



## Mass Parts 43/52: *Lord, I Am Not Worthy*

Immediately before the distribution of Communion, the priest holds up a consecrated Host and the Chalice and intones:

*Behold the Lamb of God,  
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.  
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.*

The first line is a direct quote from the Gospel of John, linking the Eucharist with the life mission of Jesus first announced by John the Baptist:

*The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. (Jn 1:29)*

The second line brings us once again into the eternal mission and purpose of the Eucharist: our participation in the eternal banquet in heaven. We are invited again and called blessed to be a part of the great Wedding Feast of the Lamb (Rev 19:7,9).

The people's reply has caused some of the most confusion in the most recent translation. We used to say: "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you..." This was easy to understand. The reception of Jesus referred to the Communion in which we were about to partake. But the original Latin goes deeper and more scriptural and the new translation reflects that.

*Lord, I am not worthy  
that you should enter under my roof,  
but only say the word  
and my soul shall be healed.*

In Matt 8:5-13, we hear of the healing of a Centurion's servant. He comes to ask Jesus to heal his servant. Jesus agrees to come, but the Centurion, as a non-Jew, thinks himself too unclean to have this great rabbi come to his house. His reply is: "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed." His belief stems from faith in the very word that Jesus would utter for healing. His faith is rewarded and his servant healed.

Worthiness is referred to a lot in our prayer lives as well as in the confessional. At the heart of it all is the truth that none of us are worthy. We are not worthy of God's love nor of the Eucharist. But our faith is that God will say the word of healing, and we shall then be healed; we are made worthy by God's grace, not by our own effort. God did indeed say that word, and that Word was Jesus Christ. Though unworthy of such great love from God, we are still invited into the most intimate relationship with him. The conjunction "but" in the middle of our statement works to negate everything that came before. It is true that we are not worthy, "but" God said the Word of Jesus Christ and this leads to our healing and ability to receive Jesus.

-Fr. Kopp

Next Week: Communion