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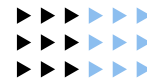
PASTORAL LETTER

ON THE LITURGY

DIOCESE OF GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS

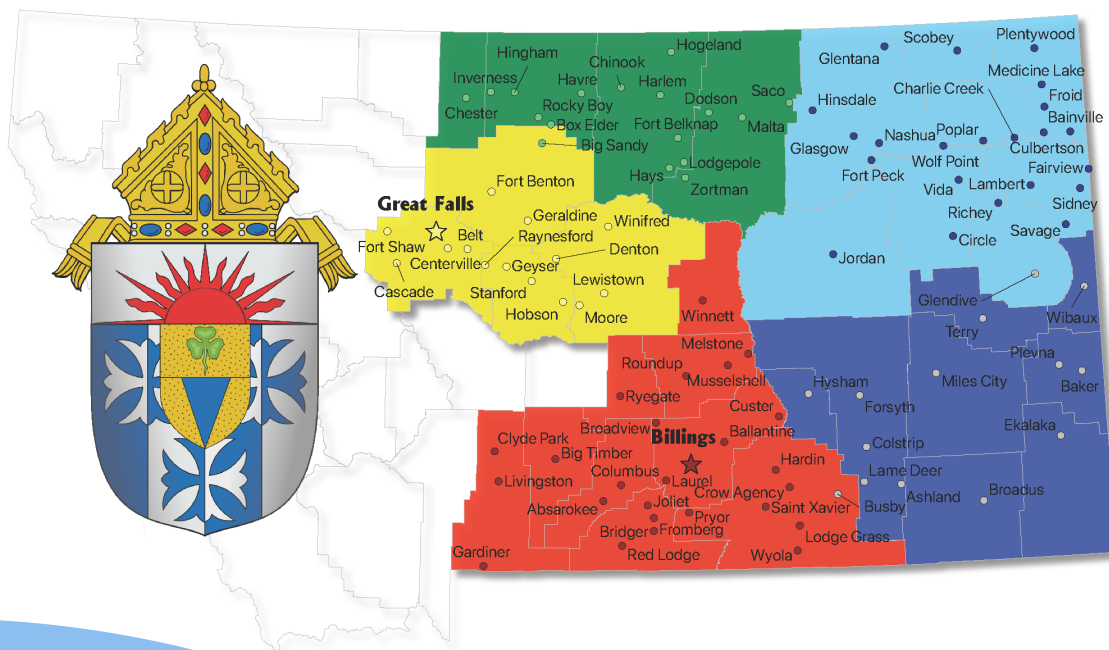
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The Roman Catholic Diocese of Great Falls - Billings, Montana



**DIOCESE OF
GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS**

BISHOPS' INTRODUCTION



Nothing is more central to the faith of Catholics than the celebration of the sacred liturgy. Those who faithfully gather every Sunday to celebrate and express their faith at the Mass know in their heart of hearts what Vatican Council II affirmed about the Eucharistic Liturgy. It is "...the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; at the same time, it is the fountain from which all her power flows" (*Sancrosanctum Concilium* #10).

It is through the Eucharistic Liturgy that the people of God express and celebrate their unity as members of Christ's body, called to become members of the communion of saints. It is through the Eucharistic Liturgy where the identity of Catholics is nurtured and shaped and where Christian values are taught. It is from the Eucharistic Liturgy that Catholics are sent forth to fulfill their role as "missionary disciples" (*Evangelii Gaudium* #120). The Eucharistic Liturgy, when fully and faithfully celebrated, is transformational.

Having celebrated the Eucharist at parishes throughout Eastern Montana and having observed how parishes generally celebrate the liturgy, we find that the devotion of many Catholics is solid and demonstrates a deep conviction. As bishops, we are impressed with the efforts made by priests, deacons, religious and laity to express their faith vibrantly and authentically in Christ through the Eucharistic Liturgy. It is obvious that faith in Christ for many a Catholic in Eastern Montana involves more than providing a religious structure to their lives. So many deeply understand that they celebrate hope and faith in the Christ who offers them salvation from sin and death! At the same time, what some of the faithful experience in their parishes raises the question: "What exactly is being celebrated and expressed in the liturgical practice of the parish?" Unfortunately, some *Novus Ordo* liturgical experiences are not all that





inspiring or in touch with the liturgy envisioned and expected by the Church, i.e., liturgies that truly celebrate faith and hope and the joy of the Gospel. Some liturgies fail to make connections with what is happening in the lives of the faithful in the assembly. Pope Francis has referred to such liturgies as banal. He has also asserted that if liturgy does not evangelize, it is not authentic.

With this in mind, we write this pastoral letter. There are important principles for celebrating the Eucharistic Liturgy envisioned by the Church. These principles guide the flow of the liturgy. By giving attention to the components of good liturgical celebration, the liturgy is celebrated well and becomes truly life-giving. This pastoral letter provides an occasion for pastors and those with particular roles in preparing for the celebration of liturgy, to review what takes place at their particular churches. The transition of leadership for the Diocese is an opportune time to review how the Eucharistic Liturgy is celebrated in Eastern Montana.



