

Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions [FDLC]

Mystagological Reflection on Texts of the *Roman Missal*

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

Mystagological Reflections on the Collect & Prayer after Communion for ORDINARY TIME – 1-7

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 Mystagological 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

1-7

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
FIRST WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME	
SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	
THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	
FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	
FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	
SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	
SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	

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FIRST WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

Collect:

Attend to the pleas of your people with heavenly care,
O Lord, we pray,
that they may see what must be done
and gain strength to do what they have seen.
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:

We, the very people pleading in today's Collect, are now thrust into the "ordinariness" of not only our personal but our communal lives as the Church. Having encountered the expectancy of the Advent Season and the joy-filled commemoration of the Nativity of the Son of God, we are well aware of the Lord's heavenly care for us. Moreover, we are conscious that the Lord's work is not complete, nor ours, as the Father's beloved daughters and sons.

While our tendency may be to allow the "ordinariness" of this post Advent / Christmastide of the liturgical year to rest on our spiritual laurels, the prayer otherwise harkens us to access what must be done for the sake of the Kingdom. The comfort of the prayer is realizing that – recalling the words of Psalm 121 – "our help [*strength*] comes from the Lord."

Prayer:

Help us, O God of heaven and earth, to take a good look at what needs to be accomplished for the sake of your Kingdom with the many gifts, talents, and abilities you have so lavishly bestowed on us individually and collectively, your beloved daughters and sons. We ask this through the greatest gift and blessing you have given us, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, for ever and ever. Amen.

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

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FIRST WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

Prayer after Communion:

Humbly we ask you, almighty God,
be graciously pleased to grant
that those you renew with your Sacraments
may also serve with lives pleasing to you.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

I am gentle and humble of heart (Matthew 11:29 NAB).

When Matthew speaks of being gentle and humble in heart, what does he mean? It would seem that having those virtues would require one to have the same attitude as that of Christ himself. When we pray just like Jesus prayed to the Father, making himself nothing, “taking the form of a slave...he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:7-8 NAB, read on Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion), we too must seek humility in our hearts.

Prayer:

Gracious God, we come today asking for the gift of humility. Help us to examine our motives. Show us how to be kind in our hearts. Teach us how to follow your example. Light our paths that we might see more clearly. In the name of Jesus we pray.

Submitted by:
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SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Collect:

Almighty ever-living God,
who govern all things,
both in heaven and on earth,
mercifully hear the pleading of your people
and bestow your peace on our times.
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:

Today's Collect first appeared in the *Hadrian Sacramentary* (7-8 century) as a non-seasonal daily prayer. It was included in the *Roman Missal* of Pius V (1570) as the Collect for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany.

Like today's Entrance Antiphon, the prayer acknowledges that God governs all things. Everything in "heaven and on earth" (Genesis 1:1; Colossians 1:16) are subject to him. Confident of his authority, his power, and his abiding mercy, we plead that God will give us peace in our time.

One wonders how often this same plea has been sent to God. In the course of countless centuries, in countless countries, for countless reasons, people have had to live in fear. Oppression, aggression, war, terrorism, invasions, armed conflicts, and hostilities between governments or among peoples have ravaged the human landscape and have defiled the human spirit. In our own homes, jealousy, anger, addictions, and selfish behavior have destroyed harmony in personal relationships. Yet, what we all long for is peace – a state of tranquility which will allow love to grow and life to progress undisturbed.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, hear the plea of your people and give us peace in our times.
May we be the instruments of that peace,
standing against injustice, offering compromises, recognizing the dignity of all,
and bearing witness to the peace which only faith in you can give. Amen.

Submitted by:
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SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Prayer after Communion:

Pour on us, O Lord, the Spirit of your love,
and in your kindness
make those you have nourished
by this one heavenly Bread
one in mind and heart.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

The Latin *infunde*, which is here translated “pour on us”, might be better rendered “pour into us.” In this it references Paul’s Letter to the Romans 5:5: “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” [RSV].

Having received the Lord’s Body and Blood in Holy Communion, we now ask that the effects of that Sacrament will be made present in our lives. The work of the Holy Spirit is at the heart of this prayer. The gift of the Eucharist is continued in and through the gift of the Spirit. What are we asking of God? That we may be one in mind and heart.

This prayer will often be used in close proximity to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – 18-25 January each year. That context is a reminder that we are still divided in faith and life but we strive toward that time when we will realize the prayer of Jesus that all might be one.

Prayer:

Lord, may the Holy Spirit inspire us to hunger for the unity which the Eucharist we have celebrated signifies.

Submitted by:
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THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Collect:

Almighty ever-living God,
direct our actions according to your good pleasure,
that in the name of your beloved Son
we may abound in good works.
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 texts of the liturgies following the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord reflect our joy that Christ our Light has come into the world. Yet we progress in our Christian lives. After Christmas Time, we are reminded by the Lectionary texts that the infant Jesus grew into a child and then into a man. The adult Jesus, emboldened by the knowledge and experience of being God's "beloved Son" (as heard in this Collect) submitted to his Father's will. Our Baptism in him calls us, too, to walk in the light and to submit to God's will.

