

The Mystery of Faith

#5: SENDING

May 28, 2006

In this YEAR OF PRAYER AND RENEWAL, the entire parish has had an opportunity to reflect on the rich mysteries of our faith. Our series concludes with this issue, in which we meditate on the concluding rites and dismissal. Read the entire series online at www.stjames-cathedral.org. **And don't forget about the Parish Retreat with Archbishop Hunthausen on the Vigil of Pentecost, Saturday, June 3, at 9:30am.**

Time for Meditation

We have experienced different kinds of silence in the course of the Mass: there are thinking silences and praying silences; solemn silences and reflective silences. This silence after holy communion is a time for adoration and thanksgiving, petition and self-offering. Countless saints have tried to put into words the richness of this silence in which we give thanks to God for the gift of his Son. St. Ignatius prayed: "Soul of Christ, sanctify me. Body of Christ, heal me. Blood of Christ, inebriate me. Water from the side of Christ, wash me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me. Good Jesus, hear me."

At St. James Cathedral, we conclude this period of meditation with a Hymn of Praise. Once again, our singing together expresses the fact that we are a community of faith, and at the same time helps us to become one.

Prayer after Communion

The Communion Rite concludes with another prayer. This time, it is not a prayer of thanksgiving; rather, we now ask for the fruits of the Eucharist; we pray that the sacrament may have an effect in our lives. Lord, we pray, may this Eucharist...

Help us bring your love to the world
Give us new purpose
Lead us to share his life forever
Touch our lives and lead us to you
Teach us the way to eternal life
Continue its saving work among us
Keep us single-minded in your service



The inscription in the oculus over the altar is taken from Luke's account of the Last Supper. It is a constant reminder to us that the mystery we celebrate around the altar must be carried out of the Cathedral and into the world.

These prayers, together with the prayers over the gifts we heard just before the Eucharistic Prayer, offer an amazing vision of what the Eucharist can do in our lives and in our communities, if we let it. Sometime, try opening your missal and reading through all the post-communion prayers for the year in sequence. Together, they form a beautiful meditation on the Mass. And you might well be amazed at what we are asking for, Sunday after Sunday!

Greeting and Blessing

*The Lord be with you.
And also with you.*

Every time we've heard these words, something important has been about to happen. We heard them at the beginning of Mass; at the beginning of the Gospel; at the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer. Why do we hear them again now? Isn't this the ending? Not at all! It's the beginning of the next part of the Mass, the part that lasts the longest: the part where we put what we have heard and received into action in our daily lives, the part where we "declare the wonderful deeds of God who has called us out of darkness into wonderful light."

Luke's Gospel concludes with the account of the commissioning of the apostles and Christ's ascension into heaven. "As he blessed them he parted from them and was taken up to heaven. They did him homage and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24: 51-52). The end of the Mass follows the same pattern. The priest gives the blessing, and we all make the sign of the cross. We are blessed and sent. Indeed, in Latin the words of the dismissal are "Ite, missa est," which literally means, *go, you are sent*. "The people are now sent forth to carry out the mission of the church, a mission of healing, justice, and proclamation. All liturgy has a social dimension" (Johnson). We accept this commission as a gift, with words of

gratitude that echo our responses elsewhere in the Mass: "Thanks be to God!"

The Mass is our greatest prayer; as Father Driscoll says, the Church "exists to pray it, and she comes into being by praying it." And yet it is what we do outside of Mass which will determine the genuineness of the offering we make at the altar each Sunday. "We cannot delude ourselves: by our mutual love and, in particular, by our concern for those in need we will be recognized as true followers of Christ. This will be the criterion by which the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebrations is judged" (Pope John Paul II, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*). All who are called to the Lord's table are called to be peacemakers, and not only on the grand scale, but in the ordinary encounters of our daily lives.

PROCESSION

In the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, the term "recessional" is never used. Recessional implies that we simply go back where we started. And that's exactly what we don't want to do after our celebration of the Eucharist! We have prayed that the celebration will transform us, and not only us, but the world we live in. And so it's good that we always process: we always go forward. Led by the cross, the ministers go out of the church, and then, the entire assembly joins that procession. We stream out to live the word we have heard, and the sacrament we have received, in a thousand different places and a thousand different ways.



"Rest in peace, holy altar of the Lord.... May the Lord grant me to see you in the assembly of the firstborn which is in heaven."

Reverencing the Altar

The priest brings up the rear in the procession of the ministers; and before he departs he reverences the altar once again. This time, it is a gesture of farewell. "The farewell kiss looks back to the Eucharist which has just concluded and anticipates the next occasion when the community will assemble at the table of the Lord" (Johnson). The liturgy of Antioch included a

wonderful prayer which the priest would say privately at this moment; and it's one which we can join in, in spirit at least, as we leave the Cathedral each Sunday: "Rest in peace, holy altar of the Lord.... May the Lord grant me to see you in the assembly of the firstborn which is in heaven; in this covenant, I place my trust.... Rest in peace, holy altar, table of life, and beseech our Lord Jesus Christ for me so that I may not cease to think of you henceforth and for ever and ever. Amen."

Corinna Laughlin, Director of Liturgy

FOR FURTHER READING

- *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1077-1112)*
- Joseph Champlin. *The Mystery and Meaning of the Mass**
- Lucien Deiss. *The Mass**
- Jeremy Driscoll, OSB. *What Happens at Mass*.
- Lawrence J. Johnson. *The Mystery of Faith: A Study of the Structural Elements of the Mass*
- Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger. *The Mass*

* Look for these titles in the Cathedral Bookstore

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- Why does Mass end the way it does?
- Does my participation in the Sunday Mass have an effect on my life during the rest of the week? Am I able to connect the worship I offer to God on Sunday with my daily life? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- How can I "love and serve the Lord" in my daily life? How can I "go in peace" in my family, my work, my broader community?
- How can we as a Cathedral Parish carry God's love into the world more effectively in this Year of Prayer and Renewal?