

## What Are We *Saying* and Why?

### *Communion Rite: The Invitation to Communion*

We backtrack a bit this week. After already having considered the different possibilities for how to receive communion, and the meaning of our sharing in it, we'll back up to the invitation to communion which follows the Lamb of God. The Lamb of God recalls the title attributed to Jesus by John the Baptist and in several other places in the New Testament. After this prayer the priest shows the host and chalice to the people and invites all to make a profession of both humility and faith with the words *Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper*. The priest responds to this along with the people in words taken from the story of the healing of the centurion's slave in Matthew's gospel: *Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed*. The traditional Latin word translated as "happy" in English is more accurately translated "blessed" (as it will be in the revised translation we will use beginning this coming November 27<sup>th</sup>), so this invitation to communion is a profession of faith as it affirms the blessedness of those who share in communion. It is also a profession of humility as we borrow the centurion's words about our unworthiness, and pray for the healing we need. Whenever I hear people express a sense of their personal unworthiness to receive communion, I readily refer to this prayer in which we *all* acknowledge our unworthiness, and the good news that it's not who or how we are that matters, but the word of forgiveness and healing Christ speaks in the gift of himself to us just as we are. An interesting point about this element of the Mass is that it was originally a part of the rite of communion for the sick. At one time in the history of the Mass, the people did not regularly participate in communion itself; only the priest did so there was no invitation to the people. But taking communion to the sick has always been practiced, so a rite for communion to the sick was developed long before our present communion rite for those present at the actual celebration of the Eucharist. With the renewal of the liturgy at Vatican II our present communion rite was developed, utilizing elements from the more developed communion rite for the sick.

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).