



OFFICE of the ARCHBISHOP

# Archdiocese of Louisville

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Dear Father:

Since my installation as your archbishop in August, I have had the privilege of celebrating the liturgy with many of you in parishes through the Archdiocese. For those I have yet to visit, I look forward to celebrating the liturgy with you in the very near future.

As I have traveled around the Archdiocese, many have asked me about my direction for liturgical practices and of my plans for further implementation of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal 2002 (GIRM). Let me begin by saying that as the Archbishop of this great historical archdiocese I must be guided in these liturgical decisions by the documents of the Church, including the Second Vatican Council, the Holy See and the USCCB. With these principles in mind I want to continue the good work that Archbishop Kelly has begun and to set the course toward full implementation of the General Instruction.

First, I address posture during the celebration of the liturgy. I recognize that this affects not only you, the celebrant, but in most cases the entire assembly. It is also why this topic is so important for, as the GIRM states, common posture is a sign of unity. In addition, it "both expresses and fosters the intention and spiritual attitude of the participants" (GIRM, no. 42). Posture visually expresses who we are and what we believe. It helps to form us into the body of Christ celebrating with Christ our Head.

In the years since the Second Vatican Council there has been a great variety of practices regarding posture during the celebration of the Mass. Even though in most cases these variations were based on careful study and prayerful intention, it is my desire to unify the liturgical practice in this archdiocese by having all parishes follow the directives in the General Instruction.

I want to give special attention to the following directives:

### • **Gesture of Reverence on entering and leaving the worship space**

If the Blessed Sacrament is reserved within the sanctuary, a genuflection is the proper gesture on entering and leaving the sanctuary. For priests and deacons this gesture is done at the conclusion of the entrance procession before entering the sanctuary and once again after venerating the altar before leaving in procession. If the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in a separate chapel apart from the worship space or in the nave of the church apart from the sanctuary, the altar is revered with a profound bow before entering the sanctuary and then again before leaving in procession (GIRM, no. 274, no 122, no 173). If for health reasons you are prohibited from genuflecting, a profound bow is substituted for a genuflection. A bow of the head is called for if one is carrying cross, candles, Book of the Gospels, etc.

### • **Kneeling/Genuflections in the Eucharistic Prayer**

At the conclusion of the singing of the Holy, Holy (*Sanctus*), the assembly kneels for the entire Eucharistic Prayer that follows concluding with the Doxology and Great Amen (GIRM, no. 43). The kneeling posture was selected for this prayer by the bishops of the United States in order to emphasize the unity of the Eucharistic Prayer, to respect the tradition of kneeling which had become common practice in the U.S., and to highlight the elements of adoration, offering, and prayerfulness present in the text.

Within the Eucharistic Prayer there are two times when the celebrant genuflects in adoration: once after he shows the consecrated hosts to the people and places it on the paten and a second time after he shows the chalice to the people and then places it on the corporal (GIRM, no. 274). If for health reasons you are unable to genuflect, replace these genuflections with a profound bow.

If a deacon is serving at the altar he is directed to kneel from the epiclesis through the showing of the chalice. He stands again after the celebrant genuflects in adoration of the chalice (GIRM, no. 179). If for health reasons the deacon is unable to kneel, he may remain standing making a profound bow when the celebrant genuflects during the Eucharistic prayer .

### • **Standing for the Lord's Prayer, the Rite of Peace and the Fraction Rite**

After the Doxology and the Great Amen which concludes the Eucharistic Prayer, the assembly stands for the Lord's Prayer and continues to stand until after the Fraction Rite which is accompanied by the Lamb of God litany (GIRM, no. 43).

- **Kneeling after the Fraction Rite**

The General Instruction no. 43 directs the assembly to kneel at the conclusion of the Fraction Rite/Lamb of God litany until the beginning of the distribution of Holy Communion. Even though permission is given to the diocesan bishop to offer an alternative posture for the assembly, it is my decision to follow the General Instruction for the United States and select the kneeling posture until the time when all stand together for the distribution of Holy Communion. This will preserve the worthy custom that reflects the humility and faith of this prayer's scriptural basis (Luke 7:8) and unify the posture in the archdiocese.

