

Commentary on the Directives for the Implementation of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (third typical edition) in the Diocese of Columbus

The directives are to be read with the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, third typical edition (GIRM), *The Norms for the Distribution of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America* (NDHC) and the Instruction: *Redemptoris Sacramentum - On Certain Matters to Be Observed or to Be Avoided Regarding the Holy Eucharist* (RS). This reading must include the amendments published on the USCCB website for the NDHC or the *Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter* (BCLN) Volume XL, (May 2004). There is an additional document, *Introduction to the Order of Mass, A Pastoral Resource of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy* (IOM), that also provides clarity for the *General Instruction* and its implementation in the dioceses of the United States.

The Directives provide clarity and unity within the diocese. These documents should be read as a hierarchy of documents with the GIRM as the most authoritative and the Directives as the lesser in authority.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

While our culture promotes a rugged individuality, the Church calls us to be an organic whole - a community. We celebrate "with one heart and soul." (Acts 4:32) We are a community that gathers together to pray with and for one another. We gather to give glory, praise, thanksgiving, and even our expressions of sorrow to God. Our

presence is important for the well being of the whole community and not just for ourselves.

There is unity in our celebrations when we celebrate as a community. Our actions form a oneness. As a community we are formed of parts that constitute the whole. There is a harmony between persons that does not exist when we see ourselves as individuals independent of those around us.

The Church calls us to a unity. The Church is not seeking uniformity that is an unvarying conformity to some standard, rules, or pattern. When we celebrate as a community, our actions serve the common spiritual good of the People of God.

Inwardly, we participate in that which we outwardly hear, do, and say during the Liturgy. Through our outward behavior and gestures we express our inner participation in the Liturgy. Every aspect of our being is engaged in the worship of God; our bodies and feelings as well as our minds and spirits, with our hands and feet as well as our eyes and ears. Our non-verbal expressions throughout the Liturgy express what cannot be articulated in words. At times these non-verbal expressions enhance the words we use.

A common posture observed by all participants is a sign of the unity of the members of the Christian community gathered for the sacred Liturgy. It both expresses and fosters the intention and spiritual attitude of the participants.

This spiritual attitude is further expressed in our common prayers and the gestures that help us express our inner non-verbalized dimensions of these prayers. Music adds an important dynamic to our celebrations. Each of us should, to the limits of our ability, support the community by adding our voice to our common songs, especially singing the constitutive parts of the Mass.

The intent of silence depends on the part of the celebration in which it occurs. Silence allows the voice of the Holy Spirit to be heard in our hearts. From this silence, this listening, our response to the moment becomes less of a habit and a more honest response to the God who loves us.

P R E P A R A T I O N F O R T H E C E L E B R A T I O N

There are two factors that we should consider when preparing the worship space for our celebrations: noble simplicity and genuineness of materials. The focus of our worship is directed to the presider's chair, ambo, altar and the assembly. Any items that would overshadow or hide these elements that are at the heart of our celebrations should be avoided. Our preparation should only enhance and not redirect our attention.

Our choice should always be for the use of natural materials. Stone or wood should always be chosen over plastic or wood composites. Natural fibers for vestments and linens should be chosen over synthetics. Cut flowers are preferred instead of hand made silk flowers. Plastic or other mass produced foliage should never be used. We should always strive to give the best we have to offer and avoid an attitude of convenience or "that's good enough."

"The crucifix is a constant reminder of the cost of salvation and the symbol of Christian hope. The cross adorned with the image of the crucified Lord should be visible to all both during and after the celebration of the Eucharist." (IOM #55) If such

a crucifix does not exist within the sanctuary, a processional cross that has the crucified Lord would provide this reminder in our celebration. If a crucifix is permanently located in the sanctuary, a processional cross should be stored out of site and used only in the entrance procession and recessional.

