

Priests' Vesting Prayers (at the altar)

- It's very important for us to prepare well for Mass, for us to think about what we're about to do and get ourselves ready interiorly for what's coming. We're preparing to encounter Jesus, who is about to come into our presence, to speak to us and teach us, to welcome our prayers of praise, thanks, contrition, intercession and petition, to feed us with himself and to strengthen us as disciples and as apostles sent to continue his saving work.
- The Church gives the priest prayers to say before Mass as he is vesting to help him focus on what he is about to do. Even before I was a priest, these prayers helped me to get ready for Mass because they are a reminder of what St. Paul told us all to do in his Letter to the Ephesians when he said, "Put on the armor of God. ...Stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate, and your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all [the] flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6:13-17).
 - **Amice**
 - The priest begins with the amice, a rectangular linen cloth, which has two strings and is placed over the shoulders and around the neck; the strings are then tied about the waist. At a practical level it covers his normal priestly clothing and prevents his perspiration from getting onto the other garments that are harder and more expensive to clean.
 - The prayer that the priest says seeks to consecrate his mind to God: "Place upon me, O Lord, the helmet of salvation, that I may overcome the assaults of the devil."
 - **Alb**
 - The alb is the long white garment that recalls his baptismal garment that we were called to keep immaculate awaiting the Lord's coming. It is a symbol of the sanctifying grace received in the first sacrament and is also considered to be a symbol of the purity of heart that is necessary to enter into the joy of the eternal vision of God in heaven, when we will all be cleansed by Jesus' blood.
 - The priest prays, "Make me white, O Lord, and cleanse my heart; that being made white in the Blood of the Lamb I may deserve an eternal reward."
 - **Cincture**
 - Around the waist, the priest places a cincture, which is a reminder to him of his chastity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven and a prayer for self-mastery, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. "Gird me, O Lord, with the cincture of purity, and quench in my heart the fire of concupiscence, that the virtue of continence and chastity may abide in me).
 - **Stole**
 - The stole is the most distinctive garment of a priest that he wears in the celebration of the sacraments. It is worn around his neck. He prays, "Lord,

restore to me the stole of immortality that I lost through the collusion of our first parents, and, unworthy as I am to approach Thy sacred mysteries, may I yet gain eternal joy.”

○ **Chasuble**

- The final vestment of the priest is the chasuble, which is the garment specifically used for the celebration of the Mass. It is a reminder for him to be yoked to the Lord Jesus who is about to celebrate Mass through him. “O Lord, you who have said, ‘My yoke is sweet and my burden light,’ grant that I may so bear this so as to merit your grace.”
 - It comes in different colors: Green for ordinary time, Red for martyrs and the Holy Spirit, Purple for Lent, Advent and funerals; White for Christmas, Easter, Feasts of non-martyred saints and most votive Masses; and black for All Souls Day, Memorial Masses and funerals.
- Many religious sisters and brothers have similar prayers when they put on their religious habit each day. I would encourage everyone as you’re getting dressed for Mass, or even dressed to go to work or to school, to be seeking to think about the things of faith and consecrating yourselves to the Lord and to his service.

Before Mass (continuous)

- **Holy Water.** Renewal of our baptismal Promises. Make the Sign of the Cross slowly, remembering how Jesus died for us on the Cross out of love and how we need his help to pick up our Cross each day and follow him. We know that St. Bernadette always *prayed*, rather than just made, the Sign of the Cross slowly and with devotion and taught others to do the same, just as she had been taught by our Lady.
- When you get to your pew, turn toward Jesus in the tabernacle and **genuflect**. Jesus is truly present. As we make the outward sign of our reverence, we should say a prayer on the inside, like “I adore you, Lord!” or “I love you Jesus!”
- Then we should enter the pew and pray, preferably kneeling, closing our eyes and focusing on what we’re about to do. We’re about to enter into the Upper Room during the Last Supper. We’re about to enter Calvary to be with Jesus as he gave his body and blood to us for our salvation. We’re about to hear him speak to us and then share in his resurrection by eating his body and drinking his blood. Praying before Mass helps us to block out the things of the world so that we may really pray the Mass with faith. I would also encourage you to go over the readings of the day to help you to grow in familiarity with them before the Mass begins so that they may have a bigger impact on you.
- Then we get ready for the opening hymn and the entrance antiphon of the Mass, which is a prayer that we say together. St. Augustine said that when we sing well, we pray twice. Singing helps us to pray together. It’s also more beautiful and puts us into a mood for prayer. The preferred thing to sing is the chanted antiphon, which is part of the prayer of the Mass that Sunday. It is possible to substitute a hymn. We generally sing both so that everyone can learn and become comfortable with both.

