do this in small groups or with everyone together.

Open the discussion in prayer, thanking God for the gift of the Mass. Using the Parts of the Mass chart on page 3, review the four major parts of the Mass and then discuss the following questions:

- What stood out to you the most in each session? Why?
- How has your experience of the Mass changed as a result of what you have learned?

4. Fellowship and hospitality.

Consider bringing a dessert or part of a meal to share.

5. Closing prayer—leader

A BIBLICAL WALK THROUGH
THE MASS