

Mystagogical Reflections on the Collect & Prayer after Communion for Lent

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MYSTAGOGY ON THE MASS TEXTS FOR SUNDAYS, SOLEMNITIES, AND HOLYDAYS

"Mystagogy", simply put, is the study of mystery. For Christians, it focuses on the Paschal Mystery of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an ancient and beloved Church method for reflecting on the experiences of worship, prayer, and the Christian life.

| Collect or Opening Prayer | Prayer after Communion |
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| <p>The Collect is introduced by the words "Let us pray" and followed by a few moments of silence to allow us to quietly compose our own prayers. These are then gathered or "collected" by the Priest and offered to God through Jesus Christ.</p> <p>Catherine Combier-Donovan Archdiocese of Baltimore</p> | <p>The single purpose of the Prayer after Communion is to recapitulate in prayer every word, action, and belief that has led us to (and will soon send us from) the Eucharist fashioned (by profound sacred words and actions) and received by those gathered. Although not words of our choosing, but rather those supplied by the Church, it attempts to verbally express what we have experienced and believe.</p> <p>Father Jim Bessert Diocese of Saginaw</p> |



The Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions [FDLC] formed an Ad Hoc Committee for Mystagogical Reflection. The committee task is to provide help for reflecting on texts of the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*. The 2013 effort focused on the Collect or Opening Prayer for Sunday, Solemnity, and Holyday Masses. The 2014 work addressed the Prayer after Communion with implications for discipleship. This work is on the FDLC website in PDF: <http://www.fdlc.org> – click the Mystagogical Reflections button.

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**Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions [FDLC]
Mystagogical Reflection on Texts of the *Roman Missal***

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ASH WEDNESDAY

Collect:

Grant, O Lord, that we may begin with holy fasting
this campaign of Christian service,
so that, as we take up battle against spiritual evils,
we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

The first obvious image that screams out at us is that Lent is a battle against spiritual evils, a campaign for which we seek to be armed with suitable weapons. Granted, these are weapons of self-restraint. It is a campaign of Christian service but, nonetheless, the reality of life and our preparation for Easter is marked with all the metaphors of spiritual warfare.

The second image, although first in appearance, is that of fasting, a holy fasting, one that is meant more for preparation for something greater than a negative battle against gaining weight. This common theme of Lent, fasting, along with the concept of self-restraint, reminds us that our self-discipline is not only possible but a life-giving source of our service. Our self-discipline can witness to the power of prayer and Christian example in the face of a world hungry for power and material things.

Prayer:

Echoing the Entrance Antiphon, Lord, you are merciful to all and despise nothing you have made. Overlook our sins and failings and bring us to repentance, for you wish the salvation of all.

Submitted by:
Fr. Leon Strieder SLD
St. Mary's Seminary, Houston, Texas
Diocese of Austin

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ASH WEDNESDAY

Prayer after Communion:

May the Sacrament we have received sustain us, O Lord,
that our Lenten fast may be pleasing to you
and be for us a healing remedy.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

How robust the theological juxtaposition of the reception of the *Sacrament* (that is, the Body and Blood of Christ in the fullness of the meaning and celebration of the Paschal Mystery) and the discipline of the *Lenten fast* (the abstinence of anything that detracts us from Christ).

Assuredly, if we allow this prayer to be the basis of our Lenten journey to: (1) keep our hearts and minds focused on the transformative power of the Eucharistic Sacrament and (2) eliminate through our spiritual fasting whatever prevents us from keeping our hearts and minds focused on Christ – we will discover an on-going spiritual formula for a “*healing remedy*” for growth in holiness (and, not only, just for the Season of Lent, but throughout our entire Christian lives).

Prayer:

O God, give us the grace to begin this Lent with all that we have and are, sustained by the reception of the Body and Blood of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Through our Lenten fast help us also to remove any and all obstacles that keep us from your healing gifts. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Submitted by:
Reverend James Wm. Bessert
Director, Office of Liturgy
Diocese of Saginaw

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FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Collect:

Grant, almighty God,
through the yearly observances of holy Lent,
that we may grow in understanding
of the riches hidden in Christ
and by worthy conduct pursue their effects.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

This new prayer for the post-Vatican II missal, with roots in the *Gelesian Sacramentary*, speaks volumes in only a few words. The cyclic nature of our liturgical calendar is not merely meant for time-keeping but for continued growth in faith. Understanding comes over time by our attention to that gradual process of continual conversion.

In the mysteries of the Sacraments and with eyes of faith, we see what is hidden – the treasure of grace that transforms and enables us to live after Christ’s example. Our response to that grace already given is our desire for right relationship with God and with one another, a visible testimony that verifies God’s continued action in the world.