Sacred vessels should be clearly distinguishable from ordinary vessels used everyday and they should be reserved exclusively for the liturgy. The GIRM has given a preference to sacred vessels made of precious metal, although other solid materials may be used which, according to the common estimation in each region, are precious and suited to sacred use and do not easily break or deteriorate. The *General Instruction* does not prohibit materials such as lead crystal, earthen vessels, wooden, etc. provided these vessels are "precious and suited to sacred use and do not easily break or deteriorate." Industries within our diocese have produced some excellent works of both crystal and earthen vessels, crafted by very talented individuals. These, provided they do not break easily (the *General Instruction* did not say they must be unbreakable), would be appropriate for liturgical use.

"The altar on which the Sacrifice of the Cross is made present under sacramental signs is also the table of the Lord to which the People of God are called together to participate in the Mass as well as the center of the thanksgiving that is accomplished through the Mass." (GIRM #296) "Out of respect for Christ's memorial banquet, the altar is adorned with a covering both during and after Mass, (GIRM #304). These altar linens can be of any festive color, however the top cloth must be white.

I N T R O D U C T O R Y R I T E S

As we separate ourselves from our daily activities and seek to be united with those who have joined with us to be in the presence of God during the

liturgy, a few moments of silence within our worship space gives us a time to reflect on God's continued presence in our lives.

All ministers (except those carrying the processional cross, processional candles, thurible, or *The Book of the Gospels*) who enter the sanctuary are to reverence the altar with a deep bow. They are not to bow to the presider, crucifix, ambo, or any other object (acknowledging a bishop with a nod of the head is an exception and is expected). When they leave the sanctuary they should again do the same. Servers would only bow to the altar during the entrance procession and recessional. In performing their functions during the Mass they would not bow to the altar as they crossed before or behind the altar.

If the tabernacle is within the sanctuary, all in the entrance procession genuflect on the right knee as a special sign of reverence to the true presence of Christ in the reserved Sacrament (with the same exceptions listed above). The presider and deacon venerate the altar with a kiss, and if the occasion suggests, the presider may incense the cross and the altar.

While the *Lectionary* is an important liturgical book, it is never carried in procession and is placed on the ambo before Mass begins. (GIRM #118b) The *Book of the Gospels* is venerated above all the books containing scripture by the Church and is carried in procession by the deacon. It may be carried by a lector if there is no deacon, or it may be placed on the altar before Mass begins.

The "Gloria" is sung or said on Sundays outside Advent and Lent, on solemnities and feasts, and at special celebrations of a more solemn character. This very ancient and venerable hymn which gathers the Church together in the Holy Spirit, glorifies and entreats God the Father and the Lamb. (GIRM #53)

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

The *General Instruction* calls the assembly to a greater sharing of ministry within our celebrations. There should be two lectors, one for each of the readings. These readings are usually of two different styles of writing and therefore are read with different intonations. While a single lector is capable of mastering the two different spirits of the readings, it is suggested that this sharing of the readings between two lectors allows for a better proclamation of the readings, thus allowing each lector a single reading to prepare and to focus his/her skills.

For those rare occasions when the psalm is not sung, there is the opportunity to further share this role by assigning a third lector. The lector who reads the psalm should be one who knows the difference between reading prose and poetry. Psalms cannot be read in the same manner as prose. Psalms are songs which are a unique style different from normal story telling.

Silence is again important after each of the two readings. These periods of silence allow time for the assembly to savor the inspired words they have heard and to ponder their meaning in their hearts. This silence could be enhanced with a stillness where movement is not taking place.

The *General Instruction* is also identifying a difference between a *psalmist* (one who leads the assembly in the Responsorial Psalm, scripture) and a *cantor* (one who leads the assembly in their singing throughout the celebration). While these two different roles can be fulfilled by a single member of the community, by separating scripture from community song, we have again a greater sharing of the community's responsibility for ministry in our celebrations.

The Liturgy of the Word builds to the summit through proclamation of the gospel. The gospel proclamation is marked with special actions, signs, and symbols. The *Book of the Gospels* is venerated above all liturgical books. Its binding is worthy, dignified, and beautiful. As a sign of Christ present in the liturgy, it is revered with the same holy kiss given to the altar. The *Book of*

the Gospels is a sign of the presence of Christ in his word and proclaimed with great honor in the Church's liturgy. The deacon carries the *Book of the Gospels* in solemn procession for the veneration of the entire congregation and may be accompanied by candles and incense at Mass.

