

CONCLUDING RITE

The Mass ends with a brief rite. After greeting the people, the priest blesses them and sends them forth to continue their mission in the world. If a deacon is present, he may dismiss the assembly.

One New Testament account of the Lord's ascension describes Christ as raising his hands and blessing his disciples as he is taken up into heaven (Lk. 24.50-51).

Historically, **early celebrations** ended after the distribution of communion, but soon Christians seemed to feel a psychological need to round off the liturgy with a concluding rite. It was usually a simple dismissal preceded by a blessing.

But **by 1570** the dismissal had many other elements attached to it, including what was known as the "Last Gospel". This was a reading of the prologue of the Gospel according to St. John.

Then **in 1884** Pope Leo XIII prescribed certain prayers to be said after Mass: three "Hail Mary's", the "Hail, Holy Queen" with its collect, and the Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel.

Now with the new Order of Mass: the concluding rite is greatly simplified. It is even replaced altogether, if another rite is celebrated (like the Final Commendation and Farewell at Funeral Masses).

If no **announcements** were made before the eucharist began, they are made after

the Prayer after Communion has been prayed and before the concluding rite begins.

The elements of the Concluding Rite then, although not as brief as in the Early Church, are still shorter than formerly:

1. Greeting and Blessing

On most Sundays, a simple greeting ("The Lord be with you") and a blessing are used ("May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit").

It might be helpful at this time to define what is meant by a blessing. Remembering how Christ, before he was taken up into heaven, "blessed the apostles with hands upraised"

*a) to bless **God** means to praise God for his goodness and wonderful gifts.*

*b) to bless a **person** is an action requesting that God continue to extend his generosity to that person.*

On certain Sundays, the blessing is expanded to what is called the "Prayer over the People" (a collect). This is ordinarily used on the Sundays in Lent.

A more solemn Blessing is used on Special Feasts, such as on Easter and during the Sundays of Easter. We are

usually invited to bow our heads and receive the triple blessing, each followed by an "Amen".

2. Dismissal

Immediately after the blessing, the priest (or deacon) adds: "Go in the peace of Christ...." The dismissal means more than "Go", it is a commissioning, a sending of each member to do good works, praising and blessing the Lord.

3. Veneration of the Altar

The priest kisses the altar at the end of the celebration. It has a valedictory or farewell character and mirrors the kiss at the beginning of Mass.

4. The Recessional

Usually instrumental music accompanies the departure. It is not necessary that a hymn be sung; but if it is, then it is a seasonal or general hymn of praise and thanksgiving, or one reflecting the Church's mission and journey.

After having looked at the Concluding Rite, let us consider **what we are dismissed to do.**

In every Mass we are called together to listen to God's Word, to respond to it in praise and thanksgiving, and then to covenant together over the Body and Blood of Christ to live a Gospel life.

When we are dismissed, it is to do what we have covenanted or promised to do:

to be "the Body of Christ", which we are by our baptism; and to be the sign of those who confess and show to others that they have

been redeemed by the blood of Christ — that he has died, but is risen and that we can have new life in him.

Therefore at the end of Mass we are sent forth with God's blessing to carry the good news of Jesus Christ to the world.

All of us, as members of the Body of Christ, are endowed with gifts. As St. Paul reminds us, there are different gifts in the body. We need to discern our gifts, both as individuals and as parish community.

Some people will find their gifts are for hospitality and welcoming: not just at the door of the church but beyond — by visiting the sick or shut-ins, by outreach to the marginalized, by efforts towards the restructuring of a more just society.

Others will find they have a gift for the proclamation of the Word: not just at Sunday Mass, but in opening up the Word of God at the Junior Liturgy or enquiry sessions, accompanying catechumens in the RCIA, helping parents prepare for the baptism or first communion of their children or in some other outreach.

Some will find that they have a eucharistic ministry: not just to give the Body of Christ to their brothers and sisters, but to provide food that nourishes in soup kitchens, to care for elders, to minister to youth or single people, or to support others by their prayers.

Some may serve at the altar, the table of the Lord, while others may serve at the

table of the hungry, the homeless, the poor; they may visit the homebound, or offer their sufferings in solidarity with the Suffering Church.

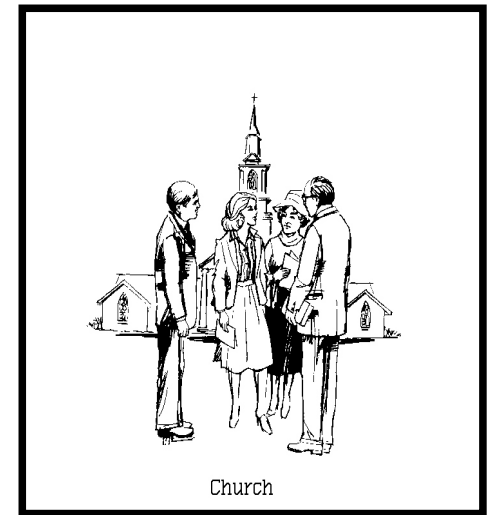
Those with musical gifts may find ways of using these gifts at Mass, at festive family gatherings, at parish get-togethers, at local civic events.

Some have gifts for family ministry, evangelization, helping people to recognize the presence of the divine in their daily lives, offering up their prayers and suffering for those who don't know or acknowledge God's love.

By every Eucharist we celebrate, we are challenged and dismissed to exercise our baptismal responsibility: by the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, by proclaiming the kingdom of God through our words and our deeds, and by witnessing to the Gospel by our way of life.

UNDERSTANDING THE MASS

Concluding Rite



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**Go in the peace
of Christ.**