

Invitation to Communion

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The Invitation to Communion is one change in the revised edition of *The Roman Missal* that definitely needs to be broken open. The new text is as follows:

Priest: 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.

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

Why the change from “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, / but only say the word and I shall be healed” to the above text? While the priest’s invitation is a combination from the Gospel according to John 1:29 and the book of Revelation 19:9, the people’s response or acclamation is taken from Matthew 8:8. In the full story from the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus went to Capernaum. There, a Roman Centurion asks Jesus to heal his paralyzed servant. Jesus offers to go and cure the servant, to which the Centurion gives the text we now use as the response to the Invitation to Communion.

One of the principles for translating *The Roman Missal* texts from the Latin, official edition, to the English, is that the translation be literal and correspond more closely to the text of scripture. Many of the texts we use in liturgy are taken from the scriptures. Since this particular response is from the Gospel according to Matthew, the text now corresponds more closely to the words of scripture.

The Invitation to Communion follows the fraction rite, where the Body of Christ was broken or fractured, during the singing of the Lamb of God. The priest’s text flows from the singing of the Lamb of God when he proclaims: “Behold the Lamb of God.” The priest says twice: “behold.” In other words, pay attention; be present to Christ in our midst. Sharing in this Supper of the Lamb affords us blessedness from God. Despite our unworthiness, our divisions, our woundedness, we pray that Christ Jesus will heal us to our depths, not just physically, but spiritually for the depth of our soul. It is in the reception of Christ’s Body and Blood that we are healed and nourished. We are not worthy that Christ should come to us, let alone enter our very beings. But indeed, Christ does. Saint Augustine once described Christ as the Divine Physician who comes to heal those who are sick. Indeed, all of us humans are sick with sin, and only Christ Jesus can heal us through his Words and through his very Body and Blood.