

## ***A Four Letter Word at Mass: Amen***

Throughout the Mass we say *Amen* many times, up to 25 different times depending on which particular options we use at different places in the Mass, with each of us saying it individually as we receive communion. The simplest way to translate this Hebrew word is *So be it!* *Amen* is a word that expresses our consent to or affirmation of what has preceded it. Hebrew scholars tell us that the ancient Hebrew word from which *Amen* comes literally meant “to pound in one’s tent stake.” As the ancient Hebrews wandered in the desert for forty years they depended on their tents to protect them from the scorching heat of the day, and the bitter cold of the night. With this in mind, to pound in one’s stake would have been a crucial matter, akin to our expression “*I’d stake my life on it!*” This is the deeper meaning of *Amen* involved when we affirm that we pray in the name of the Trinity when we conclude the Sign of the Cross with *Amen*, and affirm the importance of our Faith when we conclude the Creed with it. Our most significant *Amens* come at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer and when we receive Communion. These *Amens* express our willingness to join ourselves with Christ and make His self-sacrifice our own, staking our life on that sacrificial way of living as the way to eternal life. At the end of the Eucharistic Prayer we sometimes even sing our *Amen* three times in acceptance and affirmation of all that has been proclaimed in the prayer about God’s many gifts, beginning with creation itself through the mystery of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. In doing so we express our willingness to be the Body of Christ in the world today, and to pour out our lives for the sake of others. Our common proclamation of this familiar four letter word is yet another way in which all can personally participate in the prayer of the Mass, making it our own, and pledging to take it with us as we go forth from Mass into our daily lives.

Please let us know what else about our faith tradition you'd like to find out more about. Contact our Council for Catechesis at [tkautza@saintmaryhc.org](mailto:tkautza@saintmaryhc.org).