

The sign of unity in the one Bread

Christ's gesture of breaking bread at the Last Supper, which gave the entire Eucharistic Action its name in apostolic times, signifies that the many faithful are made one body by receiving Communion from the one Bread of Life which is Christ.

It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord's Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the instances when it is permitted, they partake of the chalice (cf. no. 283), so that even by means of the signs Communion will stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated.

The meaning of the sign demands that the material for the Eucharistic Celebration truly have the appearance of food. It is therefore expedient that the Eucharistic bread, even though unleavened and baked in the traditional shape, be made in such a way that the priest at Mass with a congregation is able in practice to break it into parts for distribution to at least some of the faithful. Small hosts are, however, in no way ruled out when the number of those receiving Holy Communion or other pastoral needs require it. The action of the fraction or breaking of bread, which gave its name to the Eucharist in apostolic times, will bring out more clearly the force and importance of the sign of unity of all in the one bread, and of the sign of charity by the fact that the one bread is distributed among the brothers and sisters.

GIRM 83, 85, 321

Some Questions

- How are people helped to make connection between bread that is 'work of our hands and the Bread that is the Body of the Lord'?
- Does the fraction rite begin before people have finished exchanging the Sign of Peace?
- Is the singing of the Agnus Dei coordinated with the action of 'Breaking the Bread'?

Further References

Celebrating the Mass: 205-6

Redemptionis Sacramentum:
48-49, 55, 73, 89

One Bread One Body:
1-3, 48: 6, 8, 12

Mane Nobiscum Domine: 20-22

Spiritus et Sponsa 12

Practical Points

- Offer catechesis on the symbolism of bread
- Ensure that sufficient bread is provided for consecration so as to avoid unnecessary use of the tabernacle
- If a single bread is not practical, ensure that the largest available size bread is provided for the priest to handle and show at the consecration and final elevation
- Do not 'Break the Bread' until the fraction rite in the Communion Rite
- Ensure that at least some of the faithful receive Holy Communion from the Body of the Lord seen at the elevations



Questions for Groups

1. What is good about current practice?
What concerns do you have?

4. Who is most directly involved in these matters, e.g. liturgical ministers?
What formation/information is necessary to engage them in the renewal of current practice?

2. In what ways does the documentation affirm or challenge your current practice?

5. How will the assembly be engaged in the process?
What, in particular, needs addressing at Sunday and/or weekday celebrations?

3. Prioritise the issues you have identified.

6. How will you know whether the formation has worked?