

Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions [FDLC]

Mystagogical Reflection on Texts of the *Roman Missal*

Link to Mystagogy Project on FDLC home page for free access and use: <http://www.fdlc.org>.

Mystagogical Reflections on the Collect & Prayer after Communion for excerpts from **The Proper of Saints** and days that replace Sundays in Ordinary Time

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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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February 2

THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD, **Feast**

Collect:

Almighty ever-living God,
we humbly implore your majesty
that, just as your Only Begotten Son
was presented on this day in the Temple
in the substance of our flesh,
so, by your grace,
we may be presented to you with minds made pure.
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:

Forty days have passed since our annual commemoration of Christmas, the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord. We celebrated that day God dwelling among us, the almighty ever-living God definitively pitching his tent among his people (see John 1:17).

Today the Lord fulfills the law, the promise he made to David and foreshadowed through Hezekiah, purifying the temple by entering it, bringing light into the house the people have both prepared and defiled. Today, as God once again takes up his dwelling in our bodies, we pray that we might be purified so that the light entrusted to us in Baptism may burn brightly. Today we bless candles so that we never forget the Light for revelation to the all the nations.

In emptying ourselves of any stain which would obscure the light of Christ, we pray this day that others may come to gaze upon the Lord alone when they encounter we who are, in his grace, temples of his glory.

Prayer:

Enkindle within me, Lord, the desire to be pure of heart so that, as you enter my fragile self, I may enter into your eternal dwelling and so gaze upon your radiant face.

Submitted by:
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February 2

THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

Feast

Prayer after Communion

By these holy gifts which we have received, O Lord,
bring your grace to perfection within us,
and, as you fulfilled Simeon's expectation
that he would not see death
until he had been privileged to welcome the Christ,
so may we, going forth to meet the Lord,
obtain the gift of eternal life.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

Let us hope the parish begins this feast blessing candles and then all processing with lighted candles going "in peace to meet the Lord." What an image: light bearers, illumined by Christ, going to meet him in the special manifold presence of the Risen One in assembly, in spoken Word, and in Eucharist.

Let us be like Simeon: expecting great things. Let us be like Simeon: going in peace to do what is at hand. Let us be like Simeon: looking everywhere for the light for revelation to the Gentiles (Lk 2:32). Let us be like Simeon: seeing salvation at work in this world. Let us be like Simeon: giving God glory for it all.

Let us be light bearers of the Illumined One in all we say and do and are.

Prayer:

Strengthened by this food, this meal that is Christ the Lord,
let us go forth and meet him, the Dead and Risen One,
everywhere to go.

Submitted by:
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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
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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.

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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
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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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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:

The prayer situates the event of the Annunciation clearly as part of God's plan for salvation. It is by God's will that the Incarnation takes place. The prayer is beautifully linked to the Prologue of John's Gospel where we are reminded that Jesus was begotten not by blood, nor by carnal desire, nor by man's willing it, but by God (John 1:13). Nine months after the Annunciation, the Church proclaims this entire Gospel on Christmas at Mass during the day.

From this plan of God comes redemption as the reason for the Incarnation. The death of Jesus was not an accident of history but a part of the God's plan which took flesh in the Incarnation.

Prayer:

Lord God, open our hearts
so that, like Mary,
we will welcome Christ into our lives.
May we, too, say yes to the invitation
to participate in God's plan for salvation.

Submitted by:
Fr. John Sauer
Office of Worship
Diocese of Winona.

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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:

It is not enough that the mysteries of faith remain something apart from us. Rather, the mysteries lead us to confession and witness. In the Eucharist, we receive the Body and Blood of Christ – true God and true man. Having received the Eucharist, we pray that they will have an effect in our lives.

As St. John tells us repeatedly in his Gospel, Jesus came that we might have eternal life. And having eternal life we will have eternal joy.

Prayer:

Lord God,
Mary reflected on the faith of her ancestors
and opened her life to the Savior.
May we be confirmed in faith
so that our witness
will find in her a model of trust and courage.
Amen.

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June 24

THE NATIVITY OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST, **Solemnity**

At the Vigil Mass

Collect:

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that your family may walk in the way of salvation
and, attentive to what Saint John the Precursor urged,
may come safely to the One he foretold,
our Lord Jesus Christ.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

At the beginning of every Collect, the Priest makes this invitation: “Let us pray.” Together with the Priest, everyone prays silently. The Priest then gathers the prayer of the assembly into one, addressing a formal, structured prayer to God that concludes with the assembly’s affirmation: “Amen.” The whole formula is called the Collect. The Collect for today’s celebration is based on the *Verona Sacramentary* for this Solemnity. It relies on the canticle sung by Zechariah (Luke 1:76-77) upon the birth of his son, John.