+ Michael W Warfel

Bishop Michael W. Warfel



+ Jeffrey M Fleming

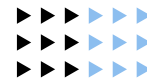
Bishop Jeffrey M. Fleming



DIOCESE OF
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PART ONE:

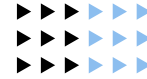
GENERAL NORMS



When we experience a well celebrated liturgy, our minds are informed, our hearts inflamed, and our souls inspired. This should be the general expectation and experience for anyone involved in preparing and/or celebrating the liturgy. As such, we ask those involved with the preparation and/or celebration of liturgies to be familiar with the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and general liturgical principles. We ask those who have particular roles for liturgy (musicians, cantors, lectors, extraordinary ministers of holy communion, deacons, priests) as well as each parishioner, to review how the Eucharistic Liturgy is celebrated in their respective faith community, whether at a large parish church or a small mission church. Special attention should be paid to the Sunday celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy.

We emphasize Sunday because it is the Lord's Day and the time when most Catholics experience the Eucharistic Liturgy. From the earliest days of the Church, Christians have gathered on Sunday to celebrate the Lord's resurrection. Sunday is the day that provides meaning to life! All Eucharistic Liturgies are celebrations of the Paschal Mystery, but Sunday in particular is the day when Catholics specifically gather as a communal body to celebrate their life in the risen Christ. This is why the Church reminds the faithful of their need and obligation to gather for the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. The invitation to salvation is not for God but for people. It is a key reason why pastors have a serious responsibility and obligation to do their best to provide the faithful with opportunities to fulfill this precept each Sunday (*Dies Domini* #49). Even in those faith communities that cannot celebrate the Eucharistic Liturgy each Sunday, the faithful are urged to gather to celebrate Sunday Worship in the Absence of a Priest (*Dies Domini* #53). Sadly, too many of the faithful in our own day and age have forgotten the importance of Sunday in their lives.

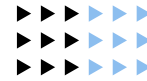




In the year 304, the Roman Emperor Diocletian prohibited Christians, under pain of death, to possess the Scriptures, to meet on Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist and to build places for their assemblies. In Abitene, a small village in what is now Tunisia, 49 Christians met in the home of Octavius Felix. They were taken by surprise on a Sunday while celebrating the Eucharist, defying the imperial prohibitions. Arrested, they were then taken to Carthage to be interrogated by the Proconsul. After being asked why they had violated the Emperor's order, the Proconsul was given the response: "*Sine dominico non possumus*," i.e., "We cannot live without Sunday," the response being understood as the celebration of their faith in Christ through the Eucharist Liturgy. After suffering appalling tortures, the 49 martyrs of Abitene were executed. They confirmed their faith with the shedding of blood. The Martyrs of Abitene truly understood the importance of the Eucharistic liturgy! Would that all Christians have the same appreciation of the Eucharist in their lives as did the Martyrs of Abitene!

The word "liturgy" itself finds its roots in two Greek words: *laos* which refers to people and *ergon* which refers to work. Taken literally, liturgy means a people at work. In the context of faith, it has come to refer to a gathering of God's people to do the work of worship. As a Christian act of worship, liturgy expresses and celebrates the presence of Christ who is active in the lives of the faithful. It envisions that those who have gathered will be actively engaged in the act of worship. As the Vatican II Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) affirms, liturgy expects full, conscious and active engagement from





all members of the assembly. The emphasis for the Eucharistic Liturgy is on its public and communal nature rather than being individualistic or private in nature. Liturgy is never solely an individual devotional practice.

In order for the Eucharistic Liturgy to be celebrated well, it must be celebrated in a manner that is more than merely ritually correct and rigidly performed. The priest celebrant should not be mistaken for a robot and the gathered assembly should likewise not be mistaken for stone statues. This does not mean that liturgy should be a free-flowing form of chaos. True adoration of God as a community is guided by ritual. Irreverence and free form worship does little to make liturgy truly life-giving. At the same time, liturgy should not be experienced as dour, dismal, or banal. Pope Francis recently affirmed this in his motu proprio document, *Desiderio Desideravi* (#21 & 22).

Every Eucharistic Liturgy, but especially those celebrated on Sunday, should strive to fulfill what the Church intends to accomplish. The faithful should expect to discover God's love and mercy and God's presence in their lives and as a result become a eucharistic people. A person striving to find meaning in life needs to personally encounter Christ and experience a sense of Christ's healing and peace, to hear an ever-deeper call to conversion to life in Christ and to know that, as they have been called, so too they are sent to be instruments of Christ in their daily worlds. In essence, liturgy is where the work of salvation is being worked out and celebrated.

