

Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions [FDLC]

Mystagogical Reflection on Texts of the *Roman Missal*

Link to Mystagogy Project on FDLC home page for free access and use: <http://www.fdlc.org>.

Mystagogical Reflections on the Collect & Prayer after Communion for ORDINARY TIME – 15-21

MYSTAGOGY ON THE MASS TEXTS FOR SUNDAYS, SOLEMNITIES, AND HOLYDAYS

"Mystagogy", simply put, is the study of mystery. For Christians, it focuses on the Paschal Mystery of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an ancient and beloved Church method for reflecting on the experiences of worship, prayer, and the Christian life.

Collect or Opening Prayer	Prayer after Communion
<p>The Collect is introduced by the words "Let us pray" and followed by a few moments of silence to allow us to quietly compose our own prayers. These are then gathered or "collected" by the Priest and offered to God through Jesus Christ.</p> <p>Catherine Combiér-Donovan Archdiocese of Baltimore</p>	<p>The single purpose of the Prayer after Communion is to recapitulate in prayer every word, action, and belief that has led us to (and will soon send us from) the Eucharist fashioned (by profound sacred words and actions) and received by those gathered. Although not words of our choosing, but rather those supplied by the Church, it attempts to verbally express what we have experienced and believe.</p> <p>Father Jim Bessert Diocese of Saginaw</p>



The Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions [FDLC] formed an Ad Hoc Committee for Mystagogical Reflection. The committee task is to provide help for reflecting on texts of the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*. The 2013 effort focused on the Collect or Opening Prayer for Sunday, Solemnity, and Holyday Masses. The 2014 work addressed the Prayer after Communion with implications for discipleship. This work is on the FDLC website in PDF: <http://www.fdlc.org> – scroll to the bottom of the home page.

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Over the course of the year
the Church celebrates the whole mystery of Christ,
from the Incarnation to Pentecost Day
and the days of waiting for the Advent of the Lord.

Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar [UNLYC], no. 17

ORDINARY TIME 15-21

Apart from those seasons having their own distinctive character, thirty-three or thirty-four weeks remain in the yearly cycle that do not celebrate a specific aspect of the mystery of Christ. Rather, especially on the Sundays, they are devoted to the mystery of Christ in all its aspects. This period is known as Ordinary Time.

Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar [UNLYC], no. 43

The Liturgical Day	Date
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	
SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	
SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	
EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	
NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	
TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	
TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	

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FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Collect:

O God, who show the light of your truth
to those who go astray,
so that they may return to the right path,
give all who for the faith they profess
are accounted Christians
the grace to reject whatever is contrary to the name of Christ
and to strive after all that does it honor.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

Living our life professing the faith that we reaffirmed at Easter is not easy. We are not alone in living out the truth that we proclaim because here we have our sights set on the light that guides us to that truth. Unaccompanied we could do nothing that would enable us to be witnesses to the faith that we profess. Through the goodness of God, we are given the grace to make every effort to eliminate those things in our lives that would cause us to not give praise, honor, and glory to the name of Christ.

We are constantly moving on the path that leads to eternal life. We move on that path accompanied by our God and by all who profess their faith in him. God is ever with us to support, encourage, enliven, and pull us back when we wander off the path which brings us to eternal life.

Prayer:

O God, you are our guide as we profess our faith in you. We move through life proclaiming your presence in every moment and in everything we do. Continue to sustain us in the struggles of life and be our companion on the path we walk, conscious of our failures and successes in this world you created for us.

Submitted by:

Sister Sharon Marie Stola, OSB, D.Min.

Director of the Office of Divine Worship and the Catechumenate

Diocese of Joliet-in-Illinois

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FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Prayer after Communion:

Having consumed these gifts, we pray, O Lord,
that, by our participation in this mystery,
its saving effects upon us may grow.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

Although this prayer dates from the seventh century and was used late in Easter Time, it serves us well on the Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time following the reform of Vatican Council II. It helps us recall the whole of the mystery of Christ.

