

*Where the End is the Beginning: Prayer After Communion*

I write this reflection from the *Spiritual Life Center* in Wichita, Kansas at the end of a conference on *Catholic Stewardship* which teaches about how our whole life as Catholics is meant to be lived as disciples of Jesus Christ, formed and guided by the Eucharist in which we participate in the self-offering of Christ as our grateful response to God for all the gifts God gives to us. Our sharing in Communion at Mass is both a personal sharing with Christ, and a sharing with all other members of the Body of Christ, and indeed with all God's creation. The gift we receive in Communion is not just a personal and private gift to us as individuals, but is meant to open and send us out as disciples and servants, stewards of God's good gifts as this *Catholic Stewardship Conference* has stressed. The meaning and purpose of the prayer after Communion make this same point about the "stewardship nature" of our Catholic faith and life, namely, that our celebration of Eucharist and sharing in Communion are meant to extend well beyond our hour at church on Sunday. The prayer after communion is *where the end is the beginning* in that the end of our *Sunday* celebration of Eucharist must also be the beginning of our Eucharistic living *all week long*. This prayer was added to the Mass beginning in the fifth century and serves to "bring our prayer to completion" as it prays that the fruits of the mystery just celebrated be extended into the rest of our lives. The way the prayer after communion "brings our prayer to completion" is two fold. One way is by concluding the celebration of the Eucharist, the celebration of the Mass itself. Another way is by how it prays that fruits of the celebration will be expressed all throughout our lives, thus fulfilling or realizing the nature of the Eucharist as a life transforming prayer, making its meaning "complete" by the way we live our lives.

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](mailto:tkautza@saintmaryhc.org).