

## New Missal Catechesis

### The Sunday Eucharist

On every Sunday from the beginning of the Church, Christians have celebrated the Mass, or as it is also known, the Eucharist. This greatest gift makes present in a sacramental way the living mystery of the Lord's Passover from death to life. The Church teaches us that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. Because the Mass is so vital, the Church has always taken great care to form her children in understanding and celebrating the liturgy.

The essential parts of the Mass have remained unchanged over the centuries, although the outward form of the liturgy has varied. The Second Vatican Council called for a number of revisions to the *Roman Missal* to help Catholics enter more completely into the celebration of the liturgy.

#### **A revised General Instruction of the Roman Missal and a new translation**

In 2002 the Holy See issued a revision of the *Roman Missal* and its introduction, which is known as the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. This was based on years of pastoral experience with the missal that was published immediately after the Second Vatican Council. Because of the diversity of cultures within the universal Church, the Holy See invited the national conferences of bishops to propose revisions appropriate to their own particular regions. At the same time, a new English translation of the original Latin text of the *Roman Missal* has received final approval from Rome.

The new translation and the new *General Instruction* come into use on the first Sunday of Advent, November 27, 2011.

The publication of the revised *General Instruction* with the new English version of the Mass is an occasion to renew our understanding of the liturgy and the way we celebrate it. By this catechesis or instruction, Catholics everywhere can more easily enter into the liturgy with all their hearts and find in it the wellspring of the Church's spiritual life.

The Archdiocesan Liturgy Commission assists the Archbishop in his role as pastor, teacher and moderator of the liturgical life. In fulfillment of this mandate, the Commission will offer reflections on the meaning of the liturgy and introduce the changes called for in the revised *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. Bulletin inserts will address these topics:

- Baptism, Penance, Eucharist
- the Eucharistic Prayer
- roles in the Liturgy
- music in the Liturgy
- postures and gestures

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Parishes vary greatly from one community to another, but the one thing we have 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 to the table of God's Word and the table of the Eucharist to be taught, nourished and sent out to build the Kingdom of God in the communities of family, school, work and city.

The instruction provided is a chance for us to ask important questions: in the celebration of the Mass in our parish, is it clear that this is the most important thing we do all week? Is the Eucharist truly the summit and source of our Christian life?

### **Baptism, Penance and the Holy Eucharist**

The Eucharist is not just one of the seven sacraments. It is the source and summit of the Church's life and of the life of the individual Christian. The Mass is the Church's fullest celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection.

The other sacraments celebrate particular ways in which the Paschal Mystery is applied in our lives, for example, in Confirmation for mission, in Penance, to impart God's pardon, in Matrimony, for grace to live the covenant of marriage.

A particular relationship can be discerned among the three sacraments of Baptism, Penance and the Eucharist.

**Baptism** joins us to the dying and rising of Jesus and makes us members of his Body, the Church (cf. Ephesians 4:4-6). Baptism is a sacrament of repentance and reconciliation because it sanctifies sinners. After Peter's speech on the first Pentecost, people asked what they ought to do to be saved. Peter responded: "Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:14-39). Baptism is the sacrament of forgiveness of original sin and in the case of those who have reached the age of reason, personal sin, too.

**Penance** has been called a second Baptism, since it is the sacrament of forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism. The sacrament restores us to the grace of Baptism and reconciles us to God and the Church. It also orients us to the Eucharist, which makes present and real the fullness of communion and reconciliation given to us in the sacrificial death and life-giving resurrection of Jesus Christ.

#### **The Eucharist Presupposes Repentance**

To share in the Body and Blood of the Lord, to participate in his sacrifice and to be joined with other believers in the mystery of God's redeeming love, presumes a converted heart. If we are 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

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comeback and offer your gift" (Mt. 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 absolution before they receive the Body and Blood of the Lord in the Eucharist.

Participation in the Eucharist strengthens us to resist sin and leads to a converted life. Our celebration of the Eucharist summons us to a fuller communion with God and one another in the Body of Christ. In his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul writes: "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" (1Corinthians 10:16-17).

## **Ministries and Roles**

Each time we come together as the Body of Christ to celebrate the Eucharist, we live our vocation received in Baptism, the sacrament that gives us a share in the priesthood of Christ, uniting ourselves with Him in His self-offering to God. The liturgy of this offering, the Mass, is not initiated by us, but by God, Who acts in and through the Church. It is our action to the extent that we give ourselves to this mystery of redemptive worship.

### **Different Roles, Indispensable Ministries**

Saint Peter reminds us that we are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people" (1 Peter 2:9–10). 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) and each member has a role in the celebration.

