

KNOW THE MASS, ONE WORD AT A TIME

Photo © John Zich



Break

Because they are small or quick, some gestures in the Mass can easily escape our notice. One such action is the breaking of the host during the singing or recitation of the “Lamb of God.” Breaking the bread or the host carries deep meaning. The gesture goes back to Jesus, as the words of consecration in

the Mass tell us, “. . . he said the blessing, broke the bread, and gave it to his disciples . . .” In the early Church, the whole celebration of the Eucharist was often simply called “the Breaking of Bread.”

The breaking of bread symbolizes the suffering body of Christ broken for us. The breaking of the one bread to feed many symbolizes our unity in Christ. The breaking of bread for later distribution to the sick symbolizes our union with those who cannot be with us in the Mass.

When the two disciples who were going to Emmaus returned to Jerusalem, they told the apostles how they had recognized Jesus in the breaking of bread. Even today, in this small gesture, we recognize his presence among us.

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO + STRATEGIC PASTORAL PLAN
YEAR OF SUNDAY MASS / YEAR OF FAITH