

CHAPTER 15

The Dismissal of the Community

The people and presiding priest depart in the name of the Lord

Following the Prayer after Communion the community is dismissed by the deacon, or (in the absence of a deacon) by the presider. The words of dismissal are said from the front of the church (and before any procession) so that all God's people are seen to be included in the commission to go to "love and serve the Lord."

From Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost, "Alleluia! Alleluia!" is added to the dismissal and to the people's response:

Go now to love and serve the (risen) Lord.

Go in peace. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Amen. We go in the name of Christ. Alleluia! Alleluia!

On an occasion when the community will remain in the same place following the Eucharist, the words to "Go now" may appear inappropriate. The Prayer Book provides one possible alternative on page 545. Another alternative, when it is not intended that the people leave, is to use the versicle and response, "Let us bless the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**"

Processions out, like entrance processions, might be reserved for particular feasts or seasons. The way all leave can vary with the feast, season, architecture, size of the congregation, and so on. Sometimes all might leave in no particular order. At other times the liturgical ministers might leave the building first. On major feasts there might be a procession with banners and so on. On occasion the whole community might decide to process out of the church building. The Day of Pentecost is an appropriate example. The Paschal Candle is lit at all services from Easter Day up to and including the Day of Pentecost. On the Day of Pentecost all might once more receive candles lit from this Easter candle - and as the Easter candle is extinguished all might process outside with

candles lit, clearly symbolising our mission to bring the light of the risen Christ into our lives and world.

Extinguishing the altar candles is a simple function - it should not become a ceremonial action which rivals the Dismissal of the Community. There is nothing symbolic in the order in which the candles are extinguished. This task can be performed after the service, when other things in the sanctuary are also being tidied up.

A New Zealand Prayer Book has several rubrics indicating where hymns may appropriately be sung. It will be noticed that it is not anticipated that there would be a hymn after the Dismissal. If there is to be a hymn after communion it more appropriately follows the distribution of communion. After this would come the Prayer after Communion and the Dismissal.

Blessings (like the Absolution) developed during a period in church history when most in the congregation were not receiving communion during the Eucharist. Now that the baptised normally receive communion at each celebration of the Eucharist, a blessing as a substitute for communion is no longer necessary. In particular, blessings should not appear to be given more liturgical prominence than receiving communion, nor should the impression be given that Christ's self-giving in communion needs to be supplemented.

Some Questions

Do the practices in your community at the dismissal give a strong message of everyone being sent out (including those in the sanctuary and choir) or are there several "dismissals"?

*"God receives you by baptism into the Church.
Child of God,
blessed in the Spirit,
welcome to the family of Christ."*