



# What's What

*A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.*

## The Fraction Rite

The Fraction Rite is the part of the Mass where the priest takes the body of Christ and breaks it into smaller pieces. This occurs during the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God). At this time, he also puts a small piece of the body of Christ (it is no longer bread at this point) into the chalice containing the blood of Christ. Have you ever wondered why this is done?

This rite has its origins in the early church. There are two traditions that lead to the present-day rite. The first is the *fermentum*. In order to show communion between churches, Pope Innocent I (401-417) decided that since not all priests could attend his Sunday Mass, he would send acolytes (similar to altar servers) from the Papal Mass to all the Masses offered in Rome. The acolytes brought a piece of the Body of Christ consecrated by the pope (called the *fermentum*) to the other churches in Rome. The priests in these Churches would then add this piece of the Body of Christ to the chalice during the Mass(es) they offered. In this way, the Mass offered by priests in these other church buildings was connected to the Mass offered by the Bishop of Rome. This was a visible sign of the communion and unity shared between the Holy Father and the people in these churches.

Another custom associated

with this rite is the *sancta*. The *sancta* was a piece of a host consecrated from a prior Mass by the Holy Father. It was added to the chalice during a Mass to show the oneness of the Mass and the sacrifice of Christ. In this way, people could see that the Mass currently being offered was connected to (and indeed the same as) all the Masses previously offered. This practice symbolized the unique and particular oneness of the sacrifice of Christ present in all Masses.

As the Church asserted more authority over liturgical practice and custom, these two traditions were collapsed into each other resulting in the current practice of the Church. While the *fermentum* no longer comes from a Papal Mass, the new General Instruction of the Roman Missal tells us that the commingling, and its accompanying prayer, should remind all believers of the salvation which Christ brought us through his own bodily death and resurrection: "The priest breaks the Bread and puts a piece of the host into the chalice to signify the unity of the Body and Blood of the Lord in the work of salvation, namely, of the living and glorious Body of Jesus Christ" (no. 83).

During this rite the priest quietly prays, "May the mingling of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ bring eter-

nal life to us who receive it." Besides unity with the pope - and our unity with each other in the Body of Christ - this commingling also reminds us of the Lord's resurrection and His promise of salvation to all who share in the Eucharist.

This shows the allegorical understanding that was attached to this ritual gesture as early as the fourth century and still provides the Church a rich and deep understanding of the fullness of the Paschal Mystery present in the Eucharist.

- by Deacon Brian Carpenter

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The Fraction Rite

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### Things to talk about:

- What is the importance of unity with other parishioners in your life?
- What role does communion with the diocese play in your life?
- How does communion with others bring you into better communion with God?

### Did You Know?

For Catholics it is not only important to share in communion with God, but with each other as well. The Church is the communion of the People of God with the Bishop of Rome.

When we celebrate the Mass, we enter into communion with Catholics all over the world who are praying the same prayers. In this way, Catholics enter into mystical communion with each other.

Almost every act that occurs in the liturgy has symbolic significance that is meant to vivify an aspect of our faith. Many of these rituals date back to the early Church. Understanding the significance behind these rituals can greatly enhance a person's experience of prayer at Mass.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) contains the norms (instructions) for saying Mass. It also explains what words, gestures and symbols are to be used, as well as why they are to be used.

The fullness of Christ exists in both the Body and Blood of Christ. You can choose to receive the Body, the Blood, or both. No matter which you choose, you receive the fullness of Christ.



## Saint of the Day: Saint Benedict

July 11 is the feast of Saint Benedict. Many people know that Saint Benedict is the namesake of our current Pope (Benedict XVI).

Benedict was born of a distinguished family in central Italy, studied at Rome and early in life was drawn to the monastic life. At first he became a hermit, leaving a depressing world—pagan armies on the march, the Church torn by schism, people suffering from war, morality at a low ebb.

He soon realized that he could not live a hidden life in a small town any better than in a large city, so he withdrew to a cave high in the mountains for three years. Some monks chose him as their leader for a while, but found his strictness not to their taste. Still, the shift from hermit to community life had begun for him. He had an idea of gathering various families of monks into one “Grand Monastery” to give them the benefit of unity, frater-

nity, permanent worship in one house. Finally he began to build what was to become one of the most famous monasteries in the world—Monte Cassino, commanding three narrow valleys running toward the mountain.

The Rule that gradually developed prescribed a life of liturgical prayer, study, manual labor and living together in community under a common father (abbot). Benedictine asceticism is known for its moderation, and Benedictine charity has always shown concern for the people in the surrounding countryside. In the course of the Middle Ages, all monasticism in the West was gradually brought under the Rule of St. Benedict.

Today the Benedictine family is represented by two branches: the Benedictine Federation and the Cistercians.

**Comment:**

The Church has been blessed through Benedictine devotion to the liturgy, not only in its actual celebration with rich and proper ceremony in the great abbeys, but also through the scholarly studies of many of its members. Liturgy is sometimes confused with guitars or choirs, Latin or Bach. We should be grateful to those who both preserve and adapt the genuine tradition of worship in the Church.

**Quote:**

“Rightly, then, the liturgy is considered as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. In the liturgy the sanctification of man is manifested by signs perceptible to the senses...; in the liturgy full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members.

*From [www.americancatholic.org/features/saintofday/](http://www.americancatholic.org/features/saintofday/)*



### Connections to Doctrine & Tradition

- The Rule of Benedict is used by numerous monasteries in and outside of Catholicism. It was designed for use by the laity, not clergy.
- The notion of praying all 150 psalms over a 4 week cycle is derived from the Spirituality and Rule of Saint Benedict. Today this forms the basis for the Liturgy of the Hours, which is the official prayer of the Church.
- Saint Benedict believed that religious life should be social in nature. He stated that the life of a hermit is only for a few .

### Want to know more?

Would you like to know more about Saint Benedict? Check out the following books and websites for more information:

- [The Rule of Saint Benedict](#) by St. Benedict
- [Life and Miracles of St. Benedict](#) by Pope St. Gregory the Great
- <http://saints.sqpn.com/patron00.htm>

*These are just suggestions. In providing these we assume no responsibility for, nor do we necessarily endorse these books or websites, their content, or their sponsoring organizations.*

“What’s What” is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.