It is important to know the ritual well so that it may be celebrated in a manner that is true to the faith. In the Latin Rite, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* provides these instructions. Attending to these norms assures that the faithful will be presented teaching and practice that is faithful to the apostolic tradition of the Catholic Church. Catholics who assemble for worship have a right to the full and authentic teaching and practice of the Church. The structure of the Eucharistic Liturgy should **never indiscriminately be changed lest there be a risk of altering a fundamental teaching and/or practice of the Church**, even unwittingly. Care must be taken so that personal preferences for *avant garde*



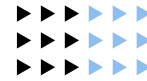


approaches to liturgy or attempts to recreate times past do not supersede the contemporary norms of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and the *Novus Ordo* liturgy. Pope Francis has taught that the normative celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy is the *Novus Ordo*. Elements from other rituals are not to be comingled with it.

Not every liturgy will have the same level of pomp and grandeur as would a celebration of Christmas or Easter, but all liturgies should provide inspiration to the gathered assembly to live their faith. An excellent model was provided by Pope Francis on Holy Thursday 2015 at the Rebibbia detention facility on the outskirts of Rome, Italy. The chapel setting was simple, just as are many of the churches in Eastern Montana. The liturgy was celebrated in a manner that could be replicated in a typical parish church. There was a small choir. The sanctuary was uncluttered yet contained all the essential elements for liturgy with matching altar and ambo. The altar itself was adorned very simply with but two candles and a small crucifix. The homily was brief and to the point and addressed the spiritual needs of the inmates present. There was even a child of about three who ran up to the Pope standing before the altar as the gifts were processed up with his mother in hot pursuit! It was moving, genuinely real and genuinely life-giving.

Devotional prayers and practices generally should not be incorporated into the *Novus Ordo* ritual of the liturgy. They certainly have their place in the spiritual lives of the faithful, but devotional prayers and practices are not a part of the scheme of the *Novus Ordo*. Similarly, care should be taken with regard to incorporation of cultural elements into the scheme of the liturgy. While every culture has the capacity to carry the Gospel, every culture is likewise in need of purification. The then Pontifical Council for Culture noted the following: “The dominant wave of secularism spreading through the different cultures, harnessing the suggestive power of the media, frequently idealizes lifestyles that are opposed to the culture of the Beatitudes and the imitation of Christ: poor, chaste, obedient and humble of heart” (*Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture* #5). The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* notes in its conclusion:





“...each particular Church must be in accord with the universal Church not only regarding the doctrine of the faith and sacramental signs, but also as to the usages universally received from apostolic and unbroken tradition. These are to be kept not only so that errors may be avoided, but also so that the faith may be handed on in its integrity, since the Church’s rule of prayer (*lex orandi*) corresponds to her rule of faith (*lex credendi*)” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal* #397).

This does not eliminate the possibility for some creativity. While requiring fidelity to the ritual, the *Roman Missal* itself provides numerous possibilities for artistic and faith-filled expression. Concrete circumstances within a parish setting will require a prudential judgement on the part of the priest and of those who prepare and celebrate a given liturgy. The recent experience of the COVID-19 pandemic provides a clear example of this. While liturgical norms are binding, not all carry the same weight nor have the same degree of urgency. Pope Francis noted in *Desiderio Desideravi*: “The norm is never an end in itself, but is always at the service of a higher reality that it means to protect” (#48). How the Eucharistic Liturgy is celebrated makes a definite impact on how the faithful translate what they experience into their day to day lives. *Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi* (the law of what is prayed is the law of what is believed is the law of what is lived).

Above all, what must be remembered is the intent of the Eucharistic Liturgy: that the faithful be able to offer thanks and praise to God; that the faithful be able to celebrate and express their life in the risen Lord; that their faith in the Lord be nourished and supported; that their right to experience the fullness of the apostolic tradition be safeguarded; that, renewed in faith, fed by God’s Word and the Body and Blood of Christ, the faithful be inspired to live their faith with conviction as they are sent out into their day-to-day lives. What happens at the Eucharistic Liturgy should make a real connection between the ritual action being celebrated and the daily activity of those who have gathered to worship God in spirit and in truth.



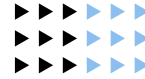


Certain key elements are important for good liturgical celebration and should be used appropriately and never discounted. Symbols are multi-layered words, objects, gestures, persons and places that point to a reality beyond themselves. As an example, bread is a key symbol for Eucharist. Bread, as we know, is readily recognized as a means of nourishment. As a symbol, it draws out numerous levels of meaning. Grains of wheat are planted (buried) and germinate (die) then sprout as new wheat (new life). The wheat is crushed in order to become flour (sacrifice). The wheat flour is separated from the chaff (decision, conversion). Water is added to the flour that it might become dough (baptism). Yeast in the dough causes it to rise (resurrection, growth). Bread baked without allowing the dough to rise is unleavened (Passover, Exodus). Bread, when broken, is shared at a meal (communion, shared life).

Ritual actions serve the liturgy by allowing an assembly, not only to express their faith bodily, but to do so comfortably. Ritual actions are the familiar and repeatable patterns that help an assembly to worship as a community of the faithful. Without an established pattern there often is anarchy. Ritual patterns serve the members of the assembly by helping them to lift up their hearts and minds to God as one body rather than on trying to decide “what comes next.” A common gesture used by Christians to begin and end prayer is the sign of the cross. It is a simple gesture but one that expresses so much about Christian life. It reminds us of our baptism and draws us into the Paschal Mystery and affirms our belief in the Holy Trinity.

