

Mystagogical Reflections on the Collect & Prayer after Communion for Advent

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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
<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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FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Collect:

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,
the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ
with righteous deeds at his coming,
so that, gathered at his right hand,
they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom.
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 Collect (Opening Prayer) for this First Sunday of Advent is an ancient prayer that first appeared in the *Gelasian Sacramentary* of the eighth century. It was not in the *Roman Missal* of 1962, but was restored to use after the Second Vatican Council.

This prayer captures the imagination for it provides us with an image of the People of God running toward Christ, doing so by our good works, in hope of being gathered at his right hand. We pray for resolve and we pray that we might one day “be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom.”

During this Advent Season, we long for the second coming of Christ and we long for the fullness of redemption that Christ offers us by his dying and rising. Yet, our world has not been completely redeemed, and with this knowledge we call upon God to strengthen us, to give us the desire to make straight the path of our lives by acts of charity and good works.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, strengthen my resolve to run toward you and help me to live a life of charity so that I may meet you every day in the faces of others.

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

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FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Prayer after Communion:

May these mysteries, O Lord,
in which we have participated,
profit us, we pray,
for even now, as we walk amid passing things,
you teach us by them to love the things of heaven
and hold fast to what endures.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

The Prayer after Communion helps the assembly to focus on what has just been accomplished in the Eucharist. This particular prayer was newly composed for the first edition of the *Roman Missal* after the Second Vatican Council. However, it has its roots in two prayers found in the *Verona Sacramentary* dating around the sixth century.

The word “mysteries” is often understood as something beyond comprehension. In the context of this prayer, it is drawn from the biblical Greek word *mysterion*, which was later translated into Latin as *sacramentum* or sacrament. Thus, the phrase, “may these mysteries”, refers to the celebration of the Eucharist in which we have just participated. Another word worthy of explanation is the unfamiliar use of the word “profit”. It is translated literally from the Latin and means to have an effect on us.

Consequently, we pray that the celebration of the Eucharist affect us so that, while on this earth, we may grow in faith through our participation in the sacred mysteries. We also pray to learn to love as Christ who loves perfectly in this world with his eyes fixed on heaven.

Prayer:

Lord, through our participation in the Eucharist, transform us so that we may be made holy and be nourished to walk and love as Christ in the world.

Submitted by:
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SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Collect:

Almighty and merciful God,
may no earthly undertaking hinder those
who set out in haste to meet your Son,
but may our learning of heavenly wisdom
gain us admittance to his company.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

This is the season to be watchful and alert as we “make haste” to meet the Son of God. As John preached at the River Jordan, we must prepare the way. This requires that we avoid distraction and stay on course. How hard that is to do in a secular season that fills our desire with temptations of worldly gifts. As the Prayer after Communion this day suggests, we must “judge wisely things on earth” and “hold firm to the things of heaven.” We need to focus on what lies ahead, seeking “heavenly wisdom,” and running toward the goal of the heavenly dwelling.

In his instruction on prayer, Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” During this season, if we can remain focused on the goals of the kingdom, perhaps our secular lives can be transformed. Paul wrote to the Philippians, “I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God’s upward calling, in Jesus Christ.” If we can transform this earthly kingdom to a place that prepares the way of the Lord, we will be prepared for the prize of meeting Christ in the heavenly kingdom.

Prayer:

Lord, we seek the prize of your heavenly calling. We pray that you will help us to transcend the distractions and temptations that keep us from being focused on the ways of your kingdom. Strengthen us and enlighten our minds in your ways so that we may gain our place in your eternal kingdom.

Submitted by:
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SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Prayer after Communion:

Replenished by the food of spiritual nourishment,
we humbly beseech you, O Lord,
that, through our partaking in this mystery,
you may teach us to judge wisely the things of earth
and hold firm to the things of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

The Prayer after Communion for the Second Sunday of Advent acknowledges the desire of God's people to satisfy their hunger and thirst in the wisdom of an All-Wise God. We are a people who having tasted the goodness of the Lord, return over and over again with glad hearts to the One we have come to adore.