- **Standing during the Distribution of Holy Communion**

The posture for the reception of Holy Communion established as the norm by the U.S. bishops is standing. In addition, at this time I ask that the norm be continued which was approved by Archbishop Kelly; namely, that the assembly stands after the "O Lord, I am not worthy ... " when the priest receives Holy Communion and remains standing until all the faithful have received Holy Communion (cf. GIRM, no 43). This posture best expresses the communitarian nature of this portion of the Communion Rite. It also articulates the consummation of the communal act of worship.

- **Posture for the Period of Silent Prayer after the Distribution of Holy Communion**

After all have received Holy Communion the celebrant and the rest of the assembly are directed to kneel or to sit for a period of silent, individual prayer, to "praise and pray to God in their hearts" (GIRM, no. 45). The assembly is given a choice on posture at this time since it is a period of private prayer. In order to allow communicants a time to pray, a one to two minute period should be set aside where there is no movement or music. This time of private prayer is a contrast from the communal aspects of the period of distribution of Holy Communion where we stand and sing the Communion Song.

#### ADDITIONAL LITURGICAL AREAS:

I have also included a list of other liturgical directives in the General Instruction that primarily affect you as celebrant of the liturgy or that only affect liturgical ministers rather than the entire worshipping body. Please examine them carefully and prepare for their implementation as well.

## **Celebrant of the Liturgy**

- **Remain faithful to the texts of the liturgy**

Except where accommodations and adaptations are specified in the General Instruction or in the Order of Mass, celebrants are to remain faithful to the texts given within the Roman Missal. The celebrant is not permitted, on his own initiative to add, to remove, or to change anything in the celebration of the Mass (CSL, no 22, GIRM, nos. 23-24).

In order to keep the focus on the ritual elements and the content of the prayer itself, rather than calling attention to a change in text by an individual presider, I ask that you remain faithful to the texts of the liturgy.

When we begin the process of preparation for the new *Missale Romanum* it will be necessary to make a number of changes in the texts of the Mass. It will be difficult to prepare the people for these changes if we are not beginning with the same texts.

- **The homily is given by a bishop, a priest or a deacon**

The General Instruction, nos. 65-66 describes the content of the Homily and lists the ministers who may deliver the homily. By its very nature the homily is the exclusive ministry of the ordained (cf. CIC 76 §1). There are certain liturgies that permit lay preaching under certain circumstances but the homily at Mass is not one of them .

- **The Precious Blood is not to be poured from one vessel into another.**

The pouring of the precious Blood during the Fraction Rite is the particular law for the U.S. (Norms, 2002). In 2004, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued an instruction, *Redemptionis Sacramentum (RS)*, which prohibited pouring the Precious Blood during the Fraction Rite (RS no. 106). Therefore, to resolve any questions regarding the force of the instruction, I, as your diocesan bishop, dispense from the particular law of the United States and bind to the universal law (GIRM) and the instruction (RS) in regards to this specific matter. Pouring of the wine is to take place before or during the preparation of the gifts and the altar, not during the Fraction Rite after the wine has become the Precious Blood of Christ

- **It is never permitted to issue a blanket invitation to Holy Communion.**

In general the Catholic Church permits access to its Eucharistic communion ... only to those who share its oneness in faith, worship and ecclesial life (CIC 844 § I). As you

know however there may be specific circumstances when a baptized person of another faith may be permitted to receive Holy Communion, e.g. a person or family living in an area with no access to their own ministers so long as the norms are properly followed. Apart from any danger of death, it is never permissible to openly invite persons from another faith tradition attending the liturgy to come forward to receive Holy Communion (CIC c. 844).