By the grace of God, we are “family” and in today’s prayer we ask for that grace to be given to the Church – God’s family – to walk in the way of salvation. Saint John is the herald who admonished our ancestors and encourages us today to “prepare / make straight the way of the Lord” (Matthew 3:3; Isaiah 40:3). The core of John’s message is to walk in the way of salvation. That “way” is the path God wants for us and Jesus models for us. The Baptist warns us not to diverge from that path.

Promising to be attentive “to what Saint John the Precursor urged”, we ask to come “safely”, without harm, to Jesus with whom we long to be in union. This is a request that we have not only for ourselves but for those who have gone before us and for all those yet to be.

Prayer:

Good and gracious God, we come before you in gratitude for sending us Saint John, the voice in the desert of our lives. His is the voice that urges us to follow the path of refreshment, the way of salvation, the way of the Lord. Lead us safely home. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Submitted by:
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June 24

THE NATIVITY OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST, **Solemnity**

At the Vigil Mass

Prayer after Communion:

May the marvelous prayer of Saint John the Baptist
accompany us who have eaten our fill
at this sacrificial feast, O Lord,
and, since Saint John proclaimed your Son
to be the Lamb who would take away our sins,
may he implore now for us your favor.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

A version of this prayer appeared in the Roman and Ambrosian traditions. It begins by referring to the “marvelous prayer of Saint John the Baptist”. John proclaims that Jesus is the Lamb who takes away our sin. At his baptism, Jesus tells John that it is fitting he be baptized in order to *fulfill all righteousness*. *Righteousness* seems to mean the saving activity of God. *To fulfill all righteousness* is to submit to the plan of God for the salvation of the world.

We now ask, no beg, the Baptist, who knew the Savior of the World and proclaimed him as the Lamb who would take away our sins, to intercede for us. We have known God’s grace in the Holy Communion shared. We implore John’s help that this grace accompany us now as we leave the church and return to daily life.

Prayer:

Loving God, you gave us Saint John the Baptist as an example of a disciple filled with passion and zeal. His lifestyle led him to the awareness that Jesus was the Holy and Chosen One. May our lives reflect even a small amount of the enthusiasm of the Baptist’s so that people will choose to follow Jesus because of our witness. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Submitted by:
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June 24

THE NATIVITY OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST, **Solemnity**

At the Mass during the Day

Collect:

O God, who raised up Saint John the Baptist
to make ready a nation fit for Christ the Lord,
give your people, we pray,
the grace of spiritual joys
and direct the hearts of all the faithful
into the way of salvation and 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:

When the Angel, Gabriel, appeared to Zechariah, he told him of the son he and Elizabeth would have: a son that would bring great joy to them, and many others would rejoice at his birth (Luke 1:14). The Angel also told Zechariah that his son would be great and would bring back to the Lord, their God, “many of the sons of Israel” (Luke 1:16). Upon believing this message, Zechariah prophesied in his canticle that John would prepare the way to salvation and peace (Luke 1:76). It is in this context that we pray today’s Collect.

Akin to “Christmas in July”, we celebrate a kind of “Advent in June” as we celebrate the birth of John the Baptist. We are reminded of his mission on earth: “to make ready a nation fit for Christ the Lord.” He preached repentance and cried out, “make ready the way of the Lord” (Mark: 1:3). And so, we pray for the “grace of spiritual joys” so that our hearts be led into the way of salvation and peace. Like the people of Israel, we rejoice in John’s message of returning to the Lord and preparing the way for him to come again.

Prayer:

Lord, help us to heed John the Baptist’s cry and prepare the way for Christ’s coming again. Fill us with the joy of Christ, and inspire us to announce by our very lives the Good News of salvation and peace which only he can give.

Submitted by:

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June 24

THE NATIVITY OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST, **Solemnity**

At the Mass during the Day

Prayer after Communion:

Having feasted at the banquet of the heavenly Lamb,
we pray, O Lord,
that, finding joy in the nativity of Saint John the Baptist,
your Church may know as the author of her rebirth
the Christ whose coming John foretold.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reflection:

As we celebrate the Solemnity of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, the Church imagines for us the great joy of the message he proclaimed, Christ Jesus. John's whole life was directed to Christ. He baptized people for the forgiveness of sins in preparation for the Baptism of Jesus: "He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire" (Luke 3:16 NAB). The Prayer after Communion alludes to the rebirth of the Church, a Church baptized into Christ and enlivened by the fire of the Holy Spirit. And, we pray that we might know well "the author of her rebirth the Christ whose coming John foretold."

Having feasted at the supper of the Lamb, we find great joy in celebrating this herald of Good News, St. John the Baptist, for he prepared the way of the Messiah, the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world by his Death and Resurrection on the Cross. Our participation in the sacrifice of Christ, the Eucharistic banquet, brings us intimate knowledge of Christ, our Lord. May we celebrate and give thanks for this gift.

