

Year of the Eucharist

October 2004 to October 2005

Part 43 in a series on
The Year of the Eucharist
from the
Department of Worship & Spiritual Life
Catholic Diocese of Memphis
in Tennessee

The Structure of the Mass The Liturgy of the Eucharist

THE CONCLUDING RITES

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

As we come to the end of the liturgy, we remember how we began: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” We conclude with the presider’s blessing over the people, invoking Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

There are two aspects to blessings: we “bless” God when we praise God, and we ask God to bless us. In the Eucharistic prayer, we hear the presider’s words, “Blessed are you, O God of all creation.” To “bless” is to give God thanks and praise.

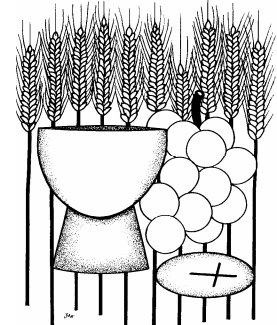
When the presider extends hands over the people in the final blessing at Mass, he asks God to “bless” us. This blessing is not simply an expression of hope that all will go well with us. It is a recognition, a confession that without God, nothing could go well. It is an acknowledgment that all life comes from God and it is God who sustains our lives day in and day out. At the root of the blessing is our awareness of our need for God and our faith that God who is Love will meet all our needs. The blessing reminds us of who we are; we are the people of God and we need God’s blessing on all that we do.

In the Dismissal, we are sent out to be the body of Christ in the world. The *Introduction to the Order of Mass* states it beautifully: “The dismissal sends the members of the congregation forth to praise and bless the Lord in the midst of their daily responsibilities” (#147).

This meaning given to the Dismissal calls us to reflect on how we go about our daily responsibilities. God invites us to a life of faith and gives us grace to enter into all the events of our lives with new eyes for seeing, new ears for hearing and a new heart for loving. The Eucharist equips us to live on a new level, a level of hope and of love.

The entire liturgy employs the use of signs that foster, strengthen, encourage and express faith. As we reflect on our own participation in the liturgy, it might be helpful to begin to be more attentive to the signs in our daily lives. Do the things I do, the books I read, the TV shows I watch, the way I relax, the work I do, the way I relate to those close to me – do all these things strengthen or weaken my faith? Do my daily choices to be angry or compassionate, critical or understanding, anxious or patient express a personal faith that is growing and drawing others in? Do I carry the grace received in the Eucharist into daily situations in such a way that I bring God’s peace to chaotic situations, hope to those who are cynical, and God’s love to those who need to know they are loved?

God not only invites us to live lives characterized by love; in the Eucharist God equips us to receive and spread that love.



From the Introduction to the Order of Mass

#145. As Scripture attests, all beings are created and kept in existence by God’s gracious goodness. They are themselves blessings from God and should move us to bless God in return. This is above all true since the Word has come in flesh to make all things holy by the mystery of the incarnation.

#146. Blessings, therefore, refer first and foremost to God, whose majesty and goodness they extol, and they involve human beings, whom God governs and by divine providence protects.

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