

Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions [FDLC]

Mystagological Reflection on Texts of the *Roman Missal*

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Mystagological Reflections on the Prayer after Communion for EASTER TIME



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 Mystagological 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 – scroll to the bottom of the home page.

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EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

THE EASTER VIGIL IN THE HOLY NIGHT

April 19, 2014

Prayer after Communion:

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

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EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

April 20, 2014

At the Mass during the Day

Prayer after Communion:

Look upon your Church, O God,
with unfailing love and favor,
so that, renewed by the paschal mysteries,
she may come to the glory of the resurrection.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

Apart from Easter Evening Prayer to be celebrated later in the day, this Prayer after Communion text becomes the final prayer of the Church's celebration of the Paschal Triduum.

The object of the prayer's concern is the Church. It is a Church which has held in sacred memory the paschal mysteries, welcomed new members into its company, and renewed baptismal vows after Lenten penance. As the climax of these works of God, which re-present God's "unfailing love and favor," the Church has now brought them to completion by sharing Holy Communion in the Easter Eucharist. It is also a Church about to be sent forth to witness to the Paschal Mystery of Christ in the way its members live each day.

The prayer summarizes concisely all the Church has celebrated and asks to be empowered with the unfailing love and favor contained in the Easter Sacrament of the Eucharist. We do not presume God's love and favor. The praying community asks that God's graciousness will continue with us until we come to all that is promised to us in the Death and Resurrection of Christ and in our communion with him.

Prayer:

Gracious God, who renews your Church in every age, may we live each day in the light and life of Easter until we come into their fullness with your risen Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Submitted by:

Father Robert J. Kennedy

Pastor, Blessed Sacrament and Saint Boniface Parishes

Chairperson, Diocesan Liturgical Commission

Diocese of Rochester

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SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER (or of Divine Mercy)

April 27, 2014

Prayer after Communion:

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that our reception of this paschal Sacrament
may have a continuing effect
in our minds and hearts.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

With this prayer, the Church comes to the end of the first eight days of the celebration of the Lord's Resurrection from the dead. In April 2000, Pope John Paul II also named this Second Sunday as one of Divine Mercy – that all the faithful might contemplate the depth of Christ's merciful love after having prayerfully journeyed with him through Holy Week, the Paschal Three Days, and the Easter Octave.

This prayer asks God to constantly renew our salvation through our reception of the Eucharist, the enduring presence of Jesus his Son in the world. For those newly baptized and those who completed initiation a week earlier, this prayer might serve as a reminder that although the excitement of the celebration of their initiation rites has diminished, the even greater joy of a life with Christ has only just begun. Likewise, the prayer challenges the rest of us to recall the graces of the Paschal Mystery experienced in Lent and Easter rather than let them simply fade away.

Prayer:

Lord God,
you send your light and your truth that we may find our way to you.
Guide those who seek you,
raise up those who have fallen
that we may all rejoice in your kingdom for ever.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Submitted by:
Fr. Christopher Bazyouros
Adult Faith Formation Consultant
Office of Religious Education
Archdiocese of Los Angeles

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THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 4, 2014

Prayer after Communion:

Look with kindness upon your people, O Lord,
and grant, we pray,
that those you were pleased to renew by eternal mysteries
may attain in their flesh
the incorruptible glory of the resurrection.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

This seemingly simple prayer encompasses the fullness and foundation of our Christian faith: our joy and hope and belief in the resurrection. The eternal mysteries of our faith include: the Trinity, the incarnation, the Paschal Mystery, salvation, transubstantiation, the Immaculate Conception, and more. All of these mysteries find their meaning and culmination in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We are a resurrection people. We do, indeed, live for ever. This is more than belief that the soul will live for ever; we believe that at the general resurrection of Christ's second coming somehow our bodies will be united with our souls. We profess this belief in the Nicene Creed: "I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body."

Resurrection is a way of living, of witnessing to our belief that we already have something of the future in the present. We are already living new risen life because we have a relationship with God – we are children of the living God. Confidence in resurrection means that we live this life in a way that infuses it with the life that is to come. We forgive; we are peacemakers. We reach out to others in love and patience and charity. We share our resurrected life with others. This is how we live as a resurrection people.

Prayer:

Gracious God, you gift us with faith in the resurrection; may we be with you in glory for ever.