Initial Rites (after greeting)

- The priest kisses the altar. An altar is not just a Catholic table. It reminds us that we're about to sacrifice something, which is namely to enter into Christ's one sacrifice from Calvary but that we're also supposed to be sacrificing ourselves as a wholly acceptable and pleasing offering with him to the Father, something St. Paul calls our "spiritual worship" (Rom 12:1-2). The priest kisses the altar where the relics of the altar are and says a prayer, "**We pray to you, Lord, through the merits of all your saints, specially those whose relics are here, that you may graciously forgive all our sins. Amen.**" He can incense the altar to help us prepare for the sacrifice and to symbolize that, as Psalm 141 says, "May my pray be set before you like incense."
- We start with the sign of the Cross. The sign of the Cross is not just what we do "before" or "after" we pray but is already a prayer. It reminds us that we're praying in the name of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We're trying literally to enter into God. And we remember that it's through picking up our Cross and following Jesus that we become united with him and in him with the Father and the Holy Spirit.
- With regard to all of the responses, it's key for us to pray them, to align our mind, heart and soul to the words we're saying. This is called the *Ars celebrandi*, which is important not only for the clergy but for lectors, cantors and all of the faithful.
- In response to the Sign of the Cross, we say, "Amen!" which means "yes!!!!" or "so be it!" or "I believe!" It comes from the Hebrew word "to uphold," that we're making what we say Amen to the foundation of our life, in this case, it means that we're affirming that we're seeking to do everything in communion with the Blessed Trinity. **Please say the Amen, as well as the other prayers, loudly, with confidence and faith.**
- There there's a special greeting taken from St. Paul's letters with which the priest greets everyone. The one I use the most comes from 2 Cor 13:13. The priest prays that each of you will have the grace of Jesus, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. And you reply with the prayer, "and with your spirit," asking that it not just be with the priest personally as a fellow disciple, but with that part of him ordained to celebrate the Mass, that each of us may pray to God with the power, grace and love of God himself.
- Then we turn immediately to what we're about to do now. The beginning of Mass is called the penitential act. Jesus' first words in his public ministry were, "Repent and believe in the Gospel." We always begin Mass calling to mind how much we need the Lord's help, that we're sinners in need of a salvation Jesus died to give us. When we call to mind our sins and failures, not only do we remember our need for his mercy, but we also remember how and how much we need the help he wants to give us in this Mass. So after confessing our commissions, omissions in thought, word and deed, we make emphatic our need for the mercy Jesus paid such a precious price to obtain, saying Lord have Mercy, Christ Have Mercy, Lord have mercy.
- Then, outside of Advent and Lent, we sing the Glory to God in the Highest. We make our own the words of the angels to the shepherds in Bethlehem on Christmas morning. The same Jesus born in the City of David comes down on the altar in the Big Apple. In it we praise, bless, adore, glorify and thank God for the gift of his Son. We ask him to receive our prayer for mercy. If you don't know the melody by heart, please use the sheets prepared on the bulletin table and sing it.

- Then we're ready for the "Collect" or opening prayer, in which we turn to God the Father and pray through Jesus in the unity of the Holy Spirit for something in particular that frames the various readings. Today we will pray for his mercy to pardon even what conscience dreads to confess and to give what prayer doesn't dare to ask. I'd encourage you always to listen carefully to this prayer and make it your own.
- Let's pray with faith the penitential act!

Liturgy of the Word (after the Collect)

