

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

Over the last two weeks, we have looked at the consummation of the Mass – Communion with Jesus in the Eucharist. Again, this is when we come into union with God in a profound way. We become like Him whom we receive – Jesus, our God. The proper response is then *gratitude* and *love*.

When we get back to our pews, of what is our prayer made up? Sometimes, we spend the time distracted – watching the other people pass us as they go to Communion. We might even be judging them for what they wear, or how they look, or what they smell like. Imagine that – we have just received the Lord of the universe, the Lord of love, and we are *judging* the people He died for! Hopefully these judgments and distractions are rare. Maybe when we get back to the pew, we are making all sorts of petitions to God, asking Him to take care of this and that. That is okay, but still missing something.

What is God looking for from us after Communion? *Love and gratitude*. It is a time of thanksgiving, thanking Him for bringing His divinity, His Godliness, down to unite to our – to my – humanity! We thank Him for coming so close to us. We tell Him that we love Him. We console His Heart for all of the times that people receive Communion without loving Him. We thank Him and we love Him.

Usually the time of thanksgiving after Communion is relatively short during Mass. The Church invites us to spend more time, even after Mass is over, thanking Him for the *great gift* of His love. Imagine how consoled Jesus would be – He who loves so much and is so little loved – if everyone spent a few minutes thanking Him after receiving Communion! When I think about how many people walk out after receiving Communion, and without spending time to say “thank you” to Jesus... it must break His Heart. It is like a guest who comes to our house, eats dinner and runs out the door without waiting for dessert, without saying “thank you” or “goodbye”! May this never be us, but may we always thank our Host, Jesus, for His incredible graciousness.

After this, we have the Prayer after Communion (signaled by another “Let us pray”). Typically, this is a prayer thanking God for the gift we have just received, and asking for what we need to live out the Mystery we have received. This signals the end of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The Concluding Rites begin with optional announcements. Finally we come to the final Blessing. The Blessing truly is a gift from God. It is like that dessert I mentioned earlier. The Lord Jesus wants to give us the grace and power to live out our Christian commitment. He blesses us to live in the Heart of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Believe me, you don’t want to miss this gift. Receive it often – let it enter into your heart, so that you can be empowered to live the grace of your Communion!

The deacon, or in his absence, the priest then dismisses us (“Go forth, the Mass is ended” or “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord,” or “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life,” or “Go in peace”) and we respond, “Thanks be to God.” Now remember, this is not, “Oh, thank goodness it is over! Boy was that long!” Rather, *we are being sent on mission*. Jesus gave us a Mission, and set up His Church – His Body present and visible on the earth – to carry out that mission. The mission is to carry the Gospel – the Good News of God’s saving love – to the ends of the earth. We receive the *shalom*, the peace of Christ so that we can go with that peace to the world. When we leave Church, do we feel like our obligation is over for the week, or do we realize our Mission is just beginning?

After the Dismissal, the priest and deacon kiss the Altar (an act of love for the God who has just come down on that Altar), and then the ministers bow to the Altar, and process out. Very often we also sign a hymn as we leave, a song of praise to God for all He has done.

This ends our survey of the Mass which we began in September. I hope that it has helped you to have a greater understanding of what is happening at Mass, and so to get more out of it. We’re working on getting these onto our website, as well as audio recordings of my homilies. Check out www.stpatricks-pelham.com over the few weeks to find archived articles and homilies. May God continue to bless you.