

Understanding the Mass – The Concluding Rites

The Concluding Rites at the end of the Mass has real significance in and of itself. On a practical level, the rite allows the time for any brief announcements to be made. As Catholics, we are truly a family so following the Prayer after Communion those important bits of family information can be shared that help build and maintain our relationships. Also, many announcements are tied to some act of charity so they provide opportunities for us to practice our faith in a very real way.

We then have the dismissal, beginning with the final blessing. Through this blessing, the Mass ends in the same way it started – under the Sign of the Cross. For the faithful, all of our activities are to begin, continue and end under the Sign of the Cross. This sign reminds us of the sacrifice we have just participated in, of our Risen Lord who now intercedes for us and of the Triune God who continues to call us into relationship with himself. Through this blessing we are imparted with the grace to live in Christ, as Christ and for Christ until we return again to the altar of the Lord.

The dismissal concludes the Mass with a command from Christ - to go forth – to go and make disciples of all nations, to go and build his kingdom, to go and glorify God by our lives. Pope John Paul II said that an authentic encounter with Christ leads one to a conversion, and then impels one to evangelization. In the Mass we have encountered Jesus Christ first as the God of mercy, then as the living Word of God and finally as the One who sacrifices his life that we may receive a share in his Risen Life! Throughout the Mass we have encountered Christ through all its words and actions. If we have consciously participated in the liturgy and opened ourselves to Jesus in it, he fills us with a fire that must be spread. We go forth then, as living witnesses to his love, his resurrection and his power to transform lives.

The Concluding Rites of the Mass prepare us to leave the church building but not our faith. In fact, each Mass we participate in prepares us to live our faith more fully and actively than ever before. The words above the doorway in one Catholic church summarizes the Concluding Rites of the Mass perfectly. There, on the way out the door of the church, one sees the words “*You are now entering the mission field*”!