Readings

- After the Opening Prayer we enter into the liturgy of the Word, which is a five-course meal.
- The first part is a **reading from the Old Testament** or, during the Easter Season, from the Acts of the Apostles. The first reading almost always links with the Gospel of the day. That's the reason why it was chosen. There's an old saying of the saints that the Old Testament is revealed in the New and the New is concealed in the Old, and that connection happens between the first reading and the Gospel every Sunday. They help us to understand each other. You'll see how closely the first reading and the Gospel are today as both the Book of Genesis and Jesus' words in the Gospel are both about the importance of marriage. Please listen with this in mind.
- After the first reading, we have a second reading from the Old Testament, which is one of the 150 Psalms or occasionally a canticle found in one of the Old Testament books. These were the hymns the Jews — including Jesus, Mary and Joseph — would sing during their worship in the synagogue, at home, during their journeys to the Temple and more. These psalms are meant to be sung, which is why we sing them here. They're called "responsorial psalms," not because we respond to the psalm with a refrain but because they're responding to the first reading — something in the psalm is always a direct response to the first reading. The psalm teaches us how to respond and meant to encapsulate the response of our life to God's continuous offering of his covenant. Today, we will speak about how wives are called to be like fruitful vines in homes, men god-fearers who are hardworking, and children like olive plants bringing fruit and joy, and how we long to see grandchildren and great grandchildren. I'd urge you always try to find this connection between the First reading and the Psalm.
- After the Psalm we have the second reading, which is taken from one of the New Testament epistles, mostly from St. Paul. Over the course of three years, we cover the most important parts of all of these applications of Jesus' teachings to the life of the early Church and the life of the Church in every age. Today, the Letter to the Hebrews speaks to us about how our human dignity, spoken about in Genesis, was greatly ennobled when Christ took on our human nature to lead us to glory and salvation, that we have the same origin in divine love and that he is honored to call us his spiritual siblings.
- Then, we'll stand for the Gospel. We stand because Jesus is about to speak to us in the Gospel and we stand for him, like we stand anytime a dignitary enters the room. We sing the Alleluia, which means "Praise the Lord!" and listen between the Alleluias to a Gospel verse, which always introduces, and in some ways summarizes, the whole meaning of the Gospel that is about to come. Please pay attention to this context. Today it's going to focus on how to remain in the love of God so that that love may be brought to perfection in us, something

that is meant to happen in marriage, including in the sufferings of marriage, about which we'll hear in the Gospel. When we listen to the Gospel, it's important to recall that the Church teaches that when the Gospel is proclaimed at Mass, it is Jesus who is speaking. Prior to the Gospel, the priest prays, "Cleanse my heart and my lips, almighty God, that I may worthily proclaim your holy Gospel." We need not only clean lips but a clean heart, because we're supposed to believe the Gospel in our heart and profess it with our lips. After the Gospel is announced, and we say, "Glory to you, O Lord," we make the Sign of the Cross on our foreheads, on our lips and above our hearts. We should be praying as we do this, "May the Lord be in my mind, on my lips and in my heart;" in other words, may I ponder God's word, speak God's word, and love God's word. That's a good way to prepare to listen to the whole liturgy of the word.

- I'll mention the fifth and last course of this great feast of God's word — the homily — when we get to its place after we've finished the Gospel...
- I would encourage you, unless you're hard of hearing or your English is not very good, to LISTEN to the readings rather than to READ them while they're being proclaimed. Faith comes from hearing and the word can penetrate us much more easily when we're listening to it than if we're trying to read it while someone else is saying it aloud around us.

Homily

- Immediately after proclaiming God's word, the priest kisses the Gospel — a sign of love — saying, "*Per evangelica dicta, deleantur nostra delicta.*" "Through the words of the Holy Gospel, may our sins be wiped away." The Gospel is supposed to cleanse and renew us.
- The Church teaches us that the purpose of the Homily is not to entertain us, although hopefully it does keep the attention of our heads and our hearts. It's not principally to explain the readings to us, although hopefully it does help us to understand what they mean better. The second Vatican Council says that it's meant to bring us to "conversion" and "holiness." It's supposed to help us to change, to begin to think not like everyone else thinks, but as Christ thinks, and to live not as the crowds do but together with Jesus. So it's meant to challenge us to examine whether we're truly living in a holy way and then to show us the help Christ wants to give us so that we can in fact let go of our old ways and begin to live more with him. Pope Francis told us in his exhortation on the "Joy of the Gospel" that a homily is to make us more and more aware of the Covenant God has made with us, to describe God's word and action and then to help us to respond with faith to the new and eternal Covenant with God that Christ has made for and with us. When you listen to homilies, please listen with this question in mind: "How is this Word of God supposed to change my life?" "How is God calling me to structure my day to day more and more in union with him in the new and eternal Covenant Jesus has made with me in his blood? The homily I preached earlier today for the Missionaries of Charity, or the other that I wrote in the newsletter, focused on Jesus' words, "It is not good for man to be alone" and how marriage is a gift of God to help us overcome existential loneliness and grow in his image and likeness as a loving communion of persons. I'd urge you to read the homily in the newsletter this morning or listen to the one I posted on CatholicPreaching.com, the link of which is in the newsletter, to be able to enter more deeply into these connections. The homily is intended both to instruct us and inspire us to convert and to seek the holiness that Jesus proposes to us through a fruitful Christian life.