While all the baptized are joined to the Lord in this work, some members of the Church are called to special service. Through the sacrament of Holy Orders, priests and bishops are "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 person of Christ (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 10), giving voice to the prayer 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 proclaims the Gospel of Christ.

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Tasks not specifically reserved to ordained ministers should be carried out by the lay faithful. For example, lectors proclaim the Word of God in the first and second readings, cantors and musicians lead the members of the congregation in sung prayer. Acolytes assist the bishop, priest and deacon. In the absence of a sufficient number of ordained ministers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion assist in the distribution of the Body and Blood of Christ. Ushers and greeters help to assemble the congregation for worship.

This common service expresses the “cohesion and hierarchical ordering” of the People of God (cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, n. 91). All liturgical ministries are important and those who discharge them have a responsibility to be prepared to serve with understanding and reverence.

### **The Responsibility of All the Baptized**

Besides specific roles in the celebration of the liturgy, the Church calls for the full, conscious and active participation of everyone in the worship of God. This requires the effort to be fully engaged in the liturgy, not present only as spectators. During the liturgy, all of us unite ourselves in various ways in intention and love with Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

## **Music in the Liturgy**

“Thankfully sing to God psalms, hymns, and holy songs” (Colossians 3: 16). From the days of the Old Testament, God’s people have sung songs of praise and thanksgiving. Music, particularly communal singing, has played a major role in the liturgies and devotions of the faithful.

Communal singing during the Mass expresses what our faith proclaims: we are one body, united in Christ, offering a single prayer of praise and thanksgiving to the Father. Our singing gives voice externally to feelings and attitudes and unites the dispositions of the community.

“A liturgical celebration can have no more solemn or pleasing feature than the whole assembly’s expressing its faith and devotion in song” (*Musicam Sacram* n. 16). St. Augustine said: “they who love, sing” and “he who sings well, prays twice.”

### **The Importance of Singing**

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* reminds us that music and singing at worship is our prayer. Putting prayer into music helps unite us and gives expression to our prayer that words alone cannot achieve. The *Gloria* that we sing during the introductory rites of the Mass is an example of a hymn of praise, meant to be sung, not recited. The *Alleluia* sung before hearing the Gospel is another expression of praise to the Lord Who is present in the proclamation and hearing of the Gospel. Merely reciting these acclamations of praise does not adequately convey the joy of our prayer at these points in the Mass. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* says “every

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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).

The Church is heir to a rich repertoire of chant, polyphony, sacred music and hymns. Composers have continually created new music for use in the liturgy in a variety of musical styles reflecting diverse cultures.

### **Who Should Sing?**

All who participate in the liturgy should sing. Our voices are gifts from God and He asks us to use His gifts in His praise.

Cantors and choirs have a particular ministry to support the congregation’s singing. Their role is to serve the community’s worship by drawing people more deeply into prayer.

### **What Should We Sing?**

The parts of the Mass should be sung, especially those that are more important: the prayers proper to the priest and dialogues between the priest and the people.

When the text of the Mass, for example the entrance antiphon, cannot be sung, a liturgical song suited to the sacred action should be substituted, taken from the Catholic Book of Worship or another source approved by a conference of bishops or the diocesan bishop.

### **The New Translation**

The new translation of the Missal will have a profound effect on the music sung at Mass. The most changed hymn text in the Mass is the *Gloria*, with the new text more closely reflecting the original Latin. Composers will need to rewrite the music for the *Gloria* and make simpler adaptations to other prayers, such as the *Sanctus*.

### **Pastoral Considerations**

The role and place of music in the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist is of enormous value. Because the Church wants to preserve and pass on the heritage of Gregorian chant and sacred polyphony, the *General Instruction* urges that all Catholics be able to chant the commonly sung parts of the Mass in Latin. This should be a priority in the Archdiocese of Vancouver.

## **Postures and Gestures**

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 pray with our bodies. During Mass we assume different postures: standing, kneeling and sitting. We also make a variety of gestures: bowing, signing ourselves, exchanging 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

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understanding and faith. Through these postures and gestures, we participate in the liturgy more attentively.

**Standing** is a sign of respect and honour. 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 assume 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.

**Kneeling** signified penitence in the early Church: the awareness of our sin casts us to the ground. Kneeling has also come to signify humble adoration. It is for this reason that we kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer, from after the *Sanctus* until after the Great *Amen* and then from the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) until Communion.