- **The tabernacle is not to be a source for the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass.**

As a general rule, Holy Communion is given from the hosts consecrated at the same Mass and not from those reserved in the tabernacle (Norms, no. 30).

"It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord's Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that ... they partake of the chalice, so that even by means of the signs Communion will stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated." (no. 85)

- **Sacred vessels are to be made of precious metal or be gilded.**

Sacred vessels are to be made of precious metal or if made from a metal that rusts or is less precious than gold should ordinarily be gilded on the inside. Sacred vessels may also be made from solid materials considered precious in a particular region, such as ebony or other hard woods provided that such materials are suited to sacred use and do not easily break or deteriorate (GIRM, nos. 328-330).

### **Liturgical Ministers:**

- **The bread for Mass should be made from wheat flour and water.**

The General Instructions nos. 320-321 and CIC 924 §2 govern the makeup and form of the bread that is used for the celebration of the Eucharist. If there is an active Eucharistic bread baking ministry in your parish, please ensure that, per validity, this bread is made only from flour. The bread is to be unleavened and additives such as honey or sugar are not permitted. In addition, if the recipe or method of baking results in a loaf of bread that is unpalatable, inconsistent in texture or does not hold together for breaking into bite-sized pieces it would be preferable to use the wheat wafers.

- **Extraordinary Ministers receive after the priest but before the rest of the assembly.**

When Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are needed to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion, they are to receive Holy Communion after the priest and deacon and before beginning the distribution of the Sacred Host and Precious Blood to the rest of the assembly. The practice of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion waiting to receive Holy Communion until after the distribution of Holy Communion is not in accord with liturgical law (*Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion*, 2001, no. 39).

### **Implementation dates:**

As the model of good liturgy in the archdiocese, the Cathedral of the Assumption will implement these directives on or near the weekend of May 24-25, which fittingly is the Solemnity of The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. All other parishes in the Archdiocese of Louisville are expected to implement fully by Advent 2008 thus allowing time for catechesis and to make any necessary changes to the worship spaces.

I know that there are always challenges for you and for the faithful in order to make changes. I have found that good catechesis usually allows for any changes to be welcomed and the spirit of liturgical celebration deepened. To this end, I have asked the Office of Worship to provide catechetical materials on these directives in order to assist you and your parishioners to prepare for these changes. You will be receiving these in the coming weeks. The Office of Worship staff will also be available to speak to your parishioners in support of these liturgical directives. As a presbyterate, we will have other opportunities to meet in the upcoming months and to discuss these changes. I hope that the Presbyteral Assembly will afford an opportunity for us to have conversation on the implementation of the liturgical direction contained within this letter. In anticipation of this conversation, I encourage you to read and reflect on the entire General Instruction of the Roman Missal. I also recognize that certain individuals and communities will be more affected than others. If you feel that it would be helpful, I would be glad to make time in my schedule to meet with you.

I am enclosing for your convenience, a copy of the column which I have prepared for the April 24<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Record* in which I give a summary of the key issues related to posture.

I recognize that there are other areas in which clarifications may be required, such as purification of vessels. I will work with the Office of Worship staff to develop such directions. I also am aware that we will need to prepare the faithful and ourselves to receive an approved English translation of the Roman Missal. Once approved, these texts will give direction to the prayers at Mass, including the Eucharistic Prayers, as well as the dialogue responses of the assembly. I am told that the final forms might be approved in 2011, though this is by no means certain. I will be working with you on steps to help explain this new translation as we get closer.

Finally, I want to express my deep gratitude to you, my brother priests, for your ongoing faithful service to this archdiocese. I greatly appreciate your support and the many kindnesses that you have extended to me. It is my hope that these liturgical clarifications offer the opportunity to continue to deepen an appreciation of the Holy Eucharist as well as to result in a fuller participation of the faithful whom you serve so well.

Sincerely yours in our Lord,

Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, D.D.  
Archbishop of Louisville

Enclosure: Copy of The Record column