

Song of Praise

Many Catholics been doing something every week at mass that doesn't even exist!

We've called it many names over the years - "Recessional" "Song of Sending" "Closing Song" - but all those names can't change the fact that it doesn't exist, at least not in the Church's official liturgical books.

I've long been bothered by forcing people to **stay** and sing after the deacon tells us: "The mass is ended, **GO ...**", especially when most people aren't singing - they're scooping up their belongings and waiting (sometimes not so patiently) to make a quick exit, hopefully without trampling Father.

So at St. Thomas More, we frequently don't sing a closing song, and instead follow what the General Instruction of the Roman Missal tells us should happen after Communion:

*When the distribution of Communion is finished, as circumstances suggest, the priest and faithful spend some time praying privately. If desired, a **psalm or other canticle of praise or a hymn may also be sung by the entire congregation.*** (GIRM, #88)

It is natural that our entire Eucharistic action should culminate in this song, praising and thanking God for such a wonderful gift! This action follows the example set by Jesus and the disciples at the Last Supper, as we hear in the Gospels of both Matthew and Mark -

"Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." (Matthew 26:30, Mark 14: 26

Note that the General Instruction tells us this song of praise arises out of silence. A shared silence, following our sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ, in which we each offer a prayer of thanks, which springs forth into a shared song of thanks.

The Instruction also says this is a song that is sung by everyone. Active participation is our goal above all others. (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, #14*) This is not a song by the choir or a soloist to showcase their abilities, nor is it a "meditation song" for a passive audience to listen to. This is a song where we all join in to sing our praise to God.

To bring closure to our celebration, we often reprise a portion of this song of praise as the ministers (and assembly) leave.

*Steve Raml
Director of Liturgy & Music*

