

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In the weeks to come, your parish bulletin will carry explanations of the Holy Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, along with some instructions on how we are to celebrate these sacraments as God's Holy People in the Archdiocese of Chicago. I always enjoy worshiping God with you when I celebrate Mass in the parishes and institutions of the Archdiocese, and I hope now for a moment of renewal in our worship.

As you know, the sacraments are acts of faith. We believe that the risen Christ acts through the sacraments. He gives us grace, which brings us into his own life here and in the life to come.

The sacraments are acts of the Church. The Church knows what Christ gives her the power to do, and it is the Church that puts order into the celebration of the sacraments. The Church, in the words of Vatican II, is a "hierarchical communion" gathered around Christ, our mediator with the Father. That reality shapes our worship. The royal priesthood of the baptized is made active in the Mass by the ministry of ordained priests, so that the Eucharist is the action of the whole Christ, made visible in head and members in his body, the Church.

The sacraments are rites. When the national anthem is played, everyone rises. That is a secular rite. The sacraments are rites of the faith community; they require common responses and actions. It is easier to respond since the liturgy was put into the vernacular, and most people do so with good voice. Likewise most people act together, for example, making the Sign of the Cross at the beginning of the Mass. We worship as a body, with various members taking different roles and functions, in an integrated pattern. Normally, we sit to listen, we stand out of respect, and we kneel to adore.

The Catholics of the Archdiocese of Chicago worship using the Roman rite, and the *Roman Missal* has recently been slightly revised. This revision necessitates a few changes in the way we worship together. These changes will be explained in the fall and will come into effect on the First Sunday of Advent, November 30, 2003. This revision does not affect celebrations of the Eucharist that use the Roman rite as it was done before the revisions called for by the Second Vatican Council. It also does not affect the worship of Catholics in Cook and Lake counties who belong to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church or to the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church or to the Maronite or other Eastern Catholic Churches, for these communities worship according to their own rites.

The explanations and instructions to follow are like a collective examination of conscience about the state of our worship. Our participation in worship should be deliberate or conscious, active, and fruitful. Sometimes we participate by acting and speaking, sometimes by silence and recollection. Participation is always conditioned by an interior disposition of faith, hope, and charity.

The charity that brings us to the Eucharist also brings us from the Eucharist into a world in need of love. Because we are one with Christ, it is his love that we are to bring to others. In the Archdiocese, we are talking more and more about sharing Christ's spiritual gifts, that is, evangelizing. The Eucharist both gives us the zeal to introduce others to Christ and is itself the greatest gift we are to share, for it is Christ himself. The Mass is the means by which God makes holy the world; it is the worship that the human race offers to the Father, adoring him through Christ in the Holy Spirit. It is the most important thing we do, the only thing we will do for all eternity. Thank you for all your efforts to do it well.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Francis Cardinal George, OMI
Archbishop of Chicago



Sunday Eucharist

The day-to-day life of a parish varies greatly from one community to another, but the one thing that all Catholic parishes hold in common is the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday, the Lord's Day. This is the gathering point for all parishioners, the time when everyone comes together. The table of God's Word and the table of the Eucharist feed and nourish the community, refreshing the people and sending them on into yet another week of work and struggles, joys and successes, and many opportunities to spread the Kingdom of God. In speech and song, symbol and gesture, we unite our praise and thanksgiving to Christ's perfect self-offering on the cross.

Sunday: The Day of the Lord

From earliest times, Christians have kept Sunday, the Lord's Day, by celebrating the Eucharist, which the Lord gave us as an everlasting memorial of his saving death and resurrection. The Eucharist makes present sacramentally the living mystery of the Lord's Passover from death to life, and our participation in the Mass gives us a unique share in the Passover of Christ. It is no wonder that the Church teaches us that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Church's life, and that the Holy Father invites us to renew our amazement in the face of this great gift.

So important is the liturgy for our lives as Christians that the Church has always taken great care with how the liturgy is celebrated. The essential parts of the liturgy have remained unchanged over the

centuries, although the ritual words and form of the liturgy have varied from time to time. The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) instituted a number of revisions to the *Roman Missal*, calling for changes to help Catholics celebrate the liturgy more deeply. After the Council, there was a major effort to catechize the faithful on the meaning of the liturgy and these revisions. Since then, a whole new generation of Catholics has grown up with the liturgy that we celebrate Sunday after Sunday, week after week, season after season.

If we were to stop and reflect on what has happened in the years since the Council, we might have to admit that some well-intentioned people may have overlooked some parts of the deep meaning and order of the liturgy. We might become aware that in some places, certain idiosyncrasies might have crept into a particular parish's celebration of the Eucharist. And we might realize that now is a good time for the Church to reflect on and review how we celebrate the liturgy, the most important element of Catholic life.

The Revised *General Instruction*

Recently, the Holy See issued a revision of the *Roman Missal* and its introduction, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. This revision has grown out of the years of pastoral experience with the *Roman Missal* that was published immediately after the Second Vatican Council. Respecting the diversity of cultures in the universal Church, the Holy See invited the national conferences of bishops to propose

revisions appropriate to their own particular regions.

The changes called for in this revision, relatively minor though they are, give witness to the fact that the liturgy is the prayer of the living Church and so understandably must undergo some changes from time to time. The publication of this revision provides the occasion for renewed catechesis on the understanding and practice of the liturgy, especially the Mass. The hope is that, with this catechesis and reflection, Catholics everywhere can more deeply pray the liturgy with all their hearts and can find in the liturgy the wellspring of their spirituality.

In the weeks to come, we will have the opportunity to reflect again upon the meaning and the value of the liturgy in our Catholic Tradition. We will be introduced to the changes in the liturgy called for in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. As we revisit our celebration of the Mass, all of us may also rediscover some things that perhaps we've taken for granted or haven't paid too much attention to in the past. This catechesis is not based in a concern about law or rubrics, but about the quality and integrity of our prayer together, which must truly

In the coming weeks, bulletin inserts will address these topics:

Ministries and Roles in the Liturgy

Postures and Gestures at Mass

Hearing the Word of God

The Eucharistic Prayer

The Reception of Holy Communion at Mass

Music in the Liturgy

Baptism, Penance, Eucharist

These inserts are to help in the preparation for the implementation of the revised norms and guidelines, which will take place in the Archdiocese of Chicago on the first Sunday of Advent, November 30, 2003.

be the primary and indispensable source from which we draw the true Christian spirit.