Gestures help us to pray, not only with our minds, but also with our bodies. When done together with others, gestures help to express faith communally. When there are no set patterns, members often become uncertain, know confusion, and may even feel stress. Their attention begins to focus on what to do next rather than attend to prayer. Some may consider symbols, ritual actions and gestures as having little importance, but these non-verbals provide an important aid to an assembly and help them recall who they are called to be in relation to God and each other.





Along with symbol, ritual action and gesture, the design and adornment of the place of worship can have a significant impact. A church should reflect both divine transcendence and divine immanence. Such a space draws the assembly into a sense of the holy: to the God who is totally Other; to the God who is incarnate and enfleshed in the lives of the assembly. The design, arrangement, and enhancement of the worship space, both in its permanent fixtures and by the way it is decorated for liturgical seasons or special occasions, should always communicate some element of the story of salvation in Christ and be evangelical in nature.

Historical circumstances of time and place often dictate the design of a particular parish's worship space. This is especially so in mission locations. It is not always easy to create an environment that meets with the expectation of contemporary liturgy. Nonetheless, for the benefit of worshippers, it is important to strive to create a space that communicates both God's providence and God's presence. Attention to elements like the altar, ambo, seating arrangements, placement, and design of the baptismal font, subconsciously make a difference. In a similar way, artistic enhancement and seasonal décor help set a tone for liturgy. An Advent wreath or bouquet of Easter lilies, a rough wooden cross for Good Friday or the newly lighted Paschal Candle subtly teach the faithful while at the same time celebrate aspects of the Paschal Mystery.

Music and song are vital elements for life-giving liturgy. Music and song lift the soul and help to create a mood and give expression that words alone cannot accomplish. Music and song can fill the air with the praise of God and instill a sense of peace and joy in the heart. When singing is done reasonably well and when instrumentalists are sufficiently talented, worship is enhanced. If sung badly or performed poorly, music and song can detract from the worship experience.

It is not always easy to find sufficiently trained and talented instrumentalists or skilled vocalists in parishes, especially in the smaller communities. There simply may be no one available. In these cases, however, it is important to assert that





instrumental accompaniment, while quite helpful and most desirable, is not essential. Singing in and of itself, without accompaniment, provides the means for an assembly to express praise and thanks to God. This normally requires a good leader of song and familiarity with appropriate liturgical music, but an assembly ought not to eliminate song merely because it lacks instrumentation or great singers. The *Roman Missal* itself provides chanted music for the various proclamations and responses as well as acclamations, all which are well suited for singing without instrumentation. There is a great body of traditional hymns and other liturgical music that almost everyone knows and can sing without accompaniment or a great leader of song.

With regards to what should be sung by all during the Liturgy, the acclamations (e.g., Alleluia, Holy Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen, Lamb of God) have primacy. The Responsorial Psalm (or Gradual) likewise should be sung as should the Gloria. These may be performed in a variety of ways, such as antiphonally or as a continuous piece of music. A repeatable antiphon sung during the Communion procession is a great help in recalling that we receive the Eucharist together as a body of the faithful and not as isolated individuals. Other common places for singing are at the beginning of the Liturgy, during the preparation of the gifts (sung or instrumental), the Communion procession, and a song that sends the members of the assembly out into the world. A post-Communion hymn of praise can also be appropriate. Recorded music, simply played for the assembly, is not sufficient.

Sometimes overlooked in parish liturgical practice is the need for attractive vesture, sacred vessels and furnishings. The vestments used by ordained ministers during the Eucharistic Liturgy should be clean, appealing, and fit properly out of respect, not solely for the nature of the celebration, but also for



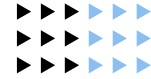


the assembly. Attractive vesture, sacred vessels and furnishings enhance worship. They need not be the most expensive but should reflect the dignity required for the celebration. A number of religious supply houses provide reasonably priced as well as attractive items. Considering that the Eucharistic Liturgy is when the majority of Catholics gather, this is but a small way to demonstrate respect and help them direct their attention to God. Similarly, those who fulfill other liturgical roles (extraordinary ministers of holy communion, readers, cantors, etc.) should be attired appropriately and in a manner that demonstrates respect for the nature of the celebration and respect toward the gathered assembly. Sacred vessels for the Eucharistic Liturgy (chalice and paten/plate/bowl) should be tasteful and be made of a material that is fitting for worship and are not to be made from fragile material such as glass or clay. Other items for worship should likewise communicate reverence and appropriateness for the nature of the celebration. Everything used for a particular liturgy should be proportionate to the size of worship space being used and appropriate to the nature of the particular celebration.

