



FROM THE DESK OF FR. MIKE

Recently the Parish Finance Council met to review the previous fiscal year. We are working on our Parish Annual Report to communicate to the parish the result of the previous fiscal year from a financial perspective. The parishioners have once again demonstrated generosity in the offertory, School and Religious Education programs, and other parish events. A number of parishioners include the parish as beneficiaries in their wills.

In the Annual report we will communicate the generosity received for the second collections throughout the past year. We are a generous people, in giving of time, talent and treasure. Beginning in October, we will resume taking up a special collection for the second collection. Thus, we are asking you to place the offerings to the church in the first basket, and then the second collection in the second basket that is passed. We are returning to the “pre-Covid pandemic” means of receiving your offerings.

Many find using GiveCentral a very easy and wonderful way to support the parish. You can register for GiveCentral through the Church of St. Mary website. (Click on “Donate” at the top right corner of our homepage.)

Animal lovers and St. Francis lovers are welcome to gather this week for the annual pet blessing. Deacon Bob looks forward to praying with you and blessing your animals, on St. Mary’s Green - rain or shine - on Wednesday, October 4 at 4:00pm.

The following article is included in my weekly bulletin to encourage your reflection on the truths offered in it and your full participation in the Eucharist at the Church of St. Mary.

Interestingly, although a closing hymn is sung at nearly every Mass in parishes in the United States, it is mentioned in few liturgical documents.

The last liturgical actions mentioned in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) are the dismissal of the people by the deacon, if one is present, or by the priest, followed by the kissing of the altar by the priest and deacon and then a profound bow to the altar by the priest, deacon, and other ministers (see GIRM 90, 168, 169, 185, 186), with the presumption of there being some kind of procession to leave. *The Roman Missal* echoes this at number 145 in the Order of Mass. The only reference to anything else taking place at the end of Mass that is mentioned in both of these sources is that if another liturgical action follows the Mass, the concluding rites are omitted (GIRM, 170, RM, 146).

That being said, however, there is nothing that specifically prohibits a closing hymn. *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* references a closing hymn, explaining that “Although it is not necessary to sing a recessional hymn, when it is a custom, all may join in a hymn or song after the dismissal” (199). Yet nothing more precise can be found as to what is appropriate and not appropriate concerning the behavior of the assembly at that time.

It would seem, then, that in the absence of norms that dictate any liturgical behavior, the answer to this question lies in the realm of the *ars celebrandi*. Looking at the purpose of music and singing, the meaning of this part of the Mass, and the nature of liturgical participation can give us some insights.

Singing is meant to express joy and communal prayer and to foster deeper participation in the liturgical action. Singing fosters unity as human voices join together as one. Participants, then, should stay until the end of the hymn, out of a deference to the common ritual action in which all are engaged. The GIRM is clear that it is the common spiritual good of the assembly, rather than “private inclination or arbitrary choice,” that must be fostered at liturgy; joining in common actions expresses and fosters an inner spiritual attitude (42). Those who leave before the end of the hymn are not heeding the call “to avoid any appearance of singularity or division” at liturgy (see GIRM, 95).

Recall, too, that the liturgical dismissal is meant to be a true sending forth, so that those who have just offered the sacrifice of the Mass “may go back to doing good works, praising and blessing God” (GIRM, 90). Thus, staying until the closing song ends becomes a participation in the action of being sent out for the sake of mission, an action that the text of the closing hymn often refers to.

Finally, that the closing hymn is meant to accompany an action of the liturgy is alluded to in *Sing to the Lord*, which states “When a closing song is used, the procession of ministers should be arranged in such a way that it finishes during the final stanza” (199). It’s clear that the ministers exiting in procession should not be in a hurry to rush out but should rather allow the closing song to be a full and dignified moment within the entire liturgical action. Concerning the *ars celebrandi* of full, conscious, and active participation, what is true for the ministers in procession is also true of all who make up the liturgical assembly.

Monsignor Joseph DeGrocco in *Pastoral Liturgy* July-August 2023

God bless you in “Eucharistic lives” of gratitude, generosity, and compassion,