

## HOLY CROSS PARISH FORMATION: ‘Active Participation in the Holy Mass’ series:

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### #1: ‘Your ‘Amen’ Response at Communion’

Your “Amen” Response at Communion *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Every once in a while, our priests remind us that our response when receiving the Holy Eucharist at Mass is “Amen”, not “Thank you”, “And also with you” or other various responses. So why “Amen”?

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, a resource which can be found online, the Eucharist brings all who receive it closer to Christ. “Through it, Christ unites them all the faithful in one body—” (ccc, pg 354, 1396) . This one body, is the Church. We are the Church, one body. To quote the Catechism of the Catholic Church: “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” 234 (CCC, PG 354)

And thusly, “If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament you receive. To that which you are you respond “Amen” (“yes, it is true”!) and by responding to it, you assent to it. For you hear the words, “the Body of Christ’ and respond “Amen.” Be then a member of the Body of Christ that your Amen may be true.” 235 (CCC, PG 355)

You and I are the Church, the members of one body of Christ. The sacrament of Communion we receive is ours, yours and mine. We proclaim it as ours when we say “Amen” to the one bread that we partake, because when we hear “The Body of Christ”, our answer to that is “Yes, it is true!”.

To say “Amen” is to respond with something more than just receiving a consecrated host. We respond united as one body, as one Church, who partakes of the one bread, and say—Yes, It Is True my sacrament, the Eucharist that I am receiving is the Body of Christ. This being so then, our response should reflect our fear of the Lord, the awe and amazement that translates into reverence for the Lord by responding with a firm yet gentle, respectful and most reverent “Amen”. **source of content: [usccb.org](http://usccb.org)**

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### #2: Introduction

**Formation on ‘Active Participation in the Mass’ will be shared in future bulletins. It is our hope this formation helps us all be more knowledgeable, fully conscious and active participants.** *Source of content: [stjeromewaco.org](http://stjeromewaco.org)*

I sit, I stand, I kneel, I listen to the readings, recite the prayers and sing the songs during the Mass. Am I actively participating in the Mass? Or am I just “actively observing”? Resources are being shared that can help all of us become fully conscious and active participants in the Mass. We begin with the following foundational information.

**Introduction:** On Dec. 4, 1963, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy was promulgated by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council. The first chapter of this document explains the meaning of active participation by the faithful in the sacred liturgy. The Council Fathers wrote these important words: “Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people’ (1 Pt 2:9; cf. 2:4-

5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism. ... for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit” (14). Coming next will be the **Communal Celebration**

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### #3: ‘The Eucharistic Celebration’

It is our hope this formation helps us all be more knowledgeable, fully conscious and active participants in the Holy Mass.

*Via our baptism, participating in Mass is our right and duty. Like myself, a lot of Catholics behave as we were taught—crossing ourselves with the sign of the Cross, kneeling, standing, etc. during Mass. But what do we think about or understand when we kneel and sit in Mass? Is Mass just “here’s the part I sit, now I stand, etc.”? Is that our conscious expectation of the Holy Mass?*

Read about the Eucharistic celebration... [Source of content: frtonyshomilies.com](http://frtonyshomilies.com)

**The Eucharist is the heart and center of Catholic life.** It is the best way to express our faith and share in the saving grace of Christ. Hence, the more we understand the meaning of the Eucharist, the more perfectly we are able to offer this sacrifice and to receive this sacrament. **The Eucharistic celebration or Holy Mass is the central act of Catholic worship. But no doctrine in our Catholic Faith has been more misunderstood by non-Catholics than that of the Holy Mass.** As the central act of Catholic worship the Mass is **primarily a sacrifice**. In the 16th century Martin Luther and many other Protestant leaders denied that the Mass is a sacrifice; they stressed the *meal* aspect exclusively. The Council of Trent reacted by emphasizing what was under attack, namely, **that the Mass is a sacrifice**. This sacrifice of the Mass is **offered on the altar using signs and symbols**. **These rituals of the Mass enable people to know what is going on and how and when they are to join in.** They also encourage greater participation by the people.

**Communal celebration:** In the Catholic liturgy, divine worship is a communal celebration. The priest acts "in the person of Jesus Christ" and takes the place of the Head of the Body of Christ. **The rest of the Body—the baptized faithful—are present as conscious and active participants**, rather than as mere observers. **The faithful are encouraged to participate so that: “when the Church prays or sings or acts, the faith of those taking part is nourished and their minds are raised to God, so that they may offer Him their rational service and more abundantly receive his grace” (33).** The assembled faithful, then, should not just be at Mass ... as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action, conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration” (33). The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), published in 2002, states that the assembled faithful should be made “ever more holy by conscious, active, and fruitful participation in the mystery of the Eucharist” (5). [Source of content: stjeromewaco.org](http://stjeromewaco.org)

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### #4: Active Participation in the Mass

*We ‘know’ the Mass. We do what we are supposed to do during Mass. So what is all this fuss about ‘fully conscious and active participation’? How much more active do we get? What ‘enhancements’ do we need or do to become fully conscious and active participants?*

[Source of content: frtonyshomilies.com](http://frtonyshomilies.com) [Source of content: stjeromewaco.org](http://stjeromewaco.org)

**Active participation in the Mass:** Though many of us simply assume that "active participation" is the equivalent of "doing something," **it is not**. The saintly Pope who conceived the phrase “**active participation in the Mass**” and used it first was **Pope Saint Pius X**.

This is how he explained it: **“If you wish to participate in the Mass actively, you must follow with your eye, heart and mouth all that happens on the altar. Further, you must pray with the**

**Priest the holy words said by him in the Name of Christ and which Christ says by him. You have to associate your heart with the holy feelings which are contained in these words and in this manner you ought to follow all that happens at the altar. When acting in this way you have prayed Holy Mass."**

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First, **active participation** means the **interior participation of all the powers of the soul in the mystery of Christ's Sacrificial Love**. It also means, that **the mind and heart are awake, alert and engaged during the Eucharistic celebration**. *Source of content:* [stjeromewaco.org](http://stjeromewaco.org)

*From this sharing, we learn that active participation is not only having **our bodies engaged**—kneeling, standing, singing, etc., during the Mass, but **our minds and hearts are also engaged** as we celebrate the memory of His sacrifice for our souls, our everlasting lives; to be united with Christ through the sacrament of Communion.*

*Does something here ring a bell? A couple of Sundays ago, Luke's gospel taught "**You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind...**" [Luke 10: 27](#) This particular verse reminds us how to love our God; perhaps, this may be the key to becoming fully conscious and active participants in the Holy Mass.*

More to come . . .

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