

The Year of Faith

Catechesis on the Mass

The Concluding Rite

This week, we conclude our catechesis on the Mass with the Concluding Rite.

After the Prayer after Communion, Mass rapidly comes to a conclusion with a blessing and dismissal. After the greeting “The Lord be with you.” the people are blessed prior to being dismissed. It may take the form of either a simple blessing, a prayer over the people, or a solemn blessing. If either a prayer over the people or a solemn blessing is to be given, the people are given the instruction: “Bow down for the blessing.” For example, in Lent each of the Masses have an assigned prayer over the people which is structured like the Collect and concludes “Through Christ our Lord.” In a solemn blessing, there are three petitions follows by the blessing, all of which receive the response of “Amen.”

The traditional dismissal of the Mass is very abrupt in the Latin, literally “Go, it is the dismissal.” Other options have been added in recent years, but regardless of which option is used the meaning is completely clear: we are sent out into the world transformed by the Mass with the mission of transforming the world with our lives. If we leave Mass without having been changed and without the sense that we are supposed to change the world, we have not truly participated in the Sacred Mysteries and are not being faithful to our baptismal calling.

The recessional then forms as the priest reverences the altar. Just as how no one should enter the Church after the priest, so too no one should leave the Church until after the priest has left. Indeed, the *Roman Missal* envisions that everyone will be engaged in some prayer of thanksgiving after Mass and even provides prayers just for that purpose. It is simply not Catholic to rush out to our cars after Mass! Instead let us give thanks to God for the miracle which we have just witnessed and tasted!

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