This week, thousands will give similar testimony to God’s grace at work in the lives of those to be called Elect. Just as the word “initiation” implies, election is only the beginning of a lifelong pursuit of deepened conversion and an ongoing, gradual “becoming” into the image and name of Christ. As we begin again our annual Lenten springtime, let us renew our pursuit of that becoming that we may be found worthy of our election by God.

Prayer:

Lord God, deepen our faith this Lent to continue the good work you have begun in us that we may always witness to your saving power and grace.

Submitted by:
Diana Macalintal
Director of Worship
Diocese of San Jose

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FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Prayer after Communion:

Renewed now with heavenly bread,
by which faith is nourished, hope increased,
and charity strengthened,
we pray, O Lord,
that we may learn to hunger for Christ,
the true and living Bread,
and strive to live by every word
which proceeds from your mouth.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

This particular prayer was a new composition for the post-Vatican II Missal. In it, we reflect on aspects of what we have obtained from the reception of the Eucharist. We are directed toward contemplation on three important aspects of our Christian life – the theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. These virtues – without which one cannot have the life of God – are the foundations of Christian moral activity. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children.

The prayer also connects us directly to the Verse before the Gospel in all the Lectionary years for this Sunday. Tempted by Satan in the desert, Jesus replies, “One does not live on bread alone, / but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.” Without physical sustenance for forty days, Christ reminds us that his word is true spiritual nourishment – that which gives us the strength and compassion to love God and neighbor, to live a life of faith, and to keep our focus on the hope of eternal life.

Prayer:

Lord, satisfied now from this heavenly banquet, may we learn to hunger, not for the fare of this world, but for the spiritual sustenance of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith with this nourishment, deepen our love of God above all things, and teach us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Submitted by:
Julie Males
Director, Office for Worship & RCIA
Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana

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SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Collect:

O God, who have commanded us
to listen to your beloved Son,
be pleased, we pray,
to nourish us inwardly by your word,
that, with spiritual sight made pure,
we may rejoice to behold your glory.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

Every year on the Second Sunday of Lent we hear the Gospel of the Transfiguration of Jesus. The Collect, inspired by the Transfiguration story, recalls God's command to listen to his beloved Son. Also, we pray that God's word nourishes us inwardly that we might have the ability to see and rejoice in the glory of God.

Sometimes we are blind to the glory of God in our lives and in this world. Sometimes the darkness and sin of our world keeps us from seeing God at work in our lives. Yet, God reveals day after day the immense love and mercy that is available to us through his Son, Jesus Christ.

The season of Lent provides us with the opportunity to listen deeply to God's Word, Jesus Christ, and to call upon God to change us inwardly so that we might see God's glory here on earth and in life eternal.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Word made flesh. Open our ears that we might hear, our eyes that we might see, and our hearts that we might love more deeply and give glory to God with our lives.

Submitted by:
Karen Kane
Director of the Worship Office
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

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SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Prayer after Communion:

As we receive these glorious mysteries,
we make thanksgiving to you, O Lord,
for allowing us while still on earth
to be partakers even now of the things of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

The origins of this prayer are ancient, yet after centuries of disuse it was reintroduced into the Mass after the Second Vatican Council (Turner, *Pastoral Companion to the Roman Missal*, p. 37). In this prayer we give thanks to God for allowing us to partake in the things of heaven. God accomplishes this through the Eucharistic Liturgy which we have just celebrated. As we receive these glorious mysteries we partake in a foretaste of the heavenly banquet.

What is to be our response to God for all the good bestowed on us? Our only response can be to give God thanks and praise. To make thanksgiving requires effort and energy on our part. In a sense, our thanksgiving becomes a verb that requires us to act, to respond to God's gift.

Our response should enable our hearts to be open to receive and feast at the banquet table. By receiving the gifts that are freely given, God makes us partakers of the things of heaven. In the act of receiving, our humanity is drawn into the divinity, that is, into communion with the Triune God.

Prayer:

Help us to hunger for the Bread of life and the Cup of salvation so that we will truly desire you – and in desiring you, seek you – and in seeking you, find you in the great sacrament of your love.

Submitted by:
David J. Reilly
Director, Office of Worship
Diocese of Kalamazoo

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THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Collect:

O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness,
who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving
have shown us a remedy for sin,
look graciously on this confession of our lowliness,
that we, who are bowed down by our conscience,
may always be lifted up by your mercy.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

This Collect in the Third Edition of the Roman Missal is, in essence, the same prayer as in the previous edition of the missal. This ancient prayer, found in the *Gelasian Sacramentary* (8th century), was restored to the missal following the Second Vatican Council.