Prayer:

Lord, we give you thanks for the great message of salvation that Saint John foretold. We ask you to direct our hearts fully to Christ, that we might always live the Gospel and proclaim to the world the joy of your salvation.

Submitted by:

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June 29

SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES, **Solemnity**

At the Vigil Mass

Collect:

Grant, we pray, O Lord our God,
that we may be sustained
by the intercession of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul,
that, as through them you gave your Church
the foundations of her heavenly office,
so through them you may help her to eternal salvation.
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 on this Solemnity prompts us to look to the roots of this religion known as Christianity. Just as Abraham was the first to deliver the knowledge of monotheism, the truth of One True God, that is, the foundation of the religion of our ancestors in the faith; Peter and Paul taught the message of Jesus and set in motion the religion of Christianity.

It is that teaching that implants within us the hope and promise of the ultimate fulfillment of the covenant: an eternal dwelling place with the One True God. Through our first teachers, Peter and Paul, we trust that our prayer for salvation is received by God.

Prayer:

O Lord, like Peter and Paul, may we have the courage to share the teachings of our faith and do what we can to inspire others to truly be, as we profess, one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Submitted by:
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Diocese of Buffalo

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June 29

SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES, **Solemnity**

At the Vigil Mass

Prayer after Communion:

By this heavenly Sacrament, O Lord, we pray,
strengthen your faithful,
whom you have enlightened with the teaching of the Apostles.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

In the Gospel for this day, Jesus instructs Peter to, “feed my sheep” (John 21: 15-19). We are fed in this Liturgy by the sacred food of the Eucharist. We are also fed by the sacred word preached by the Apostles. In the Second Reading this day, Paul acknowledges that this word does not come from human origin but from Jesus Christ, the Redeemer (Galatians 1:11-20). Gamaliel warned the Sanhedrin that if these teachings do come from God, they cannot be stopped. Defying threats, the Apostles did not stop teaching (Acts 5:34-42). Through both word and Eucharist, we are strengthened by Jesus Christ.

Prayer:

Lord, we pray that we may never cease to hunger for the teachings that came first from you and were shared by your Apostles. We pray that we may never fear to continue the apostolic mission through our lives.

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

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June 29

SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES, **Solemnity**

At the Mass during the Day

Collect:

O God, who on the Solemnity of the Apostles Peter and Paul
give us the noble and holy joy of this day,
grant, we pray, that your Church
may in all things follow the teaching
of those through whom she received
the beginnings of right religion.
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:

When we take into account the concept of our spiritual lives, it is natural for us to recall the shoulders of faith upon whom we stand – in our own personal families, our parish, religious, or diocesan communities. Today’s Collect invites us to purposefully reflect on Saints Peter and Paul upon whose shoulders the entire Church stands and commemorates today.

In honoring their memory and, as the prayer so unmistakably invites us, to appreciatively follow the teachings of these two champions of the faith, we are drawn into the festival of “noble and holy joy”. Notably, the greatness of both Peter and Paul comes from their conversion and call to holiness. Likewise, may we follow in their footsteps with the best and appropriate expression of our discipleship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer:

O God of endless ages, the Church sets before us today Saints Peter and Paul. You knew well their faults and failings; yet, through your Beloved Son, their lives were transformed into faith-filled Apostles on whose shoulders we your Church in this age now stand. Open our hearts that our lives likewise be transformed into the image and likeness of your Son whose name we bear as Christian. We ask this in his name, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, now and for ever. Amen.

Submitted by:

Reverend James Wm. Bessert

Director, Office of Liturgy

Diocese of Saginaw

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June 29

SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES, *Solemnity*

At the Mass during the Day

Prayer after Communion:

Grant us, O Lord,
who have been renewed by this Sacrament,
so to live in the Church,
that, persevering in the breaking of the Bread
and in the teaching of the Apostles,
we may be one heart and one soul,
made steadfast in your love.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

This prayer is inspired by a description of the life of the early Church that is found in the Acts of the Apostles 2:42: “They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.”

In the early Church, this meant sharing the same thoughts, attitudes, and desires to take care of everyone so that no one lacked for anything. In the breaking of the bread they recognized Christ’s presence. They were devoted to prayer because through it they were in communion with Christ. Their teachings were about Christ who died and was raised by the Father for the salvation of all.

Is not this description of Church the same for us? Today we pray that in receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, we are renewed in the life of grace given us in Baptism and strengthened to live out the call to be Church. How can we live out this call today? Pope Francis, in his address to Ecclesial Movements on May 18, 2013, gives three words that can help us be Church: “The first: Jesus....The second: prayer....Finally: witness...means living Christianity as an encounter with Jesus that brings me to others....”