In the same way we feed our children so they grow up in wisdom, age, and grace (mysterious, is it not?) the Church feeds the children of God. We, God's children, feed on Eucharistic bread and wine, feed on Body and Blood, feed on God.

This participation in Communion is our right because of new birth in Baptism. It is also our duty. For once out of the baptismal bath, we now dress like Christ and bear his light. We complete the "giving thanks" begun in the Eucharistic Prayer by dining at the Lord's table, by eating and drinking the Lord's meal, by participating in so great a mystery – Christ once dead, now risen for ever. By consuming Jesus the Christ, his saving life grows within us. We become like him – who became like us in all things but sin.

So great a mystery!

Prayer:

Oh Dead and Risen Lord,
feed us always with your very self
that we may grow week by week to be like you
– dead to sin and raised to life anew.

Submitted by:
Eliot Kapitan
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SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Collect:

Show favor, O Lord, to your servants
and mercifully increase the gifts of your grace,
that, made fervent in hope, faith and charity,
they may be ever watchful in keeping your commands.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

This collect has its origins in the Ambrosian Rite celebrated in Milan, Italy and the surrounding territories. Originating in the *Bergamo Sacramentary* (tenth or eleventh century), it was added to the Missal after the Second Vatican Council.

In these words we are reminded of our ongoing need for God's grace and the gratuitous gifts we have been given by the Spirit to participate in the divine nature. Specifically, we pray for the gifts that are known as the theological virtues – faith, hope, and charity. By these gifts we are made “capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life” [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1813]. These virtues empower the people of God to faithfully keep his commands by pursuing the good as the goal of their actions. And, as Saint Gregory of Nyssa reminds us, “The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God” [*De beatitudinibus*, no. 1].

One may also notice that hope is named first in the list of virtues, rather than faith. Why is this so? Perhaps it is to make a connection to the next line of the Collect where it speaks of being “ever watchful”. A people full of hope are a people ever watchful. A people full of hope recognize in the world around them the need of a life lived in service to God and the promise of eternal life that comes with it.

Prayer:

Merciful God, give us what we need to serve you – the faith to believe in you, the hope to desire life with you, and the love to respond to you who loved us first.

Submitted by:
Matt Miller
Director, Office of Worship
Diocese of Evansville

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SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Prayer after Communion:

Graciously be present to your people, we pray, O Lord,
and lead those you have imbued with heavenly mysteries
to pass from former ways to newness of life.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

Miriam-Webster's Dictionary defines the word *imbue* as "to cause (someone or something) to be deeply affected by a feeling or to have a certain quality." In this Prayer after Communion, not only do we ask God to graciously be present to us having just received the Body and Blood of Christ, we also ask to be imbued with the heavenly mysteries causing us to be transformed. Thus, by our very eating and drinking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we ask God to cause something powerful to happen within us – transformation.

This transformation happens because of God's graciousness. It is God who does the transforming. As the Holy Spirit is called down upon gifts of bread and wine to change them into the Body and Blood of Christ, so too, do we ask the grace of the Holy Spirit to change us.

St. Augustine said, "Be what you see; receive what you are." We are to be the Body of Christ in the world. We are to be poured out for others that they might have new life. When we say, "Amen" to the Body and Blood of Christ, we commit ourselves to be transformed into a new person, leaving behind our old ways of thinking and doing, and becoming Christ's Body in the world.

Prayer:

Lord, as we ponder the mystery of the Eucharist, change us that we might become your Body, your hands, and your feet in a world in great need of your love.

Submitted by:
Karen Kane
Director of the Worship Office
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

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SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Collect:

O God, protector of those who hope in you,
without whom nothing has firm foundation, nothing is holy,
bestow in abundance your mercy upon us
and grant that, with you as our ruler and guide,
we may use the good things that pass
in such a way as to hold fast even now
to those that ever endure.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

This Collect was composed following the Second Vatican Council using elements of various ancient liturgical texts. The prayer begins by naming God “protector”. Although not commonly found in our liturgical prayers, addressing God as protector has its origin in Scripture. We see this in the Gospel of Luke where Jesus answers the devil by quoting Psalm 91, “He will command his Angels . . . to guard you” [Lk 4:10-11]. For those who hope in God there is the sure promise of protection. The Collect reminds us that without God nothing has a firm foundation and nothing is holy.

