

The Concluding Rite

The Concluding Rite of the Mass is very brief, yet it sends us out to be the Body and Blood of Christ for each other and the world.

It is important to remember that the last prayer of the Mass is the Prayer after Communion. It is part of the Communion Rite. It is not a concluding prayer and does not begin the Concluding Rite.

The Concluding Rite begins with parish announcements, if there are any that must be spoken rather than placed in the parish bulletin.

Then we are blessed for our journey. Sometimes this is done simply. During the seasons of the Church year and special feasts, it is done more solemnly. In those times, we bow our head and pause in silence to ask for God's blessing. We then conclude as we began, signing ourselves with the sign of Christ's cross.

We are dismissed – missioned, that is, by the deacon or presider. The word "Mass" means "sending" or "mission." What we have done at this liturgy, we must now do in the world. Again, Cardinal Bernardin puts it well, "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? This is what matters."

Whether we sing a dismissal song, exit to instrumental or choir music, or leave in silence, we know that our Christian work has just begun. As the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy reminds us, "The liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church" (CSL #9). It rehearses us in who we are to be and how we are to be in the world.

The Jewish rabbi and scholar Abraham Joshua Heschel provides us with the challenge of all who believe in God. "Our problem is how to live what we pray, how to make our lives a daily commentary on our prayer book, how to live in consonance with what we promise, how to keep faith with the vision we pronounce."