

The Order of Service For the Closing of a Church

Introductory Rites

After the greeting, the Celebrant says:

Celebrant: On this (day, date _____)
we come to a special event.
As we celebrate Mass here for the last time,
let us enter with full hearts into thanksgiving
for the gifts of God and the graces of this place.

The Liturgy of the Word

The Liturgy of the Word takes place in the usual way.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is celebrated in the usual way. At this Mass, which is to be the last Mass in the Church, provisions should be made for the consecrated hosts in the tabernacle to be consumed or transferred. The tabernacle doors are to remain opened and nothing is to be in the tabernacle. The service continues with the Prayer after Communion.

After the Prayer after Communion

Celebrant: Blessed are you, loving God.
In this place we have known your love.
We trust our future in your care.
Blessed be God forever!

All: Blessed Be God forever!

Celebrant: As we leave this place of worship,
we give thanks to God
for all the blessings we have found here.

The celebrant may then (with the deacon) process through the church to the font, etc., where the following text is used. If possible, have all join in a procession for remembrance. Adapt the route according to the layout of the building, but culminate with the altar. Sing during the processions. (Use psalm 90 “You have been our haven, Lord, from generation to generation”) another psalm of thanksgiving or a well-known hymn of thanks or praise. If it is not practical for the people to join in the processions, invite them to turn in the direction of the prayer and sing between each thanksgiving.

At the font:

Celebrant: Let us remember the baptism celebrated here ...
(*pause*)
We thank you and we praise you for the life of faith
given to all who have passed through the waters of new life at this font.
Blessed be God forever!

All: Blessed be God forever!

At the confessional or reconciliation chapel:

Celebrant: Let us remember the times
when we have been forgiven, comforted and consoled
in reconciliation.
(*pause*)
We thank you and we praise you
for the healing and reconciling love
that has been given through
the Sacrament of Penance in this church.
Blessed be God forever!

All: Blessed be God forever!

At a station of the cross or at a significant statue or icon, or in a shrine (*repeat as necessary*)

Celebrant: Let us remember the generations
of prayer and devotion that this sacred image has inspired ...
(*pause*)
We thank you for inspiring in us here true devotion
to [the Way of Christ’s cross; Blessed Mother Mary, Saint ...]
Blessed be God forever!

All: Blessed Be God forever!

At the ambo:

Celebrant: Let us remember the power of God's word
proclaimed here in scripture and in preaching ... *(pause)*
We thank you and we praise you for your holy word
proclaimed here in faith and preached here in sincerity.
May it echo always in our hearts.
Blessed be God forever!

All: Blessed be God forever!

At the tabernacle:

Celebrant: Let us remember the times
we have partaken of the Body and Blood of the Lord
in this place,
times we have turned to Him
to be transformed by his very Body,
times we have accepted the Blood of his new covenant,
that we might be his witness in this world,
that we might be bread broken in his name.
Blessed be God forever!

All: Blessed be God forever!

At the altar:

Celebrant: Let us remember the times
we have gathered here for the sacred banquet:
The Triduum kept each year,
the Sundays on which we worshiped faithfully,
the first communion celebrations,
the feast days of saints and martyrs,
the weddings witnessed here,
the funerals held here in hope.
Let us pray. *(pause for a longer time)*

God our refuge, our home is in you.
You are greater than any temple, church, or cathedral
that can be built by human hands,
yet in this place we have met your divine majesty.
This church building has been a place of blessing for us.
Protect us on our way.
Lead us to new friends in another faith community.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Transfer of Artifact(s)

If the entire community is merging with (into) a parish, delegate one or more members (the parish council president, the eldest member of the parish or the youngest) to carry an artifact(s) that can and will be used in the new place (such as a sacred vessel, small icon, the Book of Gospels, a statue, etc.). This person will be presented with the object(s).

Celebrant: The life of this community will continue in another place.
 [name] receive this [name of artifact]
 that will be used at [name of church].
 take it (directly) from this place
 to Fr. _____ [name of new pastor]
 as a sign that our journey of faith will continue here.

Blessing

A solemn blessing may be used from the Roman Missal or the Book of Blessings. The final hymn could be Now Thank We All our God, Holy God, We Praise Thy Name, a hymn of honor of the parish title, or something familiar. All process out of the building after the celebrant and the ministers.

Recessional

After the recessional, the pastor/plc may lock the church doors when all the people have exited, as a sign that the Church building is closed.

[Adapted with permission of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati]