

Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions [FDLC]

Mystagogy Reflection on Texts of the *Roman Missal*

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# Mystagogy Reflections on the Prayer after Communion for LENT



Steve Erspamer

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## MYSTAGOGY ON THE MASS TEXTS FOR SUNDAYS 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.

The Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions [FDLC] formed an Ad Hoc Committee for Mystagogy Reflection. The committee task is to provide help for reflecting on texts of the Roman Missal. The 2013 effort focused on the Collect or Opening Prayer for Sunday and Holyday Masses. Beginning December 2013, new reflections will address the Prayer after Communion with implications for discipleship. You will find this work on the FDLC website in PDF form: [www.fdlc.org](http://www.fdlc.org) – scroll to the bottom of the home page.

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ASH WEDNESDAY

March 5, 2014

**Prayer after Communion:**

May the Sacrament we have received sustain us, O Lord,  
that our Lenten fast may be pleasing to you  
and be for us a healing remedy.  
Through Christ our Lord.

**Reflection:**

**Prayer:**

Submitted by:

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FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

March 9, 2014

**Prayer after Communion:**

Renewed now with heavenly bread,  
by which faith is nourished, hope increased,  
and charity strengthened,  
we pray, O Lord,  
that we may learn to hunger for Christ,  
the true and living Bread,  
and strive to live by every word  
which proceeds from your mouth.  
Through Christ our Lord.

**Reflection:**

This particular prayer was a new composition for the post-Vatican II Missal. In it, we reflect on aspects of what we have obtained from the reception of the Eucharist. We are directed toward contemplation on three important aspects of our Christian life – the theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. These virtues – without which one cannot have the life of God – are the foundations of Christian moral activity. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children.

The prayer also connects us directly to the Verse before the Gospel in all the Lectionary years for this Sunday. Tempted by Satan in the desert, Jesus replies, “One does not live on bread alone, / but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.” Without physical sustenance for forty days, Christ reminds us that his word is true spiritual nourishment – that which gives us the strength and compassion to love God and neighbor, to live a life of faith, and to keep our focus on the hope of eternal life.

**Prayer:**

Lord, satisfied now from this heavenly banquet, may we learn to hunger, not for the fare of this world, but for the spiritual sustenance of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith with this nourishment, deepen our love of God above all things, and teach us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Submitted by:  
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SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT  
March 16, 2014

**Prayer after Communion:**

As we receive these glorious mysteries,  
we make thanksgiving to you, O Lord,  
for allowing us while still on earth  
to be partakers even now of the things of heaven.  
Through Christ our Lord.

**Reflection:**

The origins of this prayer are ancient, yet after centuries of disuse it was reintroduced into the Mass after the Second Vatican Council (Turner, *Pastoral Companion to the Roman Missal*, p. 37). In this prayer we give thanks to God for allowing us to partake in the things of heaven. God accomplishes this through the Eucharistic Liturgy which we have just celebrated. As we receive these glorious mysteries we partake in a foretaste of the heavenly banquet.

What is to be our response to God for all the good bestowed on us? Our only response can be to give God thanks and praise. To make thanksgiving requires effort and energy on our part. In a sense, our thanksgiving becomes a verb that requires us to act, to respond to God's gift.

Our response should enable our hearts to be open to receive and feast at the banquet table. By receiving the gifts that are freely given, God makes us partakers of the things of heaven. In the act of receiving, our humanity is drawn into the divinity, that is, into communion with the Triune God.

**Prayer:**

Help us to hunger for the Bread of life and the Cup of salvation so that we will truly desire you – and in desiring you, seek you – and in seeking you, find you in the great sacrament of your love.

Submitted by:  
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THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT  
March 23, 2014

**Prayer after Communion:**

As we receive the pledge  
of things yet hidden in heaven  
and are nourished while still on earth  
with the Bread that comes from on high,  
we humbly entreat you, O Lord,  
that what is being brought about in us in mystery  
may come to true completion.  
Through Christ our Lord.

**Reflection:**

The text of this prayer was recovered from the *Verona Sacramentary* and was included in the first edition of the *Roman Missal* after the Second Vatican Council. This text is particularly pertinent for Lent since this penitential journey rooted in Baptism is meant to draw us to the right path, to cleanse us from our past sins, and to help us to align ourselves more closely with Christ.

In this prayer the “already but not yet” understanding of the celebration of the Eucharistic banquet is addressed. This Liturgy that we celebrate here on earth gives us a foretaste of the heavenly one to come. This prayer expresses both the yearning we have for God and the knowledge that we can achieve the fullness of joy only in God’s presence.

