



After the wonderful moment of receiving our Lord in Holy Communion, what should we do next? You got it: pray! According to the Diocese of Peoria, “After we receive the Most Holy Eucharist we return to our pew... This is a most opportune time to pray and talk with our Lord, whom we have just received” (*A Study of the Mass*, p. 20). *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* instructs us that this period may be given over to quiet prayer or to singing: “When the distribution of Communion is over, if appropriate, the Priest and faithful pray quietly for some time. If desired, a Psalm or other canticle of praise or a hymn may also be sung by the entire congregation” (*GIRM*, 88). Depending on your parish traditions, there probably has been a Communion hymn or antiphon, which began after the priest received Communion. Your parish might also have a tradition of singing a Post-Communion hymn, sometimes called a hymn of thanksgiving. Many authors recommend that, in addition to these, there also be a period of silence.

The Importance of Silence

Fr. Guy Oury says that a period of silence is important: “The whole Church, the whole community, should take time to give silent thanks. It is important to do so, even if this has to be done after dismissal. This is the moment, if ever, to introduce a time of silence, as recommended also at other moments of the celebration. On the whole, however, the Eucharistic Prayer is much less silent than in the past, and the silence that favors recollection is a value not to be lost. Thanksgiving is absolutely indispensable in its collective form and its personal form. Sacramental effectiveness of the Eucharist does not work automatically. It requires dispositions. Mass itself is a thanksgiving, but thanksgiving does not cease with reception of Communion. It continues, and may extend to a hymn or a psalm said in common. There is much singing in the course of Mass, but at this moment it is well to let the peace of silence fall over the assembly” (*The Mass*, p. 123).

So, what kind of prayer is fitting during this time? Fr. Oury notes an anonymous author writing in Syria around the year 300 AD who gives us an example: “After receiving the precious Body and the precious Blood of Christ we give thanks to him for making us worthy to share in his holy mysteries and ask him that this partaking be not for judgment and condemnation but for salvation and the benefit of soul and body, for the preservation of piety, for the remission of sins and for the life of the world to come” (*The Mass*, p. 117). Perhaps this is a moment of prayer where thanks pour forth from our hearts as we recognize the wonderful gift we have been given. Maybe it is a moment to ask that we be strengthened for what we are facing. Hopefully, it is a moment to say from our hearts that we truly want to live in God’s love.

Silent but Active Prayer

Whatever our prayer is, Fr. Joseph McGloin reminds us that this time of silence shouldn’t be mindless and passive: “So, although this is a time of silence, it isn’t a time to prop ourselves upright, either kneeling or sitting, and doze off to dream of the upcoming day or the past night. It isn’t a time, either, to say, ‘Ok, Lord, do your thing,’ and then settle back to wait passively for Him to do it. That would be about as polite as welcoming a visitor into our home and then just sitting there while they entertained and feasted us. No, this moment of union with God after Holy Communion ought to be the most active, wonderful part of the Mass for us. We talk to him and we listen. His talk will be quiet talk—the way he almost always communicates with men... He wants to teach us, especially at this intimate moment, to love him in return. This will mean an active response on our part. Silent prayer doesn’t mean just sitting back in regal passivity, waiting for the gifts to be laid at our feet. A lady once complained to Fr. Walter Farrell, the great Dominican writer, that she couldn’t seem to pray in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. ‘I begin a Hail Mary,’ she told him, ‘and then I look at the tabernacle and start to think about how good God is, and I never do finish my Hail Mary.’ She couldn’t pray? Here was a perfect prayer. And Mary would be the first one to admit that. The very purpose of our devotion to Mary (and all the saints) is to lead us to adoration of her divine Son” (*How to Get More Out of the Mass*, pp. 137–9).

So, let us use well this opportunity for prayer after Communion and grow closer to the Lord we have just received!