Prayer:

Almighty God, we are most grateful for the nourishment and graces received in Holy Communion. Let them strengthen us to be living examples for others in our communities, so that they recognize the presence of Christ in their midst and welcome you into their hearts.

Submitted by:
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August 6

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD, **Feast**

Collect:

O God, who in the glorious Transfiguration
of your Only Begotten Son
confirm the mysteries of faith by the witness of the Fathers
and wonderfully prefigured our full adoption to sonship,
grant, we pray, to your servants,
that, listening to the voice of your beloved Son,
we may merit to become co-heirs with him.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

How about a fresh connection to mark the days in the middle of this long stretch of Ordinary Time? Today's Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord is 40 days before the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, which falls on September 14. Eastern Churches celebrate this Feast with much more liturgical fanfare than do we in the West. Even if this very old connection – which dates from about the sixth century in the East – is very new to us, perhaps we can join our Eastern brothers and sisters who sing a hymn of the Cross from this date forward to September 14 (see Pierre Jounel, "The Feasts of the Lord in Ordinary Time" in *The Church at Prayer – Volume IV: The Liturgy and Time*, The Liturgical Press, 1986, pp. 97-98).

On this day we go with Christ to the mountain, we feast on his revealed glory, and we remember that in our Baptism we too are chosen, beloved, transfigured, and destined for glory. But our life in Christ is not complete without walking with him in his paschal suffering. At this Eucharist and in the days that follow, we listen to the voice of God's beloved Son Jesus, the voice that says, "Take up your cross daily and follow me" (see Luke 9:23); the voice that says, "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28 NAB).

The link between transfiguration and cross reminds us that, in Christ, glory and fullness of life is gained through self-gift and sacrifice. Like Christ himself, we, too, are God's beloved children!

Prayer:

Glory foretold, love proclaimed, Savior revealed:
Lord Jesus Christ, the Father revealed you to your followers who then knew you more closely.
Open our eyes to you: present in this Eucharist and with us throughout each moment of our lives.

Submitted by:
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August 6

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD, **Feast**

Prayer after Communion:

May the heavenly nourishment we have received,
O Lord, we pray,
transform us into the likeness of your Son,
whose radiant splendor you willed to make manifest
in his glorious Transfiguration.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reflection:

What Jesus shared with Peter, James, and John on the mountaintop, he shares with us in this Eucharistic feast: a real encounter with the Anointed, the Christ. In this feast, we share Christ's heritage: the prophets and all they reveal about God. We share Christ's chosenness and belovedness: the Father's intimate love and embrace. We share Christ's commission, who says to us: "Rise, and do not be afraid" (Matthew 17:7 NAB). We also share in the confidence of Peter: "[I]t is good that we are here" (Mark 9:5 and Luke 9:33 NAB).

This prayer asks that we be more like Christ and then describes Christ revealed in his "radiant splendor". What would our lives, our relationships, and our world look like if we took this prayer's fourth line and used it as a commission and challenge after sharing the sacramental feast of salvation?

Manifest Christ's radiant splendor!

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,
at your word we rise without fear from this feast of your salvation.
You chose us in love; you fit us for glory.
Let us be icons, revealing your life.

Submitted by:
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August 15

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, **Solemnity**

At the Vigil Mass

Collect:

O God, who, looking on the lowliness of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
raised her to this grace,
that your Only Begotten Son was born of her according to the flesh
and that she was crowned this day with surpassing glory,
grant through her prayers,
that, saved by the mystery of your redemption,
we may merit to be exalted by you on high.
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 has its roots in the Cantic of Mary as Mary responds to Elizabeth's greeting: "For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed" (Luke 1:48). Throughout the great mysteries of her life: the Immaculate Conception, the Annunciation, the Incarnation, the virgin birth, the resurrection of her Son, and the Assumption, Mary is ever the humble servant of God, ever the faithful believer, ever a woman of reflection as she "kept all these things in her heart" (Luke 2:51).

God favored Mary's humility and obedience and, and blessing her among women, God chose her to be the mother of his Son. Upon her death, God exalted Mary, body and soul, into eternal glory, crowning her Queen of Heaven, where she continues to watch over us and intercede for us.

Prayer:

God our Father, you give us the supreme model of faith and holiness in the Blessed Virgin Mary; help us to follow her example and magnify you in all we do.

Submitted by:

Dianne Rachal

Director of Worship

Diocese of Shreveport

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August 15

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, **Solemnity**

At the Vigil Mass

Prayer after Communion:

Having partaken of this heavenly table,
we beseech your mercy, Lord our God,
that we, who honor the Assumption of the Mother of God,
may be freed from every threat of harm.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

Pope Pius XII promulgated the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary with his apostolic constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* on November 1, 1950: “that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory” (no. 44). Through the grace of her Son’s Resurrection, upon her death Mary’s body was reunited with her soul and she was assumed into heaven, an anticipation of the resurrection for all the faithful.

