



Having just received a blessing through the hands of the priest, we now come to our last instruction and response in the Mass: the **Dismissal**. For this part of the Mass, the *Roman Missal* gives four options that can be used by the deacon (if there is one) or by the priest himself:

“Go forth, the Mass is ended.”

“Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.”

“Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.”

“Go in peace.”

To any of these, the people respond: “Thanks be to God.” Additionally, you may know that during the Easter Octave and the close of the Easter Season, we also add a double “Alleluia” to the end of these dismissal phrases.

### A Sending Forth...

Do you notice anything consistent or repeated in these phrases of dismissal? They all begin with “Go”! Why do we say that? It definitely isn’t because the priest is ready to get on with his day! The Diocese of Peoria teaches, “After the [Prayer after Communion] beseeches God to give us grace to put our faith into practice, the Concluding Rite is ‘sending forth’ on this mission as disciples of Christ” (*A Study of the Mass*, p. 20). We have just prayed together, giving glory to God in the perfect Sacrifice of Christ in worship of the Father; after having been nourished by the Word of God in Scripture and the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, now we are ready to go forth out into the world. Each option of the dismissal is really an instruction: “Go forth”; “Go and announce the Gospel”; “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord”; “Go in peace.” In a real way, each of these phrases practically tells us what to do next, now that our time together at a particular Mass has drawn to a close.

As Edward Sri relates, “In the ancient world, it was customary to close an assembly with a formal dismissal. The early Christians felt the need to incorporate a similar conclusion to their liturgical assembly. From the fourth century onward, the Latin words *Ite Missa est* were employed for this task... What is most significant about this dismissal is that the whole liturgy receives its name, ‘the Mass,’ from the word *Missa* (‘dismissal’/‘sending’) in this closing line. This points to how the Mass ultimately should be seen as a sending forth. As the Catechism explains, the celebration of the Eucharist is called ‘Holy Mass’ (*Missa*) ‘because the liturgy in which the mystery of salvation is accomplished concludes with the sending forth (*missio*) of the faithful, so that they may fulfill God’s will in their lives’” (*A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, pp. 147–8; CCC, 1332).

### ... to Go Out on Mission

Did anyone notice that quote from the Catechism including the word *missio* sounds very much like *mission*? I have heard several priests explain that the end of Mass is truly a sending forth of the Christian people on mission. If you think about all we have received at the Holy Mass, our hearts and minds will be very full of God’s truth, goodness, and love. Of course, those are gifts that are meant to be shared! We live in a world that experiences the effects of sin and brokenness, a world that needs hope and light, a world that needs the fruits of the Mass!

As Edward Sri continues, “Jesus told the apostles, ‘As the Father has sent me, even so I send you’ (Jn 20:21). The Father sent the Son into the world, to die for our sins and give us a share in his divine life. As we have seen, the entire paschal mystery of Jesus’ passion, death... resurrection [and Ascension] is made present to us in the Eucharistic liturgy so that we can be more deeply incorporated into Jesus’ life and mission. The more deeply the Eucharist unites us to Jesus, the more we will radiate his life and his love in the world around us. The closing line of the liturgy, therefore, is not an aimless dismissal. It is a dismissal with a mission. It is a sending forth of God’s people to bring the mysteries of Christ into the world” (*A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, p. 148). The next time you are leaving Mass, I challenge you to think joyfully of all the fruits of that Mass and then ask yourself: How can I share these fruits with the people I meet?