Submitted by:
Dianne Rachal
Director, Office of Worship
Diocese of Shreveport

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 11, 2014

Prayer after Communion:

Look upon your flock, kind Shepherd,
and be pleased to settle in eternal pastures
the sheep you have redeemed
by the Precious Blood of your Son.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reflection:

This Sunday is also called Good Shepherd Sunday as both its readings and prayers have that theme. Because of this focus, it is also called World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Thus this Sunday has a rich mixture of great images.

The Gospel of the Good Shepherd was formerly assigned to the Third Sunday of Easter but, after the Second Vatican Council, it was given to the Fourth Sunday of Easter and new orations were composed.

This new Prayer after Communion states the obvious. Jesus is the Good Shepherd (*Pastor bone* in Latin) who is asked to look upon his flock. The rich mystagogical reality is we are that flock. We are the sheep who have been redeemed. We are the ones, who receive Communion, and, here the richer image, who are redeemed by the Precious Blood of Christ. Secondly, we pray that he would be pleased to settle us in the eternal pastures of heaven. This image echoes the eschatological reality that when we celebrate the Eucharist, we already participate in the heavenly life of those who have gone on before us and worship around the throne of the Lamb. He is also the active shepherd who leads us here on earth.

Prayer:

O God, may the Good Shepherd who willingly laid down his life for his sheep and who is now risen, lift us up, fed by this heavenly food, to be better sheep and better disciples of the one Shepherd.

Submitted by:
Rev. Leon Strieder
St. Mary's Seminary, Houston, Texas
Diocese of Austin

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FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 18, 2014

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:

This prayer seeks to request a particular kind of presence from our Lord. It does not imply that the Lord is ever absent from us, rather it asks that God be “graciously” present – that is, present with his mercy and compassion. The Latin actually might be better translated as “graciously draw near” than “graciously be present”.

Having received this Real Presence through the heavenly mysteries – the sacraments – especially in Body and Blood of Eucharist, the Body of Christ now asks to receive God’s grace in a permeating way. Filled with the “heavenly mysteries” and transformed through this grace, we pray to pass from our old life of sin to a new way of life in the image of Christ.

Prayer:

Draw ever nearer to us, O Lord, and fill us with your grace and compassion. Permeated with the grace of your heavenly mysteries, free us of our former selves and make us new beings created in your image.

Submitted by:
Julie Males
Director, Office for Worship & RCIA
Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana

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SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
May 25, 2014

Prayer after Communion:

Almighty ever-living God,
who restore us to eternal life in the Resurrection of Christ,
increase in us, we pray, the fruits of this paschal Sacrament
and pour into our hearts the strength of this saving food.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

The Prayer after Communion is rooted in the words Jesus imparted to his disciples at the Passover Meal, “This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me” [Luke 22:19 NAB]. Yes, it is the life, crucifixion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus that feeds and strengthens the weary soul!

Every time that we “do this”, our prayer is for God to increase in us the ability to love and care for one another as the Body of Christ, but also to love and care for the least of those amongst us. This saving food, the Body and Blood of Christ, strengthens in us the resolve to be credible witnesses of God’s mercy and grace.

It is our hope that as bread and wine are transformed into Holy Food, our hearts may be set afire to recognize the face of God in the people and in the culture in which we live.

Prayer:

O Most Holy One, you are food for the soul. As we feast on your Body and Blood, teach us to be servants among servants, so that all may come to know your love and mercy. You, Jesus, are our Lord and Savior. Amen. Alleluia, alleluia!

Submitted by:
Rev. Mr. Royce Winters
Director of African American Ministries
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

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THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD, *Solemnity*

June 1, 2014

At the Vigil Mass

Prayer after Communion:

May the gifts we have received from your altar, Lord,
kindle in our hearts a longing for the heavenly home land
and cause us to press forward, following in the Savior's footsteps,
to the place where for our sake he entered before us.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reflection:

New to the *Roman Missal, Third Edition* are prayers assigned to the Vigil Mass, the evening Mass preceding the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord. We are now invited to vigil, as we do for Easter Sunday and the Nativity of the Lord and these other major solemnities: Epiphany of the Lord, Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, Saints Peter and Paul, and Pentecost

Our hearts burn with longing for the fullness of God, the "heavenly homeland", the "place" to which Jesus Christ ascended for our sake. In offering ourselves along with the bread and wine, we receive the gifts of the Body and Blood of Christ. The Sacrament give us the courage to press onward.