The Collect begins with God's initiative and "good pleasure" in sending us his Son. It ends at the response to which we are called: to "abound in good works." We followers of Jesus call that "discipleship."

A now-famous prayer by Bishop Ken Untener of the Diocese of Saginaw (d. 2004) says, "We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs." We can't do everything, but we use the gifts we have to transform our world as we have first been transformed in Christ. When we walk with Christ through lives of humble service, these short days and long nights in the Northern Hemisphere shine with the Light of Christ.

Prayer:

Lord God, we seek to live as your beloved; fill our days with your radiant light.

Submitted by:
Kyle Lechtenberg
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THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Prayer after Communion:

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that, receiving the grace
by which you bring us to new life,
we may always glory in your gift.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

This prayer emphasizes the inseparable link between Baptism and Eucharist. The new life in Christ we receive through the waters of Baptism is strengthened and renewed at every celebration of the Eucharist. Through the sacraments God freely and graciously gifts us with his grace to sanctify us. Our response of glory and praise to God arises joyfully from our thankful hearts.

Our Baptism makes us sons and daughters of God. In Romans 8:16, Paul wrote: “The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” God feeds his children, not with ordinary food, but with the food and drink of eternal life – the Body and Blood of his only Son. Eucharist is always a foretaste of the heavenly banquet.

Through Christ’s incarnation into our humanity, we begin to participate in his divine nature. This theology of divinization is expressed in the words said at the preparation of the chalice (and in the Collect for Christmas Mass during the Day): “By the mystery of this water and wine / may we come to share in the divinity of Christ / who humbled himself to share in our humanity.” God shares God’s very life with us!

Empowered by grace and emboldened by our identity as children of God, we begin our song of praise to God now – a song of glory that we will sing in heaven for ever.

Prayer:

Gracious God, may all we do praise you that we might share eternal life with you in glory.

Submitted by:
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FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Collect:

Grant us, Lord our God,
that we may honor you with all our mind,
and love everyone in truth of heart.
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:

“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.” These words of the prophet Jeremiah in the first reading are both exciting and frightening. To be known utterly from the beginning is difficult to fathom. Can we trust that the creator has instilled love and truth in our hearts and minds? Is this what we would call our true self, and, if so, how can we access it?

This prayer calls us to enter into the depths of our hearts and minds to find this treasure, this real and true self that is present from our birth. St. John wrote, “There is a truth that lives within us that will be with us forever” (2 John 2). And the love that St. Paul reminds us is the greatest virtue, is the love that emanates from that deep place within. It is a love that is pure, undiluted, ever new and holy, given to us before we were formed in the womb. We may not always act as if we believe this, but let us believe that the seeds of honor and love are within us, placed there by the God who calls them forth to grow and give life to all.

Prayer:

Creator God, when darkness seems to surround me, help me to remember that your love and truth have existed within me before my birth, and guide me to act as if this is so.

Submitted by:
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FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Prayer after Communion:

Nourished by these redeeming gifts,
we pray, O Lord,
that through this help to eternal salvation
true faith may ever increase.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

As we think about the mystery of the Eucharist that we have received, this prayer focuses our attention first of all on Holy Communion as nourishment. Christ is food and drink for us. Without food or drink, a person would die. Like all food and drink, this Eucharistic nourishment is given to sustain life in Christ and to provide strength in giving witness to his gospel message.

This prayer reminds us that there is nothing static about the reception of Holy Communion. It is an act that leads to new life. It is a meal that by its very nature invites us to grow in our relationship with Christ the Lord. What is the life for which we long as we are nourished by Holy Communion on this day? What strength do we need in order to live a faith filled life rooted in Jesus Christ this week?

Prayer:

Lord God, you strengthen your people with the finest food and drink. Sustain us on our journey of faith that we may come to know your Son, Jesus Christ, as our true companion.

Submitted by:
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Pastor, Saint John Fisher Parish
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FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Collect:

Keep you family safe, O Lord, with unfailing care,
that, relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace,
they may be defended always by your protection.
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 Collect begins by identifying us as members of the Family of God and asks that the Lord keep us with a parent-like, “unfailing care.” Moreover, the prayer asks that, as members of that family, the Lord might protect us and that through our Christian hope we might be upheld in safety.

The New Testament speaks at length about what it means to be members of God’s “whole family in heaven and on earth” (Ephesians. 3:15), the “household of faith” (Galatians 6:10), and “children of God” (John 1:12). We know that this membership is through no efforts of our own and in fact that it does not even come through natural birth, but only through our re-birth in the waters of Baptism.

We also know that, as in all families, our membership in the Lord’s family, the Church, comes with certain responsibilities and expectations: “Do good to everyone” (Galatians 6:10), be “rooted and grounded in love” (Ephesians 3:17), “live according to the Spirit with things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5). Living thus, as a member of the Family of God, we do indeed have access to that “grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God” (Romans 5:2).

Prayer:

Father of all, make me truly hopeful in the promises you make to your children, and help me to live genuinely as a member of your family, gathered from the ends of the earth, to praise and glorify you for ever, through your Beloved Son, Christ our Lord.

