

Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions [FDLC]

Mystagogical Reflection on Texts of the *Roman Missal*

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Mystagogical Reflections on the Prayer after Communion for ORDINARY TIME winter



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 Mystagogical 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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SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

January 19, 2014

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

January 26, 2014

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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February 2

THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

Feast

Prayer after Communion

By these holy gifts which we have received, O Lord,
bring your grace to perfection within us,
and, as you fulfilled Simeon's expectation
that he would not see death
until he had been privileged to welcome the Christ,
so may we, going forth to meet the Lord,
obtain the gift of eternal life.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

Let us hope the parish begins this feast blessing candles and then all processing with lighted candles going "in peace to meet the Lord." What an image: light bearers, illumined by Christ, going to meet him in the special manifold presence of the Risen One in assembly, in spoken Word, and in Eucharist.

Let us be like Simeon: expecting great things. Let us be like Simeon: going in peace to do what is at hand. Let us be like Simeon: looking everywhere for the light for revelation to the Gentiles (Lk 2:32). Let us be like Simeon: seeing salvation at work in this world. Let us be like Simeon: giving God glory for it all.

Let us be light bearers of the Illumined One in all we say and do and are.

Prayer:

Strengthened by this food, this meal that is Christ the Lord,
let us go forth and meet him, the Dead and Risen One,
everywhere to go.

Submitted by:
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FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 9, 2014

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:
Eliot Kapitan
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SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 16, 2014

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:
Father Jim Bessert
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SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 23, 2014

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:
Sylvia M. Garcia
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EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

March 2, 2014

Prayer after Communion

Nourished by your saving gifts,
we beseech your mercy, Lord,
that by this same Sacrament
with which you feed us in the present age,
you may make us partakers of life eternal.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

The Liturgy presents our sanctification “by means of signs perceptible to the senses” [*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 7]. In this case, the basic human experience of *hunger* is used to signify where the Lord’s saving work is leading us.

Having just been nourished by the Lord’s “saving gifts”, according to the prayer, one would think that we should be satisfied. Instead, we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, and we beseech the Lord for more. And there is so much more to be had – life eternal!

Much like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, our hearts are left burning within us after Christ breaks open the word and breaks the bread. Our hearts are hungry for more. This hunger is fed in the “present age” by our participation in the Eucharist. While this strengthens us to be able to “go and announce the Gospel of the Lord” in the present, we are also given a glimpse of that which our hearts truly desire, “a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem, toward which we journey as pilgrims” [CSL, no. 8]. Only there, feasting with Christ at the right hand of God in the company of heaven, will our hungers be fully satisfied.

Prayer:

Merciful God, our hearts will hunger until they are nourished by you. May our participation in your Body and Blood here on earth increase our hunger for heaven and may our lives bring others to hunger for you as well.

Submitted by:
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