In some parishes, the implementation of this revision will mark a change in various aspects of the parish's weekly celebration of the Eucharist. In other parishes there may be very little that is noticeably different. One of the most notable changes, for all, concerns the way we receive Holy Communion in this country. The *General Instruction* calls for communicants to make a gesture of reverence before receiving the Eucharist, and the bishops of the United States have determined that for Catholics in this country, that gesture shall be a bow of

the head to the Body and Blood of Christ in the minister's hands.

As we reflect on these changes in the celebration of Mass, it is important to appreciate the opportunity they offer for all the Church. This is a chance for each parish to consider a most important question: "Is it clear, in the celebration of the Eucharist in our parish, that this is the *most important thing we do all week?*"



Ministries and Roles within the Liturgical Assembly

Each time we come together as the Body of Christ to celebrate the Eucharist, we are doing what we were baptized to do! Our baptism gives us a share in the priesthood of Christ, and this allows us to be one with Christ in his self-offering to God. The liturgy of this offering, the Mass, is not initiated by us but by God. The liturgy is in fact a gift from God, who acts in and through the Church, the Body of the risen Christ. It is our action only to the extent that we give ourselves to this mystery of redemptive worship. When we gather for the Eucharistic liturgy, the center of the whole Christian life (*General Instruction*, n. 16), we do so because our baptism calls us to it and empowers us for it.

Different Roles, Indispensable Ministries

It is the whole community, the Body of Christ united with its Head, that celebrates the liturgy (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1140). As the Body of Christ, the Church, we each and all have a very important and necessary role in the celebration of Mass. Saint Peter reminds us that we are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people” (1 Peter 2:9–10). In the celebration of the Eucharist, the Church is her truest self. Because God has redeemed the Church in Christ we are able to come before God and offer our praise and thanksgiving in the Church’s liturgy.

All the baptized, the whole community, the holy People of God, are united with Christ, but some

members of the Church are called to special service of Christ in the community of the Church. Through the sacrament of Holy Orders, ordained priests and bishops make present Christ as the head of the Church. They are, as it were, “icons of Christ,” the one high priest (see Hebrews 7:24), in the midst of the assembly.

Priests and deacons, gathered around the bishop, act always in communion with him, the pastor of the local Church which is the Diocese. The *priest* acts in the liturgy in the person of Christ (see *Lumen Gentium*, n. 10), giving voice to the prayers of the Church, presiding over the celebration of the mysteries of our faith, preaching God’s word, and feeding God’s people by ministering the Body and Blood of Christ. The *deacon* assists the bishop and the priest, serves the poor and oppressed, and proclaims the Gospel of Christ.

Other members of the Body of Christ, the Church, are also called to service in duties of their own. Tasks not specifically reserved to the ordained ministers should be fulfilled by the lay faithful and exercised by them in conformity with their specific lay vocation.

For example, *lectors* are called to proclaim the scriptures in the first and second readings. *Psalmists* or *cantors* and *musicians* are called to lead the assembly in lifting up their voices in sung prayer and

praise of God. *Servers* are called to assist and support the bishop, priest, deacon, and other ministers. *Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion* are called to assist in the distribution of the Body and Blood of Christ when there are not enough ordained ministers to do so in an orderly fashion. *Ushers and greeters* help to assemble the congregation in their prayer and worship.

These liturgical ministries and others that have not been mentioned are important; therefore, those who fill them have a responsibility to be well prepared and to carry out their duties with reverence, dignity, and understanding.

The Responsibility of All the Baptized

The *General Instruction* states that “all . . . whether they are ordained ministers or lay Christian faithful, in fulfilling their office or duty should carry out solely but completely that which pertains to them” (n. 91).

The celebration of the Eucharist is the most important thing any parish does during the entire week. Nothing in the life of the parish should have a higher priority. Therefore, every parish must give attention to the thoughtful, careful development of these liturgical functions and ministries and to the proper training of those who exercise them.

But what about those of us who are not bishops or priests, deacons or lectors, extraordinary ministers of communion or cantors? What is our part in the liturgy? The *General Instruction* reminds us that through our baptism, we are all responsible for the

worship of God by the Church. Therefore we ought to do so to the best of our ability, with all our heart and mind and soul and strength. We are called to participate in the liturgy with deliberate and full attention and with conscious and active participation. The *General Instruction* makes it clear that as the holy People of God, purchased by Christ’s blood, called together by the Lord, nourished by his word, we nevertheless grow “continually in holiness by [our] conscious, active, and fruitful participation in the mystery of the Eucharist” (n. 5).

This means that we need to be fully engaged throughout the whole liturgical celebration, not merely present, watching as if at a performance. In our praise and thanksgiving, through song and spoken word, posture and gesture, listening attentively to God’s word, we exercise our baptismal priesthood by joining our prayer to those spoken by the priest celebrant. Our part expresses the “cohesion and hierarchical ordering” (see *General Instruction*, n. 91) of the People of God in our different roles and ministries. We mirror Christ who served by washing the feet of his disciples, who is himself God’s word, who proclaimed the kingdom, who faithfully and with love offered to God his very life, who prayed to God on behalf of others, especially those who had no one else to intercede for them. During the liturgy, in our various ways, all of us who participate in the Mass unite ourselves in intention and love with Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Those who exercise a particular function or ministry mirror Christ who, in the end, instructed his followers to imitate, always and everywhere, his example of love and service.



Postures and Gestures at Mass

In the celebration of the Mass we raise our hearts, minds, and voices to God. As creatures composed of body as well as spirit, we also pray with our bodies. During Mass we assume different postures: standing, kneeling, and sitting. We also make a variety of gestures: bowing, signing ourselves, shaking hands as a sign of peace, processing to the altar. These postures and gestures are not merely ceremonial. They carry a profound meaning when done consciously, with understanding and faith. Through these postures and gestures, we participate in the liturgy more attentively.

Postures

Standing is a sign of respect and honor. From the earliest days of the Church, standing has been understood as the stance of those who are risen with Christ and seek the things that are above (see Colossians 5). When we stand for prayer, we are assuming our stature before God as a people redeemed by the blood of Christ. We stand when the celebrant and the other ministers process into the church. We stand for the Gospel because we acknowledge that it is Christ himself speaking to us when it is proclaimed. The bishops of the United States have chosen standing as the normal posture for the reception of Holy Communion in this country.

Kneeling signified penitence in the early Church: The awareness of our sin casts us to the ground! In the Middle Ages, kneeling came to signify the homage of a vassal before his liege lord. More recently, kneeling has come to signify humble

adoration. It is for this reason that the bishops of the United States have chosen the posture of kneeling for the assembly during the Eucharistic Prayer, from after singing the Holy, Holy, until after singing the Great Amen.