- After the homily, we respond to all the five courses of the Liturgy of the Word by renewing our faith. The Creed we sing or recite has been prayed by Catholics, Orthodox and most Christians for the last 1700 years. So many Christians have lived for this profession of faith; many others have died for it. It has 12 main themes in it. In order for us truly to pray the Creed rather than just say it, we should ponder the truths we're affirming and entrust ourselves to God the Father, God the Son, God and the Holy Spirit and the one, holy Catholic and apostolic Church. We should bow at the words of the Incarnation, the most important moment in history, when God became man of the Virgin by the Power of the Holy Spirit.
- After having renewed our faith in God, we turn to Him with the Prayers of the Faithful, also called the General Intercessions. These are the prayers we make to God as a family of faith. We always pray for the Church, for her leaders, for those who serve in public office, for the sick, for the dead and for other timely needs, like today, we'll pray for peace in the Middle East as we mark tomorrow the first anniversary of the Hamas terrorist attacks in the Holy Land. It's important for us to listen to what we're praying for so that we can wholeheartedly pray to the Lord. I think the Prayers of the Faithful is one of the easiest parts of the Mass to get distracted in. If the lector were to pray, "Destroy us now with a nuclear weapon; we pray to you, Lord!" probably about half of those in attendance would just say, "Lord, hear our prayer!" This is also a time in which we could call to mind and offer to God all our own prayers.

Liturgy of the Eucharist (after the Prayers)

Offertory

- The Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the Offertory. The altar is prepared. The congregation, or the servers, may bring up the gifts of bread and wine, which will be completely changed into Jesus' body and blood. The Eucharist is not only God's gift — fruit of the earth, of the vine — but also the work of human hands. And the offertory is when we offer not only our work, not only our generous donation of money for the upkeep of the Church to help maintain a parish's or works, but our whole lives to the Father together with His Son Jesus. Sometimes people will say, "I don't get anything out of the Mass!" That's probably, Archbishop Sheen used to say, because they're not putting much or anything into the Mass. The procession of gifts is an external sign that we're giving ourselves to the Lord together with the offerings. That's why it's important for people to want to do it.
- We normally sing during the Offertory on Sunday Mass. Both the antiphon as well as the offertory hymn are meant to be a bridge from the Liturgy of the Word to the Liturgy of the Eucharist, linking the two together. They're often a reflection on what we've heard and a preparation for what we're about to do. I'd encourage you to sing along heartily.
- The priest offers first the bread and then the wine to the Father, thanking him for his generosity and begging him to turn them into his Son, the Bread of Life, and our Spiritual Drink.
- The priest has several private prayers he says, which are a beautiful way to pray the Mass.
 - "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." We're praying to be made divine

through entering into communion with Jesus. It's very similar to a prayer we say at Mass on Christmas morning.

- “With humble spirit and contrite heart may we be accepted by you, O Lord, and may our sacrifice in your sight this day be pleasing to you, Lord God.” With the words from the Book of Daniel, we're praying for humility and sorrow, recognizing we're not worthy of what we're about to do, but asking God to accept this sacrifice as a pleasing one.
- “Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sins.” The priest remembers with the words of Psalm 51 that he is a sinner and is asking God to purify him so that he may worthily offer this sacrifice.
- Then the priest says, “Pray, brothers and sisters that my sacrifice and yours.” We're all supposed to uniting the sacrifice of our lives to God, all our hardships, all our hopes. We stand as we say those words to show we're ready to make that sacrifice, to say, “Yes, we can!” as SS. James and John did to Jesus' asking whether they could drink his chalice of suffering. We all pray that the Lord will accept the sacrifice, for the praise and glory of his name, for our personal good and for the good of the entire Church. Those are the intentions of the Mass: for God's glory, for others' salvation and sanctification, and for our own growth in holiness.

Prayer over the gifts, Preface and Sanctus, Eucharistic Prayer (continuous)

