

The Concluding Rites

Kristopher W. Seaman

Of all the major sections or parts of the Mass (that is, the Introductory Rites, the Liturgy of the Word, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist), the Concluding Rites are the shortest. The Liturgy of the Eucharist ends with the Prayer after Communion, and the Concluding Rites begin with—though not required—announcements. Typically, these announcements are brief and impact the liturgical assembly. They may point to the activities of the parish. Some examples may include announcements for help with the parish’s soup kitchen, the date for the World Youth Day fund-raiser, or a coming adult formation session. Since these announcements are not part of the Communion Rite, they are best not announced before the Prayer after Communion.



The priest celebrant then greets the people with, “The Lord be with you.” He proclaims a blessing over the people. On major feasts and solemnities, there is a solemn blessing. This solemn blessing contains three parts. After each part, the liturgical assembly responds, “Amen.”

The deacon or priest then dismisses the people from liturgy. The original Latin for the dismissal is *Ite missa est*. The word *missa* is the root for Mass and thus gives the Mass its name. It has become quite common to hear people talk about the connection between *missa* and mission. As we know, the Mass should bear fruit in our lives. It means that the Triune God sanctifies us in liturgy. Put another way, through the liturgy the Holy Spirit comes to us to make us grow in holiness. Of course, we have to be open, receptive, and embracing of God’s coming to us through Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. If we are being called and sanctified by the Triune God, then we bear that mission in our families, workplaces and in our neighborhoods. Of course, we are imperfect human persons, and so each Sunday God continues to call us to grow in holiness by participating in the Sunday eucharistic liturgy.

This understanding of the missionary dimension of the Mass has been articulated by Pope Benedict XVI in his recent exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis* (The Sacrament of Charity). The Pope eloquently states, “The mystery of the Eucharist inspires and impels us to work courageously within our world to bring about that renewal of relationships which has its inexhaustible source in God’s gift In a particular way, the Christian laity, formed at the school of the Eucharist,

are called to assume their specific political and social responsibilities” (91). For the Pope, the Eucharist “schools” us and sends us out for our responsibilities as social and political persons. Therefore, the social dimensions of the Mass extend beyond the walls of the Church to live the mission Christ gives to the Church.

What is this social mission that Christ gives to us? The Pope offers two ways we embody the social mission of Christ. The first is through “the sanctification of the world” (92). To sanctify is to grow in holiness. God sends us forth to work for holiness in the political and the social spheres of life. Pope Benedict XVI also alerts us to our mission of being good stewards of God’s creation.

“The world is not something indifferent, raw material to be utilized simply as we see fit. Rather, it is part of God’s good plan (92). Therefore, as the Pope mentions, our second responsibility of the social mission of Christ is to work “responsibly for the protection of creation” (92). All of creation belongs to God alone. God entrusted to us this precious gift in order to take good care of it and all creatures.

In this same exhortation, the Pope acknowledges a need for new dismissal options. In the revised Roman Missal, the priest or deacon “may say, ‘Go forth, the Mass is ended,’ ‘Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord,’ ‘Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life,’ or just ‘Go in peace.’” “Announce the Gospel” and “glorifying the Lord by your life” both convey the meaning of the dismissal rites. Namely, we are called to take inside ourselves God’s Word, body and blood and allow God to change us in holiness and to live this change in everything we do.

After the proclamation of the actual dismissal, the priest venerates the altar-table with a kiss and then a bow. The Mass has ended.

Although not required, a concluding song or hymn is common for the departure of the liturgical ministers from the liturgy. In some parishes, the organist will play a postlude during the recessional.

KRISTOPHER W. SEAMAN, MA, MAT, is the associate director of the Office for Divine Worship of the diocese of Gary, Indiana.