The second half of the prayer asks for God’s mercy and affirms God as our ruler and guide. The prayer continues by asking that we may use the good things of this earth in such a way that they will aid us in achieving the “good things that ever endure”. What are these enduring things? They are love and eternal life. As we pray the Collect we are reminded that we are totally dependent on God for our very existence. We are reminded that God establishes and sanctifies creation thereby making all things holy. And we affirm that with God as our foundation we have hope for eternal life in the love of God who is Father, Son, and Spirit.

Prayer:

O God, embrace me in your loving arms and keep me from all harm. Give me the wisdom to recognize the work of your hand in all of creation and to long for the gift of eternal life.

Submitted by:
David J. Reilly
Director of Worship
Diocese of Kalamazoo

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SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Prayer after Communion:

We have consumed, O Lord, this divine Sacrament,
the perpetual memorial of the Passion of your Son;
grant, we pray, that this gift,
which he himself gave us with love beyond all telling,
may profit us for salvation.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

For any one of us who has done any in-depth studies in liturgy, there is constantly one central, one theological tenet that surfaces: *Paschal Mystery*. Regardless of how simply or profoundly we comprehend Paschal Mystery, this prayer seemingly captures its essence in what might be considered a strikingly poetic fashion.

That being said, the words that jumped off the page from this prayer is the phrase “which [Jesus] himself gave us with a love beyond all telling.” How does one describe such love; what wondrous love, what profound love, what unconditional love? It would appear that our lives of discipleship – as recipients of this gift and spiritual nourishment – just might be emboldened to bear witness to this “love beyond all telling.”

Prayer:

O God, source of all love, help us by our words and deeds to bear witness to the gift of your love which we have received in and through your Son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, now and for ever.
Amen.

Submitted by:
Reverend James Wm. Bessert
Director, Office of Liturgy
Diocese of Saginaw

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EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Collect:

Draw near to your servants, O Lord,
and answer their prayers with unceasing kindness,
that, for those who glory in you as their Creator and guide,
you may restore what you have created
and keep safe what you have restored.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

The earliest version of this prayer is found in the *Verona Sacramentary*. It announced a fast, perhaps during a sixth century siege of Rome. A version also appeared in the 1985 Sacramentary among the Prayers over the People. The 2002 edition removed it. (Paul Turner, *A Pastoral Companion to the Roman Missal*, © 2010, World Library Publications, p.130).

Like most of our liturgical texts, the prayer finds its source in Scriptural roots. It shows similarities to Psalm 104:30 (NAB: “When you send forth your Spirit they are created and you renew the face of the earth”) and Romans 8:21 (“...that creation itself will be set free from slavery to corruption”).

We begin by asking God to “draw near”. This congers such a wonderful image of our Father, leaning in to better hear our prayers and answering them with “unceasing kindness”. And what are we asking God to do? This is, above all, a prayer of hope that God will restore all things to their rightful order and return all creation back to its purpose, that is, to give him glory.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father,
open my eyes that I may see the glory of your creation,
teach me to always be mindful of your will,
and give me strength to witness to your purpose.

Submitted by
Rita Thiron
[Former] Director, Office of Worship
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EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Prayer after Communion:

Accompany with constant protection, O Lord,
those you renew with these heavenly gifts
and, in your never-failing care for them,
make them worthy of eternal redemption.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

This particular Prayer after Communion comes from Mass in a monastery in the *Gelasian Sacramentary*. Examples abound in the Veronese and Gelasian Sacramentaries where the concise prayer for this part of the Roman tradition took shape.

I am often taken aback by our boldness and, in my opinion, our lack of manners when speaking with God. In today's Prayer after Communion, we almost demand that God accompany us, protect us, and make us worthy. Can I hear a "please"?