The new translation of this prayer, however, provides fresh insights into the meaning in the text. The praying Church, in the human condition, approaches God with sincere humility. The guilt we carry for our continual lapses into sinfulness is expressed by the poetic image of being “bowed down by our conscience.”

This prayer, however, also contains an extraordinary spirit of hopefulness for humanity. While there have been volumes written on ways to attune our lives to the penitential season, this succinct prescription or “remedy for sin” provides the threefold solution for our transgressions: fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. This text reminds us that it is only in our sure trust in God’s goodness and compassionate treatment of all sinners that we are assured we will be lifted up from our burden of sin.

Prayer:

Lord God, help us to nourish a humble spirit. Keep us mindful of the need for acts of sacrifice in our daily lives in order to bolster our resolve to turn away from sin.

Submitted by:
Judy Bullock, EdD
[Former] Director of Worship
Archdiocese of Louisville

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THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Prayer after Communion:

As we receive the pledge
of things yet hidden in heaven
and are nourished while still on earth
with the Bread that comes from on high,
we humbly entreat you, O Lord,
that what is being brought about in us in mystery
may come to true completion.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

The text of this prayer was recovered from the *Verona Sacramentary* and was included in the first edition of the *Roman Missal* after the Second Vatican Council. This text is particularly pertinent for Lent since this penitential journey rooted in Baptism is meant to draw us to the right path, to cleanse us from our past sins, and to help us to align ourselves more closely with Christ.

In this prayer the “already but not yet” understanding of the celebration of the Eucharistic banquet is addressed. This Liturgy that we celebrate here on earth gives us a foretaste of the heavenly one to come. This prayer expresses both the yearning we have for God and the knowledge that we can achieve the fullness of joy only in God’s presence.

We are in awe of the extraordinary gift of membership in the Body of Christ, always a mystery of immense magnitude. As people of hope, cognizant of God’s promise of salvation, we are reminded of the ongoing action of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Prayer:

Gracious God, source of nourishment in the Bread of life and Chalice of salvation, help us to open our minds and hearts to the transformative power of your Spirit as we strive to embrace and reflect your goodness.

Submitted by
Judy Bullock, EdD
[Former] Director of Worship
Archdiocese of Louisville

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THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

- I. FOR THE CONFERRAL OF THE SACRAMENTS OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION
2. FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE SCRUTINIES
- A. For the First Scrutiny

Collect:

Grant, we pray, O Lord,
that these chosen ones may come worthily and wisely
to the confession of your praise,
so that in accordance with that first dignity
which they lost by original sin
they may be fashioned anew through your glory.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

Two weeks ago the Elect celebrated the acceptance, made by the diocesan Church gathered around its Bishop, of their election by God. Acting in the name of God, the Church enrolled them for participation in the mysteries of Christian Initiation (see RCIA, nos. 119 and 133). Today the Church will celebrate with the Elect the first of three Scrutinies meant “to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful” and “to...strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good” (RCIA, no. 141). This dual process of purification and enlightenment, we pray in this Collect, brings them “worthily and wisely” to Baptism during the Easter Vigil.

Echoing the words of the Samaritan woman who joyfully announced that the Lord revealed “everything I have done” (John 4:29 NAB) as presenting no obstacle for union with him, the Elect, too, become witnesses to the saving power of God. Thus we pray that these Elect will soon join all the baptized in doxology, giving right praise, that right and duty of all who have been reconciled with God and are being conformed to the image and likeness of the glorified Christ, divinized humanity, and incarnate divinity.

Prayer:

Merciful Lord, show me how I have fallen short of the glory to which you have called me. With living water, soften my hardened heart so that you may mold me in your image and likeness. Turn, O Lord, even my faults to your good so that the joy you bring to my life may attract others to your merciful love.

Submitted by:
Andrew Casad
Director of the Office for Liturgy
Archdiocese of Seattle

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THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

- I. FOR THE CONFERRAL OF THE SACRAMENTS OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION
2. FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE SCRUTINIES
- A. For the First Scrutiny

Prayer after Communion

Give help, O Lord, we pray,
by the grace of your redemption
and be pleased to protect and prepare
those you are to initiate
through the Sacraments of eternal life.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

During the Period of Purification and Enlightenment, the Elect, who are preparing for Christian Initiation in the Catholic Church through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, experience the celebration of the Scrutinies. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* tells us that “The scrutinies are meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good” (RCIA, no. 128).

In today’s Prayer after Communion, we ask God that, by his grace, he help the elect, that he protect and prepare them as they complete their conversion “and deepen their resolve to hold fast to Christ and to carry out their decision to love God above all” (RCIA, no. 128).

