

The Parts of the Mass: What are we doing, how should we do it?

The Introductory Rites

According to the GIRM (#46), the introductory rites include "the Entrance, the Greeting, the Penitential Act, the Kyrie, the Gloria in excelsis (Glory to God in the highest) and Collect." Together, they serve as "a beginning, an introduction, and a preparation" for the rest of the liturgy. As such, "[t]heir purpose is to ensure that the faithful, who come together as one, establish communion and dispose themselves properly to listen to the Word of God and to celebrate the Eucharist worthily."

So, as we begin to look at the individual parts of the Mass that make up the introductory rites, we can ask about our parish liturgies: is everything that we do during this part of the Mass helping the assembly to "come together as one"... to listen to the Word of God fruitfully... to celebrate the Eucharist (that is, give praise and thanksgiving to God and to offer oneself through with and in Christ to the Father)? If not, we have work to do....

The next paragraph (#47) of the GIRM begins; "When the people are gathered...." While it sounds obvious, even simplistic, this short statement reveals some important truths. First, we are gathered - we are brought together by God through Christ in the Spirit. We do not celebrate liturgy of our own accord, but because we are called together. And we are called together as a people, not as individuals, which is the second point being made here: liturgy is what we, as the Body of Christ, do. Together. The introductory rites try to put flesh and bones on these profound truths... so what we might know in our heads becomes embodied and penetrates deep into our hearts.

The Introductory Rites: The Entrance

Paragraphs 47 and 48 of the GIRM address the Entrance Chant. First, the role of music here is not just to signal the start of the celebration and accompany the procession (there is no such thing as "travelling music" in liturgy) but also to "foster the unity of those who have gathered" as well as to point to the day, feast, or season being celebrated (#47). Second, the music can take different forms; true chant does have pride of place - as does the use of psalms over the use of hymns. True, hymns are most commonly used; but perhaps this is a place where we can be challenged a bit... the psalms were, in a sense, the Church's first hymnbook... and psalms have been the traditional accompaniment to processions. More to the point, they are Scripture; how better to praise God than with the inspired word? Finally, a point often overlooked: if there is no singing, the entrance antiphon (found as part of the propers for the day in the Missal) is said by the priest and/or the people. Musicians, note: the entrance antiphon (taken from Scripture) can also point us in a particular direction when choosing hymns to use for this part of the Mass.

The Introductory Rites: Reverencing the Altar and Greeting

When the ministers (those in the procession) arrive at the sanctuary, they reverence the altar with a profound bow; the priest and deacon further reverence the altar with a kiss and, if desired, with

incense (GIRM #49). Only if the tabernacle is present in the sanctuary would the ministers genuflect instead of making a profound bow. Once the altar has been revered and the Entrance Chant has been completed, the priest leads those gathered in the Sign of the Cross, and greets them (GIRM #50).

We pray with our bodies. We bow (a deep bow from the waist, not just a nod of the head), acknowledging that we are not our own; we make the sign of the cross - being embraced by the sign through which we were saved... being embraced by the Triune God in whose name we live and move and have our being.

Notice the marks of reverence? What (whom) else do we honor with a kiss and with incense? The Book of the Gospels... one another... the Blessed Sacrament (more than kiss, we consume)... All reminders of Christ's presence among us (and, in the case of the word proclaimed, the assembly gathered, and the Eucharist, all modes of Christ's true and abiding presence in the Church). There is an old saying in the Church: The altar is Christ. Christ, as it were, in the center of the assembly and around whom we gather. Christ, who is priest, victim, and altar all in one.

The dialogues are, in a sense, sacramental: the liturgy is not the priest's project, but it is the work of the entire Body of Christ. The exchanges between priest and people not only reveal that reality, but bring it about. Liturgy is dialogical: God speaks/acts and we respond. The spoken dialogues remind us of that reality... and of the fact that liturgy is communal, not the private province of the presider (if the people don't answer, the priest cannot continue). Or, as the GIRM puts it, "By this greeting [which signifies the presence of the Lord to the assembled community] and the people's response, the mystery of the Church gathered together is made manifest" (GIRM #50).