We are reminded, however, regardless of our human faults and failings, that our God will never fail to care for us. Our God loves us, protects us, and accompanies us in our daily lives. Our simple gifts of bread and wine have been transformed to heavenly gifts. Through our participation in the Sacrament, we have been transformed, too. We pray that through our participation, renewal, and transformation God will find us worthy of redemption.

Prayer:

Kind and ever-loving God, we come before you today, realizing that we have failed in what we have done and in what we have failed to do. Forgive us, Lord. We want to be in your presence always. Protect us, provide for us, be with us, care for us, and make us worthy. Please. Thank you. Amen.

Submitted by:
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NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Collect:

Almighty every-living God,
whom, taught by the Holy Spirit,
we dare to call our Father,
bring, we pray, to perfection in our hearts
the spirit of adoption as your sons and daughters,
that we may merit to enter into the inheritance
which you have promised.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

This prayer has a rich liturgical history and is found in a handful of books for Mass from the seventh century to our own day.

These truths stand out: BEING DARING AND BOLD. For a child, a “double-dog-dare-you” was a challenge not to be ignored. The Mass reminds us of such boldness at the beginning of the Communion Rite. We cannot ignore the invitation by the Priest who dares us to say: Our Father.

BEING AN ADOPTED CHILD. Late in Lent, the Church lovingly entrusts to the elect the Lord’s Prayer. We do this, the rite says, to deepen an awareness of being an adopted child, one who calls God “Father”. We do this with them because we ourselves believe it. We are sons and daughters.

BEING IN THE WILL. Although there may be legal rights to an inheritance, it is ultimately a gift, even many gifts. God, by covenant, promises to keep us in the will, promises to share the divine inheritance with us. We in turn must promise to behave as worthy children.

Prayer:

God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, keep us coming back to the Sunday table of your Son. By eating his Body and drinking his Blood, we may become ever more perfect daughters and sons.

Submitted by:
Eliot Kapitan
Director for Worship and the Catechumenate
Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

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NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Prayer after Communion:

May the communion in your Sacrament
that we have consumed, save us, O Lord,
and confirm us in the light of your truth.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

This prayer, dating back to the eighth century, contains some rich elements. The word “consumed” is very strong. We have not merely “eaten and drunk” the Sacrament; we have consumed it, that is, taken it in wholly and entirely. The power of the word reminds us of the people of Israel who were to consume the daily portion of manna in the desert, the gift of God, in order to be saved. The power of the word reminds us of the prophet Ezekiel who was given the scroll of the word of God to eat.

What is this consumed “Sacrament”? The Latin word here is plural, and so we know that the reference is not to the Body and Blood of Christ only. In the celebration of the Eucharist that is completed with this post-communion prayer, we have consumed both the Word of God and the Sacrament of the altar. Beyond that, we have celebrated the Eucharist as a baptized people, alive and gathered in the Holy Spirit. Hence, the “Sacrament that we have consumed” is the whole Christ, indeed all the mysteries of Christ. As we consume and make Christ part of us, Christ is making us part of himself. Such is our communion in and with him.

Hence, we pray that our communion in Christ may “save us...and confirm us” in divine truth. The praying community, the Church, is asking to be open to receive the salvation offered to us in the sacrament of Christ and to be rooted in his truth completely.

Prayer:

Jesus our Savior, we thank you for giving yourself to us in such varied splendor. May we take you completely into our hearts as you take us completely into yours. Amen.

Submitted by:
Father Robert J. Kennedy
Pastor, Blessed Sacrament and Saint Boniface Parishes
Chairperson, Diocesan Liturgical Commission
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TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Collect:

O God, who have prepared for those who love you
good things which no eye can see,
fill our hearts, we pray, with the warmth of your love,
so that, loving you in all things and above all things,
we may attain your promises,
which surpass every human desire.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

St. Dimitri, Metropolitan of Rostov (1651-1709), taught in *The Inner Closet of the Heart*, “No unity with God is possible except by an exceedingly great love.” It is through the love of God that we exist and are called to dwell in his presence. It is because he loves us that we are offered the gift of eternal redemption, his ultimate covenant promise.

