



Episode 31: The Dismissal

SUMMARY

We might consider that the words of the dismissal are the three (*Ite, missa est*) most forgotten words of the entire Mass. The Latin word, “*Ite*” is the imperative of “go”. This is an emphatic, insistent Go! “*Ite, missa est*” literally means “Go, it is sent.”

Mass was originally a series of dismissals: the dismissal of those in the Order of Penitents, the dismissal of those in the Order of Catechumens, and finally, at the end of Mass, the dismissal of the members of the community of the Faithful. The Church herself teaches what we are to do at the dismissal of the Mass: we must return to doing good works, and praising and blessing God.

The new edition of the Roman Missal provides four options for the dismissal: 1) Go forth, the Mass is ended; 2) Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord; 3) Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life; 4) Go in peace.

The second and third dismissals were added to the Roman Missal by Pope Benedict XVI in response to the 2008 Synod on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church. The Holy Father added these biblical dismissals

so that the connection between liturgy and daily life would be more evident. The first of these comes from the story of the healing of the demoniac in the Gospel of Saint Mark. The other comes from the fifth chapter of Saint Luke which describes the healing of the paralytic. He went home glorifying God! We are reminded at the conclusion of every Mass that the mission of the Catholic Faithful is precisely to bring the message of the Gospel to their families, to their neighborhoods and to the workplace.

Roman Missal

To the Concluding Rites belong the following...

c) the Dismissal of the people by the Deacon or the Priest, so that each may go back to doing good works, praising and blessing God.

General Instruction, n°. 90.

The celebration of Mass, as the action of Christ and of the People of God arrayed hierarchically, is the center of the whole of Christian life for the Church both universal and local, as well as for each of the faithful individually. For in it is

found the high point both of the action by which God sanctifies the world in Christ and of the worship that the human race offers to the Father, adoring him through Christ, the Son of God, in the Holy Spirit.

General Instruction, n° 16.

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

[T]he liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper. (n° 10)

IN THE TRADITION

“Go home to your family and announce to them all that the Lord in his pity has done for you.” Then the man went off and began to proclaim in the Decapolis what Jesus had done for him; and all were amazed.

Mark 5: 19-20

“He stood up immediately before them, picked up what he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God. Then astonishment seized them all and they glorified God, and, struck with awe, they said, “We have seen incredible things today.”

Luke 5: 25-26

“What does [Jesus] finally say to them when he sees them? ... ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.’ Having put into their hands a summary of Christian teaching he commands them to go out into the whole world.”

Saint John Chrysostom
Homily on the Gospel of Matthew, 90.2

THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

✠ “[The] faithful ... carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world. ... They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity.

Lumen Gentium, 31

IN THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

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.

Order of Mass

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How would you describe the relationship between liturgy and life?
2. What other parts of the Mass point to the Christian's mission in the world?

FOR FURTHER READING

Pope Benedict XVI, *The Word of the Lord: Verbum Domini: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, (Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 2001).