



TEACHING MASS - BULLETIN INSERT
POST COMMUNION AND CONCLUDING RITES
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2023



CONCLUDING THE MASS AND THE CALL TO MISSION

There is an ancient saying in the Church: “May God, who has begun this good work in you, bring it to completion.” This wonderful saying, based on St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians, and which has been said as a blessing or salutation in the Church since at least the fifth century, finds a powerful meaning within the context of our liturgy. The liturgy is a work of God, so to speak, but it is indeed the work of the people, which is where the word *Liturgy* comes from. This good work of God’s and of our own must be brought to completion.

The Holy Mass does not end the moment we receive communion. Yes, receiving communion is the most intimate moment of the Mass for us individually, but that does not mean that what comes after is unimportant. There is a purpose to continue our prayer after we have received communion, and thus we do not leave right after we receive our Blessed Lord in the Eucharist. Instead, we return to our places within the church while communion continues to be distributed, and then once the Eucharist is taken to the tabernacle, we sit and allow ourselves some time for quiet reflection. We dwell on the gift of the Eucharist and remind ourselves of the reality of what, or rather *who* we have just received. Jesus, at this moment, dwells in us, not only spiritually, but physically.

This presence of Jesus within us, however, is not meant to be kept hidden away inside us. We are called to take Jesus with us out into the world! That is the center of what we might call our mission as Catholics. This emphasis on ‘mission’ is what the concluding rites of the Mass are all about.

So, what are we meant to understand about this mission of ours? Well, when we were baptized, several things happened to us. We were cleansed of Original Sin, we were reborn in the Holy Spirit, we became priests, prophets, and kings in the New Covenant, and we were made sons and daughters of God. As children of God, we are called to be members of His family, the Catholic Church. As members of the Church, we are meant to live out our lives as faithful Christians every day. This is not always easy, especially in our modern age, but God helps us through giving us spiritual graces, especially through our participation at the Mass.

We come to Mass to worship God, yes, but while we are offering Him our gift of worship, He is giving us gifts of His own. When we participate in the liturgy and receive communion reverently and worthily, God gives grace and strength to live out our Christian lives even when it becomes difficult. When we struggle to pray, God gives us the strength and desire to pray. When we struggle to do good works, God gives us the drive to do them. When we struggle with sin, God guides us to righteousness. When we feel discouraged, God gives us hope. When we feel anxious, God gives us peace. When we feel alone, God reveals Himself to us. All these things are gifts from God, and God pours forth these gifts to us as we encounter Him, especially in the Mass. What this means for us is that as we go to Mass, God is strengthening us spiritually, helping us live lives of faith in a complex world. Our mission is to stay true to the Gospel no matter what life throws our way. This is where our focus falls during the closing rites of the Mass.



CONCLUDING RITES

THE POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

After communion, we are called to reflect on the reality of the Eucharist that we have received. This we do as individuals quietly right after receiving communion, but we also do so as a single community. Our quiet prayer is ended with the priest calling us together with the words, “Let us pray.” This parallels the Opening Prayer back at the beginning of Mass. Like that prayer, this prayer is unique to the day or week. This prayer is often related to the Opening Prayer in its wording, but also includes the themes of receiving strength and blessing from the Eucharist that we have received. This is not simply yet another reminder of how special it is for us to receive communion, it also tells us how receiving the Eucharist has done something to us, namely nourished our souls and given us strength. Like a good breakfast before a long day at work, the Eucharist is our spiritual nourishment for the work we are called to do after we go forth from the church.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

After the closing prayer, it is permissible to have some brief announcements. This can seem like a break from the spiritual activities of the liturgy, but it is tied to our worship. These announcements are meant to be concerned with upcoming parish activities, all of which are great opportunities to practice our faith beyond our Sunday worship, something we are all called to do. Make no mistake. We are all called to live out our Christian lives every day, not just on Sunday. Our parishes are places where we can foster our Christian living, and they should never be without activities, whether adoration, praise and worship, service projects, or social engagements. Mass is the most important time for us, but it is not the only time we are called to worship God or be with our brothers and sisters in the faith.

FINAL BLESSING

We end the Mass as we began it: with the Sign of the Cross. What is different here is that it also takes the form of the priest blessing us. Blessings from a priest or a deacon are a powerful gesture, always connected with a duty or purpose. For example, the priest blesses the deacon before he proclaims the Gospel, the bread and wine is blessed before it becomes the body and blood of Christ. Water is blessed before it is used for baptisms, chalices are blessed before they are set aside for liturgy, and even food can be blessed before it is eaten. When we are blessed at the close of Mass, it is our mission in mind. The Mass concludes with the final blessing, but the mission continues.



DISMISSAL (SENDING FORTH)

The final words of the Mass, whether said by the priest or deacon, give us our commission. There are a few different options they use, but the message is always the same: The Mass is ended, go forth and proclaim the Gospel by your life. Indeed, with this, our liturgy is fully concluded, but our mission to go forth and live out the Gospel continues.



The last action of the liturgy is for the priest and his assistant ministers to lead us out of the church and into the world. This shows us what we are now called to do. Armed with the word of God on our lips and the Body of Christ inside us, we take what we have received out into the world. Our liturgy has ended, yes, but our mission, our worship, and our Christian lives continue. We go forth as carriers of Christ, taking Him and His message to the world. By our lives, we show the world the joy of following Christ in His Church. This is our mission. We live out our lives in accordance with the scriptures so that we proclaim the Gospel through our actions each day. The Mass has taught us, healed us, uplifted us, and fed us. Now we go forth to bring the Church to the world and the world to our Church.