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we pray that the Sacrament that we have received nourish and strengthen us as we, too, recognize the gift of your Son, our Lord, as the Living Water. Help us, we pray, to share with the Elect at every opportunity our experience of your Divine Presence in our lives. May this time of deep personal reflection bring them to great joy in anticipation of the day that they receive the gifts of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Submitted by:
Sylvia M. Garcia
Associate Director, Office of Worship
Diocese of Dallas

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT
[Laetare Sunday]

Collect:

O God, who through your Word
reconcile the human race to yourself in a wonderful way,
grant, we pray,
that with prompt devotion and eager faith
the Christian people may hasten
toward the solemn celebrations to come.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

The theme of reconciliation found in the beginning of the Collect has its basis in Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 5. Jesus the Word of God reconciles broken humanity to the Father. The second half of the prayer was composed following the Second Vatican Council.

The prayer calls to mind God's wonderful plan of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is through Jesus the Word made flesh that God continues the act of reconciling humankind to himself. The second phrase of the prayer petitions God to give us the grace to move with determination toward the Easter celebrations that are drawing closer.

As we mark the mid-point in our Lenten journey, we once again hear God desire that we turn from sin and follow Jesus. God's plan is indeed a wonderful way to experience reconciliation brought about when we enter into life with Jesus, when we die with Christ to become a new creation in him. Reconciliation in Christ is indeed cause for great joy.

Prayer:

Merciful God, inspire in me the desire to live my faith with enthusiasm and determination. Awaken in me the fruits of the Holy Spirit so that my joy may be real and lead others to your loving embrace.

Submitted by:
David J. Reilly
Director of Worship
Diocese of Kalamazoo

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT
[Laetare Sunday]

Prayer after Communion:

O God, who enlighten everyone who comes into this world,
illuminate our hearts, we pray,
with the splendor of your grace,
that we may always ponder
what is worthy and pleasing to your majesty
and love you in all sincerity.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

The earliest version of this prayer, found in the 7th century *Gelasian Sacramentary*, was used on the Vigil of the Epiphany (see Paul Turner, *Pastoral Companion to the Roman Missal*, page 42). Epiphany, illumination, manifestation. Revelation of the Christ *ad gentes*, to the nations. These wondrous themes of Epiphany find a pleasant home in this *Laetare* Sunday in the middle of Lent.

We can rejoice that this image of light is borne in the Gospels of all three Lectionary years. Most surely in Year A's story of the man born blind. But also in Year B's recounting of light and darkness, of coming toward the light, so that works may be clearly seen as done in God. And also in Year C's story of the prodigal son who "saw the light" and left death for life.

What, then, does this prayer illumine? These truths: each and every person born in this world is bathed in God's light; each and every person born anew in Baptism is awash in the splendor of God's grace; each graced person must behave accordingly, as one belonging to God. After eating and drinking Christ the Lord, we live, not in darkness, but in light.

Prayer:

O Christ the Lord,
after eating and drinking you,
let us be unafraid to stand in your light and bask in your grace
so that we may reflect your light, your goodness, your grace in all we do and say.

Submitted by:
Eliot Kapitan
Director, Office for Worship and the Catechumenate
Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

I. FOR THE CONFERRAL OF THE SACRAMENTS OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

2. FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE SCRUTINIES

B. For the Second Scrutiny

Collect:

Almighty ever-living God,
give to your Church an increase in spiritual joy,
so that those once born of earth
may be reborn as citizens of heaven.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

Those who experience a startling insight or a conversion point in life often use the words “being reborn” to describe this dynamic. Over the course of catechumenal formation, those on the way to Christian Initiation have encountered graces to interpret their lives with the Lord, and the *graces amazing* that are affecting the Church’s own spirit of joy. What is spiritual joy? It is the contentment of knowing one is in right relationship with God, self, and others. It knows that there is more to living than what the eye can see. Spiritual joy is a habit of knowing the Divine Beloved so that what is produced is an overflowing fertility. One becomes a new person, no longer only a preoccupied citizen of earth, but one destined for heaven with a longing that will only be fulfilled in seeing God face to face.