In an all too noisy world, times of silence during the liturgy ought to be normative. Like punctuation in a sentence, times of reverential silence during the liturgy provide the possibility to ponder a graced filled relationship with God in Christ. While there can be an over emphasis on the amount of silence that is required within a liturgy, times of silent reflection afford the assembly an opportunity to recall the reality of God's presence. The gathering of the people of God for worship is much different than a gathering for a group of people to attend a concert or a ball game. A place for greeting and welcome prior to the liturgy is important but prior to the beginning of the Liturgy, people need an opportunity to center on what they are about to celebrate and experience. Likewise, throughout the liturgy, the members of an assembly need moments to reflect upon what they have heard and Who they have received. Key times for silence are after the homily and after everyone has received communion.

Many Catholics may not be able to fully articulate these elements of good worship, but will sense from personal experience that life-giving liturgies require



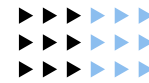


these elements. They provide the means to express Christian faith and celebrate life as members of the body of Christ, as a people of God. Because it is Christ to whom the faithful encounter throughout a liturgy, serious efforts must be made to celebrate it well. Over a period of time, liturgical experience should lead the members of an assembly to a deeper level of conversion. Liturgy should always evangelize and be a primary instrument for nurturing faith and leading the faithful to deeper conversion. It should also lead to a deeper concern for others, especially the poor. It should create in the assembly a greater desire for charitable actions as well as a greater thirst for justice in the world. If these elements are not present and the heart is not touched, the soul is not inspired and the mind is not informed, then something is seriously missing.



PART TWO:

THE EUCHARISTIC LITURGY



The account of the two disciples who encounter the risen Lord while on the road to Emmaus in Luke's Gospel (Luke 24:13-35) may easily be viewed as an account of the Eucharistic Liturgy. It recalls the third day since the death of the Lord as two disciples walk away from Jerusalem. As they walk, they are downcast. They had thought their search for meaning and purpose had been answered by the Carpenter from Nazareth but he had been executed as a common criminal. As they walk along, they encounter a stranger. Unknown to them, it is the risen Lord. He joins them as they walk away from Jerusalem and toward Emmaus.

The two disciples and their new acquaintance continue their journey and Jesus begins a discourse with them. "What were you talking about?" the Lord asks them. They share their disappointment. He addresses their disappointment by sharing the appropriate Scriptures with them while explaining their meaning.

Having heard his explanation of the Sacred Scriptures in light of their experience, they ask this mysterious stranger to stay with them to share the evening meal – an act of great hospitality. During the meal, as they break and share bread, they recognize Him. Having recognized that it is the risen Lord in their midst, their dejection turns into joy. They now understand the events of the past three days. They run back to Jerusalem to tell the story of their encounter with the risen Lord with others. It is a model for the Eucharistic Liturgy.

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

The opening rituals help the assembly to appreciate that they have gathered to worship God specifically as members of the Church. They come not to worship





as separate individuals, but as members of Christ's body. While each is a unique and irreplaceable member, the Eucharist forms a body of which they all are a part.

As the faithful gather, hospitality and welcome is essential for forming a communal gathering. This presumes the presence of ministers entrusted with the responsibility of greeting and assisting those who come to worship. Parishioners in general should view this as a personal responsibility with the goal of fostering a shared identity in Christ. Unity in Christ is foundational for heartfelt and life-giving liturgies. Formation as community demands that the faithful actually desire to be formed as intentional disciples who take concrete steps to be united with others in faith.

Life-giving liturgies tend to be in parishes in which pastors and the faithful take responsibility for their faith and reach out to others. They are intentional disciples. To take responsibility for faith, first of all, means a consistent prayer life. It is through regular prayer that people are formed and nurtured as Christian. Formational prayer is more than formally saying prayers or praying solely on occasion. It is reflective in nature by which a person shares their joys and hopes with God as well as their struggles and fears. It is opportunity to listen to God speaking in the depths of their hearts.

Secondly, intentional disciples appreciate their need to attend to the Sacred Scriptures, especially those for the upcoming Sunday. When the Sacred Scriptures are integrated into a person's life, they become more than mere





religious words. The Word of God becomes embodied in them and is translated into words and deeds. The liturgy truly becomes the “source” and “summit” of faith (*Sancrosanctum Concilium* #10). Members of the assembly who take the time to prepare for the liturgy by reading through the Scriptures for a respective Sunday seldom depart from the Eucharistic Liturgy without being enriched.

Thirdly, when the faithful understand the communal dimension of Christian faith, they appreciate the importance of sharing their faith in some way during the week. Intentional relationships with members of a faith community, while sharing experiences of faith with others, do much to enhance the experience of worship on the Lord’s Day. Remote preparation through prayer, the reading of Scripture and time and opportunity to share faith with others prepares the faithful for a richer experience of worship.