Sitting is the posture of attentive listening and of meditation. So the assembly sits for the readings before the Gospel and the homily, and may also sit for the period of meditation after Holy Communion.

Gestures

The Sign of the Cross is the most familiar gesture. We make it over our bodies as we begin Mass and in the blessing at the end of Mass. This gesture, which recalls the saving death of Christ on the cross, first marked our bodies at baptism, when we were claimed for Christ. So, too, during the sprinkling rite at the beginning of Mass or when we take holy water upon entering the church, we make the Sign of the Cross.

Genuflecting is the gesture of adoration that we make to the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Upon entering the church, before taking our place, we genuflect toward the Blessed Sacrament reserved inside the tabernacle. The priest and ministers genuflect before entering the sanctuary if the tabernacle is located within it. A genuflection is made by bending the right knee to touch the ground. During the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest genuflects three times in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament: after showing the host and then the chalice to the people, and again before

he speaks the Invitation to Communion and receives the sacrament himself.

Bowing is a gesture of reverence. We recognize the altar as a symbol of Christ, and so we stop and bow to it whenever we pass in front of it. The priest and all the ministers bow to the altar after processing to the sanctuary at the start of Mass. In the Creed, we bow at the words that commemorate the Incarnation: “by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary and became man.” This gesture signifies our profound respect and gratitude to Christ who humbled himself to share our human condition in order to save us.

There are other gestures that intensify our prayer at Mass. For example, during the Penitential Rite, when we pray the Confiteor (“I confess”), the action of striking the breast at the words “through my fault” can strengthen awareness that our sin is indeed our fault. In the Rite of Peace, we express through our handclasp or embrace that we are committed to sharing Christ’s peace. It is an expression of our desire to live in communion with one another. Thus it is appropriate that before we share in Holy Communion, the sacrament of unity, we make this symbolic gesture with those around us.

Postures for the Parts of the Mass

From the start of Mass until the first reading:	Stand
From the first reading until the beginning of the Gospel Acclamation:	Sit
From the beginning of the Gospel Acclamation until the end of the Gospel:	Stand
During the homily:	Sit
From the beginning of the Creed to the end of the general intercessions:	Stand
From the preparation of the gifts until the end of “Pray, brothers and sisters . . .”:	Sit
From the beginning of “May the Lord accept this sacrifice . . .” until the end of the Holy, Holy:	Stand
During the Eucharistic Prayer:	Kneel
From the beginning of the Our Father until the beginning of the Lamb of God:	Stand
From the end of the Lamb of God until distribution of Holy Communion:	Kneel or Stand
When receiving Holy Communion:	Stand
During silence after Holy Communion:	Sit or Kneel
From the Prayer after Communion until the end of Mass	Stand

A New Gesture

The *General Instruction* asks us to make a sign of reverence before receiving Holy Communion. The bishops of this country have determined that our sign of reverence before receiving the Eucharist will be a bow of the head to the Body and Blood of Christ in the hands of the minister. Through this reverent gesture we honor the living Christ who comes to us as our spiritual food.

This bow is not a deep bow from the waist, but a simple bow of the head, made after stopping before the minister of communion. This simple gesture, made by all, unifies us in our visible respect for the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation which we are about to receive.

By common postures and gestures, the Church gives witness to and fosters our solidarity in Christ. If individuals were to decide to change them to suit their own piety, that would detract from our unity as one Body. When we stand, sit, kneel, bow, and sign ourselves in common ritual action, we give witness to who we are as the one Body of Christ.

This insert has been created in preparation for the implementation of the revised *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, which will take place in the Archdiocese of Chicago on the first Sunday of Advent, November 30, 2003. It is based on material provided by the Secretariat for the Liturgy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc., Washington D.C. Copyright © 2002. Copyright © 2003 Archdiocese of Chicago.



Hearing the Word of God

The words of Sacred Scripture are unlike any other that we ever hear. God reveals himself to us through the Scriptures. We believe that all of Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit and must be revered as truly being God's Word. In hearing God's Word, we come to know the depth of his love for us and our responsibilities as followers of Jesus.

There are three Scripture readings at Sunday Mass, taken from both the Old and New Testaments. The first reading, for most of the year, is from the Old Testament, which reminds us that throughout history God has been at work saving his people. During the Easter Season, the first reading is taken from the Acts of the Apostles, which recalls the growth and mission work of the early Church. The second reading, always from the New Testament, is taken from a letter from one of the Apostles or from the Book of Revelation. The third reading, from one of the four Gospels, is the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. The Gospels are the fullest expression of God's revelation in Christ.

When the Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself is speaking to his people and Christ, present in his own word, is proclaiming the Gospel. (*General Instruction*, n. 29)

In the hearing of God's word the Church is built up and grows, and in the signs of the liturgical celebration God's wonderful past works in the history of salvation are presented anew as mysterious realities. (*Introduction to the Lectionary*, n. 7)

The Gospel reading is so central, in fact, that it is proclaimed from a different book than the other readings. This book—the Book of the Gospels—is the one that is solemnly carried in procession at the start of the Mass, not the Lectionary that is used for the other readings. The book is placed flat on the altar until the Gospel is proclaimed by the priest or deacon; the deacon who reads the Gospel asks a blessing by way of preparation; the priest celebrant who reads the Gospel bows before the altar praying to be worthy to proclaim it. We may surround the Gospel with candles and incense. We stand to hear the Gospel. We sign our foreheads, lips, and hearts with the cross, praying that the Gospel will remain in our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts. The priest or deacon kisses the Gospel book after proclaiming the text. Through these gestures and signs of respect, the Church pays homage to Christ who is present when his Word is proclaimed.

The proclamation of the Scriptures in the Mass calls us to respond in faith. Through

speech and song, posture and gesture, in silent meditation and, most important of all, by listening attentively to the Scriptures as they are proclaimed, we open our lives to God's Word. We pray that the Holy Spirit may make God's Word effective in our lives so that we will "Be doers of the word and not hearers only." (James 1:22)

Our full, conscious, and active participation is required if the Word of God is to find a home in us. We make the ritual responses, "Thanks be to God," and "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ." We respond to the first reading by singing the Responsorial Psalm, and we sing the acclamation before the proclamation of the Gospel. We listen attentively as the reader, priest, or deacon proclaims God's Word. We listen as if Christ himself were standing at the ambo, for in fact it is God who speaks when the Scriptures are proclaimed.

