

Dear Friends in Christ,

Over the past several weeks in our series *Made for Worship: Understanding the Mass*, we've reflected on why we worship, the meaning of the Introductory Rites and the Liturgy of the Word, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. This week, we come to the final part of the Mass: **the Concluding Rites**

These last few moments of the liturgy may seem brief or almost routine—a blessing, a dismissal, and a closing hymn—but they are important, and we should not leave before them. As a priest, it saddens me to see parishioners leaving before the Mass is over, especially after having just received the gift of Jesus in the Eucharist. What could be more important than allowing the liturgy to come to its completion and giving thanks for the Bread of Life?

"After the blessing, the deacon dismisses the people. In fact, the dismissal gives the liturgy its name. The word "Mass" comes from the Latin word, "*Missa*." At one time, the people were dismissed with the words "*Ite, missa est*" (literally meaning "Go, she—meaning you, the Church—has been sent"). The word "*Missa*" is related to the word "*missio*," the root of the English word "mission." The liturgy does not simply come to an end. Those assembled are sent forth to bring the fruits of the Eucharist to the world" (USCCB). The grace we have received is meant to be carried into our daily lives and shared with others.

Each time we leave the church, we are sent to live what we have celebrated. We have encountered Christ in Word and Sacrament, and now we are called to bring His presence into our homes, workplaces, and communities. In the liturgy, we have offered our lives to God in union with Christ's perfect sacrifice. Now, we are invited to extend that offering into the world. Every act of love, every daily sacrifice we make for others, every work of mercy, every moment of forgiveness, becomes a continuation of what we have celebrated on the altar. The Eucharist strengthens us to "become what we receive"—to be, in the words of St. Augustine, the Body of Christ for the world.

This is what it means to *live the liturgy*. What happens on the altar is meant to shape how we live beyond it. Just as the bread and wine are transformed into Christ's Body and Blood, we too are transformed and sent to be His hands and heart in the world. When we serve others with love, bear our crosses with faith, and live with the hope of heaven, we make the presence of Christ visible in the ordinary moments of life.

Before we leave Mass, it's worth remembering a beautiful tradition in the Church: to stay for a few quiet moments afterwards to make an act of thanksgiving. Having just received our Lord in Holy Communion, our hearts should overflow with gratitude. A few minutes of silence, simply speaking to Jesus from the heart, can be some of the most intimate moments of the week. On occasion I have the privilege of celebrating daily Mass at the Boston University (my alma mater) Catholic Center. The chapel is usually full of college students, and when Mass ends, no one leaves. The students kneel down in silent prayer to commune with Jesus for a few precious moments.

I want to thank you for your attention and participation in this parish wide initiative over the last few weeks. Preparing my homilies and bulletin letters has been beneficial to me as a priest, because it has reminded me that celebrating Mass is never routine but the greatest thing I get to do in my priesthood. My hope is that it has deepened your love for the Eucharist and helped you to see the beauty and meaning behind what we celebrate each week. May every Mass renew us, transform us, and send us forth to live what we have received: the self-giving love of Christ.

Have a blessed week!

In Christ,  
Fr. Bobby