Obviously, those who have special roles for liturgies need to spend extra time preparing and practicing for their respective roles. Instrumentalists need to rehearse music to be used as do the cantor and other leaders of song. Readers need to study their assigned Scriptures and practice reading them aloud. Those who shape the artistic environment of the worship space need to reflect on the themes presented for the upcoming Sunday or liturgical season. Sacristans need to be sure that the materials needed for the liturgy, such as sacred vessels, linens, books, worship aids, etc., are placed in the proper location and that all mechanical systems, such as the sound system, are working properly. Deacons need to be aware of their roles in the liturgy and be aware of special tasks that they may be required of them in the liturgy. Presiders and homilists need to be aware of specific themes for Sundays and Holy Days having read through the Scriptures, the Collects and the Preface for that particular Sunday or Holy Day and have begun preparing the homily early in the week.

The Presider as well as those with prominent roles in the liturgy should manifest a transparent and committed faith. Transparency has a way of inspiring the assembly to pray. For the Eucharistic liturgy, the Presider needs to communicate that God is a loving and merciful Father, that the Paschal Mystery is true and





may be experienced by all, that salvation is being achieved in the present moment, that what God has done in Christ is continued through the sacramental life of the Church. The manner in which liturgy is celebrated will convey any of a number of images. Hopefully, it will be an image of God who is a loving and merciful father who wants to encounter each person and who passionately desires our salvation from sin and death.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

The heart of the Liturgy of the Word is the proclamation of the Sacred Scripture from the lectionary. Based on a three-year cycle, the Sunday lectionary readings provide an overview of the Bible with the most significant texts being read from both the Old and New Testaments. For Sundays, there are four readings from Scripture. The First Reading is usually from the Old Testament (except during the Easter season when it is from the Acts of the Apostles). The Psalm Response, (and possibly from the Gradual) is integral to the Liturgy of the Word and best appreciated when sung. As one of the readings from Sacred Scripture, the psalm must never be changed for a song or a paraphrase of the psalm. Though a particular song may express religious themes and sentiments and be popular among the faithful, it is not the same as Sacred Scripture. The Second Reading is taken from the New Testament. The Gospels are proclaimed almost in their entirety over this three-year period, beginning with a continuous reading from Matthew (year A) and continuing with Mark (year B) and Luke (year C). Year B also includes sections from John's Gospel since Mark is a shorter Gospel. During the seasons of Lent and Easter, the Lectionary draws heavily on John's Gospel. For special liturgical times of the year (e.g., Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter) there are specially assigned readings. Prior to the proclamation of the Gospel, the assembly sings the Alleluia together with a Scripture verse (except during the season of Lent).

The Liturgy of the Word is ritual action. It is more than an opportunity to hear a recitation of various texts from the Bible. As a ritual action, in which we hear the





Word of God, it is a proclamation of the story of faith and, as such, the story of God's people. It is our story! It provides an opportunity for the assembly to view their lives as intimately connected with the Paschal Mystery. This time during the liturgy uses the elements of gesture, song, silence and symbol to communicate an invitation to the life of grace. An attractively adorned Lectionary and Book of the Gospels (which should always be used), a suitably designed and appropriately sized ambo, an effective use of silence, beautifully composed chants and responses, and properly choreographed processions and postures do much to enhance the proclamation of the Word of God.

The Scriptures play a definite role in the lives of the faithful. As such, they must be proclaimed well. Readers who proclaim the Word, as well as deacons and priests, must pronounce the texts in a manner that are audible and understandable, the speech articulate, and the words well projected and proclaimed. It involves much more than merely reading a passage aloud. A degree of talent and training are necessary to proclaim the Word well and in a manner that warms the hearts of the assembly. The Scriptures should have a prominent place in the life of anyone who would proclaim them. The assembly should have the sense that the Word is coming from the depths of the proclaimer's life rather than just being read off the pages of a book. The readings from Scripture are proclaimed from the ambo. Because silence is an essential part of the Liturgy of the Word, a sufficient pause should be allowed following its proclamation in order to reflect on the passage. A properly operating sound system, where needed, assists in helping everyone hear God's word.

An integral part of the Liturgy of the Word is the homily, and with rare exception, it may not be eliminated on a Sunday or a Holy Day. The homily is always given by an ordained minister. Because of the importance of the homily, it is vital that preachers strive diligently to prepare their homilies. The faithful need nourishment, inspiration, and guidance. A well prepared and delivered homily flowing from the spiritual life of the homilist can touch the minds and hearts of God's people and help them make connections between the Word of God and





what is happening in their daily lives. A homily is meant to be sacramental in nature and not overly long, no more than ten minutes. (*Living Liturgical Action Fully*, Pope Francis, January 20, 2023).

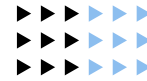
The Profession of Faith (the Nicene or Apostles Creed) provides an opportunity for the assembly to affirm their belief in a Trinitarian God. The Creed is a statement of the core elements of Christian faith. On certain occasions, the Profession of Faith is done through questioning, such as during Easter Sunday, during a baptism or at a confirmation. Depending on pastoral circumstances, it may be omitted from a particular liturgy.

