

Go in the Peace of Christ, Alleluia, Alleluia!

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One of the unique liturgical traditions included during specific segments of the Roman Catholic celebration of Easter, its octave (eight days following) and the culminating solemnity of Pentecost, is the sung dismissal which incorporates a “double” alleluia. Reserved to the able voice of the assisting deacon, or in his absence by the priest-celebrant, this musical feature and its inclusion on these assigned days is intended to foster the joyous and celebratory heart of the Church commemorating our Lord’s passing from death to life.

Interestingly, while the rubrics for the celebration of Mass are pretty clear when the sung dismissal with double-alleluia is to be included – 1) at the conclusion of the Easter Vigil, 2) Easter Sunday Mass, 3) the eight or “octave” days following Easter Sunday (which would be at the end of evening prayer on Divine Mercy Sunday or the Second Sunday of Easter) and 4) the Solemnity of Pentecost – some priest-celebrants or assisting deacons may take the liberty to include it during all Sundays of the Easter Season. Aside from the fact that there is no directive in the order of Mass on the Sundays during the Easter season that indicates the Easter dismissal must or may be included, the absence of such from any rubrical notation has a liturgical – theological rationale.

Many who include this feature during the entire Easter season do so because the Church is celebrating the joy of Easter for 50 days, but in actuality, the sense of sacred time and the celebration of liturgy within that context operate with an even more deeply rooted meaning spiritually. The calendar observances we commemorate during the liturgical year are designated by degree. The most important feasts are designated as solemnities, others as feasts of the Lord and finally those that usually commemorate the memory of the saints. These latter commemorations, called memorials, are designated either optional or obligatory by their inclusion.

The Easter Vigil, which commences our observance of the Lord’s resurrection and Pentecost fifty days following are hinge celebrations of the Easter mystery. Both are considered solemnities and are counted as principal days in the calendar, rather than “feasts” or “memorials.” The character of a solemnity is likewise applicable to the octave days following. We are reminded in *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar* that, “The first eight days of the Easter season make up the octave of Easter and are celebrated as solemnities of the Lord.” Aside from prayer texts and hymnody sustaining great joy and solemnity, the liturgy celebrated on the octave days following Easter also includes the singing or recitation of the Gloria and, as mentioned above, the sung dismissal with double alleluia.

In place of the Easter dismissal during the third to seventh Sundays of Easter, the rubrical notes in the Sacramentary indicate the option of a solemn blessing text or prayer over the people. The point is not to neglect the joy of Easter for 50 days, but to emphasize more so the saving mystery of faith on the designated days we commemorate with greater solemnity. Listen for the sung Easter dismissal this year. It's one of our liturgical treasures.