

Mass prepares you to be sent into the world



One of the 2014 Archdiocesan Synod priorities is understanding the Mass. Catholic Herald Family, working with the synod implementation

evangelization and Sunday Mass pastoral priority team, has published this series, designed to help parents teach their children about the Mass. This sixth and final part focuses upon the concluding rites at Mass.

My washing machine broke. A tiny plastic piece in the detergent compartment disappeared. Don't ask me how – it's one of life's mysteries related to the Final Resting Place of socks that vanish from the dryer.

Whatever. I ordered the part, tracked the package's progress online, and ripping open the envelope, discovered my simple piece of plastic. Predictable enough, I suppose. Even so, I still felt a little thrill when I saw a package waiting for me in the mailbox.

I can't be the only one who hasn't quite outgrown the charm of receiving a special delivery.

Sending and receiving packages connects us to one another. And knowing a package is meant just for me – regardless of its contents – lifts my spirits.

As our "Whispers in the Pew" series draws to a close, we consider the very end of Mass. For centuries, the Latin words used to dismiss the people have been "Ite, missa est" – literally meaning "Go, she (you, the church) has been sent."

The liturgical prayer and the people who offered it are now "sent." The whole Mass takes its name from this dramatic moment. Another English word comes from this same

Latin root: missionary. Just as missionaries are sent to care for the physical and spiritual needs of others, every person at Mass is dismissed from church with a purpose: to love others in the name of Jesus.

We are God's packages. Big and small, confident and awkward, questioning and imperfect, we are each marked "Special Delivery." Jesus says it best: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (Jn 20:21).

Where is God sending us? Into the world, into our daily lives. We are modern-day apostles, and our mission territory is right in front of us. Strengthened by the very flesh and blood of Jesus, we return to our weekday routine as Jesus' disciples.

In these final minutes of Mass, our children might not grasp the great dignity and joy of being sent as missionaries; they may simply be glad to be released. (Maybe you can sympathize!)

My son Jack used to get hopelessly squirmy toward the end of the liturgy. Sometimes I really did just need to take him out, but often I could interest him in the tabernacle.

Whispering in the pew together, we would keep our eyes on the open tabernacle. I'd ask Jack to imagine what it must feel like for Jesus to live in that special place all week long. I'd remind him that although Jesus lives everywhere, the tabernacle is

built to keep his Body safe. Moments before the end of Mass, just before the priest would close and lock the tabernacle, Jack would whisper a prayer into his hand, then wind up like a pitcher and throw the prayer into the tabernacle.

“Throwing” our prayers into the tabernacle helps us remember where all our concerns should rest: in the Heart of Jesus. No one has ever cared for us like Jesus does. He receives our prayers and offerings, transforming them into the grace we need to bring his love to the world.

Go. You are sent.

ACTION STEPS

■ **Watch!** As the Communion line tapers off, children can become restless. Help them watch each person receive a blessing or the Body of Christ. Whisper about how great Jesus is to want to be with us like this.

■ **Imagine!** Think of three places you go on any given weekday, or three tasks you must do. Jesus is interested in everything, be it brushing teeth or performing surgery. These specific places are your mission territory, where Jesus accompanies you. As each day begins, imagine what you and Jesus can do together for the salvation of souls.

■ **Offer!** Learn the words to a Daily Offering prayer. This one for children from the Apostleship of Prayer is sung to the tune of “Amazing Grace”:

*For love of me you came to earth;
You gave your life for me.
So every day you give me now
I give back happily.*

*Take all my laughter, all my tears,
Each thought, each word, each deed,
And let them be my all-day prayer
To help all those in need.*

(Grace is director of children’s ministry for the Apostleship of Prayer and author of “Pray with Me: Seven Simple Ways to Pray with Your Children” (Ave Maria Press). She and her husband, David, parents of five children, are members of St. Mary’s Visitation Parish, Elm Grove. She can be contacted at gurbanski@apostleshipofprayer.org).