Prayer:

O God,
earthbound by our own desires, we accept much of life without thought of you.
Open our hearts that with new insight
we may seek you as the source of our contentment.
May we know the freedom of companionship with you,
that knowing your voice while on earth,
we may long to see you face to face in heaven.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Submitted by:
Fr. Tom Ranzino
Pastor, St. Jean Vianney Church
Director of Office of Worship
Diocese of Baton Rouge

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

- I. FOR THE CONFERRAL OF THE SACRAMENTS OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION
2. FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE SCRUTINIES
- B. For the Second Scrutiny

Prayer after Communion

Sustain your family always in your kindness,
O Lord, we pray,
correct them, set them in order,
graciously protect them under your rule,
and in your unfailing goodness
direct them along the way of salvation.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

How incredibly important it is to feed and tend to the needs of the family. Each of us has been recipients of the generosity of those who have provided such care. How even more wonderful it is to hear in lyrical fashion (in today's Prayer after Communion) that our God does the same for all of us – God's family – members of the Household of God. In addition to asking for God's sustenance, we ask for forgiveness [*correction*], protection, and direction.

Throughout our assemblies of faith on this Fourth Sunday of Lent, prior to our reception of Eucharistic sustenance, we likewise witnessed the outpouring of God's forgiveness [*correction*], protection, and direction with the celebration of this Scrutiny of the Elect among us. Through the powerful beam of Christ's unfailing light, we prayed that they be enlightened to truly see like "the man born blind" and to become "staunch and fearless witnesses to the faith" (RCIA, no. 168).

May the sustenance we receive in the reception of the Holy Eucharist and the illumination of our faith, expressed by our words and deeds, assist our Elect on their path toward full Initiation this Easter.

Prayer:

Bring us out of any and all darkness, O Lord, our God, and by the Light of your Christ, forgive, protect, and guide us into your truth. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Submitted by
Reverend James Wm. Bessert
Director, Office of Liturgy
Diocese of Saginaw

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FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Collect:

By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God,
may we walk eagerly in that same charity
with which, out of love for the world,
your Son handed himself over to death.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

This Collect, as all are, is introduced by the words “Let us pray” and followed by a few moments of silence to allow us to quietly compose our own prayers. These are then gathered or “collected” by the Priest and offered to God through Jesus Christ.

In today’s Collect we ask for help on the journey. Throughout Lent, we have the image of the disciples on the road to Jerusalem, of the pilgrim Church on a journey through the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection.

In the Collect of the Fourth Sunday of Lent, we were asked to walk the journey with eager faith. In this Collect, we ask to walk the journey with eager love. With Jesus as our model, and knowing as he did what awaits us on the other side of pain and suffering, let us ask God’s help to become more deeply united with Christ, to become Christ-like in love, and to love the world as Jesus did.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, may your word penetrate my life. Make me more like you. Turn my doubt into eager love and my hesitant steps into loving actions on behalf of others.

Submitted by:
Catherine Combier-Donovan
[Former] Director of Worship
Archdiocese of Baltimore

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Mystagogical Reflection on Texts of the *Roman Missal***

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FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Prayer after Communion:

We pray, almighty God,
that we may always be counted among the members of Christ,
in whose Body and Blood we have communion.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reflection:

[Note: The readings given for Year A may always be used in place of the ones for Year B and Year C.]

One of the great, mysterious aspects of our faith is the understanding that the divinity can dwell within us. The Second Reading for Year A brings this out when Paul reminds us that the Spirit dwells within us (Rom 8:8-11). He reiterates this in Romans 12:5: “so we, though many, are one body in Christ.” Through the power of the Spirit we are united with him who “humbled himself to share in our humanity” (part of a quiet prayer during the Preparation of the Gifts). This is the theology of humanity.

As long as we remain faithful to him, we have some share in the power of the Spirit that enables us to be Church and, as “one holy, catholic and apostolic Church”, manifest the presence of Christ in the world.

Prayer:

Lord, Jesus Christ,
just as you restored life to Lazarus and brought him out of the tomb,
we pray that you, through the Spirit,
will renew us as ministers of your Word, and doers of your will.

Submitted by:
Karen L. Podd
Buffalo Diocesan Liturgical Commission
Diocese of Buffalo

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FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

- I. FOR THE CONFERRAL OF THE SACRAMENTS OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION
- 2. FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE SCRUTINIES
- C. For the Third Scrutiny

Collect:

Grant, O Lord, to these chosen ones
that, instructed in the holy mysteries,
they may receive new life at the font of Baptism
and be numbered among the members of your Church.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

Reborn, receiving new life, and heading for glory! This Collect focuses the elect on the nearness of Baptism and the congregation on the prospect of rebirth. In addressing God, the Collect for each Scrutiny gets to the point using the verbs “grant” and “give”. There is firmness in our request that calls for an emphatic result. The Third Scrutiny Collect asks that the chosen ones “be numbered among the members of your Church.” God’s beneficence is sought and new life is what must flow from this.

Using the words “holy mysteries” may provide a clue to what the chosen ones need to know. From the biblical Greek *mysterion*, later translated into Latin as *sacramentum* or sacrament, the prayer indicates in what the chosen ones should be instructed. They, and all of us who hear these words, need to know what the holy mysteries (Sacraments) of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist intend throughout our Christian lives. Our prayer today could neither be more focused nor more intentional: let all be “numbered among the members of your Church.”

