

THE FINAL PRAYER AND CONCLUDING RITES

After Communion, it is convenient to leave a time of silence so that both the priest and the faithful can take advantage of those moments of intimacy with the Lord. The Holy Father, in his apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* speaks about this: "Furthermore, the precious time of thanksgiving after Communion should not be neglected: besides the singing of an appropriate hymn, it can also be most helpful to remain recollected in silence." (SC, 50)

To complete the prayer of the people of God and to conclude the whole Communion Rite, the priest says the post-Communion prayer, in which we ask that the Mystery we have celebrated produce abundant fruit in the faithful and in the Church. (Cf. GIRM, 72)



After the post-Communion prayer, the priest greets the faithful and blesses them, tracing the sign of the Cross and invoking the Trinity: "May almighty God bless you. The Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit." It is necessary to point out that the priest here does not ask for the blessing of God to descend upon us. He - if he celebrates the Catholic liturgy - transmits, effectively and with the certainty of the liturgy, the blessing that Christ grants to His people. He does so as Our Lord who, speaking to His disciples in the moment of His ascension, "raised his hands, and blessed them. As he blessed them he parted from them and was taken up to heaven." (Lk 24:50-51) So now, through the priest who represents Him, the Lord blesses the Christian people, who have come together in the Eucharist to celebrate people, who have come together in the Eucharist to celebrate the memorial of "the death your Son endured for our salvation, his glorious resurrection and

ascension into heaven, and ready to greet him when he comes again.” (EP III).

Finally, the priest dismisses the faithful. The word Mass comes from the Latin word *mittere* which means "sending." The Eucharistic celebration ends with the sending of the Christians into the world. And this is not a simple exhortation, "Go in peace," almost insignificant. It is important and efficacious. In effect, as Christ sent out His disciples before ascending into Heaven, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15), now the same Christ, concluding the Eucharist, through the priest who acts in His name and makes Him visible, sends out all the faithful, so that they go back to their ordinary lives, and always announce the Good News with their words and moreover, with their works.

Benedict XVI says that the relation between the celebrated Mass and the Christian mission in the world can be perceived in the words, "Ite, Missa est," pronounced at the end of the Eucharistic celebration. The expression *Missa* is transformed into mission. This greeting synthetically expresses the missionary nature of the Church. The people of God should be helped, based on the liturgy, to deepen in this constitutive dimension of the Church. (cf. SC, 51)

Through these words, the connection that should exist between the liturgy and the Christian life can be seen. Each person who truly receives the Body of the Lord, should necessarily be a witness of His love in the world. They should be a candle placed on top of the candlestick to shine for all of those in the house. The participation in the Eucharist shouldn't be reduced to an intimate experience of union with God, but should push the faithful to be witnesses of Christ in the world. The authentic experience of the Eucharist produces apostles.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Eucharist and Queen of Apostles, teach us to combine these two realities that are intimately united: the Church lives from the Eucharist, growing in her union with Christ in the Sacrament of Love, and at the same time, the Church should find in the Eucharistic Christ the strength of testimony, of announcement, so that all men can come to know Jesus Christ and to live from Him, participating in this abundant divine life that has brought Him to earth.