It is in this communal act of celebrating the Paschal Mystery that we remember God's power to transform us into being instruments of love, peace, and justice. As ambassadors of Christ, we give evidence to the world of God's wisdom and love. Now that our hunger and thirst are satisfied, we are freed to share this Good News!

Prayer:

Lord, we place our trust in your promise that you will come again in glory.
Stir our hearts by the power of your Spirit to do your will
for we await with joyful hope your coming.
Come, Lord Jesus, come.
We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Submitted by:
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THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Collect:

O God, who see how your people
faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity,
enable us, we pray,
to attain the joys of so great a salvation
and to celebrate them always
with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.
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 prayer is in a fifth-sixth century collection of prayers. Thought lost, the collection was rediscovered in the nineteenth century. This prayer was restored to the missal in the work of Vatican Council II. It recalls our waiting for a birthday celebration that looks beyond to the Three Days of Passion, Death, and Resurrection.

We are still waiting on this Third Sunday. But for what? This prayer reminds us that we are not awaiting the birth of Christ. That has already happened. We are, however, awaiting the coming feast day – the annual celebration that once again recalls the impact of Jesus Christ, no longer a babe, who is our great salvation.

With every baby, we see and hope for great things to come. In waiting for the feast day of this One, who is God-with-us, we look to the salvation already won for us. This birth leads to Passion and Death. And to new life. So too for us: birth to death; then death to new life.

Prayer:

You are no longer a babe, O Lord, but our risen Savior. Help shape our lives and deaths to be like yours, that one day we may share the lasting joy of new life with you for ever.

Submitted by:
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THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Prayer after Communion:

We implore your mercy, Lord,
that this divine sustenance may cleanse us of our faults
and prepare us for the coming feasts.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

Through the Prayer after Communion, we join hearts in a final plea, making a loving request of God before being sent forth.

As the People of God faithfully await and rejoice in the Lord's nearness, there is a thick thread of theological truth in the content of today's prayer. Recalling that a Sacrament effects what it signifies, the Communion that we have just received is the sacramental sign of Christ in his Death and Resurrection. Since Christ offered his life that we might live, a principle effect of this "divine sustenance" is a deepening of love and of community in the Church. What the prayer asks is what we believe but understand only obliquely: that the nourishing, deepening presence of God within us will replace our faults and failings with grace.

In Matthew 26:28, "for this is the blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins" [NAB], we know of the Eucharist as imparting forgiveness. The Council of Trent spoke of the Eucharist as "remedy" freeing us from sinfulness.

The key word today is "sustenance". The Eucharist intends food for life's journey. Through the Eucharist, we are fed and we build an abundance of grace, sharing more fully in the life of Christ. As we strive to "become what we eat", discipleship takes root within our lives. Our faults are rooted out by God's mercy.

Prayer:

Gracious and loving God, we give thanks for a rich measure of grace, mercy, and forgiveness through Holy Communion. May we rejoice in preparing for the Lord's Nativity, sustained by this Sacrament of Love, freely offered and gladly received.

Submitted by:
Dr. Patricia J. Hughes
Director, Office of Worship
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FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Collect:

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord,
your grace into our hearts,
that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son
was made known by the message of an Angel,
may by his Passion and Cross
be brought to the glory of his Resurrection.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

As we approach the final days of Advent we are faced with the images of Christ's birth, Passion, Death, and Resurrection. The Church is placing before us the message that Christ's Incarnation was only part of God's design for the redemption of humankind. The Church is placing before us that there was much more to the story of Christ's birth.

This prayer asks that God would pour forth his grace into our hearts. Because of this grace we may know that the message of the Angel announcing the birth of Christ would signify to us that we are brought to the glory of Christ's Resurrection only by living in the shadow of his Passion and Cross. We may want to see the child in the manger. However, this prayer reminds us that the manger always includes the Cross.

