



## 'Communion Rite'

### A Faith Connection

*By Father Greg Friedman, O.F.M.*

**I**N THE PRAYERS of the Communion Rite, we see one area where the positive aspects of the new translation come together. All Catholics are familiar with the moment when the priest takes the host and, holding it up with the plate or above the chalice, says "Behold the Lamb of God." Like many of the prayers of the Mass, this text is rich in Scriptural references, and the new translation helps to bring them alive.

There are in fact three different Scriptures which you can meditate on as you hear the priest say,

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.

And together we pray:

Lord, I am not worthy  
that you should enter under my roof,  
but only say the word  
and my soul shall be healed.

### How many Scripture passages can you find?

The first is from the Gospel of John 1:29. John the Baptist sees Jesus coming toward him and points out Jesus with those first words, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." This proclamation by John precedes one of my favorite Bible stories. The day after John's introduction, he again says, "Behold the Lamb of God," and this time two of the Baptist's disciples follow after Jesus.

This initial encounter leads to three more followers who "come and see" Jesus, and become his disciples. I think it's a great story of how one person's curiosity, interest and faith leads to another's, and another's. Isn't that how our call to be Christians works? It's all right here in the Communion Rite!

Next, the priest says, "Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb." If you're paging through your Bible, let me help. These words are a reference to

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the “wedding feast of the Lamb,” described in Revelation 5:19. Early Christians, experiencing struggles in living their

## We, the People

THE CHURCH TEACHES that, at Mass, the assembly must be a sign of unity. “Indeed, they *form* one body, whether by hearing the word of God, or by *joining* in the prayers and the singing, or above all by the common *offering* of Sacrifice and by a common *partaking* at the Lord’s table.” (My italics.)

Your “gestures and postures observed in common” are part of that witness, as is your willingness to “perform some particular ministry or function in the celebration.” (From the General Instruction, found in every missal.)

faith in the Roman Empire, found hope in the vision of a heavenly banquet. That vision fits perfectly with what we’re about to share at Mass—the Eucharistic meal which is a sign of what we hope to share forever in heaven, the fullness of God’s reign.

The third Scripture story embedded in the Communion Rite is found in the section of our prayer where you’ll

probably most easily notice the new translation:

Lord, I am not worthy  
that you should enter under my roof,  
but only say the word  
and my soul shall be healed.

Let’s look at the New Testament passage:

When he entered Capernaum, a centurion approached him and appealed to him, saying, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, suffering dreadfully.” He said to him, “I will come and cure him.” The centurion said in reply, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed. For I too am a person subject to authority . . .”

When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Amen, I say to you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith . . .” And Jesus said to the centurion, “You may go; as you have believed, let it be done for you.” And at that very

hour (his) servant was healed.  
(Matthew 8:5-13)

Think of the centurion’s faith-filled protest, full of humility: Don’t confuse the roof of his house with the roof of your mouths as they receive Communion! This is a moment where the liturgy wants us to connect our own story, to think of our unworthiness before God, and the great grace given us at Eucharist. We are welcomed, forgiven and we find healing.

The Communion Rite offers us an opportunity to link our personal stories with the stories of salvation—like the centurion’s or the disciples of Jesus or the Christians whose struggles in the early years of our faith gave us the Book of Revelation.



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## Questions

- 1 How is Scripture linked to the Mass, both in the readings and in the prayers?
- 2 How is the Eucharist a “heavenly meal”?
- 3 How is the centurion’s encounter with Jesus like yours?

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