

New and Corrected Translation of the Mass – Part 27

The *Ecce*

☩ 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.

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

Matt 8.8
Luke 7.6-7

After the priest prays his own preparation for Communion silently, he takes up the Host and shows it to the people saying the *Ecce* ('Behold!'). The first part recalls the *Agnus Dei*, sung just shortly before. His second line ('Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb') is the words of the angel to John (cf. Rev 19.9). It is not about those who are about to receive Communion here at this particular Mass when those words are said. The 'supper of the Lamb' is biblical image of the end of time, when the Kingdom of God has been fully established and Christ has judged the nations. In saying 'Blessed are those...' the priest is acknowledging that we do not know who may yet go to heaven.

That is why it is doubly presumptuous if a priest should change 'those' to 'we'. Presumptuous because the priest cannot change the words of the Mass, and presumptuous because he is claiming we are all going to heaven, when that is not certain. We *hope* to go to heaven, but we cannot say we are definitely going there.

The people's response makes this humility explicit, using the words of the Roman centurion to Jesus. The centurion's faith is praised by Jesus, who then heals his servant as He had been asked. We too are acknowledging our unworthiness, and the truth that we cannot save ourselves. We explicitly acknowledge that we are unworthy to receive the Eucharist ('I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof'), and also confess that He alone can heal us – and that He only need say the word.

This is also why we need to examine our souls so carefully before receiving Communion. And if we are conscious of grave sins, then all we need do is to approach Jesus in the Sacrament of Confession, where He who sees our hearts – using the priest – will 'only say the word' so that our souls will be healed. We can never be worthy of Holy Communion, but we still need to examine ourselves before approaching the Eucharist (cf. 1 Corinthians 11.28,31).