



## REFLECTIONS ON EUCHARISTIC TOPICS

### APPENDIX A

Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

This document is presented as a guideline for the priests of the diocese and for all those whose ministry is centered on the Eucharist – including all fully initiated members of the Church, especially those who distribute Holy Communion, serve others at the altar or visit the sick.

These guidelines address several areas of contemporary concern in our faith communities. The four sections treat the tabernacle and its relationship to celebrating Eucharist, the quality of the Eucharistic bread and wine, Sunday celebrations in the absence of the priest, and several related issues. In these guidelines there is a richness of documentation and authorized commentary and interpretation to undergird the instruction it contains. Attention to the underlying principles set forth will lead to a deeper appreciation of the Eucharist, a most valuable gift from Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the New and Everlasting Covenant. Our belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist draws us deeply and reverently into the worship due to him.

May all that we do at the table of Christ give praise to God the Father, and may it honor the Sacrament Jesus has given us to celebrate.

#### **SECTION ONE: The Reserved Eucharist: Its Relationship to Celebrating Eucharist**

“The offerings are then brought forward. It is praiseworthy for the bread and wine to be presented by the faithful. They are then accepted at an appropriate place by the priest or the deacon and carried to the altar. Even though the faithful no longer bring from their own possessions the bread and wine intended for the liturgy as in the past, nevertheless the rite of carrying up the offerings still retains its force and its spiritual significance” (GIRM #73.3).

This is a clear sign that the symbols of bread and wine are the food and drink for **this** sacred meal. At the Eucharist, the principle is that all the bread and wine used at a given Mass should be consecrated at that Mass. The distribution of already consecrated hosts from the tabernacle should clearly be an **exception** rather than the norm.

The encyclicals of Pope Benedict XIV *Certiores Effecti* (1742) and *Mediator Dei* of Pope Pius XII (1947) containing statements emphasizing the importance of the assembly receiving bread consecrated at the same Mass suggest that this is not a new phenomenon in the church (See BCL Newsletter Vol. XXV, May 1989.).



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Benedict XIV says:

Certainly there is nothing to which bishops, parish priests, and confessors can more usefully devote all their zeal than to stimulate the faithful in cultivating that purity of mind which renders them worthy of frequently approaching the sacred table and of partaking not only spiritually, but also sacramentally in the sacrifice that the priest, as public minister of the church, offers not only for himself, but also for them and in their name. One and the same sacrifice is shared by those who receive from the celebrating priest a part of the victim, which he himself has offered (CE #6, 7).

Pius XII echoes this teaching in *Mediator Dei* when he states:

Now it is very fitting, as the liturgy otherwise lays down, that the people receive Holy Communion after the priest has partaken of the divine repast upon the altar; and as we have written above, they should be commended who, when present at Mass, receive hosts consecrated at the same Mass, so that it is actually verified, 'that as many of us, as, at this altar, shall partake of and receive the most holy body and blood of thy Son, may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace' (MD #121).

The liturgical documents from the Second Vatican Council and the United States Bishops affirm these teachings:

That more complete form of participation in the Mass by which the faithful, after the priest's communion, receive the Lord's body from the sacrifice, is strongly endorsed (CSL #55).

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 instances when it is permitted, they partake of the chalice (cf. no. 283), so that even by means of the signs Communion will stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated (GIRM #85).

Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it is distributed under both kinds. For in this form the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clear expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord, as also the relationship between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Father's Kingdom (GIRM 281).



The consecrated hosts are to be frequently renewed and reserved in a ciborium or other vessel, in a number sufficient for the communion of the sick and others outside Mass (HCOM #7).

If, at a parish celebration of the Eucharist, the ministers foresee that they may run out of consecrated bread, they should first check with one another, or if there is not more than a small number of communicants, they should begin to break the eucharistic bread into smaller pieces to share with the faithful who have not yet received the Eucharist. Only after exhausting these two possibilities would they go to the tabernacle to bring the reserved hosts to be shared with the assembly.

Most parish communities, both large and small, can estimate rather closely the number of weekly communicants. In most situations, the size of a given assembly will not vary widely from week to week. Each faith community should train sacristans or other ministers to be attentive to preparing the amount of bread and wine used for each Eucharistic celebration. The determination of the amount of bread and wine for the assembly should be one of the final functions of the sacristan or eucharistic ministers prior to the beginning of the Eucharistic Liturgy. As we have seen in the documents from the Second Vatican Council, the reservation of the Eucharist is not maintained for the purpose of storing large quantities of consecrated hosts for use at subsequent Masses. Rather, the Eucharist is to be reserved in parish churches primarily for the administration of Viaticum of the dying, secondly for giving communion to the sick outside of Mass, and finally for Eucharistic adoration (*Eucharisticum Mysterium* #49). There is no mention made in post-conciliar liturgical norms of reserving the Eucharist for distribution at later Masses. Church documents insist on using bread and wine consecrated during that Mass for the reception of communion by the faithful.