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The Introductory Rites: The Penitential Act, *Kyrie*, and *Gloria*

After the greeting, the priest invites the assembly to take part in the Penitential Act (GIRM #51). The *Kyrie* (Lord, have mercy) is either incorporated into the Penitential Act or follows it (GIRM #52). The *Gloria* "is sung or said on Sundays outside Advent and Lent, and also on Solemnities and Feasts, and at particular celebrations of a more solemn character [for example, the ritual Mass of Confirmation, even in Lent]" (GIRM #53). "From time to time on Sundays, especially in Easter Time, instead of the customary Penitential Act, the blessing and sprinkling of water may take place as a reminder of Baptism" (GIRM #51). On certain occasions, such as Palm Sunday or when baptism or funerals are celebrated at Mass, the introductory rites are changed.

The point of the Penitential Act is truth-telling: we are broken and in need of healing, sinners in need of forgiveness. The focus is not on individual sins (not an examination of conscience) but on acknowledging our sins so we can be properly prepared to enter into the liturgy. In other words, "[i]t is not a matter of getting rid of our sins in order to be pure enough to celebrate the mysteries; rather, it is that the general confession makes us capable of being forgiven" by the eucharist we are about to celebrate (*A Commentary on the Order of Mass of the Roman Missal*, p. 129). It is important to remember that only grave sins must be brought to the sacrament of reconciliation for forgiveness; our minor sins may be healed by the Eucharist - which has been called the medicine of immortality. Therefore, it follows that the *Kyrie* is more joyful acclamation than an asking for forgiveness. Please note that the *Kyrie* is not used alone; it is either part of or follows the Penitential Act.

The *Gloria* is "a most ancient and venerable hymn by which the Church, gathered in the Holy Spirit, glorifies and entreats God the Father and the Lamb" (GIRM #53). It cannot be replaced by any other text; even though it is a hymn and ought to be sung, it is still spoken if singing is not possible.

There are a number of options for the Penitential Act, which are summarized in [this document](#).

The Introductory Rites: The Collect

The Collect begins with the priest's invitation: "Let us pray." At this point, there should be a period of silence to allow the assembly to do just that - pray, or as the GIRM states, to "become aware of being in God's presence and.. call to mind their intentions" (#54). He then "collects" the prayers of the people into one prayer that expresses the character of the Mass being celebrated.

The prayer is addressed to the Father, through the Son, in the unity of the Holy Spirit - a reflection of our Trinitarian faith. The assembly makes this prayer their own by their "Amen."

The Liturgy of the Word: General

Paragraph 55 of the GIRM lays out the basic elements of the Liturgy of the Word: readings from the Sacred Scriptures and the chants that take place between them, the homily, Profession of Faith, and Universal Prayer, and - mentioned explicitly - silence. This paragraph also reminds us that in the readings and homily, "Christ himself is present through his word in the midst of the faithful" - truly, really present. This faith claim points to the serious responsibility that those who proclaim the word in the liturgy have to be well-prepared and competent ministers.

The Liturgy of the Word: Silence

The first element of the Liturgy of the Word described in the GIRM (#56) is, surprisingly, silence. This aspect of the liturgy is often overlooked - but the word needs a "space" into which to be proclaimed. As the GIRM states, "[t]he Liturgy of the Word is to be celebrated in such a way as to favor meditation, and so any kind of haste such as hinders recollection is clearly to be avoided." Silence makes it possible for those in the assembly to grasp the word of God with their heart and make a response in prayer, and so really make the word their own (GIRM #55, 56). Appropriate times for silence include before the Liturgy of the Word begins, after the First and Second Readings, and at the end of the Homily.

Click here to read the "liturgical word" flyer on [Quiet](#); a commentary from the [Vatican](#); and liturgical catechesis from the [Archdiocese of Philadelphia](#) on the importance of silence in the liturgy.

The Liturgy of the Word: The Biblical Readings

The GIRM next comments on the biblical readings. We are reminded of the centrality of the Word of God in Catholic life and worship; so important are the readings - including the responsorial psalm - that they may not be substituted with non-biblical texts (#57). One of the great blessings of Vatican II is that we now hear much more of the Bible at Mass, including readings from the Old Testament. Just as we are fed with the Eucharist from the altar-table, we are fed with the Word from another table: the ambo (#58). Because the proclamation of the readings is a ministerial, and not presidential, role, the readings are proclaimed by a lay reader and the gospel by a deacon (or, if there is no deacon, a concelebrating priest; only if no other cleric is present should the presiding priest read the gospel; #58). The readings are punctuated by responses (the psalm and gospel acclamation) by which the "assembled people give honor to the Word of God that they have received in faith and with gratitude" (#58). The proclamation of the Gospel is the high-point of the Liturgy of the Word, as seen by the ways we mark the proclamation with signs of honor: we stand, we sing in anticipation, the Book is accompanied by candles and incense, an ordained minister reads it (and prepares to read it with a blessing prayer). We are reminded that in the proclamation, it is Christ who is speaking to the assembly (#60).