Mary’s title as *Theotokos*, Mother of God, dates to the Council of Ephesus in 431. This title is professed in the *Hail Mary*: “Holy Mary, Mother of God.” The key invocation of this prayer follows in that we ask Mary to “pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death.” We honor Mary, our heavenly Mother, and can always turn to her for comfort, protection, and gentle entreaty to her Son on our behalf.

Prayer:

God of All, who exalted Mary as Queen over all things, may she ever exercise her maternal role on behalf of the members of Christ.

Submitted by:
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August 15

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, **Solemnity**

At Mass during the Day

Collect:

Almighty ever-living God,
who assumed the Immaculate Virgin Mary, the Mother of your Son,
body and soul into heavenly glory,
grant, we pray,
that, always attentive to the things that are above,
we may merit to be sharers of her 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:

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary “body and soul into heavenly glory” was declared a dogma of the Church in the 1950 Apostolic Constitution of Pope Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*. It has been found on liturgical calendars, however, since at least the fifth century. In the first three lines of the Collect we are reminded not only of Mary’s Assumption but also her Immaculate Conception, perpetual virginity, and, of course, her place as the Mother of God.

The heart of this Collect is also the heart of this Solemnity. Writing on the Church’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Pope Paul VI reminds us that “Mary is above all the example of that worship that consists in making one’s life an offering to God” (*Marialis cultus*, no. 21). From her *fiat* to the prophetic words Simeon spoke at our Lord’s presentation in the temple to her place at the foot of the cross, Mary lived “attentive to the things that are above,” placing God always in front of her. When we make our own lives an offering to God as Mary did, being “attentive” and “devoted to carrying out the heavenly Father’s will” (*Munificentissimus Deus*, no. 42), we demonstrate our own belief in the Resurrection and the hope of a place for us in glory with Mary, sharing the joy of good and faithful servants.

Prayer:

May all who meditate upon the glorious example Mary offers us this day, be more and more convinced of the value of a human life entirely devoted to carrying out the heavenly Father's will and to bringing good to others (see *Munificentissimus Deus*, no. 42).

Submitted by:
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August 15

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, **Solemnity**
At Mass during the Day

Prayer after Communion:

Having received the Sacrament of salvation,
we ask you to grant, O Lord,
that, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
whom you assumed into heaven,
we may be brought to the glory of the resurrection.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

As we approach the end of the Mass and are about to be sent forth to glorify the Lord by our lives, we take this opportunity to ask God to listen to the intercession of the one whose “soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord” (Luke 1:46).

The Almighty has done good things for us in providing the “Sacrament of salvation,” which has “filled the hungry with good things” (Luke 1:53). We now make one last request – that the Lord remember “his promise of mercy” (Luke 1:54) of which the Blessed Virgin proclaims in the *Magnificat* (the canticle sung every day in Evening Prayer). She has gone where we hope to go, so we trust that the Lord will listen to her prayers, look with favor on us his lowly servants, and lead us to everlasting life.

Prayer:

Sub Tuum Praesidium

We fly to your patronage, O holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

Submitted by:
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Director, Office of Worship
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September 14

THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS, **Feast**

Collect:

O God, who willed that your Only Begotten Son should undergo the Cross to save the human race, grant, we pray, that we, who have known his mystery on earth, may merit the grace of his redemption in 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:

The mystery of the Cross requires much contemplation, for what kind of God would require of his only Son death on a Cross? Yet, we know that this mystery has saved and set us free from the power of death and sin in our world.

Jesus was obedient to the Father's desire to show us the way of love, even to the point of death on a cross. We are invited to that same obedience, even in the face of the burdens life places in front of us. On a global level, we see devastating natural disasters, civil unrest, massive epidemics of sickness, greed and power leading to harmful consequences for others, and the list goes on. On a personal level, our lives have their own share of crosses.

The challenge, of course, is to march forward in life and in love, confident in the power of the Cross of Christ, which proclaims life over death, freedom from the chains of sin, hope in the face of darkness and despair. It is by our faith in this mystery that we face the challenges of life, knowing that God's love and mercy will raise us up to new life, life eternal.

Prayer:

Almighty God, we give you thanks for the grace to accept the mystery of the Cross in our lives. May we always be filled with hope and joy, knowing that you will not abandon us but, rather, you have saved those who place their trust in you.

Submitted by:
Karen Kane
Director of the Worship Office
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September 14

THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS, **Feast**

Prayer after Communion:

Having been nourished by your holy banquet,
we beseech you, Lord Jesus Christ,
to bring those you have redeemed
by the wood of your life-giving Cross
to the glory of the resurrection.
Who live and reign for ever and ever.

