

The Communion Rite: Our Singing and Our Silence

Two further elements of the Communion Rite for us to consider are the songs we sing while receiving communion, and the silence we keep afterward. St. Augustine said a couple of things about those who sing: *the one who sings prays twice, and singing belongs to one who loves*. The song(s) we sing during our reception of communion are an integral and important part of our prayer. The purpose of the communion song is to *express outwardly the communicants' union of spirit by means of the unity of their voices, to give evidence of joy of heart, and to make the procession to receive Christ's body more fully an act of community.*" (General Instruction on the Roman Missal - GIRM) Note how this statement refers to our communion both with Christ and one another, which we've noted in our other reflections on our participation in communion. The practice of singing during our reception of communion dates from very early in the history of the Eucharist.

After all have received communion and concluded the communion songs, here at St. Mary-Holy Cross Parish we spend some time (two minutes, to be precise) in complete silence. The GIRM says such sacred silence may be observed at this time, in keeping with our age old tradition of prayer in which silence is seen as the highest form of prayer: *silence is God's first language, everything else is a poor translation*. Our practice of extended silence after communion was initiated by Fr. Bob Aubrey when he helped out here after Fr. Harris left in July 2008, before I came in September of that year. It is a good opportunity simply to rest quietly in the presence of the Lord and with one another with whom we have shared communion, before returning to the often busy, noisy activities of our lives. It is an opportunity to "practice" the words of Psalm 16:10, *Be still, and know that I am God*.

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.