



FR. DANIEL'S CORNER

Mass Moment: Part 30

POST COMMUNION AND CONCLUDING RITE

When the distribution of Communion is over, if appropriate, the priest and the faithful pray quietly for some time. If desired, a Psalm or other canticle of praise or a hymn may also be sung by the whole congregation (GIRM #88). The silence observed after the reception of the Communion is to a great reverence for what just happened; that the eternal Son should become incarnate and share himself with us in this most intimate of ways. In this silence, of course, we reflect on what has been accomplished, conversing in our hearts in a profoundly personal way with Christ, “the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me” (Gal 2:20).

To bring to completion the prayer of the People of God, and also to conclude the whole Communion Rite, the priest pronounces the Prayer after Communion, in which he prays for the fruits of the mystery just celebrated (GIRM #89). The priest says, “Let us pray,” and the assembly as one, stands again. The Amen response concludes this unit of prayer and the priest invites the congregation once again for the Concluding Rite.

If “Amen” is a signal that a liturgical unit is ending, the repetition of the greeting “The Lord be with you” is a sign that a new one is opening. The priest has said this before. It is not that he thinks it did not work the first, the second, or the third time; it is part of the rite, the serious play that lets us know we are starting to do something different now. The priest blesses the people making the sign of the cross with his hand and saying: “May Almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” After the blessing, the priest or the deacon, in some short phrase, dismisses the people, sending them out. But this dismissal ought not to be understood simply as the banal announcement that “it’s over; you can go home.” It needs to be grasped within the dynamic of Jesus’ words, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (Jn 20:21; 17-18).

The Latin *Ite missa est*, the words used for centuries for the dismissal, underlines the commissioning that takes place after Mass. The *Mass-Missio*- in this sense is a sending forth. The ultimate purpose of the whole celebration is “The Sending” which implies self-emptying like Christ the head. The dismissal of the assembly is like the breaking of the bread. We have become “the bread of life” and the “cup of blessing” for the world. Now we are scattered, broken, poured out to be life for the world. What happens at home, at work, at meals? What do we make of our time, our words, our deeds, our resources of all kinds? That is what matters (*Guide for the Assembly*, p. 23).

Sometimes some members of the church leave before the final blessing. Most who leave early do not need to and ought not to. We should stay and join in the final hymn until the priest and altar servers process out of the church. After, still take a minute to recollect what we have encountered in this sacred space, place and time. Think of the week ahead and try to figure out many ways and instances by which we can be a light to the world. It is commendable and a thing of beauty, that now renewed by the Eucharist, each person goes to another person and introduces their self. After all, we refer to ourselves as brothers and sisters. This is another way we can all experience the bonds of our communion with each other and with Christ.

And that is your Mass Moment for the week.