It is beneficial to prepare ourselves for a fruitful hearing of the Scriptures. In his instruction, *Dies Domini*, Pope John Paul II encourages "those who take part in the Eucharist, priest, ministers, and faithful . . . to prepare the Sunday liturgy, reflecting beforehand upon the Word of God which will be proclaimed." The Holy Father adds that if we do

Meditative Silence

The *General Instruction* calls for periods of meditative silence in the Mass, especially in the Liturgy of the Word:

The Liturgy of the Word is to be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation, and so any sort of haste that hinders recollection must clearly be avoided . . . it is also appropriate to include brief periods of silence . . . in which, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the word of God may be grasped by the heart and a response through prayer may be prepared. (n. 56)

not, "it is difficult for the liturgical proclamation of the Word of God alone to produce the fruit we might expect" (n. 40).

The Liturgy of the Word also includes the homily, which helps us understand the meaning of the Scriptures and other Mass texts, more closely connecting God's Word and the texts to our daily lives. Because the homily is a liturgical action and is given by the priest or deacon, it may not be omitted on Sundays and Holy Days. After we recite the Creed together, the Prayers of the Faithful conclude the Liturgy of the Word as the community, moved by the inspired Word of God, prays for the needs of the whole Church, the world, and the local community.

The twofold table of God's Word and Eucharist continues to spiritually nourish the Church. "In the word of God the divine covenant is announced; in the Eucharist the new and everlasting covenant is renewed." (*Introduction to the Lectionary*, n. 10) God's Word leads us to the Eucharistic table where we enter the mighty deeds of God and especially the saving death and resurrection of Jesus. By uniting ourselves to Jesus in his self-offering to the Father, we are drawn more deeply into the life of God.



The Eucharistic Prayer

The Eucharistic Prayer is the source and summit of the Mass, just as the Eucharistic sacrifice is the source and summit of the whole Christian life. Most Catholics learn at an early age that it is during the Eucharistic Prayer that our gifts of bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. We call this action the *consecration* and this change of the elements *transubstantiation*. The words Jesus spoke at the Last Supper when he took bread into his hands and said, “This is my body,” and over the cup, “This is my blood,” embody what we, as Catholics, believe occurs at Mass.

What we have not always appreciated is the full context of the Eucharistic Prayer and the depth of its meaning. In the Eucharistic Prayer, we give thanks and praise to God. We remember and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, make present the saving life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We offer Jesus’ sacrifice to the Father and join ourselves to him in this solemn offering. We ask the Holy Spirit to transform our offering and make us one in Christ with all those mentioned in the Eucharistic Prayer.

We Remember in Thanksgiving

We come to the altar with praise and thanksgiving for the work of God’s creation and for the redemption won for us by Jesus Christ. Most

especially we remember Christ’s becoming man, his preaching and teaching, his passion, death, and resurrection. In this memorial act, these sacred events become present and real in a special way. In the Eucharist we meet and enter into the one sacrifice of Christ. Christ has died and risen once, for all time, and so this memorial does not add to Christ’s sacrifice; nor does it multiply it. Rather, in the celebration of the Eucharist, Christ makes his sacrificial death and his resurrection sacra-

mentally present to us in an un-bloody manner. It is a *memorial* celebration, so that, as Saint Paul says, “every time, then, you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes!” (1 Corinthians 11:26)

We Offer Sacrifice

Christ emptied himself for our salvation. “The gift of his love and obedience to the point of giving his life (cf. John 10:17–18) is in the first place a gift to his Father” (Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n. 13). Christ invites us to join ourselves to him in this offering to the Father so that his sacrifice will include our own. Through the action of the priest Christ is both the one who offers and the one who is offered. The gifts of bread and wine that we carry to the altar are symbols of all in our lives that we bring to the altar. We join

When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the memorial of her Lord’s death and resurrection, this central event of salvation becomes really present and the “work of our redemption is carried out.” (Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n. 11)

It is Christ himself, the eternal high priest of the New Covenant who, acting through the ministry of the priests, offers the Eucharistic sacrifice. And it is the same Christ, really present under the species of bread and wine, who is the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1410)

our work, sufferings and successes, joys and burdens to Christ's sacrifice so that our lives may be offered and transformed. When the priest prays "Let your Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy. . . ." we are not only asking that this bread and wine be transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, but also that our lives will be changed and given new meaning, new value.

Real Presence for Eternal Life

The Church partakes most intimately in Christ's sacrifice when she receives the Eucharist. "We receive the very One who offered himself for us, we receive his body which he gave up for us on the Cross and his blood which he 'poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' (Matthew 26:28)." (Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n. 16) Our eating and drinking at the Lord's Table assures us of eternal life, for the food that we share is truly the real body of Christ. When some quarreled about how Jesus could give them his flesh to eat, Jesus firmly responded: "Unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him on the last day" (John 6:53-54). Our celebration of the Eucharist then points us to the future, giving us a glimpse of heaven on earth. The names of the saints in the Eucharistic Prayer remind us

Not only do we say that it is the Church that celebrates the Eucharist, we believe that the celebration of the Eucharist also makes the Church. Although we are already one in Christ through Baptism, Eucharistic "Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens this incorporation into the Church, already achieved by Baptism. In Baptism we have been called to form but one body. The Eucharist fulfills this call" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1396).

We participate in the Eucharistic Prayer by:

- Our attention and posture.
 - Joining our lives to the sacrifice of Christ.
 - Making the responses: Holy, Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen.
-

that the Church in heaven and the Church on earth are one around the altar. We are given hope for a new world today and a glorious future when Christ will come again in glory.

One Body, One Spirit in Christ

In the Eucharistic Prayer, we pray that our communion will fulfill the desire of Jesus when he prayed to his Father: "so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me" (John 17:21). The words of the Third Eucharistic Prayer echo Jesus' prayer to the Father: "Grant that we who are nourished by his body and blood may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ." The bond of unity that the Eucharist creates is so unique and so essential to the Christian life that we can rightly say that the Eucharist makes the Church (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1396).

Amen

The Eucharistic Prayer ends with the assembly's Great Amen. Our Amen should be the most robust acclamation we make at Mass, for it is our "yes," our "so be it," to the entire prayer proclaimed by the priest on our behalf. By our Amen we make the sacrifice enacted at the altar our own.



The Reception of Holy Communion at Mass

At Mass, when we hear the invitation, “Happy are they who are called to his supper,” we know it is Christ who is calling us to his holy table. As we process to the Eucharistic table, our identity is revealed as a pilgrim people on our way to the heavenly Jerusalem. For the table we approach is no ordinary table; the food and drink we share is no ordinary supper. And the company around this altar includes far more members of Christ’s Body than our eyes take in. Our faith enables us to understand that our communion will not only be with Christ and the immediate community around us—it includes people of every race and nation and all the great saints and followers of Jesus throughout the ages. This holy meal is already a taste of heaven.

