

## **Rite on the Occasion of a Parish Closing<sup>1</sup>**

*This liturgy focuses more on the history and life of the community than on its physical environment. Its tone is one of thanksgiving and tenderness of memory. A separate rite of leave taking of the building should be arranged some time later, possibly at a separate evening prayer at the end of the day or another time when people can gather to say goodbye more specifically to the building.*

*On the day of the formal closing rites for the parish, all gather outside the parish church to be closed, if circumstances permit. The liturgy may begin outside the worship space with a gathering hymn. Representatives from the receiving and closing parishes may be involved in the opening procession and ministers of the liturgy.*

### **INTRODUCTORY RITES**

#### **Introduction**

*After the greeting the celebrant speaks to the assembly in these or similar words.*

Celebrant: As the Lord's temple, God's holy people,  
let us give thanks today for the \_\_\_ years  
\_\_\_\_\_ parish has served the (neighborhood) community.  
At the table of God's Word  
and the table of the Eucharist  
our communion with Christ and one another will be strengthened  
for our ongoing journey of faith.  
Especially aware of any unresolved conflict or broken relationship  
because of the consolidation/closing discernment,  
let us prepare our minds and hearts for these holy mysteries  
by acknowledging the need for the mercy of God in all our lives.

#### **Penitential Act**

#### **Gloria**

*This needs to be festive and accompanied by the ringing of the bells, where possible.*

#### **Liturgy of the Word**

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from "Liturgy on the Occasion of Closing a parish," in David G. Caron, "Information Packet on Parish Closing," Miami, FL; privately published, 1999.

## Prayer of the Faithful

*In addition to intercessions for the general needs of the Church and the world, some of the following may be of particular use for the closing of a parish.*

*The response to each petition is: Lord, hear our prayer.*

1. For the pope and local bishop, that God may bless them with wisdom and insight as they continue to shepherd the Church of the twenty-first century, we pray to the Lord.
2. For other parishes, schools, and institutions throughout the country facing significant changes and transitions, that the love and solidarity of all Catholics may overcome all fear and sadness, we pray to the Lord
3. We remember with particular tenderness the pastors and local leadership who have served in this parish throughout its history. In gratitude we pray to the Lord.
4. For the founders, benefactors and all past parishioners of this parish; for all those whose faith, vision, and generosity has been the corner stone of our parish history, we pray to the Lord.
5. For the priests and vowed religious who have faithfully served this parish through preaching and teaching, prayer and pastoral care, we pray to the Lord.
6. For the ability to rejoice in the blessings we have received through this parish and for the courage to move onward with hope, we pray to the Lord.
7. For those who are still conflicted after the decision to close \_\_\_\_\_ parish, for the healing and reconciliation of any words spoken in anger or frustration during this time of discernment for this community's future, and for any relationships that remain broken or strained, we pray to the Lord.
8. For the unsung heroes of \_\_\_\_\_ parish who have contributed so much of themselves for the success of the parish, we pray to the Lord.
9. For the dead, especially those buried from this church over its \_\_\_\_\_ year history, we pray to the Lord.

Celebrant: Lord God, in Christ you made your people,  
a chosen race, a royal priesthood.  
Through these past years your Church has been realized in the life of this parish.  
Although the service of this parish has now come to an end, we pray that you  
keep us ever mindful that wherever two or three are gathered in your name  
your holy presence will be known.  
Wherever you lead us we will continue to be your holy people, your imperishable  
temple.  
Hear us as we raise our minds and hearts to you through Christ our Lord.

## LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

### Offertory

*As the collection is taken the celebrant may call to remembrance the generous stewardship of the parishioners over the years of its history.*

*Mass proceeds as usual with the Eucharistic prayer and the communion rite.*

*At the end of the Liturgy of Eucharist, while all are still in their places, ministers may remove the altar cloth during a communion song. The ministers continue to stand in the sanctuary are with the altar cloth and lighted altar candles.*

### A Final Commendation<sup>2</sup>

Celebrant: Before we take leave of \_\_\_\_\_ parish,  
let us pause to once more express our deep affection for this place  
and the history of Christian community life that has taken place here.

Celebrant: Whenever we eat this Eucharistic bread and wine  
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

All: Whatever table we gather around  
may we be reminded of the love we have shared around this one.

Celebrant: The grass withers, the flower fades,  
but the word of our God will stand forever.

All: May we always be open to God's word;  
it challenges us to justice and comforts us with hope.

Celebrant: *(Holding the paschal candle)*  
Jesus said "I am the light of the world."

All: May we share the light of our faith with our new parishes.  
We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people.

Celebrant: With thanks to God for the good accomplished here,  
this parish of \_\_\_\_\_ is now closed.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from the closure rites of Chicago's Saint Sebastian Parish in 1990, in William McManus, "A Funeral for a Parish," *Liturgy* 90 22, no. 2 (February-March 1991) 6-7, ©1991 Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

**Concluding Song**

*(Following the cross the celebrant and the assistant minister with the paschal candle, all may process out.)*