

The Communion Rite: The Lord's Prayer

The Communion Rite begins with our praying of the Lord's Prayer, the model Christian prayer given by Jesus to his first disciples when they asked him to teach them how to pray. There are actually two different versions of the Lord's Prayer in the Bible, one in St. Matthew's gospel, and one in St. Luke's. Luke's version is shorter, but Matthew's is the one most commonly used. In Jesus' time, rabbis often provided "index-prayers" or patterns for prayer, rather than specific or particular prayers. Each part of such prayers focused on one essential part of our relationship with God. The Lord's Prayer is this sort of prayer as it encompasses the whole range of our relationship with God. Since early in the history of the Mass this prayer has been part of our immediate preparation for receiving Communion. For the first six centuries it was commonly said *after* the breaking of the bread, and since the seventh century it has been said before then, to link it more closely to the Eucharistic Prayer. For the first twenty centuries, in the Roman Church, only the priest was permitted to pray the Lord's Prayer at Mass. Beginning in 1958 the people were also permitted to pray it in Latin along with the priest. It echoes the EP in the way it praises God and prays for the coming of God's Kingdom. For us it can be a way of repeating and emphasizing the ***Great Amen!*** with which we concluded the EP. When we pray for *our daily bread* in the Lord's Prayer we mean both all the material bread and sustenance we need for our physical bodies, and the spiritual sustenance we receive in the Eucharistic Bread, the Body and Blood of Christ. The request for forgiveness in the prayer serves as a needed preparation for our participation in the sacred meal. The official instructions for Mass don't say anything about what gestures or postures the people should use during the prayer, and different communities have different practices during the recitation of the prayer, some holding hands with one another, others raising their hands in the ancient *orans* position.

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.