During the procession to the altar, we sing a hymn or musical antiphon that helps predispose us for the Gift we are about to receive. The Church considers our singing together at this time so important that the *General Instruction* does not merely suggest, it mandates that the assembly sing together a hymn or psalm with antiphon or special communion chant during this significant moment. The *General Instruction* gives us the reason: “Its purpose is to express the communicants’ union in spirit by means of the unity of their voices, to show joy of heart and to highlight more clearly the ‘communitarian’ nature of the procession to receive communion.” (n. 86)

Some may regard this time of receiving communion as a time for their own private prayer, and so they may perceive the expectation of singing as an intrusion

on their prayer. The reception of Holy Communion is indeed a personal moment, but it is also a corporate act. We are being joined to Christ and to his Church.

Our participation in the singing both fosters and expresses this communion. There is time for silent personal prayer in the period of silence after receiving Holy Communion.

At times, it may be hard to believe that our Lord can make the community we know, full of faults and shortcomings, into his Body. Yet this is what we proclaim to be true as we prepare to say “Amen”

before the Body and Blood of Christ. Because unity in the Church’s reception of the Eucharist is so important, the *General Instruction* calls for each country’s conference of bishops to determine one common posture and gesture of reverence to be used by all in receiving communion. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has determined that in this country, communion is normally received standing and that a bow of the head is the act of reverence made by those receiving. This shows the importance and significance of one common posture and gesture as a sign of our unity as members of the one body of Christ.

Communion may be received either in the hand or on the tongue. The decision belongs with the individual communicant, not the minister distributing communion. A communicant receiving in the hand removes gloves, if any, and holds up the hands to receive with the left hand cupped and open, supported by the right (a left-handed person rests the right upon the left). In the fourth century, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem

Receiving Holy Communion in the Catholic Church makes it visible that one is in full communion of faith. Respect for those who are not in communion with the Catholic Church forbids inviting them to a gesture that would violate their own conscience.

Those who feed on Christ in the Eucharist need not wait until the hereafter to receive eternal life: they already possess it on earth, as the first-fruits of a future fullness which will embrace man in his totality. For in the Eucharist we also receive the pledge of our bodily resurrection at the end of the world. (Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n. 18)

taught that in this way, our hands form a throne to receive our King (see *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds*, n. 41).

As the communicant approaches and stands in front of the minister, the minister holds up the host and the communicant bows the head to Christ truly present in the Eucharistic elements. The minister says, "The Body of Christ." The communicant audibly responds, "Amen," as an expression of belief in the real presence of Christ, body and blood, soul and divinity, who gives life to the believer. These words should not be altered; they are the universal ritual practice for

Catholics throughout the world. Christ's invitation to partake of his body and blood is an invitation to enter into intimate friendship with the Lord, through sharing in the mystery of his passion, death, and resurrection. The communicants' "Amen," then, is also a statement of their commitment to be the body of Christ in the world, to be bread broken and wine poured out for their sisters and brothers.

The minister places the Eucharistic bread in the palm of the hand, and the communicant carries it to the mouth with the other hand. We do not reach out and take the host from the minister; we never *take* communion, but always *receive* it. The host is always consumed immediately upon receiving it; we do not move to return to our place before doing so.

While the heart of the celebration of the Eucharist is the Eucharistic Prayer, the consummation of the Mass is found in Holy Communion, whereby the people purchased for the Father by his beloved Son eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ. They are thereby joined together as members of Christ's mystical Body, sharing the one life of the Spirit. In the great sacrament of the altar, they are joined to Christ Jesus and to one another. (*Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds*, n. 5)

Holy Communion has a more complete form as a sign when it is received under both kinds. For in this manner of reception a fuller sign of the Eucharistic banquet shines forth. Moreover there is a clearer expression of that will by which the new and everlasting covenant is ratified in the blood of the Lord and of the relationship of the Eucharistic banquet to the eschatological banquet in the Father's kingdom. (*General Instruction*, n. 281)

The communicant approaches to receive from the chalice, bows the head to Christ truly present in the Precious Blood, and the minister proclaims, "The Blood of Christ." The communicant again responds, "Amen." Reception of communion under both forms more fully expresses the depth of what our communion with Christ means. Recall the words of Jesus to his disciples, "Are you willing to drink of the cup that I am to drink?" Receiving the cup into our hands is a gesture of faith that demonstrates our willingness to share in the cross of Jesus and become a "living sacrifice of praise."

Sharing the Eucharistic cup more completely expresses the new and everlasting covenant that is ratified in the blood of Christ. Reception of communion under both forms, bread and wine, more clearly responds to the Lord's invitation, "Take and eat. Take and drink."

In receiving from the chalice, the communicant is not to dip the host into the cup. The *Norms* clearly state that "it is never allowed" (n. 50). Receiving by intinction means that the priest dips the host into the Precious Blood and places it on the tongue of the communicant. If for some reason a communicant is not able or willing to drink from the cup, then that person should receive only under the form of bread. A communicant who receives only the consecrated bread or only the consecrated wine fully receives Christ, whole and entire, given for our salvation.



Music in the Liturgy: Let All God's People Sing!

Singing is a powerful way of uniting a group of individuals into a single body. The singing of the national anthem at a sports event, for example, can unite thousands of strangers in a stadium into a single body, standing together in a common gesture of respect and honor. Similarly, communal singing during the Mass has a way of gathering the many individuals present and making them into a visible expression of what our faith proclaims: that we are one body, united in Christ, offering a single prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God.

The Importance of Singing

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* recalls the old proverb, "One who sings prays twice." This reminds us that our music and singing at worship is not entertainment or background music for our prayer. Our singing *is* our prayer. Putting our prayer into music not only helps to unite us in the prayer we make, it also gives a unique expression to our prayer that words alone cannot achieve. Consider, for example, the Alleluia we sing before hearing the Gospel. Our Alleluia is an expression of praise to the Lord who is present to us in the proclamation and hearing of the Gospel. Merely saying this acclamation of praise does not easily convey the joy and strength of our prayer at that point. The Gloria that we sing in the introductory rites of the Mass is another example of a hymn of praise—made to be sung, not recited.

Music is so important to our liturgical prayer that the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* says very strongly, "every care must be taken that singing

by the ministers and the people is not absent in celebrations that occur on Sundays and holy days of obligation." (n. 40)

We are heirs to a rich repertoire of chant, polyphony, sacred music, and hymns that goes back to the earliest times. And since the Second Vatican Council, when the use of the vernacular was introduced into the liturgy, composers have continually been creating new music for use in worship as well. Our experience of the liturgy has been enriched by a variety of musical styles, and the contributions of diverse cultures have been a wonderful gift.

