

Liturgy Lesson Thirty Six: The Concluding Rite

This week brings us to our last Liturgy Lesson. Hopefully these lessons have been helpful to everyone, helping us to understand the history and meaning of the Mass we celebrate together, especially as we begin using the new translation of the Roman Missal. Should you wish to review the lessons, they are posted on our Parish web site, www.stiggys.org.

As you can imagine with this being the last lesson, the topic is the Concluding Rite. It appears that in the early church, the Eucharist ended immediately after communion. But Christians soon felt a need for a better defined closure to the celebration so the Concluding Rite was added. Over the centuries much was added to this rite, and some older Catholics may remember lengthy opening verses of the Gospel of John that were quietly said by the priest at the left side of the altar just before the final blessing.

With Vatican II this rite was changed, bringing it back to its simpler roots in the early church. There is a concluding prayer by the priest, which is meant to gather all of our prayers of Thanksgiving, just as the Collect gathers our prayers at the beginning of Mass. There is a blessing and then the dismissal or the *Ite Missa Est* as it was called in the old liturgy. Those Latin words simply mean, "Go, the Mass is ended." As a final act the priest kisses the altar, the symbol of Christ and the place of sacrifice. The concluding procession is the least important of the processions of the Mass. It is simply a means of leaving the place of worship and may be done with or without music.

As we conclude our Mass today, let us be prepared to live what we have celebrated and go in peace to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to others.