

# Fraction (religion)

The **Fraction** is the ceremonial act of breaking the consecrated bread during the Eucharistic rite in some Christian denominations.

the fact that the one bread is distributed among the brothers and sisters.”

## 1 Western Christian

### 1.1 Roman Catholic

In the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church, it is accompanied by the singing or recitation of the *Agnus Dei*.

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 83 states:

“The priest breaks the Eucharistic Bread, assisted, if the case calls for it, by the deacon or a concelebrant. Christ's gesture of breaking bread at the Last Supper, which gave the entire Eucharistic Action its name in apostolic times, signifies that the many faithful are made one body (1 Cor 10:17) by receiving Communion from the one Bread of Life which is Christ, who died and rose for the salvation of the world. The fraction or breaking of bread is begun after the sign of peace and is carried out with proper reverence, though it should not be unnecessarily prolonged, nor should it be accorded undue importance. This rite is reserved to the priest and the deacon. The priest breaks the Bread and puts a piece of the host into the chalice to signify the unity of the Body and Blood of the Lord in the work of salvation, namely, of the living and glorious Body of Jesus Christ.”

In speaking of the bread to be used at Mass, the *General Instruction*, 321 recommends that

“the eucharistic bread ... be made in such a way that the priest at Mass with a congregation is able in practice to break it into parts for distribution to at least some of the faithful. Small hosts are, however, in no way ruled out when the number of those receiving Holy Communion or other pastoral needs require it. The action of the fraction or breaking of bread, which gave its name to the Eucharist in apostolic times, will bring out more clearly the force and importance of the sign of unity of all in the one bread, and of the sign of charity by

### 1.2 Anglican

In the churches of the Anglican Communion, the rite is similar to that practised in the Roman Catholic Church, and consists of the priest breaking the Host in half and making an exclamation, such as, “We break this bread to share in the body of Christ”, and the faithful making a response, such as, “Though we are many we are one body, because we all share in one bread” The response may change during certain liturgical seasons, or according to the rite being celebrated. A Fraction Anthem may be sung or spoken during the rite.

## 2 Eastern Christian



*the Lamb and particles as they are placed on the diskos (paten) during the Divine Liturgy.*

In the Eastern Orthodox Church and Eastern Catholic Churches of the Byzantine rite, leavened bread is used for the Eucharist. The round loaves, or *prospora*, are stamped so that a Greek cross is in the center, with the letters "IC XC NI-KA" (Greek for “Jesus Christ conquers”) occupying the quarters formed by the cross' arms. The square portion occupied by this stamp, the "Lamb", is cut out before the Divine Liturgy during the preparatory rite and is the only part consecrated during the *Epiclesis*. As part of the Liturgy of Preparation, the priest cuts the Lamb part way through crosswise into four sections from the bottom, leaving the bread united by the stamped crust on top.

At the Fraction, which follows the **Lord's Prayer** and the **Elevation**, the celebrant breaks the Lamb into four portions along the cuts already made, as he says the words: "Broken and divided is the Lamb of God, which is broken and not disunited, which is ever eaten and never consumed, but sanctifieth those that partake thereof." He then arranges the four pieces crosswise on the edge of the **diskos** (paten). On the invitation of the deacon, "Fill, Master, the holy chalice," the celebrant takes the piece with the letters "IC" and places it into the chalice saying, "The fulness of the cup, of the faith, of the Holy Spirit."

The portion with the letters "XC" is used for the communion of the clergy. The two portions "NI" and "KA" are divided into small pieces and placed in the chalice for the communion of the people. The portion "IC" is not used for communion, but is consumed by the deacon along with any other consecrated elements left over at the end of the Liturgy (see **Ablution in Christianity**).

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