



**GUIDELINE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY/ELECTRONIC
RECORDING DURING LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS
IN THE DIOCESE OF GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS
APPENDIX B**

Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

The celebration of key points in our faith journey becomes an opportunity to be recorded for the future, and this recording has become a very pronounced situation during some of the sacramental liturgies. With advanced technology and the plethora of electronic means of recording both still and moving images, silent and audio, it becomes necessary to address how this technology is employed with dignity during liturgy.

While admitting the value of recording these key events, it is necessary to realize that what is being recorded is a deeply spiritual event and is the sacramental celebration of a personal and communal relationship with God. As such, the celebration is to be conducted with reverence and respect, and with concern for the total participation of the persons involved as well as the assembly gathered. Thus, any distraction caused by flashing bulbs, strong lighting, persons moving about detached from the celebration, and other disruption such as inappropriate dress, eating or chewing gum and other disengaged actions by the photographer, who may or may not be familiar with the liturgical action being celebrated, is to be avoided and, in fact, forbidden.

When planning for the celebration of Baptism, completion of initiation (Confirmation and First Communion), weddings, funerals, ordinations and the like, it is important to bring the above to the attention of the participants. Each parish will have its own manner of addressing the situation, but the following ideas may be of some assistance as you approach the problems which may arise.

1. Talk to the people about the sacramental nature of the celebration and the importance of being totally present to what is being celebrated. Help them to take ownership of the sacredness of the event.
2. Be aware of the reputation of the photographer and that the person is allowed to operate in a given parish (some are not welcome in specific parishes because of their poor behavior or reputation in the area). Be sure the person making the arrangements is aware of the parish/diocesan regulations.
3. Make sure that the photographer (hired or volunteer) knows the layout of the worship space, is familiar with the ritual and is respectful of the sanctity of the space, its furnishings and the liturgical events and actions.
4. Walk through the celebration with the photographer, pointing out the key times when photos may be appropriate.
5. Provide a standard place for the photographer to be located and note the fact that he or she should not be moving up and down aisles, approaching the sanctuary area or causing a disturbance by sound or sight during the celebration.



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In addition it is helpful to provide:

1. A time before the celebration to take posed photos. This is especially true for weddings which should finish the photo shoot at least an hour before the beginning of the liturgical celebration. Be sure this does not coincide with any other liturgical function in the worship space, e.g. the sacrament of reconciliation.
2. An opportunity for the bishop, presider, deacon, catechist, other ministers to pose with the celebrating parties.

Remind family members that photos and other electronic recording from the pews is not to take place. Having people stand or stretch out of the pew with a camera phone, etc. is exceedingly distracting and causes a disruption in the sacred action.

A word from the MC or cantor before the beginning of the celebration, or a paragraph in the worship aid may be necessary as a reminder to all regarding the proper demeanor for the celebration. Something like the following may be helpful.

Today we gather as a family and parish community to celebrate a most important faith event in the life of _____ (this couple, this infant coming into the faith community in baptism, these children completing their initiation, etc.). To help us all participate in the fullest and most respectful way possible you have been provided with a worship aid to assist you in entering into the celebration. Please be conscious of the sacred event that is taking place and do all you can to promote a dignified and respectful celebration. Do not interrupt or distract from the liturgical action and prayer that is taking place, but give the gift of your total presence and participation to those celebrating.

Revised & Promulgated
By Bishop Michael W. Warfel
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