



Mass Parts 38/52: *Holding Hands during the Our Father*

What happened to holding hands during the Our Father? Sometime in the past 10-15 years, congregations were encouraged to stop holding hands during the praying of the Our Father. Why?

Let us remember the primary purpose of this study of the Mass. The basic idea of *lex orandi, lex credendi* teaches us that what we do physically during our prayer has an effect on what we believe. Here is what I think was going on in our heads when holding hands during the Our Father: “This is our great prayer of unity. We are standing here, joined as one, calling to *OUR* Father.” Many parishes have pictures of people reaching out across the center aisles with all holding hands in one great ritual. Our difference in posture and positioning puts an emphasis on the Our Father as something separate and special.

But the Our Father is not the most important prayer during the Mass. The Eucharistic Prayer is the most important. If our holding hands forms our belief as to what is the most important thing we are doing, then we should all be holding hands during the whole consecration of the Eucharist. But we don't. The proper posture during the Eucharistic prayer is to kneel in wonder and worship at what is happening.

Now, some type of gesture during the Our Father is appropriate. We can fold our hands, or press them together, or lift up our hands in some fashion of praise. And if your family or loved ones like to hold hands during the Our Father, I am not coming down from the altar to break it up. But we are not as a community going to create a ritual action when it is not appropriate. There is no longer a formal congregation-wide call for hand holding.

-Fr. Kopp

Next Week: Sign of Peace