

## New and Corrected Translation of the Mass – Part 29

### The Post-Communion Prayer, Blessing and Dismissal

After Communion, a period of silence is enjoined. We are free to sit or kneel as we prefer (no priest or bishop may impose a uniform practice here), making our thanksgiving in silence. This is a time of communing with Jesus, who is inside us through the Eucharist. Then the priest invites us to pray. After a short silence during which we pray, he prays the Post-Communion prayer, which collects all our intentions and directs them to God, usually thanking Him for the gifts we have received as a foretaste of heavenly realities we hope to see and enjoy directly. If notices are made, they are usually given out at this point, briefly and succinctly.

Then the blessing is given by the priest or bishop. It is always given in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; imparted with a Sign of the Cross. We bow as we make the Sign of the Cross over ourselves, at the same time as the Cross is traced over us. That the Cross should be a blessing may strike us as odd. Here it is a blessing and a reminder that ‘If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me’ (Mark 8.34, Luke 9.23, cf. Matt 10.38). The Cross is the means ‘by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world’ (Gal 6.14). And because ‘I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me’ (Gal 2.20). Therefore ‘those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires’ (Gal 5.24). This is what being blessed with the Sign of the Cross means for us, and that is why we begin and end Mass with It.

The dismissal may come in a few forms. Our response is always:

**✠ Thanks be to God.**

The usual dismissal in Latin is *Ite, missa est*. The word *ite* (‘go’) is plural, addressing the members of the congregation. While *missa est* means ‘it is the dismissal’, it could also mean ‘She is sent’. The dismissal is an acknowledgment that with the dispersal of Christians from Mass, it is the Church (i.e. She) who is sent out to the whole world. So the dismissal is not a simple declaration “It’s over, you can go now”, to which we sigh with relief, “Thanks be to God”. The dismissal calls to mind the Ascension of Jesus, and His great commission: ‘(1) Go therefore and (2) make disciples of all nations, (3) baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (4) teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; (5) and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age’ (Matt 28.19f). The first four parts of the commission are made possible by the fifth, because that is what the Catholic Church is: Jesus, alive and active in the world today, acting through His Body, the Church, until the end of time. Amen! Thanks be to God!