Who Should Sing?

All who participate in the liturgy are expected to sing. No doubt there are some Catholics who feel that they don't have a beautiful singing voice. Others may feel uncomfortable singing together. But the voices we have are gifts from God. God does not hold auditions for prayer; God simply asks us to use the voice he's given us. When everyone sings, we can truly feel the power of the liturgy encircling the assembly. We owe it to ourselves and to one another to participate as fully as we can to make our experience of worship as rich as it can be.

To help our sung prayer, there are cantors and choirs who lead us. Their role is not to take our part away, but to support our singing. The choir or cantor can provide embellishment to what the congregation is singing. At times, the choir may offer music that fosters a more meditative mood, enriching our prayer. The ideal cantor and choir

never dominate the liturgy or become a focus themselves, but by serving the community's worship help draw the assembly more deeply into prayer.

What Should We Sing?

The Church has a preference for singing those parts of the Mass that are more important. Besides the prayers that are proper to the priest, the most commonly sung parts of the Mass are the Gloria, the Responsorial Psalm, the Gospel Acclamation, the Sanctus or Holy, Holy, the Memorial Acclamation, the Great Amen, the Lord's Prayer, and the Agnus Dei or Lamb of God. Hymns or chants at the entry of the procession, at the preparation of the gifts, during the communion procession, and at the conclusion of the Mass are commonly sung in most parishes.

The music is carefully chosen with respect to the liturgy of the day and the place in the liturgy where it is used. Sometimes worshipers wonder why we have to sing all the verses of a hymn. But when we consider the many purposes of singing, we understand. The opening hymn, for example, does not simply give the congregation something to do while the ministers make their way to the front of the church. One of its primary purposes is to help gather and unite the many individuals into one body as we prepare to celebrate the Eucharist. Also, the verses of the hymn all fit together as one

composition. The meaning and message of a hymn might be lost if we omit verses. In any case, our hymn singing is our sung prayer.

Pastoral Considerations

Every parish needs to consider the role and place of music and singing in the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. Trained music ministers are all the more important because the Church does not want to lose her heritage of Gregorian chant and sacred polyphony. The *General Instruction*, like the documents of the Second Vatican Council, urges that all Catholics be able to chant the commonly sung parts of the Mass in Latin.

The *General Instruction* gives clear and sound direction about the part that music must play in our weekly celebration of the Eucharist. In a poetic way, the instruction notes that the intense union between God and the Church in the celebration of the Eucharist can be described as a union between lovers whose nature is best expressed in song (n. 39). As we gather to hear God's Word, to eat the Bread of Life and drink from the Cup of Salvation, our prayer must reflect the joy and depth of this profound mystery of

faith. In doing so, we can follow the instruction of Saint Paul, who told the Church to "sing together psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" (Colossians 3:16) as we wait for the coming in glory of the one whose death we proclaim.

The *General Instruction* notes the following songs and acclamations that are normally sung:

- Opening song (n. 48)
- Kyrie (n. 52)
- Gloria (n. 53)
- Responsorial Psalm (n. 61)
- Gospel Acclamation (n. 62)
- Song at the preparation of gifts (n. 74)
- Sanctus, Memorial Acclamation, and Great Amen (nn. 79, 151)
- The Lord's Prayer (n. 81)
- Lamb of God (n. 83)
- Song to accompany the communion procession (n. 86)
- Optional psalm, canticle of praise, or hymn after communion (n. 88)

Baptism, Penance, Eucharist: Sacraments of New Life, Repentance, and Communion

Sacraments in Relationship

It would be a mistake to consider the Eucharist just one of the seven sacraments. Rather, the Eucharist, as source and summit of the Church's life and the life of individual Christians, is unique among the sacraments.

The Eucharist is the Church's full celebration of the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection and sending of the Holy Spirit. The other sacraments are particular forms of celebrating that paschal mystery and represent particular ways that it is applied in our lives—for example, in our confirmation for mission, our reception of God's merciful forgiveness, or our living the loving and life-giving covenant of marriage.

When we consider the great grace of repentance and reconciliation, we can clearly see a particular relationship among the three sacraments of Baptism, Penance, and Eucharist.

Baptism joins us to the dying and rising of Jesus and therefore to his Father and to one another (see Romans 6:3–4) as members of his Body, the Church (see Ephesians 4:4–6). It is important to remember that Baptism is also a sacrament of repentance and reconciliation because it sanctifies sinners. After Peter's stirring speech on the first Pentecost, people asked him what they ought to do to be saved. Peter responded, "Repent and be baptized *for the forgiveness of your sins*" (see Acts 2:14–39). This Baptism for repentance means that sins are forgiven, both original sin and personal sins, and that we stand in a reconciled relationship with God. We are in communion with the One who wants to share his life with us.

Penance has been called a second Baptism. It is the sacrament for those who, after Baptism, after being irrevocably claimed as God's own sons and daughters, have sinned and found themselves estranged from God and the Body of Christ, his Church. The sacrament of Penance renews the grace of repentance and restores

us to a reconciled relationship with God and his Church. It restores us to the communion with God and the Church established in Baptism. It also orients us to the Eucharist that makes present and real the fullness of communion and reconciliation given to us in the sacrificial death and life-giving resurrection of Jesus Christ. Clearly, these three sacraments, Baptism, Penance, and Eucharist, are integrally related as sacraments of new life, repentance, and communion in that life.

Briefly, Baptism brings us basic forgiveness, a turning around of our lives, and belonging to Jesus Christ and his Church. Penance depends on Baptism and re-awakens or enlivens the forgiveness and belonging that had their beginning in Baptism. At the same time, Penance enables our entrance into the culminating moment of communion that is the reality of the Eucharist, communion with the sacrifice of Christ and his Body the Church.

With this sense of the integral relationship of Baptism, Penance, and Eucharist as sacraments of new life, repentance, and communion, it may be helpful to focus more particularly on the Eucharist and repentance. How exactly does our repentance, our conversion of heart, our search and acceptance of God's forgiveness, relate to our participation in the Eucharist as communion in the sacrifice of Jesus and the life of his Body, the Church?

