

## New and Corrected Translation of the Mass – Part 22

### The Communion Rite

The third major section of the Mass is the Communion Rite. In the Catholic Church ‘communion’ means more than receiving the Blessed Sacrament. The earliest Christians understood communion as being of one mind and heart, sharing their possessions, and so entering into worship: “And all who believed were together and *had all things in common*; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and *breaking bread*” (Acts 2.44-46). Holding all things in common is linked to ‘breaking bread’, that is, to the Eucharist.

To receive Communion is therefore to proclaim that you are *in communion* with the whole Catholic Church. That is why it is a nonsense to go to one particular Mass alone, and reject those who go to other Masses. If you receive Communion then you are in communion with every other Catholic, and not just with the people you like.

That is why the Eucharist may not be received by those whose communion with the Catholic Church doesn’t exist visibly (non-Christians), is impaired through not being fully in communion with the Catholic Church (non-Catholic Christians) or not being in a state of grace (Catholics in a state of mortal sin). For example, being divorced is not a bar to receiving Communion, but being divorced and re-married is such a bar, as is fornication or “living in sin”. In these cases, receiving Communion would involve a contradiction between what Communion is, and what the state of your life is. This is a hard saying, as they told Our Lord (cf. John 6.60; Matt 19.10), but His grace is the only thing which can help us (cf. 2 Cor 12.9).

The reason Communion may not be given out indiscriminately is to protect its would-be recipients from divine judgment (and indeed, to protect those who are involved in the distribution of the Blessed Sacrament from judgment too; the “stewards of the mysteries of God” (cf. 1 Cor 4.1) have a great responsibility laid upon them!). St Paul explains, “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died” (1 Cor 11.27-30).