The Liturgy of the Word: The Responsorial Psalm

The Responsorial Psalm is not a musical interlude; it is itself an "integral part of the Liturgy of the Word" (#61). In other words, we should get used to thinking about FOUR scriptural texts being proclaimed on a Sunday (or other Solemnity), not three. In ordinary time, the Psalm is selected to harmonize with the first reading and gospel. In fact, one of my professors was fond of saying that if one wants to know the focus of the readings for a given day, start with the psalm.

The psalm and its response should be sung - and this can be done in two ways: the cantor (psalmist; typically from the ambo) singing the verses and the assembly replying with the response (the preferred way) or even straight through (everyone together, or even the cantor alone - though the latter is not recommended). Singing is so important that it is even allowed to use a "common" or seasonal psalm (one assigned to the season or class of saint being celebrated) if that would help an assembly sing.

The GIRM states: "In the Dioceses of the United States of America, instead of the Psalm assigned in the Lectionary, there may be sung either the Responsorial Gradual from the *Graduale Romanum*, or the Responsorial Psalm or the Alleluia Psalm from the *Graduale Simplex*, as described in these books, or an antiphon and Psalm from another collection of Psalms and antiphons, including Psalms arranged in metrical form, providing that they have been approved by the Conference of Bishops or the Diocesan Bishop. Songs or hymns may not be used in place of the Responsorial Psalm." In other words, there is great latitude, which can be very helpful in encouraging singing by the assembly. Typically, however, it is the psalm assigned in the Lectionary which should be used - since the group of readings are intended to work together. If the assigned psalm is not going to be used, the preacher should be notified ahead of time - since he may have prepared his homily with the assigned Psalm in mind.

The Liturgy of the Word: The Acclamation before the Gospel

Before the Gospel, an acclamation (alleluia outside of Lent) is sung "by which the gathering of the faithful welcomes and greets the Lord who is about to speak to them in the Gospel and profess their faith by means of the chant" (#62). Here we see a ritual expression of the Church's teaching that Christ is truly present in the proclamation of the Word. While the cantor or choir sings the intervening verse (taken from the Lectionary or the *Graduale*), all are to stand and sing the acclamation itself (#62).

While not mentioned explicitly in the GIRM, the acclamation accompanies the procession with the Book of the Gospels - so music ministers and presiders/deacons need to work together to make sure the acclamation does not end too soon or lasts too long.

When there is only one reading before the Gospel, there are a few different options (#63):

a) during a time of year when the Alleluia is prescribed, either an Alleluia Psalm or the Responsorial

Psalm followed by the Alleluia with its verse may be used;

b) during a time of year when the Alleluia is not foreseen, either the Psalm and the Verse before the Gospel or the Psalm alone may be used;

c) the Alleluia or the Verse before the Gospel, if not sung, may be omitted.

Finally, if a Sequence is required (Easter, Pentecost) or included as an option (Corpus Christi, Seven Sorrows of Mary), it precedes the alleluia (#64). These should be sung; on those occasions when the Sequence is optional, if not sung, it should be omitted.

The Liturgy of the Word: The Homily

In the past few years, a number of church documents on preaching have been promulgated: [*Preaching the Mystery of Faith: The Sunday Homily*](#) (from the US Bishops), sections from [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#) (from Pope Francis), and, most recently, the [*Homiletic Directory*](#) (from the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments). These documents take the very basic information contained in the GIRM and expand upon it.

The GIRM (#65) reminds us that the homily is part of the liturgy; it is not an interruption. In fact, it is called "necessary for the nurturing of the Christian life." I would hope that such a statement would make those of us who dare to preach take the task of preparation with utmost seriousness.

The homily (#65) should be based on the liturgical texts: either the readings from Scripture or from the prayers of the Mass (ordinary or proper). We are also reminded that the homily should attend to the liturgical context and the community assembled. We do not preach into a vacuum.

The homily (#66), which is preached by an ordained minister (usually the presiding priest, but, on occasion, by an assisting deacon or concelebrating priest), is required on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation; it is strongly recommended on other days. There should be a period of silence after the homily.

