



ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF REGINA
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Pastoral Letter to the Faithful of the Archdiocese of Regina

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I write to you to address how we celebrate the Holy Mass, the Eucharist, in our parish communities and throughout the archdiocese. Before addressing some specific issues regarding these celebrations of the liturgy, we rejoice to acknowledge that the celebration of the Eucharist is at the centre of our lives. At the Second Vatican Council, the Church states that the Eucharistic sacrifice is “the source and summit of the Christian life” (*Lumen Gentium*, 11). As Saint John Paul II noted, “the Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith but recapitulates the heart of the mystery of the Church” (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 1).

With our participation in the Eucharist, we are drawn prayerfully into the mystery of God among us, God at the centre of our lives as a people of faith. We live in a culture where much attention is given to our choices, our freedoms, our favourites, our fashions, our sports teams. Our days are often filled with things that are ‘all about us’. The liturgy is something of a reprieve from all of that. It tells us about God, and draws us, mind and heart, body and soul, into the mystery of our living relationship with God, centred on God’s abiding and redeeming mercy for us.

The Eucharist brings us consciously into the presence of the Creator, author of all things, the one Jesus calls ‘abba’ and teaches us to approach as our ‘abba’, an ever-present ever-loving father. It draws us into the mystery of the Word made flesh, Jesus, who shows us the face of God’s mercy, who gives everything that we might live. And it sends us forth in mission carried by the Holy Spirit, God walking with us, guiding and inspiring us at the depth of our being, breathing life into our church.

In telling us about God, the liturgy also tells us about ourselves: it tells us that we are loved, created for a purpose, gifted and blessed, forgiven, and called to learn to live as instruments of God’s merciful designs for humanity and creation. While this may not always be our experience at Mass, the celebration of the Eucharist draws us into the mystery of our relationship with God; it converts our hearts by its power and its beauty; and it summons us to personal transformation and communal mission on the path of Christian discipleship. That is why it matters so much how we celebrate the Mass.

The current Roman Missal, approved by the Holy See in 2011 and used by the priest as he presides at Mass, contains all the prayers and instructions for the celebration of the Eucharist.

The specific part that gives overall direction for the proper celebration of the Mass is called the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM).

In the implementation of this new missal there has also been some confusion on how the directives of the GIRM are implemented in the archdiocese, and I now offer these guidelines to address some inconsistencies in the celebration of Mass. I have consulted with clergy and lay leaders about how we celebrate the Eucharist, asking where there are tensions, and inviting suggestions for how we could improve our celebrations. I have also drawn on the assistance of our archdiocesan director of liturgy.

The first area to address is the Communion Rite. Before the Eucharistic Prayer and Communion, bread and wine are brought forward during the preparation of the gifts, representing the assembly's offering to God. Those gifts are received and then in consecration become God's gifts to his people. Full participation in the liturgy envisions the following:

- **Reception of the Lord's Body:** the General Instruction clearly states that "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, in the cases where this is foreseen, they partake of the chalice, so that even by means of signs, Communion will stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated" (GIRM, 85). Therefore, parishes are encouraged to find an appropriate means to discern the approximate number of hosts needing to be consecrated at each Mass. The body of Christ from the tabernacle can be used if insufficient hosts have been consecrated, but receiving pre-consecrated hosts is not the norm at a Eucharistic celebration.

- **Reception of the Cup:** Communion has a fuller form as a sacramental sign when received under both species. Hence parishes are encouraged to make reception from the chalice, the Blood of Christ, possible for all parishioners. Those who receive communion under one species or the other are in no way deprived of the fullness of grace offered in this sacrament (GIRM, 282).

To highlight its sacredness, the Communion Rite is accompanied by both a hymn (or hymns) and by a period of silence.

- **Music during the Procession to Communion:** The purpose of the communion song 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 communal nature of the procession to receive communion (GIRM 86, 159). So, the Communion song ideally begins while the priest is receiving Communion, and continues while the Eucharist is being distributed to the faithful. The hymn should be concluded in a timely manner so that the singers and musicians can also receive communion with ease.

- **Silence after Communion:** a period of sacred silence is to be observed by priest and people after the distribution of communion is over and the vessels have been purified. It is advisable that the brief moment of silence not be interrupted by music or announcements (announcements should take place after the closing prayer). In our busy lives, this moment of silent prayer is a time of grace, allowing us to give thanks, to lift prayers, to be strengthened by the Eucharist so that we can go forth to live out of the love and hope which are at the heart of the Mass.

Finally, I would like to address our posture at Mass. It is important to remember that the Roman Missal envisions posture as something that expresses the unity of the community and should not be a cause of division. Whether we stand or kneel, being united in our outward posture expresses

our oneness as the body of Christ and our unity in praise and thanksgiving offered to God.

● ***Posture during the Eucharistic Prayer:*** the posture to be assumed by the faithful at the Consecration is kneeling (GIRM, 43). When the new Missal was released, the bishops in Saskatchewan - and in some other places - interpreted that we were to kneel just prior to the Consecration, but after seven years of experience, and little consistency in practice, I would ask that we now kneel at the conclusion of the Sanctus ('Holy, Holy, Holy') and to stand when the priest announces 'The Mystery of Faith'. Those who may not be able to kneel for such reasons as infirmity are invited to sit. In parishes where there are no kneelers, or when Mass is celebrated in a school or setting without pews and kneelers, you are invited to discern the most appropriate reverential posture for that place.

● ***Posture during the reception of Holy Communion:*** the normative posture to receive Communion is standing. Before the minister of Communion, the recipient is invited to make a bow of the head before receiving the Blessed Sacrament (GIRM, 160).

● ***Posture after receiving Communion:*** to remain standing after receiving Communion is the established norm in the dioceses of Saskatchewan, as in many other places. We remain standing until the whole congregation, including choir, has received communion. It is not problematic that some sit or kneel when they return to their pew, but a unity of posture, like the unity of all joining in the communion hymn, is a means of fostering and expressing the communion of faith which holds us together in Christ.

I request your careful and deliberate attention to these matters. I offer these guidelines so that in the archdiocese we may express more fully our bonds of unity with the whole Church and our oneness as the Body of Christ. As you work with your parish priest in implementing these guidelines, our Archdiocesan Director of Liturgy, Fr. Ron Andree, who knows the directives of the universal church well and has assisted me in drawing together these guidelines for improving our celebrations of the Eucharist, is available to pastors to answer questions as they emerge in parishes.

Wishing you all the abundant blessings of God as we celebrate the Holy Mysteries and as we go forth glorifying the Lord with our lives.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Donald J. Bolen", with a small cross symbol to the left.

✠ Donald J. Bolen
Archbishop of Regina

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