The General Intercessions should reflect actual and contemporary needs of the universal Church and the local community, those oppressed by any burden, for the salvation of the world, for public authorities and for particular categories of people. “Canned” petitions may be helpful, but it is better to have the General Intercessions drafted by a deacon or an assigned member of the parish. Expressions of prayer for particular concerns should be included within the general prayer category. The assembly generally participates in the prayer through their response rather than voicing special intentions from the assembly. Drafting the petitions and leading the General Intercessions in praying them is primarily a role for deacons. In parishes without a deacon, these prayers are led by the Reader. Whichever is the case, these prayer intentions should be announced in an articulate and audible manner, akin to the proclamation of the Scriptures. The Liturgy of the Word is our entrance into the next part of the Eucharistic Liturgy.

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The Eucharistic Prayer is the heart of Christian worship. It is an action the Church has celebrated since the Lord instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper. In times past, the faithful would bring elements for the Liturgy of the Eucharist (bread and wine) from their homes as well as other gifts for the



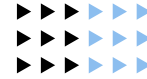


needy. The procession with the gifts retains this image and is an expression of sharing and stewardship. These gifts represent the lives of the faithful, offered and presented to God, gifts that God will transform and return to them in the Eucharist.

At the Last Supper the Lord took bread, said a blessing, broke the bread into pieces and then handed it to his disciples saying, “Take and eat; this is my body” (Mt. 26:26). He also took a cup filled with wine and gave thanks. He passed it to them and they shared from the cup. He said as he gave it to them, “Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt. 26:28). Through it the Lord instituted a ritual that would unite the faithful of all ages with his unique saving sacrifice on the cross. The Eucharistic Prayer recalls this once and for all sacrifice of Christ and makes the Paschal Mystery present. As the faithful enter into the sacrificial ritual and receive the sacred Body and Blood of Christ, they are made one in Christ and with each other as they participate in the salvation Christ has won.

The Eucharistic Prayer together with Communion is the high point of the Eucharistic Liturgy. Through this ritual action, praise and thanksgiving is offered to God (eucharistia). The saving activity of Christ and his sacrifice on the cross are remembered and, through the Holy Spirit, Christ is sacramentally made present (actualized) through the simple elements of bread and wine. The Eucharistic Prayer includes a number of specific elements. It is a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God for his gracious action in the world. It is a prayer in the Holy Spirit in which the Presider calls upon God through the Spirit of the Lord (epiclesis) to transform the gifts of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. It is a prayer of remembrance (anamnesis) in which God’s saving work through Christ is recalled and proclaimed in the memorial acclamation. It is a prayer of offering and supplication (anaphora) in which the faithful offer Christ as Mediator to the Father. The faithful confidently surrender themselves to the will of God so that they may be united in Christ. All the members of the Church are prayed for, living and dead, that they might know salvation in Christ. Finally, it is a prayer of sanctification (agiasmos) through which the assembly strives to





renew their baptismal life in the Lord and are filled with the Holy Spirit of the risen Lord. The Eucharistic Prayer (there are thirteen although only four are commonly used) leads to the Communion Rite as its logical conclusion: “Take and eat. This is my body. Take and drink. This is the cup of my blood.” Those properly disposed and suitably initiated into the Church receive the Body and Blood of Christ as the Lord commanded. The rituals that prepare for distribution of Holy Communion are crafted to form both a spiritual and a practical bridge from the Eucharistic Prayer to the distribution of Holy Communion. Having attended to the Eucharistic Prayer that focuses on “taking” and “blessing”, the focus turns to “breaking” and “sending”.

These rituals are more than merely functional. The words expressed in the Lord’s Prayer and the peace exchanged in the Sign of Peace, move us deeper and deeper into communion with each other and with God. The action performed in the Fraction Rite and sung in the acclamation of the Lamb of God, celebrate a conviction of faith. Receiving the Body and Blood of Christ as a community celebrates the primary identity of the assembly. Those who have gathered as individuals are now one Body in the Lord (1Cor. 10:17). The faithful, as much as possible, are to receive the Body and Blood of Christ consecrated from the liturgy in which they participate, not from the tabernacle. This allows the gathered faithful to fully participate in the particular sacrifice being offered.

The Communion Rite is processional in nature. It is natural that the faithful remain standing as they come forward to receive Holy Communion. As a procession, it is not proper for a kneeler or communion rail to be used. While any communicant may kneel for the reception of Holy Communion, kneelers are



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Ashley Jaeger Photography



not envisioned as part of a procession. The ritual procession reinforces the Catholic understanding that Holy Communion is not a private time of devotion, but a communal action. As was stated strongly centuries ago by St. Augustine of Hippo, “If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. To that which you are, you respond ‘Amen’ and by responding to it you assent to it. For you hear the words, ‘The Body of Christ’ and respond ‘Amen’. Be then a member of the Body of Christ that your Amen may be true.”

Following the Communion procession and after all have received Holy Communion, it is appropriate for some time of silence. The Prayer After Communion concludes the Communion Rite.