Let us use these final days of Advent to reflect on Christ's life beyond his birth to making the connection to the completion of his path to the Cross and the glory of his Resurrection.

Prayer:

God of life, as you pour your grace into my heart, open it to receive the message of the birth of Christ without forgetting his Passion, Death, and Resurrection.

Submitted by:
Sister Sharon Marie Stola, OSB
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FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Prayer after Communion:

Having received this pledge of eternal redemption,
we pray, almighty God,
that, as the feast day of our salvation draws ever nearer,
so we may press forward all the more eagerly
to the worthy celebration of the mystery of your Son's Nativity.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reflection:

Three weeks ago, in the Opening Collect, we began the Advent Season asking that God might grant us the resolve to “run forth with righteous deeds to meet [his] Christ.” Today, on this last Sunday of the season, we actually find ourselves repeating that request in the Prayer after Communion. At this point in the liturgy, having just received the Eucharist, we ask that it might strengthen us to “press forward” as we near the great feast of Christmas.

Notice, however, that there is a bit more urgency in the request we make today. We know that the approaching day is “ever nearer”, and we ask that we might move toward it “all the more eagerly”. There is a deliberate focus here, a steadfastness, to which we are invited. This is a focus and steadfastness that may very well be needed in these final days before Christmas, when we might be susceptible to the more commercial dynamics of the season or to the demands of a busy parish schedule.

As many of us may stress and struggle in these final days to “get it all done”, it is good to be reminded that what we are preparing to celebrate isn't just a “holiday”; it isn't just an “observance”. It is the *feast day of our salvation!* This a rather profound lens through which to view and understand just what it is we are getting ready to celebrate! To prepare “more eagerly”, with focus and steadfastness, would indeed make for a more “worthy celebration of the mystery of [the] Son's Nativity!”

Prayer:

Creator of the Stars of Night, increase in me the desire for your Son's coming. In these final days before the celebration of his Nativity, may I long all the more for his return and may I eagerly press forward to meet him in every circumstance of my life and in every person that I meet.

Submitted by:
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December 8

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
PATRONAL FEASTDAY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, **Solemnity**

Collect:

O God, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin prepared a worthy dwelling for your Son, grant, we pray, that, as you preserved her from every stain by virtue of the Death of your Son, which you foresaw, so, through her intercession, we, too, may be cleansed and admitted to your presence. 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 first see the celebration of the Feast of the Conception of the Most Holy and All Pure Mother of God in the fifth century on December 9 by Eastern Christians in Syria. By the eighth century the Feast was celebrated in the Western Church on December 8. On May 13, 1846 the United States Bishops unanimously chose the Blessed Virgin Mary, conceived without sin, as Patroness of our country.

The celebration of this Solemnity during Advent gives us an amazing insight into Mary's role, from the time of her conception, in the salvation of humankind as made visible in her son. This prayer asks that as we progress in living the Gospel message of her son, we look for help from Mary's intercession to being admitted to the joys of eternal life and living in God's presence and be free from sin.

Advent recalls for us these images of the presence of God in our world, through the 'yes' of Mary, now and in the time to come. As we ask God, through Mary's intercession, to guide us in the way that will lead us to heaven, let us also remember the needs of our country and seek Mary's intercession for them.

Prayer:

God, fill me with a fervent desire to accept your call to holiness as Mary did, so that I may be a reflection of you to all whom I meet this day.

Submitted by:

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December 8

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
PATRONAL FEASTDAY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, **Solemnity**

Prayer after Communion:

May the Sacrament we have received,
O Lord our God,
heal in us the wounds of that fault
from which in a singular way
you preserved Blessed Mary in her Immaculate Conception.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

In the Immaculate Conception, the Blessed Virgin Mary is preserved from original sin, thus preparing her for the singular role she would play in salvation history – bringing Christ into the world in the flesh.

While we are not kept free from original sin, the story is similar for us. By our celebration of the sacred mysteries, we are in preparation for our own participation in the saving work of Christ. In the “Sacrament we have received”, Christ has come to us in the flesh. We are filled with grace and united to Christ, “cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1393). In turn, we are then sent forth from the celebration to bring the Gospel of Christ to a world in such need of healing.

