



DIOCESAN LITURGICAL COMMISSION

RITUAL FOR THE CLOSURE OF A CHURCH BUILDING

A ritual for the closure of a church marks a very significant moment in the life of a worshipping community. Therefore, people need time to tell stories and express their feelings before this ritual is celebrated. History and thanksgiving are major components in such a ritual and a history of the life of the community and the church building should be part of the ceremony.

The ritual may take place within a final Mass. The ceremony should be adapted to the needs of the particular assembly.

CELEBRATION OF THE CLOSURE OF A CHURCH BUILDING WITHIN MASS

GATHERING

Opening Hymn

Welcome

Welcome by the Leader

Welcome by the Celebrant

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Greeting

After the greeting, the presider may introduce the celebration in these or similar words:

Celebrant: As we celebrate the Eucharist today
for the final time in this place,
let us pray with full hearts in thanksgiving
for the gifts of God and the graces received here.

OR

Celebrant: My sisters and brothers,
we gather together today in this space
in which we have celebrated the mysteries of our faith.

We begin our liturgy by remembering that we are on a journey,
a pilgrimage that leads us one day to the banquet table of heaven.

The rite of blessing and sprinkling of the people with holy water may take place instead of the penitential rite, as a renewal of baptism.

Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling Holy Water

Celebrant: Dear friends,
this water will be used to remind us of our baptism,
and of the many baptisms in this Church.
Let us ask God to bless us
and keep us faithful to the Spirit he has given us.

After a brief silence, he joins his hands and continues:

Lord God almighty,
creator of all life, of body and soul,
we ask you to bless ✠ this water.
As we use it in faith, forgive our sins
and save us from all illness and the power of evil.

Lord,
in your mercy, give us living water,
always springing up as a fountain of salvation.
Grant this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

The Celebrant sprinkles himself and the ministers and moves through the Church for the sprinkling of the people. He returns to his place, faces the people and with hands joined prays:

Celebrant: May almighty God cleanse us of our sins,
and through the Eucharist we celebrate,
make us worthy to sit at the table
in the heavenly kingdom.

All: Amen.

The Mass proceeds as normal until after Communion. The sacred vessels remain on the altar and the tabernacle should be emptied before the ritual begins. Following the Prayer after Communion, the Ritual of Closure commences.

RITUAL OF CLOSURE

Celebrant: People of God,
we have gathered today
to mark the closing of our church building
and to remember with thanksgiving
the many ways in which
God has blessed our lives in this place.
As the procession moves around the church,
let us reflect on our journey of faith.

A moment of silent prayer follows. Then a procession moves to various spots in the church. The assembly may be invited to follow the procession led by incense, cross and candles. Each place may be incensed as the procession arrives there.

At the Front Pew of the Nave

The leader invites the assembly to recall in silence the many gatherings which have taken place in the church. After a brief time of silence, the celebrant prays:

Celebrant: Almighty God,
you have gathered us in this place as your Church
and filled our hearts with your love.
Through the prayers and songs
you have consoled us in times of sorrow
and filled us with gladness in times of joy.

We praise and thank you for our community,
for our ministry and our mission,
and for all that you have been for us,
and with us, in our life together.

Leader: Thanks be to God

All: Thanks be to God.

At the Font

The holy oils have been placed beside the baptismal font. The leader may invite the assembly to mention names of those baptised, confirmed, married, ordained or buried at that church. In conclusion, the celebrant prays:

Celebrant: Almighty God,
at this font, you have received our children
and our loved ones,
and made them one with your Son, Jesus Christ,
and with us, the Body of Christ.
You have given them, as you have given to us,
your Holy Spirit, that faith, hope, wisdom and love
might abide in all your people.

Leader: Thanks be to God

All: Thanks be to God.

The leader hands the holy oils to some parishioners to carry in the procession.

At the Lectern

The celebrant stands near the lectern and prays:

Celebrant: Almighty God,
from this lectern,
you have spoken your powerful Word.
You have lived among us through the gospel
and the stories of your people of faith.
Through your Word you have called us,
you have taught us and you have guided us in your way.
May your Word continue to be a lamp for our steps
and a light for our path.

Leader: Thanks be to God

All: Thanks be to God.

The leader hands the book of gospels or the lectionary to a parishioner and the procession continues.

At the Altar

The leader may invite the assembly to make a gesture of reverence – such as a bow – to the altar. Then the celebrant prays:

Celebrant: Almighty God,
at this table, you have welcomed us to the banquet
of our Lord and Saviour
and given us a foretaste of the feast to come.
You have united us with him and with one another
in a feast of love through the sharing of his body and blood.
You have strengthened us for our mission
and for our daily lives and sent us out
to share Christ's love with all the world.

We praise and thank you for the grace and favour
you have shown us through the
Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.
We thank you also for the hope of sharing this feast
with all the saints in the heavenly banquet.

Leader: Thanks be to God.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

The celebrant hands the sacred vessels to some parishioners. Other parishioners fold the altar cloth. Then the vessels and cloth are carried in the procession.

At the Paschal Candle

The leader lights the candle and the members of the assembly light individual candles from the paschal candle. The celebrant says (or sings): Christ, our light. All respond: Thanks be to God. Then, a parishioner carries the candle out the main door(s) and all follow.

At the Door

Celebrant: Christ, yesterday and today,
the beginning and the end,
Alpha and Omega,
in every age, you have been our help.

As we close the door(s) of this church,
we ask you to keep open the doors of our hearts
that we may welcome you always
as you come to dwell within us.

The leader closes the door(s).

Celebrant: Gracious God,
bless this faith community of N.....

Strengthen us by your grace
that we may remain faithful to you.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Celebrant: May almighty God bless us all,
the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Those in the procession place religious items in an appropriate place.

All gather for refreshments.

Text adapted from *Today's Parish Minister*, April/May 2009, by Diana Macalintal, Director of Worship for the San Jose, California Diocese, USA.