Reflection:

At the center of every Eucharistic Liturgy is the celebration of the Paschal Mystery – the life, Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ. On this Feast of the Exultation of the Holy Cross, we focus on the glory of the Cross, and we remember that Jesus redeemed the world by his dying on the Cross and rising to new life. This dying and rising, this Paschal Mystery, is the pattern for our own lives.

Every day we bear the burden of our own crosses and we share in the sufferings of others. Like Jesus, we join in solidarity with the poor, the marginalized, the broken-hearted, the lost, and the suffering by walking with them the road of life. Our participation in the Eucharistic banquet strengthens us to bear our burdens in faith, to live Gospel lives of service, and to offer our lives to others. We die to ourselves, our selfishness and greed, so that others may have life. This is the pattern of the Christian life.

Today, we glory in the Cross of life and pray that Christ will bring us to everlasting joy at the heavenly banquet.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, we give you thanks for the gift of redemption, for you died on the Cross to redeem us from darkness and sin. Nourish our faith that we may pattern our lives after you and always live in Paschal hope.

Submitted by:
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November 1

ALL SAINTS, **Solemnity**

Collect:

Almighty ever-living God,
by whose gift we venerate in one celebration
the merits of all the Saints,
bestow on us, we pray,
through the prayers of so many intercessors,
an abundance of the reconciliation with you
for which we earnestly long.
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 for All Saints has a long-honored place in the Mass and was included in the Missal prior to the Second Vatican Council. Although similar in content to the previous missal, the descriptive phrases have been expanded in this new translation of the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*.

The imagery in this prayer for the celebration of All Saints draws on John's heavenly vision of a great multitude in white robes and holding palm branches found in the seventh chapter of Revelation. It expresses our faith in the interaction between the Church Triumphant, the heavenly kingdom, and the Church Militant, the earthly kingdom. Not only is it reassuring to us that there are a great number of saints in heaven but the fact that they are advocating for our spiritual welfare is extraordinary.

On this day we give thanks for the witness of faith that all the saints throughout the ages have given to us. It gives us great joy to celebrate this feast in the awareness that the multitude of saints are interceding for us as we yearn for union with God.

Prayer:

Lord God, by your grace, the saints have followed in your path of life. Hear our pleas for your mercy, O Lord, and help us to attune our lives to these models of faith lived in your goodness.

Submitted by:
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November 1

ALL SAINTS, **Solemnity**

Prayer after Communion:

As we adore you, O God, who alone are holy
and wonderful in all your Saints,
we implore your grace,
so that, coming to perfect holiness in the fullness of your love,
we may pass from this pilgrim table
to the banquet of our heavenly homeland.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

This Prayer after Communion has its origins in the Paris Missal and was included in the post Vatican II *Roman Missal*. On this great feast we honor God's holiness shining through in these holy men and women as we celebrate the communion of all the Saints.

The vivid imagery in this text describes life's journey as a movement from one table, the table of the Lord where we celebrate the Eucharist, to the banquet table in our "heavenly homeland" for which we long. The use of the term "pilgrim table" where life's journey begins, not only addresses the transience of life on earth, but even calls to mind the secular thanksgiving feast of gratitude and unity we celebrate at this time of year.

In this prayer we make a plea for God's grace to transform us, sanctifying us so that we may make that passage from "pilgrim table" to the eternal banquet enjoyed by all the Saints.

Prayer:

Gracious God, fill us with your grace that we may know your ways and follow you on the path to holiness. Given this heavenly food for our journey, sanctify us so that we may come to enjoy your heavenly banquet. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Submitted by:
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November 2

THE COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

(All Souls' Day)

1

Collect:

Listen kindly to our prayers, O Lord,
and, as our faith in your Son,
raised from the dead, is deepened,
so may our hope of resurrection for your departed servants
also find new strength.
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:

Each time we celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist we share in the Paschal Mystery of Christ and root our faith more deeply in the Resurrection of that same Christ.

Today, as we honor the dead, all our faithful departed, we pray that God might give us both faith in the resurrection and the concomitant hope that he will raise to new life all his good and faithful servants.

“For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life, but each one in proper order: Christ the firstfruits; then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:22-23 NAB).

Prayer:

Lord, console our spirits with assurances of the Resurrection of your Son. Give us hope that those with whom we shared that faith in this life may have a share in his eternal life. Strengthen us by this faith and hope to be devoted to love and serve you by loving and serving one another.

