



NATIONAL
**Eucharistic
Revival**

**Step-by-Step Walk Through the Mass
Do This in Remembrance of Me, Part 68,
Holy Communion
by FR. LUKE SPANNAGEL**



As we continue through the Communion Rite, the long-anticipated moment has arrived. Finally, it is time for **Holy Communion!** This is the moment we have been preparing for throughout the whole Mass. Whenever I think about the joy of Holy Communion, I remember very vividly the thrill of my First Communion. I think of the song we all learned and the wonderful party afterward. But I especially remember the moment of Communion. Although I was small at the time, in second grade, I remember feeling a special closeness to God that I never had felt before. I don't know if I grasped what Holy Communion meant on an intellectual or even theological level, but I certainly felt a true spiritual union with our Lord.

As Fr. Joseph McGloin teaches, “The word ‘communion’ is almost self-explanatory. Literally, it means ‘union with.’ It suggests a sharing, a mutual participation. Holy Communion, is, then, an intimate sharing in the life of Christ” (*How to Get More Out of the Mass*, p. 128). That is exactly what takes place in Holy Communion. We receive the Precious Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ into our bodies, and he unites us with himself. Unlike regular food which becomes part of our bodies, the Eucharist unites our bodies to the Lord. Fr. McGloin continues, “While the other sacraments bring us the grace of Christ, this one brings us the grace of Christ himself along with himself. Truly, a person with any faith in Christ would be foolish to neglect this great gift” (*How to Get More Out of the Mass*, p. 133).

Participating in Christ's Perfect Sacrifice

Did you notice he said sacrifice? Hopefully, this word reminds us of one of the names for the Mass—the Holy Sacrifice. As we have journeyed through the Mass, we have noted that the Mass is a true sharing in the Last Supper and in the Cross of Jesus. In the Mass, we are invited to participate in the one perfect sacrifice of Jesus. Fr. Guy Oury tells us how sacrifice and Holy Communion fit together in the Mass. He says, “The Mass is a sacrifice but also a repast, or rather, a sacrificial repast. It would not have meaning, at least not the meaning given it by the Lord, were it not also Communion.” He goes on to say, “The meal symbolizes the union between the God of the covenant and the people of God.”

This becomes clearer if we look at meals and feasts in Jewish history. According to Fr. Oury, “In the [Traditional Jewish] meal God is present as a tablemate, invisible to be sure but still present. He lives with human beings, shares their common interests, and welcomes them as intimates. People are the invited of God... At the time of Christ, the image of a feast was one of the most common to portray the kingdom that was to come. The Lord used it repeatedly in the parables. It stood for the kingdom of heaven both in the terrestrial form that is the Church and in the ultimate and definitive form that is paradise. The Eucharist itself was instituted in the context of a sacred meal, that of Passover” (*The Mass*, pp. 105–6).

The Greatest Celebration of All Time

See how Holy Communion is so much more than just a meal? True, it is a Sacred Meal, Holy Thursday, the Last Supper, where we are guests of the Lord, who gives of his very self for our nourishment. But, this meal is also the sacrifice of the Cross, where our sins are overcome and conquered once and for all. The meal is also an anticipation of the heavenly banquet, where we will celebrate with the Lord and the Communion of Saints forever. Finally, this special meal is also a means of unity among the faithful—the Body of Christ, the Church. With all this meaning, the Eucharist is the greatest celebration of all time. Not only are we present at this wonderful celebration, but many of us are also invited to receive the Lord in the Eucharist. In the weeks ahead, we will look more closely at receiving Communion properly, who can receive Communion, different forms of Holy Communion, and what to do when we aren't able to receive Our Lord.