**Sitting** is the posture of listening and meditation. The congregation sits for the first and second reading and the homily. We may also sit during 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. Before taking our place upon entering the church, we genuflect toward the Blessed Sacrament reserved inside the tabernacle. In the procession beginning Mass, the priest and ministers genuflect to the tabernacle when it is located within the sanctuary. They also genuflect to the tabernacle upon leaving the sanctuary at the end of Mass. During the liturgy, a bow is made when passing before the tabernacle.

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, unless the tabernacle is located in the sanctuary; in that case, they genuflect, as described above.

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In the Creed, we bow at the words that commemorate the Incarnation: “by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” This gesture signifies our 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 a sign that we are committed to sharing Christ’s peace. It is an expression of our desire to live in communion with one another.

### **A New Gesture**

The *General Instruction* asks us to make a sign of reverence before receiving Holy Communion. The bishops of Canada 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. Through this gesture we honour the living Christ who comes to us as our spiritual food. We fold our hands when receiving on the tongue or extend them one over the other when receiving in the hand. The simple bow is not repeated before receiving the Precious Blood. This gesture made by all unifies us in our visible respect for the Bread of Life and the chalice of salvation.

By common postures and gestures, the Church gives witness to 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.

### **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
- During the preparation of the gifts: sit
- From the invitation “Pray, brethren...” before the prayer over the offerings until the end of the *Sanctus*: stand
- During the Eucharistic Prayer: kneel
- From the beginning of the invitation to pray 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
- After receiving Holy Communion: kneel or sit
- From the Prayer after Communion until the end of Mass: stand

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### **Key Points in the Revised General Instruction**

This summary highlights significant revisions to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, clarifies existing norms and sets out particular directives for the celebration of Mass in the Archdiocese of Vancouver. This summary is not a substitute for a careful reading of the revised *General Instruction* and the *Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers*.

#### **The liturgical assembly**

The celebration of the Eucharist is an action of the whole Church. As the centre of the whole Christian life, the Sunday celebration is of utmost importance in the life of the parish.

Everyone who takes part in the celebration of the Eucharist should prepare for the liturgy. An atmosphere of reverent silence should characterize the church before and after Mass. This silence should also be observed within the celebration of the Mass, particularly at the following moments: after the invitation of the priest to pray, after the proclamation of the first and second readings, after the homily and after Communion.

Participation of the faithful throughout the celebration of Mass should be promoted and fostered, particularly in those parts of the Mass that are usually sung. This participation is further realized in the common postures and gestures which the faithful make or observe:

- by bowing in the Creed at the words, "by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man";
- by standing from the invitation "Pray, brethren..." before the prayer over the offerings;
- by kneeling during the Eucharistic Prayer after the *Sanctus* until after the singing of the Amen;
- by bowing to the Eucharistic elements as a sign of reverence before receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord;
- by standing or kneeling (according to the custom of the parish) for the reception of Holy Communion.

The faithful should normally receive Communion consecrated at the same Mass. They may receive the host either on the tongue or in the hand. Self-intinction (the communicant himself dipping the Host in the chalice) is never permitted.

#### **The priest**

The Eucharistic liturgy is the gift of God to His Church. No one, even a priest, is permitted to add, remove or change anything in the celebration of the Mass, except where the norms allow for a choice among options or permit extemporaneous words.

When the tabernacle is located in the sanctuary of the church, the priest and ministers genuflect before it when they approach the altar and when the procession leaves at the end of

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Mass; when passing in front of the tabernacle during the liturgy, a bow is made rather than a genuflection.

Prayers which the priest prays in his own name (i.e., before reading the Gospel, at the preparation of the gifts and before and after the Communion of the priest) are said quietly.

It is very appropriate that the priest sing those parts of the Eucharistic Prayer for which musical notation is provided.

The celebrating priest and concelebrants receive Communion before distributing it to anyone else. The priest or deacon hand the communion vessels to the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Concelebrating priests wear chasubles, unless the number of concelebrants precludes it.

### **The deacon**

During the procession at the beginning of Mass, the deacon carrying the Book of the Gospels precedes the concelebrants and principal celebrant and places the Book of the Gospels on the altar. In the absence of a deacon, a lector may carry the Book of the Gospels. The deacon announces the intentions at the Prayers of the Faithful. The deacon should kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer from the *epiclesis* to the elevation of the chalice, i.e. just before the Memorial Acclamation. The deacon receives Communion under both species from the priest after the priest's own Communion. If Communion is distributed under both species, the deacon ministers the Precious Blood.

### **The Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**

The Archdiocese of Vancouver has distributed detailed guidelines for the service of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

Adapted from materials prepared by the Archdiocese of Chicago.