## **SECTION TWO: The Quality of the Eucharistic Bread**

### **The General Instruction of the Roman Missal**

The meaning of the sign demands that the material for the Eucharistic celebration truly have the appearance of food. It is therefore expedient that the Eucharistic bread, even though unleavened and baked in the traditional shape, be made in such a way that the priest at Mass with a congregation is able in practice to break it into parts for distribution to at least some of the faithful. Small hosts are, however, in no way ruled out when the number of those receiving Holy Communion or other pastoral needs require it. The action of the fraction or breaking of bread, which gave its name to the Eucharist in apostolic times, will bring



out more clearly the force and importance of the sign of unity of all in the one bread, and of the sign of charity by the fact that the one bread is distributed among the brothers and sisters (GIRM #321).

### Code of Canon Law

“The bread must be merely wheat and recently made so that there is no danger of corruption” (Canon 924).

#### COMMENTARY:

In a 1929 instruction, the Sacred Congregation for the discipline of the Sacraments taught that bread made of any substance other than wheat is invalid matter, as is bread to which has been added such a *great quantity* of another substance that it can no longer be considered wheat bread in the common estimation. ...As the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* # 321 stipulates that the bread for the Eucharist should have the appearance of real food and be made in such a way that the priest is able to break it into parts and distribute them to at least some of the faithful. Other instructions from the Apostolic See have attempted to clarify the meaning of this law by indicating that the “appearance” of bread applies to its color, taste, and thickness rather than to its shape. From *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law* (Commissioned by the Canon Law Society of America 2000, page 1116).

“In accord with the ancient tradition of the Latin Church, the priest is to use unleavened bread in the celebration of the Eucharist whenever he offers it” (Canon 926).

#### COMMENTARY:

The requirement of unleavened bread is for liceity. In the early centuries, both Eastern and Western Churches used leavened bread for the Eucharist, but in the eighth and ninth centuries the use of unleavened bread became the general custom in the West. In keeping with the scope of the Code, the canon properly addresses only the practice of the Latin Rite... (*New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, page 1116).



## OTHER COMMENTARY

The requirements for the validity of the Eucharistic bread are rather minimal, notably that the bread be made of wheat and that *any additional ingredients do not substantially alter its nature as wheat bread*. The practice of using any additional ingredients is prohibited. The requirements for complete liceity are greater in number and more specific. The Code of Canon Law, canon 924.2, states that the bread must be *merely* wheat and recently baked so that there is no danger of corruption. Canon 926 states that the bread must be unleavened in accord with the ancient tradition of the church.

The bread used in the liturgy must always be of the highest quality. It must be fresh and able to be broken easily during the Communion Rite. It must not be brittle or “hard” and difficult to consume.

Faith communities in the diocese may use substantial bread. Bread bakers must take great care to insure that the bread is made only from 100% whole wheat flour and water.

The implementation of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (# 321) regarding the bread used for the Eucharist is a laudable practice.

A special ministry or service to the parish is developed when members of the assembly prepare and bake the bread for the Eucharist. Those engaged in such service should be prepared well for this important task.

Deacons and priests who assist during the Communion Rite must be well prepared for the ritual of Breaking the Bread. This must always be done with a clear sense of reverence, for it is not merely functional. In antiquity the name given the Eucharistic liturgy was *‘The Breaking of the Bread’*. The Communion Rite, therefore, both demands and deserves great attention and care. It must never appear hurried or disorganized, but must be viewed and experienced as integral to the entire liturgical action. Each Faith Community should regularly evaluate its approach to the Communion Rite and make changes, in accord with liturgical principles, whenever necessary, in order to assure a sense of reverence and respect in both ministers and assembly.

## SECTION THREE: Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest

As noted above in Section One, communicating the Assembly from the reserved Eucharist is a practice that undermines the significance and meaning of the Eucharistic Liturgy and should be avoided. Rare is the instance when it is necessary. Church



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documents and instructions strongly discourage the practice of distributing communion from the tabernacle during Mass. It makes little sense to emphasize the communion rite and then ignore this basic principle. In a time of increasing ***SUNDAY CELEBRATIONS IN THE ABSENCE OF A PRIEST***, which for the most part involve a communion service, the practice of receiving communion from the tabernacle while at Mass, is even more inappropriate.

