



Praying the Mass Anew

*The New Translation of The Roman Missal
and Our Actual Participation at Mass*

21. Concluding Rites – Going Forth.

Having received Holy Communion, we draw near to the end of the Mass. In the Eucharist, God truly dwells within us – for as Jesus says in John 6:56: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.” While we should take what moments of silence are given after receiving Holy Communion to give thanks to God for the gift of Holy Communion. Such thanksgiving prepares to be sent out to live this gift of communion with Christ.

As the fitting conclusion of Holy Communion itself, we all are invited to stand and pray. The priest offers the **Prayer after Communion**, asking God that the mysteries of Christ in the Eucharist may have an effect in all our lives (as was covered in “Insert 12” earlier this fall). Following the “Amen” of the people, the Mass is brought to its proper conclusion as the priest blesses the people and then either he or the deacon dismisses them.

The dismissal of the people of the Mass is best understood as *the “sending” of the people to live more fully in Christ*. The new translation for the concluding rite makes this truth of being “sent” very clear. In addition, it is noteworthy that Pope Benedict XVI himself has given us three new formulas for use in dismissing the

people from Mass. We will consider all of the formulas for dismissal.

“Go, it is sent”

As we know well, the new translation is very literal in interpreting the original Latin prayer texts for Mass. In fact, it is from the Latin text of the dismissal that the word “mass” is derived. The Latin text is *“Ite, missa est.”* Literally translated, the words are “Go, [it] is sent.” At the heart of the statement is the word *missa*. Taken from this word are several familiar words in English, including “mission,” “missal,” and of course “mass.” Hence, if we took the most literal translation of this phrase as “Go, it is sent,” the “it” may be understood as not simply the people themselves, but the “mission” task that they are sent to live.

In the new translation, given that we take the word “mass” from *missa*, the words of the deacon or priest have been rendered **“Go forth, the Mass is ended.”** Note that the text says “Go forth”: we are to go forth to live what we have just offered and received in the Holy Mass. All are entrusted with taking the gift of Holy Communion with Christ into their lives, to offer themselves more perfectly in all that they are called to be. Hence, we have a new beginning from every Mass.

Pope Benedict XVI's Additions

While the word *missa* contains the root of the English word “mission,” the connection of these words has universal significance. Pope Benedict himself observed in 2007 in his exhortation on the Eucharist called “The Sacrament of Charity” that while the word *missa* originally meant “dismissal,” it has grown to contain this character of “mission.” Accordingly, he has given three additional formulas for dismissal from Mass that express this truth of mission. These texts of Pope Benedict are new and will be officially used for the first time in this latest edition of the *Roman Missal*. The new texts are in the box below.

Response of the People

Aware that the priest or deacon may choose from the four options for dismissing the people, the **verbal response of the people is unchanged**. After the dismissal, the people will still respond **“Thanks be to God,”** giving thanks both that they have not only partaken in the Mass, and that they have been entrusted with the mission that they are now sent to live. Hence, the true response of the people is not merely in words – it is by **living the mission of charity that we have offered in the Eucharist and are called to live as his disciples**.

New Dismissal Options – added at the request of Pope Benedict XVI

1. **“Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.”**

literal translation of “Ite ad Evangelium Domini annuntiandum”

2. **“Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.”**

literal translation of “Ite in pace, glorificando vita vestra Dominum”

3. **“Go in peace.”**

literal translation of “Ite in pace”

- All these formulas emphasize that we “Go” – we are “sent” to live.
- Each formula offers a distinct aspect of evangelization and mission.
- The people respond:
“Thanks be to God.”
 - Not “Thank God it’s over.”
 - Rather “Thanks be to God for the call to be your witness.”

Questions of the Week:

➤ ***What gives the Pope authority to “add” prayers to the Mass?***

As we read in an earlier insert, no individual priest has the authority to change any of the prayers or the ritual. However the pope and bishops are given authority to guard and hand down the liturgical rituals of the Church, always mindful of the purpose of the liturgy and the particular circumstances that may be present. Likewise, the pope, by virtue of being the pope, is able to implement changes or new liturgical practices for the good of the whole Church. Truly, this happens more frequently than we may have considered – such as Pope John Paul II’s declaration of the 2nd Sunday of Easter as “Divine Mercy Sunday,” which he set forth in the year 2000. Thus, mindful of the whole Church throughout the world, the pope may add or eliminate prayers, give further clarification on prayers, or make adjustments to the way the liturgy is celebrated.

➤ ***I notice people who leave right after they receive Holy Communion. Why is this wrong?***

Now that we know from the main section of today’s insert the meaning of the dismissal from Mass as a sending forth, to leave Mass immediately after receiving Holy Communion has two main problems. First of all, we have not fully finished the act of receiving Holy Communion itself (which is only accomplished in the **Prayer after Communion**). Second, we have not yet received the blessing of God or the exhortation to go forth to live the faith that we have just celebrated. By way of analogy, leaving Mass before the final blessing is like a soldier marching into battle without being confirmed or directed in his mission.

Accordingly, we remain for the final blessing and dismissal so that as we are sent, we go forth with the fullness of God’s blessing and commission.