We all know that “Love is a two way street.” For the love that God has for us to be complete, we must love him in return. And how do we love him? By living in the spirit of his law; a law that calls us to love him and our neighbor while we set our own desires aside.

How do we merit the gift of God’s love? We certainly do not merit that gift by human desire. We merit the gift through the spiritual desire that enflames our heart.

Prayer:

Lord God, kindle within us the fire of your love. Let our hope in your promises keep us on the right path so that we may rejoice in your presence all the days of our life.

Submitted by:
Karen L. Podd
Buffalo Diocesan Liturgical Commission
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TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Prayer after Communion:

Made partakers of Christ through these Sacraments,
we humbly implore your mercy, Lord,
that, conformed to his image on earth,
we may merit also to be his coheirs in heaven.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reflection:

We ask God's mercy, then we eat the Body and drink the Blood of Christ – but why? Could it be that through this feast we actually will become what we eat? If this is true, then as disciples apprenticed to Christ, we will also know God's promise of the peace and joy of heaven.

When the Mass concludes, "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord," we move from Sunday worship back into the world to try and do exactly what was asked of us. We have faith in our ability to go forth in mission, imaging Jesus to people we meet, work with, and live among.

How glorious to receive Communion and reflect the image of Christ!

Prayer:

God of mercy, apprentice us in your love, no matter where we may find ourselves this week. May our prayers echo *Kyrie* and our actions, words, and behaviors mirror the way you taught us to live. Make us master apprentices, guiding our hands, our hopes, and our hearts to serve others as you taught by your life on earth. And may we continue to become what we eat each time we receive Communion. Hold us in your mercy, for ever and ever. Amen.

Submitted by:
Dr. Patricia J. Hughes
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Diocese of Dallas

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TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Collect:

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful
to unite in a single purpose,
grant your people to love what you command
and to desire what you promise,
that, amid the uncertainties of this world,
our hearts may be fixed on that place
where true gladness is found.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

One of the amazing things about the “collect” prayers we encounter weekly at Mass is that they are general enough to gather together the thoughts and prayers of the assembly of believers. This text has a variety of images that individuals can grab onto! Still, the persons in church next to us might find another equally appropriate avenue with which they may identify. Singleness of purpose, loving God’s commandments, desiring God’s promises: we strive for these things every day.

As we hear this prayer we are invited to think of our own personal hopes and desires, our own striving to conform to God’s will in Christ. Where will we encounter “the uncertainties of this world” in the coming week? What are the hopes and desires we bring to our prayer today? How will we be challenged to embrace the will of God in Christ in the week to come?

Prayer:

God of love, open our hearts to your will. Give us the grace and the resolve to love your commands in all we do.

Submitted by:
Rev. Steven P. Walter
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Archdiocese of Cincinnati

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TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Prayer after Communion:

Complete within us, O Lord, we pray,
the healing work of your mercy
and graciously perfect and sustain us,
so that in all things we may please you.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

Praying this prayer in conjunction with the readings of this day expands our understanding of the mystery of Christ and his Church. In Year A, we rehear themes of God's justice and inscrutable wisdom that culminate in the words to Peter, "What you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." In Year B, we pledge not to forsake but serve the LORD and with Peter proclaim, we will not leave, we do believe in your words of eternal life. In Year C, while wrestling with who is first and who is last, all nations are drawn to the LORD to recline at table in the kingdom of God.

We are called to proclaim and share the mercy of God which this prayer says is a healing work among us. Our prayer here is asking God to "perfect and sustain us" in that effort to keep in our hearts this mercy of God so that we may please the Lord in all things.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, guide us in the understanding of your ways so that we may do more than proclaim you the divine Savior. Guide us to manifest to the world the goodness of your presence in the mercy we share with those around us.

Submitted by:
Rev. Louis Dorn
Secretary, Diocesan Liturgical Commission
Diocese of Jefferson City

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