

8th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A
8:00a.m. St. Patrick's and 11:00 a.m. St. Theresa's
Isaiah 49:14-15
1 Corinthians 4:1-5
Matthew 6:24-34
February 27, 2011

Special Homily on the Concluding Rites

This month we have been talking about the four parts of the Mass. The first weekend we talked about the Introductory Rites and how they serve to help us open our hearts to God as we celebrate the Mass.

Then we talked about the Liturgy of the Word where we share God's Word. God's Word is an important part of how God reveals his plan to us. We must receive *and respond* to God's Word if we are to be Christ's disciples.

Last week we talked about our celebration of our Eucharist where we celebrate the perfect sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross for us we make sacrifices in our own lives and offer them to God as we celebrate the Eucharist.

Now we turn our attention to the final part of Mass, the Concluding Rites. It is short, only about 40 words, a few more if there is a special blessing. It only takes a minute for that and then the recessional.

Just because the Concluding Rites are short doesn't mean they are insignificant. What's in the Concluding Rites? Well, you might think it begins with the "final prayer." It doesn't. Actually, the final prayer is not a concluding prayer to the whole Mass. If you look in the book, it is a prayer after Communion, ending the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The Concluding Rites began *after* that prayer. It's the final blessing (the lord be with you, and also with you, may almighty God bless you ...) The Mass is ended go in peace and the recessional.

Why a blessing? Well, we should also like to be blessed but the blessing at the end of Mass has a particular purpose. We have heard God's Word, celebrated (and received) the Eucharist. We have been transformed by that which we have heard and received. Now, we are called to go out into the world.

The final blessing is for strengthening as we go out in the world. When we leave church we have a choice. We can go out into the world and live according to God's Ways (heard in the Word) or we can follow earthly pleasures.

In the first reading, Isaiah speaks of how, at times, we might feel like God has forgotten us because things don't go the way *we* think they should. God promises "I will never forget you." God keeps his promises.

But do we forget God?

Now, I don't really think we forget about God. When trouble arises we pray. But how important is God to us?

Jesus tells us "You cannot serve God *and* mammon." We can't have our cake and eat it too.

We have a choice to make God the priority in our life or earthly ways. There are people who come to church for one hour a week and that might be the only time they even think about God the whole week.

If that is the case, what does the Mass really do for us? Has hearing God's Word meant anything to us? We receive the Eucharist to be strengthened in God's Will.

Our concluding rites are *not* just to say the Mass is over, let's go home.

As we conclude we make the Sign of the Cross – a very simple gesture but it reminds of what we are all about. It reminds us of what Jesus has done for us *because* he loves us.

Then a few more words. There are options but I always tend to say “the Mass is ended, go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”

Yes, the Mass is ended but we don't go forth to do whatever feels good. NO! We are sent forth to live as Jesus' disciples to be his hands in the world. We are called to serve.

And even then we don't scatter out just yet. We have a recessional. Now, only the lector, altar servers, and myself will process us. I will kiss the altar as a sign of reverence and the lector, servers, and I will bow to the altar recognizing the Eucharist that has been celebrated on this altar.

As we are doing this, we all sing together as a community united in faith, called to support one another as we go out into the world to love and serve the Lord.