Submitted by:
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November 2

THE COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

(All Souls' Day)

1

Prayer after Communion:

Grant we pray, O Lord, that your departed servants,
for whom we have celebrated this paschal Sacrament,
may pass over to a dwelling place of light and peace.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

First of all, the prayer uses the plural, “departed servants”, since All Souls’ Day is for all those who have died.

Without being so named, this day is treated as if it were a Solemnity that is not a Holyday of Obligation. On this day, there cannot be a Ritual Mass or a Mass for Various Needs and Occasions (see GIRM, no. 372). Unless there is a Funeral Mass, which is permitted this day (GIRM, no. 380), all the Masses this day are for all who have died, not for any particular person.

As in all Masses, we celebrate the Paschal Mystery, the Death and Resurrection of Christ, who died for all humanity. The image of passing over connects us to the root of the word “Paschal”, the Passover, which, of course, is the context of Jesus’ saving event. We also pass over to a dwelling place of light and peace, an image from the First Eucharistic Prayer, the Roman Canon, *a place of refreshment, light and peace*, a residue from Roman pagan funeral rites at the grave. We pray that all the faithful departed can now share in that heavenly banquet which is peaceful and restful.

Prayer:

Echoing the Communion Antiphon, Lord, you are the Resurrection and the life and we believe in you. May all who have died, believing in you, live for ever in peace and joy.

Submitted by:
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November 2

THE COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

(All Souls' Day)

2

Collect:

O God, glory of the faithful and life of the just,
by the Death and Resurrection of whose Son
we have been redeemed,
look mercifully on your departed servants,
that, just as they professed the mystery of our resurrection,
so they may merit to receive the joys of eternal happiness.
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:

“Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled” (Luke 1:45 NAB). In the second Collect today, we echo this same sentiment of Elizabeth who, though not seeing the infant Messiah Jesus in the womb of her cousin with whom she was speaking, felt within her the joy of trusting in the Lord’s promises.

Though we likewise do not see those for whom we now pray, in joy we plead they have a share in eternal blessedness. We entrust our deceased friends and relatives to the sure and certain hope of God’s mercy. We know that God is ever faithful to those who believed what was spoken to them and who thus hoped for resurrection.

Prayer:

I come before you, Lord, saddened by the death of those who are dear. But I know that they witnessed to you by their righteous life and professed with their lips the faith you gave them. Bring them into your presence and make me know again the joy of all who trust in your merciful love.

Submitted by:
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November 2

THE COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

(All Souls' Day)

2

Prayer after Communion:

Having received the Sacrament of your Only Begotten Son,
who was sacrificed for us and rose in glory,
we humbly implore you, O Lord,
for your departed servants,
that, cleansed by the paschal mysteries,
they may glory in the gift of the resurrection to come.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

We recall the Paschal Mystery, here in the plural, perhaps to emphasize the two central moments of Jesus' Death and Resurrection. We are reminded that Jesus' Death was a sacrifice, a sacrifice to end all ritual sacrifices – and then he rose in glory. We pray that the departed may glory in that gift of resurrection to come. We are also reminded that we are praying for all the departed, in the plural, as these Masses are for all who have died.

Finally, we recall that the Eucharist is a cleansing sacrifice and that the Eucharist, offered for those who have died, can purify them and present them to God on high. In our on-going ecumenical discussions, it is essential we proclaim that we do celebrate the Eucharist for the living as well as for the dead.

Prayer:

Echoing the Communion Antiphon, may the perpetual light of the risen Lord, along with all the Saints in Heaven, shine on all those who have died. Lord, in your mercy, do not forget your own.

Submitted by:

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November 2

THE COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

(All Souls' Day)

3

Collect:

O God, who willed that your Only Begotten Son,
having conquered death,
should pass over into the realm of heaven,
grant, we pray, to your departed servants
that, with the mortality of this life overcome,
they may gaze eternally on you,
their Creator and Redeemer.
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 pray this day that each Christian, conformed to the image of the beloved Son, may become a locus for the ongoing fulfillment of that salvation of humanity revealed and effected in Jesus Christ. Christ's Paschal Mystery marked the door by which humanity definitively passed over from death to eternal life, from enslavement in sin to that Promised Land of union with the Father.

In Baptism, we pass over from self to Christ so that, conformed to him, we too may also pass over mortality and live in the house of the Lord for ever. We pray this day that those whom we loved and who have passed through death from our sight may be admitted to the realm of heaven.

Prayer:

In all ages you tenderly lead your people from despair to hope. As you raised the Israelites out of slavery and brought them to rest in green pastures, so you raised to glory your beloved Son, breaking for ever the prison bars of death. Release our brothers and sisters, those whom you called friends, from the bondage of mortality and welcome them to your heavenly banquet!