For homiletic resources, see our [Preaching Links](#) page.

The Liturgy of the Word: The Profession of Faith

The Creed is said or sung by the entire assembly on Sundays, Solemnities, and at other "celebrations of a more solemn character" (#68). The GIRM states that if it is sung, it is intoned (first line is sung) by the priest, cantor, or choir - and then either everyone sings the rest of the Creed together, or the people and choir alternate verses. Likewise, if it is recited, it is done by everyone together or by two parts of the assembly alternating.

But, why recite the Creed at all? The GIRM (#67) gives this explanation: by reciting the Creed, we (a) respond to the Word of God (readings, homily) and (b) give voice to the "great mysteries of the faith" in anticipation of celebrating those mysteries in the liturgy of the Eucharist.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist: General

Take, bless (give thanks), break, give... we encounter these four verbs over and over in the various feeding stories of the New Testament. Faithful to Jesus' command to "do this" in his memory, we, too, take... as we prepare the altar and gifts... bless... as we pray the Eucharistic

Prayer... break... as we prepare for communion... and give... as we share in that communion (#72).

Because we are *all* the Body of Christ, we all take part in these actions – each in our own way. While the Priest serves “in the person of Christ the Head” we, the Members of the Body, are not passive observers.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist: The Preparation of the Altar and Gifts

The liturgical reforms that followed the Second Vatican Council called for a return of the "praiseworthy practice" of members of the assembly presenting the gifts of bread and wine to be used for Eucharist. While in the past, people brought bread and wine from home, it is still the case that having parishioners present the bread and wine (and gifts for the poor and church's ministries) makes an important point: the gifts are symbols of all that we are and all that we do. So – do we join ourselves to the procession, do we see ourselves and our lives in the simple gifts of bread and wine?

The preparation of the altar and gifts is accompanied by song, even if there is no procession with the gifts; the singing should continue at least until the gifts are placed on the Table by the priest (#74). Incense may be used - "so as to signify the Church's offering and prayer rising like incense in the sight of God" (#75). The gifts, altar and cross are incensed by the priest; a deacon (or, in his absence, another minister) incenses the priest and the people. "Then the Priest washes his hands at the side of the altar, a rite in which the desire for interior purification finds expression" (#76). One reminder: the monetary gifts are not to be placed near the altar (#73).

The fact that the preparation of the altar is specifically mentioned should serve as a reminder that nothing should be placed on the altar (except the altar cloth and candles, if they are not freestanding) until the Liturgy of the Eucharist; only then are the corporal(s), Missal, and purificators placed. More to the point: the altar is not a 'coffee table' on which to throw worship aids, hymnals, and the like... it is a symbol of Christ's presence in the midst of the assembly and should be treated with proper respect.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist: The Prayer over the Offerings

The Prayer over the Offerings closes the Preparation of the Gifts and Altar and moves us to the Eucharistic Prayer (#77). This is one of the "proper" prayers for each day, feast, or ritual Mass - along with the Collect and the Prayer after Communion.

In this prayer, we ask that God may make these gifts holy (sanctify them) and so transform us as we share in them (after their own transformation in the upcoming Eucharistic Prayer). The "Amen" is our making this prayer our own.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist: The Eucharistic Prayer

The GIRM (#78) calls the Eucharist Prayer the "center and high point of the entire celebration." Here, we - that is, the entire assembly, with the priest as our voice - make our great prayer of "thanksgiving and sanctification." We lift our hearts to God, praying to the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit. We join Christ our Head in both praising and thanking God for God's great

deeds on our behalf as well as in offering ourselves through, with, and in Christ to the Father. Thus, not only are the bread and wine received as gift, offered back, transformed, and returned - we, too, are offered and transformed in this holy exchange.

We will next review the structural components of the Eucharistic Prayer.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist: The Eucharistic Prayer - Preface and Sanctus

The Eucharistic Prayer begins with what is called the Preface (GIRM #79a). We need to be careful not to misunderstand the name for this part of the prayer and treat it like the preface to a book - some sort of optional introduction before we get to the important part. Rather, this is an integral part of our prayer - and in it we name the particular reason(s) for giving thanks at this Mass. Because we can't name all our reasons for gratitude in one prayer, we have 99 different Prefaces that vary according to rite, feast, or season. As we join in the prayer silently, are we aware of the gifts we have received? Are we grateful?