Prayer:

God of all that lives, lead us to spiritual rebirth as your chosen ones seek entry through Baptism. Transform us, Christians and aspiring Christians, with the love that you continue to lavish upon us. May this Lent reacquaint us with the joy of being saved through Baptism.

Submitted by:
Dr. Patricia J. Hughes
Director of the Office of Worship
Diocese of Dallas

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FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

I. FOR THE CONFERRAL OF THE SACRAMENTS OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

2. FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE SCRUTINIES

C. For the Third Scrutiny

Prayer after Communion

May your people be at one, O Lord, we pray,
and in wholehearted submission to you
may they obtain this grace:
that, safe from all distress,
they may readily live out their joy at being saved
and remember in loving prayer those to be reborn.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

As a Church, we are mindful of the Elect and the journey of faith that has brought them this far. In this prayer, we recall the joy and hope of being saved in Christ, a gift that is already ours, but perhaps a gift we may not always recognize. Living out the joy of our Baptism is no easy task. We must be willing to submit to God's grace wholeheartedly. Often, the Elect, who await new birth in Christ, inspire us as they submit their lives to God's grace and forgiveness through the celebration of the Scrutinies.

As we look forward to the Christian Initiation of many adults throughout the world, we pray for and anticipate with great joy the Baptism of those who will be welcomed fully into the household of Christ, into our communities of faith. We join with them in their journey to the waters, renewing our own baptismal faith, in sure knowledge of God's power over sin and death, filled with the joy of the resurrection.

Prayer:

Lord, may we be ever mindful of your saving grace that fills us with the joy and hope of the resurrection, of ever-lasting life. Strengthen all of us in these final days of preparation as we look forward to the celebration of the Sacrament of rebirth for our Elect.

Submitted by:
Karen Kane
Director of the Worship Office
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

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PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

At the Mass

Collect:

Almighty ever-living God,
who as an example of humility for the human race to follow
caused our Savior to take flesh and submit to the Cross,
graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering
and so merit a share in his Resurrection.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

The Collect on this solemn day of the liturgical year has been in use for the Sunday before Easter dating back at least to the eighth century and the *Gelasian Sacramentary*. Thus, it has been in use for at least 1200 years in the celebration of the Eucharist.

In the proclamation of the Passion of our Lord, we encounter the suffering that Christ endured for our sake. By this collect, we pray that in our patient suffering we are joined even closer to our Lord in a special way. And more so, through this suffering, we may share in the glory of the Resurrection when all pain will be wiped away.

Whether our pain and suffering is temporary, chronic, or even debilitating, we are graced with the chance to share in a part of the life of Jesus that many take every chance to avoid. However, should we not embrace life in all stages so as to be able to rejoice in the next life where pain and suffering will be wiped away?

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, help me to reach out to those who are no longer able to be present at the Eucharistic table because of illness or old age. Allow me to carry their burden – even if only for a time – when I visit them, pray for them, and care for their needs. And, if I suffer, may I be patient and willing to carry this grace with which I have been gifted, and look forward to sharing resurrected life at the end times.

Submitted by:

Fr. Duane Wachowiak

Pastor and Director of Worship & Liturgical Formation

Diocese of Gaylord

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PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

At the Mass

Prayer after Communion:

Nourished with these sacred gifts,
we humbly beseech you, O Lord,
that, just as through the death of your Son
you have brought us to hope for what we believe,
so by his Resurrection
you may lead us to where you call.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

This prayer comes at the end of what – if well-celebrated – is a very long and intense Eucharistic Liturgy, full of contrast between high and low, light and dark, triumph and despair. We begin with Jesus’ triumphal entrance into Jerusalem and finish the Gospel with Jesus crucified and laid in a tomb. We hear Paul’s description of the One in the form of God humbling himself, taking the form of a slave. This Prayer after Communion even uses the very word “humble” to describe how we approach God in prayer.

Yet death is never the end of the Paschal Mystery, and death is never without its partner – resurrection – in every Eucharistic celebration. This is why at the end of this Palm Sunday Liturgy, we can pray that Christ’s Death brings us hope and that his Resurrection leads us to heaven.

To be the Bread of life, Holy Communion is first the bread of death. For those who dare to “draw near and take the Body of our Lord”, the implication is huge: we must die to ourselves and all that keeps us from God if we are to share in the eternal life of the Risen Christ.

Prayer:

God our Father, may we who have been reborn in Baptism and nourished at the Lord’s table find strength in the Eucharist, so that we may truly die with Christ and be led to share in his Resurrection.