Submitted by:
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November 2

THE COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

(All Souls' Day)

3

Prayer after Communion:

Through these sacrificial gifts
which we have received, O Lord,
bestow on your departed servants your great mercy
and, to those you have endowed with the grace of Baptism,
grant also the fullness of eternal joy.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

We recall that the Eucharist is a sacrifice and, in Communion, we receive the gifts of that great sacrifice. Here stated, the gifts are great mercy and fullness of eternal joy. The Eucharist is the great Sacrament we offer for those who have died; we offer this sacrifice for both the living and the dead.

This concept that the Eucharist can be beneficial for those who have died is still an ecumenical topic worth continued discussion. One major issue in this ecumenical discussion is whether there can be any further grace for those who have died. Our faith proclaims that God can bestow mercy on the departed at the time of their death helped by the prayers of the faithful, as God is not determined by our time.

Finally, our eternal life begins with Baptism, the Sacrament by which we first died to sin and are reborn in Christ. At our death, helped by our prayers and the Eucharist, the departed may be granted the fullness of that grace and eternal joy.

Prayer:

Echoing the Communion Antiphon, may we who are still among those on earth be prepared and await the coming of the Lord, whether in the Second Coming or at the time of our death. May the Lord come and change our mortal bodies to conform to his glorified body in Heaven.

Submitted by:
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November 9

THE DEDICATION OF THE LATERAN BASILICA, **Feast**

Collect:

O God, who from living and chosen stones
prepare an eternal dwelling for your majesty,
increase in your Church the spirit of grace you have bestowed,
so that by new growth your faithful people
may build up the heavenly Jerusalem.
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:

On the face of it, this Feast and this prayer are about the far away cathedral church of the Diocese of Rome, St. John Lateran. But, if we go deeper, we discover this feast, this church building, and this prayer have something for all of us. Let us first look to the end: “the heavenly Jerusalem” is our promise and our goal. We come to our parish church (this *Domus Deus*, this House for God) Sunday after Sunday because it is a bit like heaven where we dine at the eternal Kingdom banquet – the Eucharist with its Communion of the Lord’s Body and Blood.

We are heirs to this banquet and this Kingdom because of the “spirit of grace” bestowed. It happened in creation and is sacramentally strengthened in Baptism. This Baptism makes of us “living and chosen stones” – echoing St. Peter’s claim, hinted at in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (no. 7), proclaimed on the Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year A, and other occasions (1 Peter 2:4-9), and enshrined in the USCCB guideline *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship*. We also call this church building the *Domus Ecclesia*, the House for the Church, because it is also for us, the Church, God’s holy People.

This feast and this prayer remind us that the baptized living and chosen stones – the Church – by our acts of discipleship as “faithful people” do, in fact, bring on “new growth” – the sacred work of new evangelization.

Prayer:

God of heaven and of earth, continue to help us bring our Baptism into Christ to its fullness. Help us be faithful disciples filled with zeal for evangelization of everyone so that all may one day dine in the heavenly Jerusalem for ever.

Submitted by:
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November 9

THE DEDICATION OF THE LATERAN BASILICA, **Feast**

Prayer after Communion:

O God, who chose to foreshadow for us
the heavenly Jerusalem
through the sign of your Church on earth,
grant, we pray,
that, by our partaking of this Sacrament,
we may be made the temple of your grace
and may enter the dwelling place of your glory.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

We have received the Most Holy Eucharist and recalled the dedication of the church of St. John Lateran, the cathedral church for Rome and for the world. All church buildings are dedicated and made holy so they can be places where the Church assembles to be nourished by the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and to be strengthened in community.

Today's celebration of the Eucharist also leads us to recall how our parish church was dedicated. As the people were sprinkled with water before the building itself was sprinkled in the Rite of Dedication, we recall how each of us became members of the Church, the Body of Christ, through Baptism. We are temples of grace being formed in ways as to be worthy of entering into the heavenly Jerusalem. We have a foretaste of this in our own parish church building.

Prayer:

O God, you will that all people gather to give praise, honor, and glory for the gift of the Eucharist. Through all times you have dwelt with your people in their creation of a building in which to celebrate the Eucharist, the other Sacraments, and sacramentals. Be with us today as we recall the dedication of the Lateran Basilica. Be with us every day in our parish church; may it always be a place where we are initiated into the awe of what we will find on entering the new and heavenly Jerusalem. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Submitted by:

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Diocese of Joliet-in-Illinois

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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.

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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

Proper of Saints

The Liturgical Year. Holy Church celebrates the saving work of Christ on prescribed days in the course of the year with sacred remembrance. Each week, on the day called the Lord's Day, she commemorates the Resurrection of the Lord, which she also celebrates once a year in the great Paschal Solemnity, together with his blessed Passion. In fact, throughout the course of the year the Church unfolds the entire mystery of Christ and observes the birthdays of the Saints.

Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar [UNLYC], no. 1

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