It is important to note that the priest begins the Preface with the words that end the rest of the assembly's part of the dialogue: It is right and just / It is truly right and just.... In other words, we "hand" the priest the words he is to use to give voice to our prayer. Here is another example of the dialogic nature of liturgy.

The theme of thanksgiving continues after the *Sanctus* and leads to the epiclesis and institution narrative (as we will review next time).

We respond to the Preface by joining with the Angels and Saints in singing the *Sanctus*, or *Holy, Holy, Holy* - based on Isaiah 6:1-4; Revelation 4:8, 5:13; and Matthew 21:9. This is an acclamation that is to be sung by the entire assembly, priest and people together; it should never be sung by cantor or choir alone. Do we join in - with full hearts and voices? Are we aware of the "cloud of witnesses" with which we praise God?

The Liturgy of the Eucharist: The Eucharistic Prayer - Epiclesis and Institution Narrative

As mentioned last time, the Preface and Sanctus flow into the body of the Eucharistic Prayer itself, which briefly continues the theme of thanksgiving before turning to the invocation of the Holy Spirit (epiclesis) over the gifts (GIRM #79c) and the recalling of Christ's actions at the Last Supper in the institution narrative (#79d).

While the Roman Catholic tradition has emphasized the latter (also calling it the "consecration") over the former, it is really incorrect to try to separate these two aspects of the Eucharistic Prayer. The GIRM itself uses consecratory language when referring to both of these elements.

In regards to the epiclesis, the GIRM states that "the Church implores the power of the Holy Spirit that the gifts offered by human hands be consecrated, that is, become Christ's Body and Blood" (#79c). All but one of our Eucharistic Prayers today have an explicit double epiclesis - that is, the Holy Spirit is also invoked on the community (later in the prayer), so that we would experience the gift of unity and that "the unblemished sacrificial Victim to be consumed in Communion may be for the salvation of those who will partake of it" (#79c); in the other, the invocation is implicit.

The Institution Narrative (a combination of the words attributed to Christ at the Last Supper in each of the three Synoptic Gospels and in 1 Corinthians) "effects" the sacrifice which Christ instituted and commanded the apostles to "perpetuate this same mystery" when we gather to remember (#79d).

The Eastern Christian tradition has historically emphasized the epiclesis; there is even an anaphora (Eucharistic Prayer) that does not have an explicit institution narrative - yet we consider that prayer to be a valid one. We should keep in mind that our liturgies arose in a particular place and time, and reflect the needs and styles of their communities of origin. There is no one time and place that "got it perfectly right" - the only perfect liturgy is the one celebrated in glory before God.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist: The Eucharistic Prayer -Anamnesis and Oblation

"Anamnesis" is remembering... or, more literally, "not not-forgetting" ... it is a kind of remembering that goes beyond recalling a past event as a fact, but re-remembering... making that event present to us here and now.

So, at Eucharist, we do "this" in *anamnesis* of Christ... a remembering that makes present Christ's Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension (#79e).

In our remembering, we also offer: God gives the gifts of the earth and human work, we offer back grapes and wheat changed into wine and bread; not to be outdone, God gifts us with bread and wine changed into Christ--so we might be changed more and more into Christ as well. In the praying of the Eucharistic Prayer we not only offer Christ to the Father through the Holy Spirit but, along with Christ, offer ourselves (#79f). As St. Augustine put it - we are also placed on the altar.

This is the key difference between a Communion service and Eucharist: this dynamic exchange is missing. Eucharist is much more than simply receiving Communion.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist: The Eucharistic Prayer -Intercessions and Doxology

During the Eucharistic Prayer, we all exercise our common, baptismal priesthood, and one aspect of our priestly identity in Christ is to offer prayers for one another. During the intercessions, we not only give voice to our communion with the whole Church (in heaven and on earth) but also to our faith that the offering of Eucharist is made for both the living and the dead (#79g). The Church transcends time and space.

The concluding doxology, "by which the glorification of God is expressed" (#79h), gives testimony to our Trinitarian Faith. We pray through, with, and in Christ to the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The priest, who has given voice to our prayer as a Eucharistic Community, now falls silent. The Amen which concludes the doxology is the assembly's ratification of what the priest has prayed in our name.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist: The Communion Rite - Preparation for Communion

There are three ritual actions which make up the preparation for communion: the Lord's Prayer, the Sign of Peace, and the Fraction of the Bread (accompanied by the "Lamb of God").

