



**Step-by-Step Walk Through the Mass
Do This in Remembrance of Me, Part 79
Recessional
by FR. LUKE SPANNAGEL**



After reflecting on the dismissal and mission last time, was anyone else excited to take the fruits of the Mass out into the world?! Let's go! This time, we review some acts of reverence similar to the beginning of the Mass with which we conclude and go forth from Mass. As the Diocese of Peoria instructs, "After the blessing and closing words, 'Go forth, the Mass is ended,' the priest goes to the altar once more and reverences it with a kiss. The Mass 'ends' where it began—at the altar. For on the altar the sacrifice of Christ was made present in our midst. As the Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith, the altar on which this sacrifice is rendered is given this gesture of reverence and even love. A kiss is a symbol of love—the priest, 'the servant of God and minister to the Holy of Holies,' acknowledges his love for the mystery that he celebrates. As it is the source and summit of the Church, it is then necessarily the source and summit of the priest's ministry in the parish. Everything in the Church derives from and is pointed toward the Most Holy Eucharist" (*A Study of the Mass*, p. 20). Just as we saw in the entrance at the beginning of Mass, the altar is especially honored as the place where Jesus truly becomes present during the Mass.

Going Forth to Share the Good News

The Diocese of Peoria continues, "After reverencing the altar the priest genuflects in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament before exiting the sanctuary. The priest then recesses, most often following the cross and candles that led him in... The recessional may be accompanied by a hymn of praise, or even just instrumental music. The music at this point is typically majestic, as we have concluded the celebration of a most majestic event" (*A Study of the Mass*, p. 21). Some priests have pointed out that there is not a recessional antiphon in the Roman Missal, whereas we do have Entrance and Communion Antiphons. These antiphons unite us in praise and meditation, while the conclusion of Mass feels more open-ended. Perhaps this is fitting, in accordance with mission and sending forth; perhaps this open-ended conclusion reminds us that the fruits of the Mass continue and are carried forth with us as we depart. Within that mindset, singing together also feels appropriate, as we are now going forth together, united by Christ!

Carrying Christ's Love into the World

After the celebrant follows the processional cross out of church, the Diocese of Peoria challenges us: "It is not appropriate to leave or exit the church before the priest, as the symbolism is so important. Following the cross 'into the world' is a profound thing that all of us do, even if not immediately after the priest. We carry the cross of the Lord with us as it was 'by this Holy Cross you have redeemed the world!' The Cross is the most powerful symbol of God's love for his people. 'God so loved the world that He sent His only son so that we might not die, but have eternal life!' In Catholic churches we have a corpus of Christ on our processional crucifixes and sanctuary crucifixes because the Paschal Mystery is at the center of all our celebrations. When we look upon the crucifix we see our God, who literally loves us to death! We carry this love with us into the world, as all of us are 'missionaries' given a mission to spread the 'Good News' of our Lord Jesus Christ" (*A Study of the Mass*, p. 21).

Let us then remember this love as we "process" out into the world. Let us take with us what we have learned about God and about ourselves; let us take the graces we have received; let us take the victory of the Cross which we have experienced and process out into the world. That is how the fruits of the victory of the Cross are extended to every heart; that is how the fruits of the Mass are extended to all people! That is how we embrace our identity as Eucharistic Missionaries!