Following her humble example and empowered by her constant intercession, may we always respond to the Lord’s invitation as Mary did, build up the body of Christ and come to share in his Resurrection.

Prayer:

Nothing is impossible for you, O Lord. Send the Holy Spirit upon us to heal our wounds. Give us the grace to overcome our sinful ways and follow the example of your sinless Mother.

Submitted by:
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[In the Dioceses of the United States]

December 12

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

PATRONAL FEASTDAY OF THE AMERICAS, **Feast**

Collect:

O God, Father of mercies,
who placed your people under the singular protection
of your Son's most holy Mother,
grant that all who invoke the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe,
may seek with ever more lively faith
the progress of peoples in the ways of justice and of peace.
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:

In the 1969 reform of the general liturgical calendar, December 12 was the Optional Memorial of St. Jane Frances de Chantal. In 1971 the Congregation for Divine Worship confirmed the addition of the Memorial of Our Lady of Guadalupe on the same day for the United States. Our Lady of Guadalupe was raised to a Feast in 1987 for the United States. In 2008, in the supplement for the *Missale Romanum*, editio typica tertia, the orations for this feast were added to the general Roman calendar and thus into our English missal and Jane Frances de Chantal was moved to August 12.

The prayer emphasizes the protection of Mary for the People of God and requests that all who invoke her may seek with greater faith the progress of peoples in the ways of justice and peace. The present Mexican Missal speaks more appropriately of our country, "nuestra patria".

God is asking us to trust that he has put the Americas under the singular protection of his Son's Mother and we are to grow in faith and work for justice and peace. We cannot be Church without a true sense of being a particular people in a particular locale. Likewise God's plan demands that we work for his justice so all people may live in the dignity of the children of God.

Prayer:

May we take Mary's Magnificat more seriously, working for those disenfranchised in our midst. For truly the Lord has cast down the mighty and has lifted up the lowly.

Submitted by:

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[In the Dioceses of the United States]

December 12

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

PATRONAL FEASTDAY OF THE AMERICAS, **Feast**

Prayer after Communion:

Lord God, may the Body and Blood of your Son,
which we receive in this sacrament,
reconcile us always in your love;
and may we who rejoice in Our Lady of Guadalupe
live united and at peace in this world
until the day of the Lord dawns in glory.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

“The Guadalupe vision is not something totally new, for it is simply the ideal of the kingdom of God as lived and proclaimed by Jesus. This is the lifestyle and ideal that he died for. Guadalupe is the good news of the Christian movement that is recorded in the Gospels and lived and celebrated by Christians, especially in the Eucharist.” Virgil Elizondo in *Guadalupe Mother of the New Creation*, Orbis Books, 2007, p. 115.

Although Blessed Mary, the Immaculate Conception, has pride of place in the United States of America, Our Lady of Guadalupe belongs to all of the Americas. It is telling that this appearance, this vision, this gift took place in the very heart of the Western Hemisphere, in the center of the Americas. This pregnant Virgin, so utterly kind to the poor, so full of proof to the doubtful, so full of peace to those desperately in need of it belongs to us all. Loves us all. Lives with us all. Awaits, with us, for that dawning day of the Lord.

Prayer:

O God of power and mercy, we pray that the Eucharist that we have received nourish us and strengthen us to be reconciled to you. We pray that with the help and intercessions of our Lady of Guadalupe, may we dwell among each other in peaceful harmony until the day that we join you in your heavenly Kingdom. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Submitted by:

Sylvia M. Garcia

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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

Advent

Advent has a twofold character, for it is a time of preparation for the Solemnities of Christmas, in which the First Coming of the Son of God to humanity is remembered, and likewise a time when, by remembrance of this, minds and hearts are led to look forward to Christ's Second Coming at the end of time. For these two reasons, Advent is a period for devout and expectant delight.

Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar [UNLYC], no. 39

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