Understanding Episcopal Liturgy

#28. ***When the Eucharistic Minister offers the bread or the wine, they say words of institution, such as "The Bread of Heaven" or "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you in everlasting life." Where do these words come from? What should I do when I receive the bread or wine?***

The words for the distribution of communion are often taken from The Book of Common Prayer (1979). The most common phrases are found on page 365. During the English Reformation different factions within the church attacked and sometimes killed those who disagreed with their choice of words for communion. In a spirit of reconciliation and inclusion modeled by Christ Jesus, we include words that point toward both catholic and protestant understandings of the meaning of communion.

The most important thing for us who receive communion is our full presence and attention as we are receiving the sacrament. After the Eucharistic Minister says the words of institution you may respond by saying "Amen" or "Thanks be to God." Some people make the sign of the cross on their chests before or after receiving the sacrament. If responding 'Amen' or making the sign of the cross helps you participate more fully, I encourage you to do so. We just try to remember that there is not one 'perfect' way to participate. These are examples of adiaphora, an idea for discussion next week!