- We turn to God the Father and we pray over the gifts for something in particular for this particular Mass. Today we will ask him to complete his sanctifying work in us through the celebration of these sacred mysteries.
- Then we get straight into the Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer. It begins with an ancient prayer in dialogue.
 - The priest prays that the Lord be with you and you pray that he will be with that part of the priest ordained to celebrate the Mass. This needs to be *prayed*. We really want the Lord with the other.
 - Then the priest instructs with the words of St. Paul to lift up your hearts and you respond that you've lifted them up to the Lord (Col 3). Our hearts at that point should be with the Lord. If they're with the Lord, then they're “all in” to the prayer, their treasure is with God, they're seeking what he seeks. Sometimes our hearts aren't lifted up. We need to ensure they are!
 - The priest encourages us to give thanks to the Lord our God. The Eucharist as a whole is thanksgiving. It's right always to thank God. It's just or fitting to do so. We pray this on Christmas and Easter and at weddings. We also pray it at funerals. It's right and just always to give God thanks and praise. The whole Mass is summarized by the Greek word Thanksgiving. Are we grateful to be here with God?
- Then we come to the Preface. We turn to God the Father and we pray for something in particular. It's a beautiful prayer that varies according to the celebrations. We call to mind we're not the only ones praying, but we're joining in the praise of the angels and saints forever and ever in heaven, as we prepare to join into what the Prophet Isaiah saw happening in heaven and to what the people said as soon as Jesus was preparing to enter into the holy city on Palm Sunday. It points out that in the Mass we're not only entering heaven, but Jesus comes to us. It's a uniting between heaven and earth. That prepares us to

say to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, “Holy, Holy, Holy!” and “Hosanna!” or “Save us, Savior in the highest!”

- After the Holy, Holy, Holy, comes the most solemn part of the Mass, which cannot be interrupted. It’s the Eucharistic prayer. There used to be only one that could be used, what we called Eucharistic Prayer I or the Roman Canon. Now there are four main Eucharistic prayers, two Eucharistic Prayers of Reconciliation and four Eucharistic Prayers for Various Necessities, in all ten. Each of them is a little different, but all of them are beautiful. It’s sometimes good for us in our personal prayer to meditate on them so that when they’re used at Mass we can far better pray them together with the priest in the person of Christ.
- What’s the same in every Eucharistic Prayer are the words of consecration.
 - We begin by praising God the Father.
 - Then we ask for the Holy Spirit to come down to change the bread and wine into Jesus’ body. The bells ring for the first time when that happens.
 - Then we have the words of institution as Jesus says the words himself through the priest. At the words of consecration, during the elevation, we should say something to Jesus in adoration, thanks or petition, like “My Lord and my God!” “I love you Jesus!” “Jesus unite me fully with you!” “Make me holy!” “Jesus, I adore you devoutly.” When he’s lifted up, we’re supposed to be adoring him. The bells ring at each elevation to help us to remember to adore.
 - After we have the Memorial Acclamation, in which we actualize the prayer for ourselves now and apply it to ourselves. We ask Jesus, for example, who has just come down on the altar, “Save us, Savior of the World!”
 - Afterward, we pray that the Holy Spirit may transform us to become one body, one spirit in Christ, that he help the Church, and all her leaders. We pray for the dead and for all those in need.
 - And we finish by offering through, with and in Christ in the unity of the Holy Spirit all glory and honor to the Father, to which we all respond, “Amen!” So be it!

Communion Rite (after the Great Amen)

- After having given all praise and glory to the Father, we then turn to the Father with the words Jesus taught us to pray. It’s important that we not just recite but mean the seven things for which we’re asking. It’s also important for us to grasp that we’re praying “Our Father” because we want to be praying as a family.
- After the Lord’s Prayer, we have what’s called an embolism as we reinforce the prayer we’re saying. We ask to be delivered from evil, for peace, for mercy, for freedom of sin and distress.
- We show our true relationship to God when we say next, “For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever!” All glory is his, not ours. That’s what we seek as Christians. Protestants normally add this to the end of the Our Father, from a version of the prayer written in the Didache, a Christian book from about 80 AD. But Catholics don’t add it to the Our Father because that’s not in the Gospel of St. Matthew. We mean it, though, just as much.
- After this we speak to Jesus present for us in the Eucharist, reminding him of his promise of peace and asking, with the faith of the Church, for peace and unity. Then we immediately act

on that prayer by giving each other the sign of Christ's peace. That's not a time just to say hello. It's a prayer. We're called to say to each other, "The peace of the Lord be with you!" That's peace through the forgiveness of sins. We should do this as family members who love us, not as strangers afraid the other is going to pass on to us fatal germs!

