

The Fracture – A Reminder of Resurrection & The Unity of the Whole Church

While the Lamb of God is chanted/sung by the people, everyone in the church kneels down and the priest begins to perform a special ritual with the sacred host and the precious blood. The priest takes his time to break or fracture the host in half, and then he breaks off a little piece of the bread that has become Jesus in order to drop that small piece of the host into the chalice. While he does this ritual, he says silently the following prayer:

“May this mingling of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ bring eternal life to us who receive it.”

The first and very traditional and beautiful meaning of this ritual is that Jesus was dead, and therefore biologically would have lost the flow of his blood within his physical body (being dead for 3 straight days). Therefore, this ritual is meant to symbolize the reality that Jesus’ body is now united again with his blood after his Resurrection. When the small piece of bread (now the host at Mass) unites with the wine (now the precious blood at Mass), we are meant to remember that Jesus now has active and alive blood once again flowing through His Resurrected and newly alive body in Heaven. This one little action signifies the entirety of Jesus’ Resurrection for our sake, and His conquering sin and death for us as well, and this is what we can reflect on during this part of the Mass!

In addition, a second traditional and still even more beautiful meaning of this fracture ritual and prayer is to signify and communicate the unity of all churches within a local Diocesan church and the Universal Church of the entire world. This tradition began as the Catholic Church over the ages reflected on how Jesus emphasized the breaking of the bread throughout his teaching and establishing the Sacrament of the Eucharist. In Rome, the Pope would have the main celebrant host broken into a variety of smaller pieces, and many of the smaller pieces were then carefully and reverently processed over to other parish churches in the region around Rome. Those pieces of the consecrated host were then placed in the priest’s chalice during the Mass to symbolize his unity and the unity of his parish with Rome and the regional church (the diocesan church) as well as with the Universal Catholic Church around the world. Therefore, for us today, when we see the priest fracturing the host and breaking off a piece of it to mingle with the precious blood of the chalice, we can pray for our Bishop of Harrisburg (right now, Bishop Timothy Senior) as well as to pray for the Pope (right now, Pope Francis) and the entire Catholic Church. We are not simply symbolically remembering this unity. In fact, we quite literally partake in this unity during each and every Mass more fully than we can ever imagine when we are united to Jesus’ very body, blood, soul, and divinity through Holy Communion. We are the Body of Christ. We are broken for God and for each other, and we are united as one because Jesus’ body was broken and given up for us on the Cross. Through His Resurrection we gain new life, and through his gift of the Holy Spirit and in Holy Communion we are united as One Body of Christ for our sake and for the entire world.