Submitted by:
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FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Prayer after Communion:

O God, who have willed that we be partakers
in the one Bread and the one Chalice,
grant us, we pray, so to live
that, made one in Christ,
we may joyfully bear fruit
for the salvation of the world.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

This prayer concluding the Communion Rite today is a new composition. It borrows phrases from well-known biblical texts. The mystagogues among us will draw our attention to other texts and other days.

We hear 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 read on the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, Year A (*Lectionary for Mass*, no. 167A). It is Christ who speaks to us that day of one loaf and one cup of blessing. He speaks of many being one because of his Blood and Body.

We hear John 15:1-8 read on the Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year B (*Lectionary for Mass*, no. 53B). The same Christ speaks of the true vine (Christ himself), the vine grower (Father), branches of the one vine (us), pruning and remaining, and fruit bearing.

What does it mean to be one? Without giving up my self, I am part of something that is more than me. What does it mean to be made one in Christ? Without giving up my self – but giving myself over – I am in this saved world together with others. We are shaped and saved as a people, God’s Pilgrim People. We sing, in response to the mystery of faith declaration: “When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, / we proclaim your Death, O Lord, / until you come again.”

Prayer:

Help us be one in Christ, your Son, O God, that we may remain on the vine, bear fruit, and be one in your saving action for the sake of the world.

Submitted by:
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SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Collect:

O God, who teach us that you abide
in hearts that are just and true,
grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace
as to become a dwelling pleasing to you.
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 notion of “grace” mirrors God’s love toward us and within us. The greatest grace that God provides for us is the gift of Jesus his Son. Through that gift, grace redeems us and is the gift that transforms us. “Fashioned” or created by God’s grace means our acceptance of the Divine Life of God within us. We know intellectually that God loves us without condition. Thus we can understand as human beings that the more grace is within us, the more pleasure God takes with us.

In addition to pleasing God, grace is a kind of “blessed superglue” that cements our adoption as a child of God. The heart is the spiritual dwelling place for grace. And grace is the creative force in our hearts that empowers and “fashions” us to love.

Prayer:

O grace-giving God, we praise you for the abundant love that comes to us as grace. Open our half-shut eyes to recognize your life and your love within us. Let grace be our guide and our strength as we seek to become Love, each and every moment of this day, this week, and this year.

Submitted by
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SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Prayer after Communion:

Having fed upon these heavenly delights,
we pray, O Lord,
that we may always long
for that food by which we truly live.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

Any student of the Church's Liturgy is aware that 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.

This said, today's prayer speaks of our "having fed upon these heavenly delights." Often times, the word "delight" is all about me – what brings me pleasure, the enjoyment I have found, or the satisfaction that has come my way. The "delightfulness" to which we are directed in this simple-yet-complex metaphor is not about us at all. Rather, it is totally about what we have received: the Eucharist, genuine "heavenly delights".

Perhaps this prayer might give us pause to ponder not only how fortunate we are to be the recipient of the gifts of the Eucharist, but take spiritual delight in the realization of the life-giving affects afforded us to conform our words and actions this day to those of the Christ encountered in this holy feast.

Prayer:

O God, giver of all delightful gifts, truly fashion us by your grace that, in this Eucharist, we may grow in holiness and find the sustenance to give witness to Christ to all we may encounter this day.

Submitted by:
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SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Collect:

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that, always pondering spiritual things,
we may carry out in both word and deed
that which is pleasing to you.
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 for the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time comes from the *Gelasian Sacramentary* and can also be found in other early Sacramentaries.

This prayer begins with a request. We ask God to grant, in both what we say and do, that we will always do what is pleasing to him. But rather than just ask, we promise that we will fulfill our part of the bargain by always pondering spiritual things. This is a promise that we will always try to keep and, if we are able to keep this focus, we will do what is right and pleasing to God. This is a reminder that we can't do what is right without taking the time to think and pray. The word "ponder" helps to understand that our prayer should include deep reflection. To ponder takes time.

How much time do I take for my prayer? How many times am I distracted by the ways of the world and lose sight of spiritual things?

Prayer:

Loving Father, strengthen my resolve to keep my eyes fixed on Jesus so that I may follow him faithfully all of my days. Amen.

Submitted by:
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SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Prayer after Communion:

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that we may experience the effects of the salvation
which is pledged to us by these mysteries.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

Through the Prayer after Communion, we pray that we experience the effects of salvation. Our salvation is a gift to us from God through Jesus Christ. Through Christ's life, Death, and Resurrection some effects of salvation are our redemption, justification, sanctification, and glorification.

As St. Paul tells us, Christ died once for all. Since, through our Baptism, we were united with him in death, we will be united with him in resurrection into eternal life (cf. Rom 6). We experience Christ through the sacraments and, by the graces received through them, we are able to put on a "new self" for living a sanctifying life free of sin. In the Eucharist, we are in intimate union with Christ. One of our goals, then, is to share our union with Christ with everyone we encounter so that we actually become Christ to one another. We "become what we eat."

Prayer:

Good and gracious God, we thank you for the graces received in the celebration of Holy Communion. Let them be our strength as we look forward to joining you in your heavenly Kingdom.

Submitted by:
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