We are in awe of the extraordinary gift of membership in the Body of Christ, always a mystery of immense magnitude. As people of hope, cognizant of God’s promise of salvation, we are reminded of the ongoing action of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

**Prayer:**

Gracious God, source of nourishment in the Bread of life and Chalice of salvation, help us to open our minds and hearts to the transformative power of your Spirit as we strive to embrace and reflect your goodness.

Submitted by  
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FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT  
March 30, 2014

**Prayer after Communion:**

O God, who enlighten everyone who comes into this world,  
illuminate our hearts, we pray,  
with the splendor of your grace,  
that we may always ponder  
what is worthy and pleasing to your majesty  
and love you in all sincerity.  
Through Christ our Lord.

**Reflection:**

The earliest version of this prayer, found in the 7<sup>th</sup> century *Gelasian Sacramentary*, was used on the Vigil of the Epiphany (see Paul Turner, *Pastoral Companion to the Roman Missal*, page 42). Epiphany, illumination, manifestation. Revelation of the Christ *ad gentes*, to the nations. These wondrous themes of Epiphany find a pleasant home in this *Laetare* Sunday in the middle of Lent.

We can rejoice that this image of light is borne in the Gospels of all three Lectionary years. Most surely in Year A's story of the man born blind. But also in Year B's recounting of light and darkness, of coming toward the light, so that works may be clearly seen as done in God. And also in Year C's story of the prodigal son who "saw the light" and left death for life.

What, then, does this prayer illumine? These truths: each and every person born in this world is bathed in God's light; each and every person born anew in Baptism is awash in the splendor of God's grace; each graced person must behave accordingly, as one belonging to God. After eating and drinking Christ the Lord, we live, not in darkness, but in light.

**Prayer:**

O Christ the Lord,  
after eating and drinking you,  
let us be unafraid to stand in your light and bask in your grace  
so that we may reflect your light, your goodness, your grace in all we do and say.

Submitted by:  
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FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

April 6, 2014

**Prayer after Communion:**

We pray, almighty God,  
that we may always be counted among the members of Christ,  
in whose Body and Blood we have communion.  
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

**Reflection:**

[Note: The readings given for Year A may always be used in place of the ones for Year B and Year C.]

One of the great, mysterious aspects of our faith is the understanding that the divinity can dwell within us. The Second Reading for Year A brings this out when Paul reminds us that the Spirit dwells within us (Rom 8:8-11). He reiterates this in Romans 12:5: “so we, though many, are one body in Christ.” Through the power of the Spirit we are united with him who “humbled himself to share in our humanity” (part of a quiet prayer during the Preparation of the Gifts). This is the theology of humanity.

As long as we remain faithful to him, we have some share in the power of the Spirit that enables us to be Church and, as “one holy, catholic and apostolic Church”, manifest the presence of Christ in the world.

**Prayer:**

Lord, Jesus Christ,  
just as you restored life to Lazarus and brought him out of the tomb,  
we pray that you, through the Spirit,  
will renew us as ministers of your Word, and doers of your will.

Submitted by:  
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PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

April 13, 2013

At the Mass

**Prayer after Communion:**

Nourished with these sacred gifts,  
we humbly beseech you, O Lord,  
that, just as through the death of your Son  
you have brought us to hope for what we believe,  
so by his Resurrection  
you may lead us to where you call.  
Through Christ our Lord.

**Reflection:**

This prayer comes at the end of what – if well-celebrated – is a very long and intense Eucharistic Liturgy, full of contrast between high and low, light and dark, triumph and despair. We begin with Jesus’ triumphal entrance into Jerusalem and finish the Gospel with Jesus crucified and laid in a tomb. We hear Paul’s description of the One in the form of God humbling himself, taking the form of a slave. This Prayer after Communion even uses the very word “humble” to describe how we approach God in prayer.

Yet death is never the end of the Paschal Mystery, and death is never without its partner – resurrection – in every Eucharistic celebration. This is why at the end of this Palm Sunday Liturgy, we can pray that Christ’s Death brings us hope and that his Resurrection leads us to heaven.

To be the Bread of life, Holy Communion is first the bread of death. For those who dare to “draw near and take the Body of our Lord”, the implication is huge: we must die to ourselves and all that keeps us from God if we are to share in the eternal life of the Risen Christ.

**Prayer:**

God our Father, may we who have been reborn in Baptism and nourished at the Lord’s table find strength in the Eucharist, so that we may truly die with Christ and be led to share in his Resurrection.

Submitted by:

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