In the Lord's Prayer, we pray for our "daily" bread - the Eucharist - and to be purified from sin, so that we may receive so great a gift worthily (#81). To the prayer itself is added an "embolism" (which is prayed by the priest and asks for deliverance from evil) and a doxology (prayed by the people; the priest is silent here).

The Sign of Peace is then shared. This ritual action is often misunderstood; it is not a time for simply greeting one another as we would during a social occasion. By sharing the sign of peace with those near us we are committing to sharing that peace beyond the walls of the church as well as expressing our communion with the whole Church and, indeed, the whole of humanity - not just those in our parish (#82).

The most important ritual in the Preparation for Communion is the Fraction. Far from being a simple necessity (the Host needs to be broken), "[t]he gesture of breaking bread done by Christ at the Last Supper, which in apostolic times gave the entire Eucharistic Action its name, signifies that the many faithful are made one body (1 Cor 10:17) by receiving Communion from the one Bread of Life, which is Christ, who for the salvation of the world died and rose again" (#83). The rite should begin only after the Sign of Peace has been concluded, so the assembly can pay attention--and join in the singing of the Lamb of God (Agnus Dei). As the bread is broken we are reminded that, as Christ's disciples, we, too, are to be bread broken for the life of the world.

The Lamb of God is to be sung (or recited) as given in the Missal; the words are not to be changed. If the fraction needs to be prolonged, the invocation ("Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world") is simply repeated as many times as needed (with the response "Have mercy on us" used until the final time, when "Grant us peace" is used.)

As part of the Fraction, "[t]he Priest breaks the Bread and puts a piece of the host into the chalice to signify the unity of the Body and Blood of the Lord in the work of salvation, namely, of the Body of Jesus Christ, living and glorious" (#83).

The Liturgy of the Eucharist: The Communion Rite - The Communion Procession

Posture in the liturgy both signifies (says something) and unifies (helps make us one as a community). After the Lamb of God, the GIRM (#43) allows for two options - either all remain standing at this point and throughout the communion procession (the preferred form in our diocese) or all kneel at this point, stand to join in the procession, and then kneel again on returning to their place. Both approaches are legitimate, and the decision is left to the pastor which option to use. The more important aspect is unity: this is not an individual choice, but a common posture that we all take.

The priest invites us to communion, and we respond in the words used by the Centurion in the Gospels (#84).

The GIRM also makes it clear that there is a strong preference that we should all receive from the bread and wine offered at the Mass--not from the Hosts reserved in the Tabernacle, and not just under the form of the Bread alone (#85).

The chant (song) that accompanies the communion begins as the priest communes; he is the first person in the communion procession. Singing should not wait until the priest and other ministers have received (#86). As with a common posture, the purpose of the communion hymn is to "to express the spiritual union of the communicants by means of the unity of their voices" as well as "to show gladness of heart, and to bring out more clearly the 'communitarian' character of the procession to receive the Eucharist" (#86). The singing continues until all have received.

Options for what may be sung are listed in GIRM #87. Perhaps greater thought should be given to singing the antiphon and one of the psalm options. That way, those walking in the communion procession could easily sing the antiphon without the use of a book while the cantor or choir sings the verses of the psalm. If there is no singing, the communion antiphon is recited.

After communion, there ought to be a period of silence. If there is to be any singing at this point, it is to be a congregational hymn or canticle of praise (not a 'meditation' by a cantor or choir) (#88). The communion rite concludes with the Prayer after Communion, which prays for the fruits of the sacrament (#89). Therefore, any announcements should wait until after that prayer.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist: The Concluding Rites

After Communion, the liturgy comes rather quickly to an end. The concluding rites consist of (#90):

- a) brief announcements, should they be necessary;
- b) the Priest's Greeting and Blessing, which on certain days and occasions is expanded and expressed by the Prayer over the People or another more solemn formula;
- c) the Dismissal of the people by the Deacon or the Priest, so that each may go back to doing good works, praising and blessing God;
- d) the kissing of the altar by the Priest and the Deacon, followed by a profound bow to the altar by the Priest, the Deacon, and the other ministers.

The brevity of these rites belie their importance. Pope Benedict XVI reminded us that the dismissal reminds us of the Church's missionary nature. In fact, he authored the additional dismissal formulas (beyond, "Go forth, the Mass is ended") in order to emphasize the Church's missionary nature... and the connection between liturgy and life.