At the site of the Church of the Ascension in Jerusalem, there are two marks in the rock that the devout believe to be the footprints left by Jesus as he ascended. It is possible to physically place one's feet in them. It is much more difficult, however, to truly step in the footsteps of Jesus, for they lead through his Passion to Resurrection.

Prayer:

Lord, you invite us to follow in your footsteps and you give us food for the journey. May we always respond to you with courage and paschal joy.

Submitted by:
Catherine Combier-Donovan, MLS
[Former] Director of Worship
Archdiocese of Baltimore

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THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD, *Solemnity*
June 1, 2014

At the Mass during the Day

Prayer after Communion:

Almighty ever-living God,
who allow those on earth to celebrate divine mysteries,
grant, we pray,
that Christian hope may draw us onward
to where our nature is united with you.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

This Prayer after Communion follows the oldest formula found in the *Gelasian Sacramentary* (8th century). We pray that God, who does a wonderful thing, grant us something even greater: eternal life. And we ask it through Christ our Lord. Here the great gift is “Christian hope” and its power to draw us forward to be united with God.

For six weeks we have reveled in the Resurrection, and now we near the end of the Easter Time. We belong to the earth, but through the gift of the Incarnation we are allowed to touch the divine mysteries. Christian hope grounds us and gives us the courage to endure the difficulties of daily life and to remain faithful. It allows us to catch glimpses of God, to grab on to the garment of Jesus, and to hang on tight all the way to eternal life!

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, as we celebrate the Ascension, may we follow you in hope and be lifted up with you in glory.

Submitted by:
Catherine Combier-Donovan, MLS
[Former] Director of Worship
Archdiocese of Baltimore

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PENTECOST SUNDAY, *Solemnity*
June 8, 2014

At the Vigil Mass
Extended form and Simple form

Prayer after Communion:

May these gifts we have consumed
benefit us, O Lord,
that we may always be aflame with the same Spirit,
whom you wondrously poured out on your Apostles.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

At this same Mass, we pray in the Prayer over the Offerings and in the Eucharistic Prayer that the Holy Spirit would sanctify the gifts of bread and wine. In a sense, by consuming the Body and Blood of Christ, it is we who are consumed by the flames of the Holy Spirit. Through partaking of the Eucharist, we receive the same Spirit that Christ gave to the Apostles and are empowered with Pentecostal zeal.

The fact that the Spirit was poured out “wondrously” evokes the miracles of Pentecost – the tongues of fire and the great deeds then performed by the Apostles. And because the mission and lineage of the Apostles continues in the Church through the ages, we still benefit from and contribute to the work of the Holy Spirit today.

Prayer:

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy divine consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Submitted by:
Brian MacMichael
Director, Office of Worship
Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend

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PENTECOST SUNDAY, *Solemnity*
June 8, 2014

At the Mass during the Day

Prayer after Communion:

O God, who bestow heavenly gifts upon your Church,
safeguard, we pray, the grace you have given,
that the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out upon her
may retain all its force
and that this spiritual food
may gain her abundance of eternal redemption.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

At every Mass, we thank God for the gift of the Holy Eucharist. But in a special way at Pentecost, we offer thanks for the manifold gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit. The Sequence we sing at Mass today (*Veni, Sancte Spiritus / Come, Holy Spirit*) speaks of these gifts and of the power of the Holy Spirit to transform our lives, making us to reflect the divine light.

We first receive the Holy Spirit when it is “poured out” at Baptism. Our participation in these gifts is then strengthened by Confirmation. And through the spiritual food of Holy Communion, we receive the sustenance whereby our transformation can “retain all its force.” This occurs both individually and communally – for the entire Church, which was born at Pentecost, is exhorted to share these gifts through the great mission of evangelization, winning an “abundance of redemption” throughout the world and all of time.

Prayer:

O Holy Spirit, illumine our minds, that we may see and understand the things that are for our eternal good. Strengthen our hearts and wills, that they may be conformed to your divine will, and be guided by your holy inspirations. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Submitted by:
Brian MacMichael
Director, Office of Worship
Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend

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