- Next, we have the fraction rite, which we break the host in two, a symbol of the way Christ's flesh was broken in his passion. We begin to pray the Lamb of God. It's important that we *pray* this. We say, "You take away the sins of the world," and we ask him to "have mercy on us" and then to "grant us peace," knowing that the Lamb of God gives us peace precisely when we're free from sin and in a right relationship with God.
- The priest during this time prays a beautiful prayer that can teach us all how to prepare for Holy Communion, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, by the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit your death brought life to the world. By your holy body and blood, free me from all my sins and every evil. Keep me faithful to your teaching and never let me be parted from you."
- Then the priest says, with the words of St John the Baptist and the Book of Revelation, "Behold the Lamb of God. Behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those who are called to the Supper of the Lamb," and we all pray with the words of the Centurion in the Gospel, "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed." We should do everything we can not just to say but to mean those words. We don't have a right to receive Jesus. He wants to feed us, but our souls must be healed and cleansed. He does that in the Sacrament of Confession. We should not come to receive Holy Communion unless we're morally certain that our souls are clean, that we have no sin on our souls. If we're not certain, then we should first go to be cleansed by Jesus in the Sacrament of his Mercy by confessing our sins to the same priests through whom he gives us his Body and Blood.

Actual Reception (continuous)

- When we come to receive the Lord, we should come with great reverence. We should bow reverentially with a prayer interiorly as we approach to receive. The preferred way to receive Holy Communion, the Church has taught and continues to teach, is on the tongue. An indult has been granted in the United States and in some other countries to receive Holy Communion on the hands, but if we're going to receive on the hands, we should make a throne in the form of a cross, with our dominant hand underneath the other. We should then consume the host *immediately*, not blessing ourselves with the Host, not walking away, but stepping to the side and immediately consuming the King of Kings with love. If for whatever reason we don't have access to using both our hands, because we're wearing a cast, or we're carrying a baby, or using a cane, or something else, we should receive reverently on the tongue. All the more if our hands are dirty.
- The Church permits us to receive standing, kneeling, or, if we're in a wheelchair, seated.
- We should always receive in a spirit of true adoration and prayer. We should be asking Jesus something, like, "Lord, make me holy!" or "Love, give me strength to face this difficulty," or simply, "My Jesus, help me to live in you and you in me."
- When we return to our pews, we should be praying with a tremendous sense of thanksgiving. We now have God inside of us! We're not worthy of this gift but the Lord has

given himself to us besides! Sometimes the thanks can take the form of a specific prayer. Other times we can just say, “Thank you, thank you, thank you!” On other occasions, we can thank him by praising him with the words of the Eucharistic hymn. But it’s a time for us to pray, not to look, for example, at the others going up to Holy Communion. It’s certainly not a time to leave. If we were to receive intending to leave immediately, we really wouldn’t be receiving him worthily.

- Here for the sake of efficiency, we ask you to come up in two lines, all the way to the sanctuary. Don’t wait a few feet back. Make the reverence as the person before you is receiving.

Closing Prayer and Dismissal (before the Prayer after Communion)

- The Prayer after Communion always links the awesome privilege of having just received Jesus within to some concrete way Jesus wants to change us. Today, for example, we will pray to the Father that we may be refreshed and nourished by Jesus in Holy Communion and be transformed into him.
- We normally have announcements. This is a necessity I’d prefer not to have to do, but the reality is many people come to Mass without having read the newsletter carefully before Mass. For that reason, we need to call attention to some important things. Thanks for your courteous attention.
- Then there is the final blessing and the dismissal. We receive the blessing of the Trinity to strengthen us as we go to live a life in total, holy communion with the One we’ve just received. And we receive a commission from God, to “go and announce the Gospel of the Lord” or to “go in peace, glorifying the Lord by our life.” We have an important task to spread the faith by our words and by our witness. Having heard God’s word at Mass and received him in Holy Communion, we are strengthened to do just that.
- And we finish Mass joyously by praying together in song. We have the tradition here of two things at the end of Mass. The first is the Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel, which I explained in last Sunday’s newsletter on Sept. 29, the feast of St. Michael. We ask his help to renounce Satan, all his empty promises and evil works, and to help us to remain faithful to God. The second tradition is singing to Our Lady whatever is the seasonal hymn — the Salve Regina in Ordinary Time, the Alma Redemptoris Mater in Advent through the Presentation, the Ave Regina Caelorum from Feb 2 through the end of Lent, and the Regina Caeli from Easter through Pentecost.
- It would be a bad habit to leave Mass early. If you have that habit, I’d ask you in the Lord’s name please to stop, unless there’s an emergency. Let’s pray and praise God all the way until Mass really ends and take that joy out to a world that so much need the God who embraces us here.
- As we’re leaving Church, we should always genuflect toward Jesus in the tabernacle and thank him once more for the priceless gift of his presence among us and his incredible love until we see him the next time.