The presentation of the *Book of the Gospels* to the newly ordained deacon "symbolizes the office of the deacon to proclaim the Gospel in liturgical celebrations and to preach the faith of the Church in word and deed. The enshrinement of the *Book of the Gospels* whenever the Church gathers in a council or synod is a sign of the presence of Christ himself as teacher and guide.

The Church acknowledges the preeminent place of the gospels by granting "special marks of honor to their proclamation". The proclamation of the gospel is reserved to the deacon, only in his absence may a priest proclaim the gospel. A Gospel procession, which marks the coming of Christ, may be accompanied by particular marks of reverence, namely, incense and lighted candles. The special minister appointed to read the Gospel (the deacon) prepares himself with a blessing, the faithful stand as they listen to it being proclaimed and acknowledge and confess Christ is present and speaking to them. (*Book of the Gospels* (BG) #7-8; GIRM #60).

Although the gospel is the summit of the Liturgy of the Word, the homily is no less important. This action is the Church teaching through its leadership (bishops, priests and deacons) who break open the Word and make the connection between a life in Christ and our praise and thanksgiving to our God. The non-ordained, while having acquired knowledge in many aspects of the Church's teachings, the homily is an exercise of the teaching office of the Church which is the role of the clergy.

Silence after the homily allows the assembly to reflect on the explanation and how the scripture may be applied to their lives and to better see God's action in their daily activities.

Within the Profession of Faith is the statement of the *Incarnation of our Lord*. It is this statement that is the foundation of our belief that God through his Son became one with us. This belief deserves our deep-felt gesture - a bow made by all present.

The deacon normally leads the petitions of the General Intercessions. His knowledge of the needs of the community are expressed in prayer. However, if the petitions are not composed by the deacon, then the one who composed them should be the one who leads the community in these prayers.

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Preparation of the Gifts

There are minor changes in the preparation of the gifts at Masses when the distribution of communion is to include the Precious Blood being distributed to the community. The wine is poured into the communion cups and the presider's chalice during the preparation of the gifts before it is consecrated. The wine is poured into separate cups at this time because, once the wine becomes the Precious Blood, it is not to be poured from one vessel into another. A few drops of water are placed into the carafe, then the wine is poured into the cups and chalice.

The communion cups may be filled before Mass begins and placed on the credence table. During the preparation of the gifts the cups will be brought to the altar and placed around the chalice. The chalice will be prepared in the normal fashion.

The GIRM calls for the collection to be brought forward and placed in a secure location, but not at the *foot of the altar*. Most pastors would argue that the foot of the altar is the most secure. Here we are left with our imagination to find another innovative location.

The assembly is now being asked to stand *before* the *invitation to prayer* for the "prayer over the gifts". This will require the presider, deacon or

some other minister to gesture for the community to stand before the presider begins his *invitation to prayer*.

Eucharistic Prayer

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has continued the posture of kneeling during the Eucharist prayer. While this is to be universal in this country, there are exceptions listed in the GIRM where standing may be an alternative (GIRM #43). Although kneeling is the prescribed posture during the majority of the Liturgy of the Eucharist (from the end of the *Sanctus* until the *Great Amen*), the GIRM does not mandate kneelers. The Directive provides for pastors of parishes that do not have kneelers (or for another reason that prevents the whole community from kneeling) to contact our bishop to request temporary continuance for the practice of standing. Those who do not kneel make a profound bow when the priest genuflects after the consecration.

The posture of the deacons and other ministers within the sanctuary should be the same as that of the presider, thus creating a unity in their posture and service within the sanctuary. They are to stand during the Eucharistic Prayer while positioned within the sanctuary according to their duties. Deacons are *not* to look or act as a concelebrant. Servers are *not* to look or act as a deacon.