Since substantial bread can spoil rather quickly, any remaining consecrated bread should normally be consumed following the Celebration of the Eucharist.

Communities who celebrate a Service of Word and Communion would normally need to use more traditional hosts. The introduction to the ritual book, *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest (SCAP)*, states "The faithful are to be frequently reminded that even when they receive Holy Communion outside Mass they are united to the Eucharistic sacrifice, but the rite of reception of Holy Communion is not the same as participating in the sacrifice itself. Communion may be received only under the form of bread, as the consecrated wine is not reserved except for the communion of the sick" (#60).

Hosts consecrated at the last Mass celebrated in the place where the liturgical assembly gathers may be used. Before the Lord's Prayer, the deacon or lay leader of prayer goes to the place where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, genuflects, takes the ciborium containing the body of the Lord, and places it on the altar. The deacon or lay leader of prayer then returns to his or her chair and introduces the Lord's Prayer. After the Lord's Prayer, the deacon or lay leader of prayer goes to the altar for the invitation to Holy Communion (#61)

#### **SECTION FOUR: Other Considerations**

##### **Sharing Eucharist with the sick and homebound:**

Communion to the sick and homebound is an important ministry in the life of each local faith community. Priests, Deacons, Lay Leaders of Prayer or Ministers of Holy Communion should bring communion to the sick and homebound on a regular basis. The Ministers of Holy Communion will usually distribute a consecrated wafer to the sick or homebound who may not be able to swallow substantial bread. In fact, it is lawful to minister communion solely under the form of consecrated wine to those who cannot receive the consecrated bread (Canon 925).



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A simple ritual presenting the pyx with the consecrated hosts to those ministers who will be visiting the sick is encouraged. By calling forward the ministers before the Prayer after Communion and handing them the Body of Christ to take to the missing members of the assembly, we intentionally send them on this mission in our name and call to mind that we are all one body in Christ.

If there are several ministers who will be receiving a pyx, it may be a good idea to have them laid out on a small tray with a paper under each with the name of the minister and the number of hosts needed. That way the presider will be able to prepare each pyx without making a mistake. The tray can be brought to the altar at the Lamb of God and be filled as the other vessels are prepared for communion.

The practice of bringing a pyx forward in the communion procession is not allowed.

A sample ritual is given below. The presider is encouraged to use his own words if he wishes. In the case where the community is using the rite, *Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest* the same procedure may be used by the Lay Leader of Prayer who would fill the pyx before returning the remaining hosts to the tabernacle after communion.

#### **A sample ritual:**

(Presider takes the pyx(s) and goes to the top of the sanctuary steps)

**Presider:** In the name of our parish community, \_\_\_\_\_, I invite our ministers who will be visiting the sick and homebound of our Parish to come forward.

Presider gives a pyx to each saying:

Go now to our brothers and sisters who are ill or homebound. Tell them of our concern and love, and share with them the Word of God and the Body of Christ.

Presider lays hands on the head of each minister as he says:

May your presence and the gift of the holy mystery you carry, bring comfort to those who are ill or homebound and remind them that we are all one in the Spirit and in this sacred food that we share.

#### **Fragments of Eucharistic Bread:**

The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith responded to a question concerning the fragments of the Eucharist and said:



*Christ stays present under the species of bread so long as there subsists these species of bread and so long as the sign of bread continues or subsists. The particles, which have detached from the consecrated hosts, must seem as bread, if not, they are no longer a sign and can no longer support the presence of the Body of Christ (Notitiae #8), also (GIRM #278).*

Nonetheless, we must be expected properly to purify sacred vessels prior to a warm thorough wash as noted in the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal #279*. This includes the purification of the pyx with a little clean water after the hosts have been given and before it is put away. The minister simply puts in a little water, consumes the water and wipes the pyx with a purificator.

