



“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.” After his genuflection to Our Lord really present in the Most Holy Eucharist, the priest raises the chalice with the host and proclaims these words of St. John the Baptist (Jn 1:29). This part of the Mass is called the “Showing of the Host.”

The current *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* includes a paragraph on this part of the Mass: “Then the Priest shows the faithful the Eucharistic Bread, holding it over the paten or over the chalice, and invites them to the banquet of Christ; and along with the faithful, he then makes an act of humility, using the prescribed words from the Gospels” (*GIRM*, 84). There is really a communication going on here. Like St. John the Baptist, the priest is proclaiming the presence of the Lord Jesus and pointing him out so that everyone may know he is with us. Then the priest extends an invitation to those who are able to partake in this special gift, the Holy Eucharist.

An Invitation and a Gift

“Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.” As Edward Sri indicates, “these words are taken from a climactic moment in the book of Revelation and indeed, the entire Bible (Rv 19:9).” The scene is set as the great multitude in heaven is singing together the Lord’s praises. Sri continues, “And the angel instructs John to write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb’ (Rv 19:9). What is the festive supper of the Lamb? It is the Lord’s Supper, the Eucharist. First of all, the *supper* and the *Lamb* bring to mind the Passover supper in which Jews would sacrifice a lamb and eat of it as the main course of the meal... But this passage tells us something even more dramatic. In Revelation 19:6-9, the Lamb is revealed to be a bridegroom! And that means this Passover supper is a wedding feast. The Bridegroom-Lamb is Jesus, and the Bride represents us, the Church, whom Jesus is coming to wed... When you hear those words at Mass, do you realize that you are receiving a wedding invitation? You are being called to participate in the marriage feast of Jesus and his Church” (*A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, pp. 138, 140).

We are so blessed by his invitation and the gift of Jesus himself. What do we do now? The only right thing to do is to be honest with the Lord about his generosity and recognize that without his grace and mercy, we could never be worthy of such a gift. Thankfully for us, the words of the centurion from the Gospel (see Mt 8:8) summarize well what our response should be. After the showing and “Lamb of God,” the priest and the people respond, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”

Our Response and Reception

As the Diocese of Peoria teaches, “We respond to this invitation of the priest to receive the Lord Jesus in the Holy Eucharist with humility. Like the centurion servant who recognized himself unworthy to have the Lord ‘under his roof’ to heal his child, it calls to mind our humility—and the Lord’s divine majesty that He can do this work despite our weaknesses” (*A Study of the Mass*, p. 19). As Edward Sri notes, these words of the centurion are also a prayer that “expresses a great faith that surpasses many others in the gospels and amazes even Jesus: he believes Jesus can heal from afar, simply by speaking his word... Jesus praises this man for his faith. Just like the centurion, we recognize our unworthiness to have Jesus come under the ‘roof’ of our souls in holy communion. Yet just as the centurion believed Jesus was able to heal his servant, so do we trust that Jesus can heal us as he becomes the most intimate guest of our soul in the Eucharist” (*A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, p. 142).

The Diocese of Peoria reminds us: “it is for this reason that Jesus came into the world, as ‘people who are well do not need doctors, sick people do!’ ‘I have come to seek out those who are lost!’ In the Holy Eucharist, Jesus seeks us out! He comes to our doors and He knocks. Our reception of Communion is an opportunity to allow Him into our hearts...” (*A Study of the Mass*, p. 19).

The Lord Jesus, of course, knows our failings. That he wants us anyway is what makes his love so powerful and so amazing. That he would offer his very Body to us is even more amazing. It is natural for us to desire to repay a kindness, but what do we do when the kindness is the greatest gift in the history of the world? Thankfully, the rest of the Mass will help us to know what to do!