

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

The Mass, Part 14 – So Long, Farewell, Auf Wiedersehen, Adieu!

After 13 discussions of the various parts of the Mass, we have come to the end. When we first started discussing the Mass, we compared it to a banquet, and analogically divided both the banquet and the Mass into four parts or movements: the greeting, the getting to know one another, the meal proper, and the farewell. [cf. *Looking Through Stained Glass*, “The Mass, Part 1 – The Everlasting Banquet,” Sept. 16, 2018] Well, now we have arrived at the final movement of the Mass, the “Farewell.” During a banquet, the “Farewell” is the time when we say a few parting words, we say “Goodbye,” and we wish each other well, until we meet again. During the Mass, the “Farewell” is better known as the Concluding Rites.

After Communion, the priest prays one of the presidential prayers, coincidentally known as “The Prayer After Communion.” Technically, this prayer is part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, but as it follows a period of silence and seems to flow into the rest of the Concluding Rites, one might consider this prayer part of these rites. “To bring to completion the prayer of the People of God, and also to conclude the whole Communion Rite, the Priest pronounces the Prayer after Communion, in which he prays for the fruits of the mystery just celebrated.” [*General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)*, 89]

The Concluding Rites might include some brief announcements by the priest. At some of our Masses – usually the Sunday 9 AM Mass – we also distribute the Vocations Chalice to one of our families during this time. This chalice is used by the receiving family as a focal point for prayer

throughout the week, as they pray for vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and religious life in our parish, our diocese, and the Church universal.

The final blessing of the priest follows any announcements. Sometimes in special seasons – like Christmas, Easter, Lent and Advent – we have a longer blessing formula, known as the Solemn Blessing or Prayer over the People. [*GIRM*, 90b]

Finally, the priest or deacon gives the dismissal, such as “Go forth, the Mass is ended,” or “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.” To this dismissal, the people respond, “Thanks be to God.” In this response, we both thank God for the gift of the Mass we have just celebrated, and for the opportunity to share in the mission of God. The Concluding Rites include “the Dismissal of the people by the Deacon or the Priest, so that each may go back to doing good works, praising and blessing God.” [*GIRM*, 90c] [cf. *Looking Through Stained Glass*, “The Mass, Part 2 – A Mass by any Other Name Would Be as Sweet,” Sept. 23, 2018]

While the final, Recessional, song is being sung, the priest and deacon reverence the altar before leaving the sanctuary. This moment of reverence is a moment of both recognition of the sanctity of the altar and of thanksgiving for the opportunity to serve at the altar. The priest and deacon then reverence the tabernacle, usually by genuflecting to it, recognizing the enduring presence of Christ there.

With the Mass concluded, we exit the Church building and go to live out the faith that we have just received and celebrated.