Communion Rite

There is no prescribed gesture for the Lord's Prayer. The overarching directive for *unity* begs for a common posture or gesture. As the assembly and presider recite the Lord's Prayer together, the best gesture would be the one prescribed in the *rubrics* for the presider. The rubrics call for the presider to say the Lord's Prayer standing with his hands in the *orans* position, that is outstretched.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (new title) may still come to the sanctuary during the "sign of peace". Once entering the sanctuary, they should not extend the sign of peace to one

another, but simply move to a place within the sanctuary unique to themselves. Deacons, after the fraction rite, are to stand away from the altar and not with concelebrants.

After the presider self-communicates, the deacon is to come forward and receive communion from the presider, then communion is offered to the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. (Servers may also be given communion at this time.) The Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are *helpers* of the ordinary ministers (bishops, priests and deacons). As *helpers* they are to be given the vessels which they will use to assist in the distribution of communion to the assembly.

Christ is fully present in both the Precious Body and Precious Blood. Therefore, there is no difference in the reception of one over the other. Ordinary ministers should not lessen this equality by only distributing the Consecrated Hosts and leaving the distribution of the Precious Blood to the extraordinary ministers. Deacons are the ordinary ministers of the Precious Blood.

The deacon, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and the assembly are to make a gesture of reverence (bowing one's head) for the true presence of Christ before their reception of the Precious Body and the Precious Blood.

Our celebration of the Mass encourages those assembled to be conscious, active and fully participate in the sacrifice of the Mass being celebrated. The assembly should be receiving Christ's Precious Body and Blood from the sacrifice being celebrated. Their participation in the sacrifice of the Mass is diminished by the routine distribution of the reserved sacrament from the tabernacle and/or the intentional inadequate supply of wine prepared for consecration during the Mass. The reserved Sacrament from the tabernacle may be brought to the altar *after* the distribution to the assembly begins and used *only* when it becomes apparent that not enough hosts were provided for the assembly before Mass began.

The excess Precious Body and Precious Blood can be consumed by the ordinary and extraordinary ministers of communion. Some of the extra Consecrated Hosts may be taken to the tabernacle for the sick and for adoration. Excess Precious Blood must be consumed. The vessels may be placed on the credence table, covered, and cleansed following Mass.

A blessing for non-communicants is an *addition* to the rituals of the Mass. This action is confusing and runs the risk of diminishing the unique importance of Communion and is to be avoided.

The GIRM calls for the communion song to begin with the presider's reception of communion and to continue through the assembly's reception of communion. Any psalm or hymn is appropriate if it expresses the spiritual unity of the communicants, shows the joy of all, and makes the communion procession an act of union of sisters and brothers in Christ. In its structure and its simplicity, the song should encourage the participation of all present. Several communion songs may be sung in succession. Depending on the length of Communion, it may be preferable to interrupt congregational singing with periods of silence, instrumental music, or choral music, resuming the singing after an interlude. This provides some challenges to our music ministers who would like to also receive communion.

CONCLUDING RITE

The *Book of the Gospels* is not carried out at the end of Mass. While it contains the "words of everlasting life", these words have been poured out into the assembly. We are now the containers of those words. We are to carry them into the world in which we live. We have been given a sense of mission that calls us to witness to Christ in the world and to bring the Gospel to the poor.

The veneration and reverence of the altar and the reverence for the tabernacle is repeated during the recessional by the ministers from the sanctuary.

Recessional Music, while not part of the *General Instruction*, has always been part of the tradition of the Church and is the "sending of the faithful" to put into effect in their daily lives the Paschal Mystery and unity in Christ that they have celebrated.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the *General Instruction* and the other documents published, are not to create uniformity, but to encourage unity throughout the whole Church. The reading of these documents should not be so literal that they become ridged rules which do not encourage us to reach out to one another. These modifications to our celebrations are to be first viewed through our own spirituality. The goal of our liturgies should not be our adherence to rubrics, but instead a well-trained heart that seeks God.

The rites and prayers that the Church gives us make up a treasury of the Church's understanding of our Lord and what the Lord asks of us. They are the primary a means to full, conscious, and active participation in the Paschal Mystery through which Christ redeems his beloved and joins us to himself in glory.