

#25 LORD, I AM NOT WORTHY THAT YOU SHOULD ENTER UNDER MY ROOF

Our discussion of the Communion Rite continues with preparation for and reception of Holy Communion.

After the Lamb of God finishes, the priest quietly says a prayer addressed to Jesus. Immediately following this prayer, he genuflects, takes the host, slightly raises it, and says, “**Behold the Lamb of God . . . Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.**” You will notice that several of the words here are different. The opening phrase is taken from John 1:29 “where John the Baptist points out Jesus to his followers” (Turner). The final phrase alludes to the wedding banquet of the Lamb in Revelation 19:9. The new translation helps depict the reality of our gathering: every time we gather to celebrate Eucharist, we gather at the table of the heavenly banquet. It is Christ, the bridegroom, who continues to invite us to eat and drink at his table. Our Eucharistic sharing is a sharing in the very life of God, a gift we call grace. How seriously do we take this invitation to eat at Christ’s table?

Both priest and assembly respond to this invitation by saying, “Lord, I am not worthy **that you should enter under my roof**, but only say the word and **my soul** shall be healed.” While these are changes in the English translation, this is how the Latin and most other languages have always been. This text refers to both Matthew 8:8 and Luke 7:6 where a centurion asks Jesus to heal his servant, but feels unworthy to have Jesus enter his home. Ultimately, Jesus heals the servant because of the centurion’s faith and humility. Our prayer is similar: as we confront our own sinfulness, we may feel unworthy to have Christ enter our body. As we come to the table, we must be honest, admit to our sins, and be open to God’s healing love. As we place our sins upon the altar and humble ourselves before the Lord, we are transformed and invited into deeper communion with God.



The very act of processing to receive the Eucharist is a statement of faith in the risen Christ, so the procession to receive communion is reserved for those who are in communion with the Church and who have professed faith in the midst of the assembly. This is why we dismiss the catechumens before the baptized profess the Creed. The catechumens’ sole responsibility is to hear and study God’s word; the baptized are also called to pray for the world, profess the creed, and take part in the Eucharist.

As we walk to receive the body and blood of the Lord, we ritualize our pilgrimage here on earth. While each celebration of the Eucharist is a celebration in union with the heavenly liturgy, we must also remember that we go from the celebration to continue proclaiming the Good News and the reality is that our journey is hard. We all have many crosses to carry, but each time we gather we grow as the Body of Christ and are strengthened for the road ahead. In each Eucharist, we long for that final day when our pilgrimage is complete and we sing in endless praise at the Supper of the Lamb.

We will continue our discussion next time by exploring the words and postures for receiving Holy Communion.