Submitted by:
Jeremy Helmes
Pastoral Associate for Liturgy & Music
St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

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THE CHRISM MASS

Collect:

O God, who anointed your Only Begotten Son with the Holy Spirit
and made him Christ the Lord,
graciously grant
that, being made sharers in his consecration,
we may bear witness to your Redemption in the world.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

We sometimes forget the importance of the Holy Oils, especially Holy Chrism, for our Christian life. Chrism is central to Baptism, Confirmation, and two of the Holy Orders, priesthood and episcopacy. There is no anointing in the conferral of the diaconate. Up until the Second Vatican Council, Priests were anointed with the Oil of Catechumens on their hands, mainly to exorcize them in order to hold holy things. Now Chrism is used. Bishops have always been anointed on their heads with Chrism.

This new prayer reminds us that Jesus is the Anointed One, the Christ, the Messiah. This prayer is an echo of the theophany at Jesus' baptism. In our Baptism, we are made sharers in this consecration. Plus our mission, to bear witness to his Redemption in the world, echoes the prayer for anointing with Chrism in Baptism, that "As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet, and King, so may you live always as members of his body, sharing everlasting life" (*Rite of Baptism for Children*, nos. 62, 98, 125, and 151).

Prayer:

Echoing the Entrance Antiphon, may we give glory to Jesus Christ who has made us by Baptism into a kingdom, all of us priests, for God. May our service be one which reflects the holiness and service of Christ to a world in dire need of healing and salvation.

Submitted by:
Rev. Leon Strieder, SLD
St. Mary's Seminary, Houston, Texas
Diocese of Austin

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THE CHRISM MASS

Prayer after Communion:

We beseech you, almighty God,
that those you renew by your Sacraments
may merit to become the pleasing fragrance of Christ.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reflection:

First of all, in this prayer we have the concept of renewal. Every time we celebrate the Sacraments, the entire Church is renewed and each person open to God's grace is likewise renewed. While certainly this is true in our theology of the Eucharist, it is true in all Sacraments. For example, in the present *Rite of Baptism for Children*, in the intercessions, we pray "Renew the grace of our baptism in each one of us" (RBC, no. 47).

In this prayer, the choice of the verb, merit, may demand some explanation. It is not that we merit anything by our actions. All that we are and do is first God's gift to us. Rather, we must cooperate with his grace and give better witness to God by our lives. Our actions and intentions count.

Finally, we are "to become the pleasing fragrance of Christ." Perhaps the sense of smell has become minimal in our sacramental theology. Yet we notice with a positive response the sweet smell of Chrism in our Sacraments of Initiation. We are pleasing before God and must give good witness to him.

Prayer:

Echoing the Communion Antiphon, may we sing of the mercies of God for ever. May our mouth, our speech, our song proclaim that our God is faithful. His mercy is everlasting.

Submitted by:
Rev. Leon Strieder, SLD
St. Mary's Seminary, Houston, Texas
Diocese of Austin

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March 19

SAINT JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, **Solemnity**

Collect:

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that by Saint Joseph's intercession
your Church may constantly watch over
the unfolding of the mysteries of human salvation,
whose beginnings you entrusted to his faithful care.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

Did you ever wonder what it was like to be Joseph? Surely, it was difficult in the beginning to understand what Mary was saying to him: "I have conceived a child but I have not been with a man."

We know that he struggled with her proclamation but, through the "mysteries" of our Lord God, his struggle became calm and the difficulty of his path was made smooth. He understood clearly that he was the "chosen" one here on this earth to be with Mary as they reared the Son of God. The reality that he was the one to do God's will was unfolded to him and he understood his task.

God chooses us as well.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we know that you are present to us always and that you call to us. Often, we are not prepared to listen. Help us to hear you better. Help us to erase the clutter that surrounds us each and every day in order that we may be more attentive to you. Show us the way, O Lord, to know you, to love you, to see you, and to serve you better. In the name of Jesus we pray.

Submitted by:
Dr. Jessie Thomas
Professor Homiletics II
The Diaconate Office
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

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March 19

SAINT JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, **Solemnity**

Prayer after Communion:

Defend with unfailing protection,
O Lord, we pray,
the family you have nourished
with food from this altar,
as they rejoice at the Solemnity of Saint Joseph,
and graciously keep safe your gifts among them.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

Pope Benedict XVI wrote these words in his encyclical titled, *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love), on Christian love (no 39): “Faith tells us that God has given his Son for our sakes and gives us the victorious certainty that it is really true: God is love!” That love of God is all around us. It is in our families, it is in our faith communities, it is in our working environment, it is in everyone that we meet. When we look at each other, God calls us to recognize the face of his Son Jesus in the eyes of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Love is the greatest gift. May we learn by Saint Joseph’s example.