The Eucharist Presupposes Repentance

To share in the Body and Blood of the Lord, to participate in his sacrifice, to be linked at the deepest level of our lives with other believers in the mystery of God's redeeming love—all this assumes a converted heart that is capable of this holy communion. If we are truly estranged from God or our neighbor, we are incapable of communion until we repent and receive God's forgiveness. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says, "If, when you are bringing your gift to the altar, you suddenly remember that your brother has a grievance against you, leave your gift where it is before the altar. First go

and make peace with your brother, and only then come back and offer your gift” (5:23–24). Similarly, Saint Paul writes, “. . . anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of desecrating the body and blood of the Lord. A man must test himself before eating his share of the bread and drinking from the cup. For he who eats and drinks eats and drinks judgment on himself if he does not discern the Body” (1 Corinthians 11:27–30). In light of these biblical injunctions, the Church teaches that those who are conscious of serious sin in their lives must first confess their sins in the sacrament of Penance and receive forgiveness before they receive the Body and Blood of the Lord in the Eucharist.

The Eucharist Includes Repentance and Forgiveness

There are many prayers in the Eucharistic liturgy that call on God’s mercy and forgiveness. They are prayers of repentance. For example, the opening Penitential Rite includes a calling to mind of our sins along with a call for God’s mercy, “Lord, have mercy,” or *Kyrie eleison*. The Gloria includes the words, “Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us.” The proclamation of the Gospel is not only a call to repentance but a moment of forgiveness, as the priest’s personal prayer at the end of the Gospel indicates: “May the words of the Gospel wipe away our sins.” The Eucharistic Prayers repentantly turn to God and seek forgiveness: “Though we are sinners, we trust in your mercy and love. Do not consider what we truly deserve, but grant us your forgiveness.” The words of institution bring forgiveness to the forefront: “. . . the blood of the new and everlasting covenant . . . will be shed . . . so that sins

may be forgiven.” The Lord’s Prayer, the Lamb of God, and the “Lord, I am not worthy” in the communion rite all contain words of repentance and forgiveness.

Though it does not diminish the need for the sacrament of Penance, the Eucharist is an event of new life, repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The Church teaches that through our participation in the celebration of the Eucharist, venial sins are forgiven.

Repentance, Reconciliation, and Communion: Fruits of the Eucharist

Our participation in the Eucharist, according to the teaching of the Church, enables us to avoid sin. In other words, the Eucharist gives us strength to lead a converted or transformed way of life. Our celebration of the Eucharist summons us in the course of daily life to a fuller communion with God and one another in the Body of Christ.

Saint Paul’s teaching forms the basis for these convictions. He writes in 1 Corinthians: “When we bless ‘the cup of blessing,’ is it not a means of sharing the blood of Christ? When we break the bread, is it not a means of sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, many as we are, are one body; for it is one loaf of which we all partake” (1 Corinthians 10:16–17).

In the Eucharist, source and summit of the Church’s life and the life of individual believers, we find the culmination of our journey of repentance and communion. For here we find Christ who is our life and our peace.

These reflections are drawn in good measure from the work of Father Rinaldo Falsini, OFM, in his book *Penitenza e riconciliazione nella tradizione e nella riforma conciliare: riflessioni teologiche e proposte celebrative* (Milan: Ancora, 2003), especially pp. 88–104. This insert has been created in preparation for the implementation of the revised *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, which will take place in the Archdiocese of Chicago on the first Sunday of Advent, November 30, 2003. Copyright © 2003 Archdiocese of Chicago.



Key Points in the Revised *General Instruction*

This summary has been compiled to highlight certain significant revisions to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and the *Norms for the Celebration and Distribution of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States*. This summary also offers clarification on existing norms and, finally, communicates particular determinations for the celebration of the Eucharist in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

This summary is by no means meant to serve as a substitute for the careful reading and studying of the revised *General Instruction* and the *Norms for the Celebration and Distribution of Holy Communion*.

The liturgical assembly

The celebration of the Eucharist is an action of the whole Church, and each person present—ordained, lay ministers, members of the faithful—should be helped to realize that this Sunday celebration is of utmost importance in the life of the parish, and is, in fact, the center of the whole Christian life of the Church. (see GIRM, nn. 1–26)

Everyone who takes part in the celebration of the Eucharist is to prepare himself or herself before the liturgy. Silence, as an aid to this preparation, should be provided for all. (see GIRM, n. 45)

NOTE: If the church has a gathering space and people greet one another there, then silence may accompany their entrance into the body of the church. If people greet one another in the church, then a few moments of silence may be requested before the liturgy begins.

This silence should also be observed within the course of the celebration of the Mass, particularly at the following moments, as appropriate: after the invitation of the priest to pray, after the proclamation of the first and second readings, after the homily, and after communion. (see GIRM, n. 45)

Participation of the faithful throughout the celebration of Mass is to be encouraged and fostered, particularly in those parts of the Mass that are usually sung. (see GIRM, nn. 39–41)

This participation is further realized in the common postures and gestures which the faithful are called upon to make or observe:

- by bowing in the Creed at the words, “by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” (see GIRM, n. 137)
 - by standing, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, after the priest’s invitation to “Pray, brothers and sisters, that our sacrifice may be acceptable . . .” and before they respond, “May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands . . .” (see GIRM, nn. 43, 146)
 - by kneeling during the Eucharistic Prayer after the Sanctus is sung and until after the singing of the Amen. (see GIRM, n. 43) (Note: When Mass is celebrated in a place that does not allow for kneeling—for example, in a gym—then the faithful all bow when the priest genuflects after the consecration of the bread and after the consecration of the wine. See GIRM, n. 43)
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- by following the custom of the parish in kneeling or standing after the Lamb of God and throughout the communion procession until the prayer after communion.

NOTE: In the Archdiocese of Chicago, the Archbishop has determined to allow for parish custom at this time. (see GIRM, n. 43)

- by bowing his or her head to the Eucharistic elements in the hands of the minister as a sign of reverence before receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord in communion. (see GIRM, n. 160)

- by normally standing for the reception of Holy Communion. (see GIRM, n. 160)

All the faithful are normally to receive elements consecrated at the same Mass. (see GIRM, n. 85)

The faithful may receive the consecrated host either in the hand or on the tongue, as they decide. (see GIRM, n. 160)



Self-intinction by the communicant is never allowed. (see *Norms*, n. 50, GIRM, n. 287)

The priest

The Eucharistic liturgy is the gift from God to his Church and as such, no one is permitted—including the priest celebrant—to add, remove, or change anything in the celebration of the Mass, except where the norms allow for a decision between options. (see GIRM, n. 24)

If the tabernacle is located in the sanctuary of the church, then the priest and ministers genuflect before it when they approach the altar and when the procession leaves at the end of Mass, but never during the liturgy. (see GIRM, n. 274)

Prayers which the priest prays in his own name (that is, before reading the Gospel, at the preparation

of the gifts, and also before and after the communion of the priest) are to be said quietly. (see GIRM, n. 33)

It is not permitted to substitute or add non-biblical texts to the Liturgy of the Word. (See GIRM, n. 57).

