

The Ending and the Sending: The Concluding Rites

We have journeyed from the ***Introductory Rites*** which begin the Mass, through the ***Liturgy of the Word*** in which we converse with God in the words of Scripture, the Homily, Profession of Faith, Intercessions, into the ***Eucharistic Prayer***, our great prayer of praise and thanksgiving, and the Communion Rite in which we are more deeply united to God in Christ and with one another. We arrive now at the ***Concluding Rites*** which send us out *to do good works, praising and blessing God (General Instruction on the Roman Missal)*. By one calculation, this part of the Mass is the briefest and simplest, made up as it is of only the announcements, a blessing and dismissal, and recessional. However, by another calculation it could be considered the fullest and most extensive part as it links or connects our celebration of the Eucharist to all the rest of our life. As noted last week regarding the Prayer after Communion, it is “*where the end is the beginning*” and how “the end of our *Sunday* celebration of Eucharist must also be the beginning of our Eucharistic living *all week long*.” The ***Concluding Rites*** are the “doorway” that sends us out into the world to bring and be the grace of Christ we have shared and celebrated at Mass. The very last three words of the Mass in Latin are *Ite, missa est*. These words do not translate easily into English, and there are various forms and wordings in our English translation that can be used for the dismissal. But they all have the same fundamental intention and purpose of commissioning and blessing us to live lives of thanksgiving and service, as we have prayed throughout the Mass. Since every gift of God bestows a responsibility and obligation for the one who receives it to live a life of thanksgiving and to share with others the divine message and grace of the Eucharist, the words *Ite, missa est* can rightly be interpreted as signifying our God given mission: *Go! Your mission is beginning*.

Please let us know what else about our faith tradition you'd like to find out more about. Contact our Council for Catechesis at tkautza@saintmaryhc.org.