

*Series on the Mass, Part 82: Final Blessing, conclusion*

Oct. 31, 2021

Current practice is for the simple priest to give a blessing at the end of the Mass in a single sign of the cross. First the priest places his hands on the altar and kisses it; next, lifting his hands and forming a circle as he does so, he says: "May almighty God bless you"; and, as he turns to the faithful, continues: "the Father, and the Son and the Holy Ghost." The faithful respond: "Amen."

The action of venerating the altar first is a sort of borrowing from Christ the benediction that is to be given to the faithful. The priest begins this blessing facing the altar that represents Christ and the image of the crucifix there reminds us of the source of grace that we receive. The priest's hands extended to heaven forming the circle is an invocation for grace to descend upon us. It has always been the custom to kneel, if we are able to do so, to receive the blessing from the bishop or priest.

Sincerely in Christ,

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