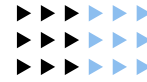
THE SENDING

The Concluding Rite is very brief in nature. If there are brief announcements to be made, they should occur at this time, following the Prayer After Communion. This is also a time when a non-ordained member of the faithful may address an important issue or witness to their faith. The final element of the Eucharistic Liturgy is the dismissal, a word which means sending forth. If there is a deacon at the Liturgy, he normally announces the dismissal, sending the faithful forth to love and serve the Lord and one another and announce the Gospel with their lives. They are sent forth to be a Eucharistic presence through their daily living.

It is our hope that this pastoral letter on liturgy will be used as a springboard to enhance how the Eucharistic Liturgy is celebrated in Eastern Montana. The Eucharist Liturgy is the central means by which we, as Christians, celebrate our faith in the risen Lord. May our liturgies inform minds, inflame hearts, and inspire souls with the love and mercy of God.



SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS & DIRECTIVES



FOR EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION IN THE DIOCESE OF GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS

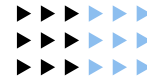
ARS CELEBRANDI (THE ART OF CELEBRATING)

The *ars celebrandi*, with specific reference to the *Novus Ordo*, refers to the proper way to celebrate the Eucharistic Liturgy. Pope Francis states in his recent motu proprio *Desiderio Desideravi*: “The *ars celebrandi* cannot be reduced to only a rubrical mechanism, much less should it be thought of as imaginative – sometimes wild – creativity without rule. The rite itself is the norm...” and as such must be followed. Celebrating the *Novus Ordo* properly and providing catechesis on the proper celebration of the *Novus Ordo*, is primarily a way to foster the engagement and participation of parishioners in the Eucharistic Liturgy.

RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION UNDER BOTH FORMS

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, reception of the Precious Blood from the Cup was suspended. While reception of Holy Communion solely under one form is the reception of the whole of Christ, there is a great and important pastoral value in allowing all the opportunity to receive the Precious Blood from the Cup. There are significant references by Jesus in the Gospels regarding the meaning of reception from the Cup. Jesus chose bread and wine from the Passover meal to be used at the Eucharistic Liturgy. Given that lessening of the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases and with a complement of vaccines and effective medicines, it is time to resume offering the Blood of Christ again to members of the assembly. Resumption of offering the Blood of Christ resumed at the Mass of the Lord’s Supper during the Holy Triduum.





NOVUS ORDO VERSUS TRADITIONAL LATIN MASS

In 2021, Pope Francis issued his motu proprio *Traditionis Custodes*. There are currently four priests and four parishes (not including the Transalpine Redemptoris, who have separate permission from the Holy See) who have temporary permission, with restrictions, to celebrate the Traditional Latin Mass (Extraordinary form). Pope Francis is very clear that the normative rite for the Eucharistic Liturgy is the *Novus Ordo*. There is to be no convergence or commingling of elements of either ritual with the other. Implementation of diocesan policy regarding the TLM is to be followed strictly.

LATIN VERSUS THE VERNACULAR

The Fathers at the Second Vatican Council desired that the Latin language be preserved, especially in the people's responses. At the same time, they acknowledged that the vernacular was frequently advantageous to the people. What the Fathers did not anticipate was the enthusiasm, even passion, with which so many of the faithful, clergy and laity alike, would embrace the use of the vernacular. While Latin retains a special place in the liturgy, especially with acclamations and notable traditional devotional hymns, the normative language for the *Novus Ordo* Eucharistic Liturgy is the vernacular. The Church's magisterium in the persons of Pope St. Paul VI and Pope St. John Paul II affirmed this development.

AD ORIENTEM VERSUS AD POPULUM

The Fathers at the Second Vatican Council in *Sancrosanctum Concilium*, did not address the position of the altar in the sanctuary or whether the priest should face "toward the East" or toward the people. When free standing altars were introduced, however, it seemed logical that the priest should face the people, the emphasis of *Sancrosanctum Concilium* being full, active, and conscious, engagement (mentioned 16 times) of those assembled for worship. When the first *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* was introduced, it stated that the





altar should be “free standing, away from the wall, so that the priest can walk around it and can face the people” (*GIRM #262*). This has since been the most common posture for the celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy. While either orientation is permitted, the celebration of the liturgy with the priest facing the people is pastorally and theologically more consistent with the *Novus Ordo* by which both priest and people may focus on the altar and the sacrifice taking place on it. When celebrating the *Novus Ordo*, we ask all priest to face the people when at the altar and that the altar be so arranged so that “the faithful may not be impeded from a clear view of what takes place at the altar or what is placed on it” (*GIRM #307*).

COMMUNION PROCESSION

The Communion Rite is processional in nature. While reception of Holy Communion is deeply personal, it is not private. As a procession, it is natural for communicants to remain standing as they receive Holy Communion though an individual communicant may choose to kneel when they receive Holy Communion. However, so as to not impede the flow of the procession, kneelers are not to be placed in the aisle.

RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION BY THE ASSEMBLY

“It is 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 cases where this is foreseen, they partake of the chalice (cf. 283), so that even by means of the signs Communion may stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated” (*GIRM #85*).





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