The homily is a most important element of the Liturgy of the Word and care should be taken in its preparation. The homily may not be omitted on Sundays or holy days of obligation. It is given by the priest celebrant, a concelebrating priest, or the deacon, but is not to be given by a lay person. (see GIRM, n. 66)

For the Creed, only a formula approved by the Church is allowed for liturgical use. (See GIRM, n. 67)

For Mass on weekdays in Ordinary Time, the prayers from the previous Sunday, orations from another Sunday in Ordinary Time, or one of the prayers for various needs provided in

the Missal may be used. (see GIRM, n. 363)

During the preparation of the gifts, the prayers of blessing for the bread and the wine are to be said separately, not at the same time. These prayers are said before either the chalice or the paten are placed on the altar. (see GIRM, nn. 141–142)

It is very appropriate that the priest, if he is able, sing those parts of the Eucharistic Prayer for which musical notation is provided. (see GIRM, n. 147)

At the sign of peace, the priest ordinarily remains within the sanctuary, but may, for pastoral reasons, offer the sign of peace to a few of those near the sanctuary. (see GIRM, n. 154)

NOTE: In some parishes, careful thought must be given to establishing a sense of proportion and integration of this rite into the overall design of the

liturgy, while respecting the importance this rite has taken in the Eucharistic celebration. Pastors who wish to discuss this should contact the Office of Divine Worship.

The fraction rite is to be carried out only by the priest celebrant. A concelebrating priest and the deacon may assist. This pertains to portioning out the consecrated hosts to communion plates as well as to pouring the Precious Blood into ancillary cups. (see GIRM, n. 83; *Norms*, n. 37)

NOTE: In some cases, because of the number of communion cups needed, it may be necessary to pour unconsecrated wine into the cups during the preparation of the gifts. These cups would then remain on the altar during the consecration of the Eucharistic Prayer.

The celebrating priest (and concelebrants, if present) is to receive communion before it is given to anyone else. (see GIRM, nn. 158, 160, 182, 244)

The priest (and the deacon, if present) is to hand the communion vessels containing the consecrated elements—plates and cups—to the extraordinary ministers of communion. (see GIRM, nn. 83, 160, *Norms*, n. 40)

Concelebrating priests are normally to vest in the vestments worn when celebrating Mass individually. (see GIRM, n. 209)

The deacon

During the procession at the beginning of Mass, the deacon carrying the Book of the Gospels, if it is used, precedes the concelebrants and principal celebrant. He places the Book of the Gospels flat on the altar in preparation for the proclamation of the Gospel. If he is not carrying the Book of the

Gospels, he walks to the right of the principal celebrant. (see GIRM, n. 194)

NOTE: The Lectionary is not carried in the procession, but rather is placed on the ambo before Mass begins. (see GIRM, nn. 118, 120) In the absence of a deacon, a lector may carry the Book of the Gospels, if it is used, in the opening procession. The Book of the Gospels is not carried out in the closing procession. (see GIRM, nn. 120, 194)

The deacon, if he is able, should kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer, from the epiclesis to the elevation of the chalice, that is, just before the Memorial Acclamation. (see GIRM, n. 179)

The deacon receives communion under both species from the priest immediately after the priest's own communion. (see GIRM, n. 182)

The deacon assists in distributing communion to the extra-

ordinary ministers of Holy Communion and to the people, and may also assist in distributing vessels to the extraordinary ministers. (see GIRM, n. 182, *Norms*, nn. 38, 40)

If communion is distributed under both species, the deacon is to minister the Precious Blood. (see GIRM, n. 182)

If a deacon assists at the altar, he is the one who usually announces the Prayers of the Faithful and the announcements after the post-communion prayer. (see GIRM, nn. 177, 184)

The extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion

NOTE: In the Archdiocese of Chicago, the Archbishop has allowed for the following means of distributing communion to the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.



The extraordinary ministers of communion may approach the sanctuary and the altar as the priest receives communion. (see GIRM, n. 162, *Norms*, n. 38)

After the priest (and the deacon, if present) has received, he may distribute communion to two of the extraordinary ministers.

The priest may then give to one of these two extraordinary ministers a cup of the consecrated wine and to the other, a paten of the consecrated bread. These two ministers may then communicate the remaining ministers. (The deacon, if present, may assist.)

After each extraordinary minister has received communion, he or she goes to the altar, where the priest or deacon gives a communion vessel to the minister. The minister then goes to the assigned communion station. (see GIRM, n. 162)

Ministers may not add anything to the words of communion: “The Body of Christ,” “The Blood of Christ.” (See *Norms*, nn. 41, 43)

Extraordinary ministers of communion are to receive before they distribute communion to the rest of the faithful, not afterward. (see *Norms*, n. 39)

The Archbishop of Chicago has given permission for the extraordinary ministers to help consume whatever is left over of the Precious Blood after all have received communion. Extraordinary ministers may also help to purify the vessels at a side table. It is also permissible for the vessels to be covered by an appropriate cloth on the side table and cleansed after Mass. (see *Norms*, n. 52)

It is forbidden to pour what remains of the Precious Blood into the ground or down the sacrarium. (see *Norms*, nn. 51–55)

NOTE: The norms mention nothing about going to the tabernacle before or during communion in order to bring out consecrated hosts. The norms presume that enough hosts are consecrated so that all who take part in the Eucharist receive hosts consecrated at that Mass. (see GIRM, nn. 85, 118c) Furthermore, there is nothing in the norms to prohibit someone other than the priest (for example,

the deacon or the extraordinary minister of communion) from taking what is left over of the consecrated hosts to the tabernacle after communion.

The lectors

If the Book of the Gospels is used, the lector may carry it in the absence of a deacon, and lay it flat upon the altar in preparation for the proclamation of the Gospel. (see GIRM, nn. 194–195)

NOTE: The Lectionary is not carried in the procession, but rather is placed on the ambo before Mass begins. (see GIRM, nn. 118, 120) The Book of the Gospels is not carried out in the closing procession. (see GIRM, nn. 120, 194)

Normally, the scriptures proclaimed in the first and second readings are each proclaimed by a separate lector. (see GIRM, n. 109)

The division of any scriptural readings into parts, except for the Passion, is prohibited. (see GIRM, n. 109)

When no deacon is present, the lector or another minister announces from the ambo the Prayers of the Faithful. (see GIRM, nn. 99, 197)

