



Pastor's Column

St. Peter Catholic Church

January 27, 2019 ~ Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Mass Explained - Concluding Rites

We continue (and now conclude) our Pastor Column series "The Mass Explained," and we conclude with the Concluding Rites (appropriately enough).

Immediately after Holy Communion, the remaining Communion Hosts are gathered into our main ciborium (that is, the sacred vessel containing the consecrated Hosts that we keep in the tabernacle, in the Blessed Sacrament chapel), and an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion returns the ciborium to the tabernacle. The purification of the sacred vessels then takes place. In some places, it is done at the credence table (that table next to the altar servers where everything needed for the liturgy is kept); in other places, it is done at the altar. This ritual of "washing the dishes" is more than simply washing the dishes. The smallest particles of Sacred Host and the smallest drops of Precious Blood are diluted with water and consumed out of holy reverence for Christ present in the Sacred Species (the Host and the Blood of the Eucharist), for even the smallest crumb of Host or the smallest drop of Blood in the chalice still is the fullness of God present to us in the Eucharist. There is a silent prayer assigned to this task, which is a prayer I have asked our Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to pray in the sacristy where the Communion cups are purified: "What has passed our lips as food, O Lord, may we possess in purity of heart, that which has been given to us in time may be our healing for all eternity." Jesus commanded us to eat His Body and drink His Blood, and that command applies to the smallest crumbs and drops as well; these, then, are to be consumed reverently, not washed in a sink, drained through rusty pipes, and dumped into septic tanks and sewers, for that is certainly not fitting for the Lord of Hosts. (On a similar note, all things that are blessed and/or used for sacred purpose are to be burned or buried, but *not* simply thrown away like trash.)

Following the purification of the sacred vessels is the Prayer After Communion. This is a prayer that always references the Eucharist that we have just received, as well as the graces that we hope to gain and, indeed, are promised to gain from having received the Eucharist. After this is the Final Blessing, and the priest-celebrant blesses all of *you*, the people of God, for he is still serving you in the Mass as *alter Christus* ("another Christ") and *in persona Christi* ("in the person of Christ"); for "the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve."

And then the dismissal. *Ite missa est*. "Go; you are sent." The Latin word *missa* ("sent") is where we get our English word "Mass." Mass ends with us being sent forth back into the world to keep serving the Lord and one another through the words and deeds, actions and activities of our daily lives. The final words of Jesus to the Apostles at the end of St. Matthew's Gospel narrative is the Great Commission – the great "sending forth" so that they might continue the good work that Jesus has begun. And now, some two thousand years later, we too are sent forth to continue this good and holy work. We cannot run away from the world but are summoned to be *in* the world, though not *of* the world, to proclaim the Gospel to every nation. We are, as it were, an intravenous injection into the bloodstream of society; or, as Jesus Himself says, we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

And thus concludes our Pastor Column series "The Mass Explained." In a couple of weeks, during the weekend of February 16/17, all Masses at St. Peter will be a "teaching Mass," in which I will celebrate the Mass with a running commentary about what we are doing and why in that given moment of the Mass. It

can be an opportunity for you to observe the Mass unfold in a whole new way; it can also be an opportunity to invite family members or friends who may have questions about the Mass to show them the Mass explained as it is being celebrated. More information about this is forthcoming; and a handy Scripture reference guide will be included in the Sunday bulletin the weekend prior to the “teaching Mass” that you can check out the biblical foundations for every part of the Mass. Stay tuned!

~ Fr. Lewis