### **Communion from the Cup**

The gospel records Jesus' command to eat the bread and drink from the cup of wine given to his disciples at the Last Supper, and to continue doing this in his memory. Direct reception from the cup most effectively signifies fidelity to the Lord's command. Although for good reasons there was a period of time when our practice was different, the Holy See has now judged that the direct administration of the cup to the communicant is preferable, that is, "ranks first" (DOL # 2115). The National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) has made this policy for the United States: "Because of its ancient sign value '*ex institutione Christi*', Communion from the cup or chalice is always to be preferred to any other form of ministering the precious blood" (HLS # 44). Church discipline prohibits recipients from taking the host and dipping it in the cup on their own because the sign value is diminished. The NCCB disapproved of intinction for the faithful because everyone in the assembly may not be able, or may not wish, to receive the precious blood and because intinction eliminates the option of receiving communion in the hand (HLS #51-52). In our diocesan church the reception of communion under both kinds is the norm. It is recognized by the Holy See as the ideal practice because of its symbolic value (GIRM #85). The National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States commends the practice more forcefully, saying that it "is to be desired in all celebrations of the Mass" so that "fuller light may fall upon the import of Christ's words at the Last Supper and in the Eucharistic prayer, and for the sake of the faithful's greater participation in the mystery" (HLS #19).

The approved procedure for dealing with the precious blood which remains after the Eucharist is addressed in, *Norms for the Distribution of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America* where it states that "The Precious Blood may not be reserved, except for giving Communion to someone who is sick" ( NDHCBK #54).

The Precious Blood is never reserved for another Mass nor is it poured into the ground or into the sacrarium (or a sink), (HLS #38). Rather, it is to be consumed by the





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ministers immediately at a side table before the prayer after communion. When a large amount of the precious blood remains it may be covered and reverently consumed following the Eucharistic Liturgy.

Loving care, attention and proper reverence should be maintained by ministers while consuming the extra Blood of Christ following the distribution of communion.

Purification of vessels is done by the presider, deacon or instituted acolyte at this time or after Mass, at the altar or at the credence table. The vessels are later washed with soapy water by the ministers. All vessels should be dried with a cloth towel (paper towels can be especially damaging to pottery, wood and precious metal vessels.)

#### **Care for the gluten intolerant**

Pastors/Pastoral Administrators should be aware of assembly members who are gluten intolerant. Even a very small amount can cause severe reaction and, therefore, people in this condition do not receive the host. Please offer Holy Communion under the form of the consecrated wine to them. Alert the extra-ordinary ministers of Holy Communion of the situation so that they do not question what is occurring.

According to the November 2003 Newsletter of the Bishops Committee on the Liturgy (now the Secretariat for Divine Worship and the Sacraments) the lowest possible gluten in hosts is 0.01% and the hosts were developed and sold by the Benedictines listed below. Totally gluten free hosts are invalid matter for the Eucharist.

Congregation of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

Altar Breads Department

31970 State Highway P

Clyde Missouri 64432

1-800-223-2772

[altarbreads@benedictinesisters.org](mailto:altarbreads@benedictinesisters.org)

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**Resources:**

- BCL      **Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter, 1986-1990**, National Conference of Catholic Bishops' 1993, United States Catholic Conference. Published by Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL 60672.
- CE        *Certiores Effecti* Benedict XIV 1742, in **The Liturgy** - selected and arranged by the Benedictine Monks of Solesmes. Translated by the Daughters of St. Paul, St. Paul Edition, 1962, Boston, MA.
- CSL      Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, **Documents On The Liturgy, 1968-1979; Conciliar Papal and Curial Texts**. 1982 ICEL, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 56321
- DOL      Instruction *Sacramentali Communionem*, **Documents On The Liturgy, 1968-1979; Conciliar Papal and Curial Texts**. 1982 ICEL, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 56321
- EACW    Environment and Art in Catholic Worship, **The Liturgy Documents**, 1991. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL 60622
- GIRM     General Instruction of the Roman Missal,; Including Adaptations for the Dioceses of the United States of America, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003.
- HCOM    **Holy Communion Outside Mass**, Published by the authority of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1983, United States Catholic Conference, Washington, DC 20005
- NDHCBK Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002.
- HLS      **This Holy and Living Sacrifice: Directory for the Celebration and Reception of Communion Under Both Kinds**, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1985, United States Catholic Conference, Washington, DC 20005



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- MD            *“Mediator Dei”* Pius XII - **The Papal Encyclicals** 1939-1958, A Consortium Book, [edited by Claudia Carlen, IHM], 1981 McGrath Publishing Company, Wilmington, NC
- NOT           *Notitiae* #8 - Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, May 2, 1972 (translated from the French)
- SCAP        Introduction - **Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest:** United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2007.
- SCR           Instruction – “Eucharisticum Mysterium,” on Worship of the Eucharist, 25 May 1967 in **Documents on the Liturgy**, 1968-1979; Conciliar Papal and Curial Texts. 1982 ICEL, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 56321

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