Prayer:

God of Love,
Joseph was the husband of Mary,
and you entrusted Jesus to his care.
I am inspired by his fidelity and integrity
as your self-sacrificing servant.
Allow Joseph to offer
strength, courage, fidelity, and tender self-less love to all.
Let this holy family renew in us
the desire to be your servant,
faithful in the vocation you have given to us.

Submitted by:
Dr. Jessie Thomas
Professor Homiletics II
Office of the Diaconate
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

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March 25

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD, **Solemnity**

Whenever this Solemnity occurs during Holy Week, it is transferred to the Monday after Second Sunday of Easter.

Collect:

O God, who willed that your Word
should take on the reality of human flesh
in the womb of the Virgin Mary,
grant, we pray,
that we, who confess our Redeemer to be God and man,
may merit to become partakers even in his divine nature.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

One of the most wonderful of all the tenants of our Catholic faith is proclaimed in the Collect for today's Solemnity. As do several of the Prefaces to the Eucharistic Prayer, today's Collect proclaims, in no uncertain terms: The Divine took the form of humanity so that humanity might become Divine! What an outreach! What an offering! God the Father reaches out to his own creation! So much does the Divine want to be one *with* us, that the Divine becomes one *of* us!

“[T]he reality of human flesh” is a striking phrase! Yes! In all of its complexities and in all of its frailties and in all of its beauty and in all of its struggles – the Word took on the *reality* of our flesh, of our lives, of our existence. With its pains, joys, losses, and delights, the Word *really* became one of us, wholly! Not half-way, not just seemingly, not in appearance only – the Word took the reality, the whole of, our flesh.

That alone is enough, truly! However, there is more. Not only did the Word *really, truly* take on the *whole* of our humanity, he did so precisely that he might share his Divinity! What a gift – and what a responsibility – for those of us who would dare to believe! For this, and for so many other reasons, it *is* right and just, it *is* our duty and our salvation to always and everywhere give thanks, through him!

Prayer:

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness you dared to share the reality of my life. In so doing, you offer to share with me the Divine Love that comes through your relationship with the Father. May I always be willing to do no less with others – to share what you have given me. For you are Lord, true God and true Man, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

Submitted by:
D. Todd Williamson
Director of the Office for Divine Worship
Archdiocese of Chicago

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March 25

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD, *Solemnity*

Whenever this Solemnity occurs during Holy Week, it is transferred to the Monday after Second Sunday of Easter.

Prayer after Communion:

Confirm in our minds the mysteries of the true faith,
we pray, O Lord,
so that, confessing that he who was conceived of the Virgin Mary
is true God and true man,
we may, through the saving power of his Resurrection,
merit to attain eternal joy.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

So much – packed into so little! We make this prayer having just shared in the Eucharist. Upon finishing the Communion procession, we sit, perhaps with a bit of silence, to let what God has just done for us and to us sink into our hearts and souls. Gathering ourselves after that, the Church asks that the Lord confirm the mysteries of the faith in us!

What mysteries, do you suppose, this prayer is asking be confirmed in our minds? Consider the ones that are referenced in this prayer: that the Word was made flesh (“he who was conceived”); that the Word was born of a virgin; that in the Incarnation, Jesus Christ was true God and true man, sharing both natures; that Christ rose from the dead; that in that Resurrection we are saved, and that the salvation through his Resurrection brings eternal joy!

So much – packed into so little!

It makes sense that only after receiving the Eucharist would one be able to even *think* of confirming these mysteries of the true faith! Yes – only the Eucharist can strengthen us to fathom, to accept, to take as our own these Mysteries – that is, these encounters, with the living Christ, raised from the dead, living in our midst – now.

Prayer:

There are no words, O Lord our God, with which I might ascent to all the Mysteries you have opened to us through the Incarnation of your Son. True God and true man, “the dawn from on high” has broken into my life! I can only but mutter one word: Amen. Through Christ our Lord.

Submitted by:

D. Todd Williamson

Director of Worship

Archdiocese of Chicago

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Over the course of the year the Church celebrates the whole mystery of Christ, from the Incarnation to Pentecost Day and the days of waiting for the Advent of the Lord.

Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar [UNLYC], no. 17

Lent

Lent is ordered to preparing for the celebration of Easter, since the Lenten liturgy prepares for celebration of the Paschal Mystery both catechumens, by the various stages of Christian Initiation, and the faithful, who recall their own Baptism and do penance.

Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar [UNLYC], no. 27

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