

PREPARING FOR ADVENT:

The Ordinary Form of the Mass Celebrated “ad orientem”

On July 5, 2016 Cardinal Robert Sarah, in speaking with priests during a retreat conference, spoke of the Holy Season of Advent being an opportune time for those priests in attendance to begin celebrating Mass “ad orientem”. On July 11, 2016 the Vatican spokesman Fr. Frederico Lombardi, S.J. issued a statement declaring that there were no new liturgical directives being issued from the Vatican in this regard.

As some of you know, I have on a few occasions publically celebrated the Ordinary Form of the Mass “ad orientem”. Celebrating Mass “ad orientem” in the Ordinary Form means that the priest stands at the altar facing the same direction together with the people from the Preparation of the Gifts until the Communion Rite turning to the people when indicated by the rubrics. After some discussion I did support the proposal of one priest to celebrate the Ordinary Form of the Mass “ad orientem” in one of our local churches with the understanding that it would be done with proper catechesis. Even though the Ordinary Form of the Mass may be celebrated “ad orientem” the norm since the Second Vatican Council has been to celebrate this form of the Mass “versus populum” (facing the people).

My expectation is that our priests will continue to celebrate the Ordinary Form of the Mass “versus populum”. I would not expect or encourage a priest in our Diocese to begin celebrating Mass “ad orientem” at parish Masses without having a personal, in-depth conversation with me.

Even though there are many options in the Roman Missal some options do need and continue to be properly explained and implemented in order for the faithful to enter more deeply and participate more fully in the Church’s Liturgy. Which leads me to another option which is Distribution of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds.

Holy Communion Under Both Kinds

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal states with regards to “Holy Communion under Both Kinds”, that “whenever the opportunity for instruction is present, the faithful should be properly catechized...”(25). We all know that the flu and cold season raises all sorts of questions with regards to the transmission of germs when the faithful receive the Precious Blood from a chalice. I feel that it is most timely to address these concerns now.

There are two issues, as I approach this:

1. Health (the possible spread of contagion vis-à-vis the approach to the Sacred with an attitude of heroic faith. “Because it is Precious Blood, in Faith, I won’t get sick or transmit sickness to another.”)
2. The doctrine of concomitance (one never is denied reception of the Precious Blood when one receives Holy Communion under the appearance of Bread since the Body and Blood of Christ are both fully present as one under either Form) vis-à-vis the admonition that receiving Holy Communion under BOTH forms is a “fuller sign”.

These two discussions rest on both Faith and Reason and, as in most theological discussions, opinions can be strongly held on several levels.

It is my contention that our belief in the concomitant Presence of Body and Blood must be reiterated in these days. Our people need to know what we believe and hold as truth and, in this matter, the truth is greater than the “fuller sign”. Therefore to receive under ONE Form is a true reflection of our true doctrine.

Traditionally the one form to be received is the form of Consecrated Bread, not the Precious Blood under the appearance of wine, though for one whose manner of obtaining nutrition is by liquid administered through a feeding tube, this stands to perfect reason and is acceptable.

For the seasons beginning with the First Sunday of Advent and, in fact, until Holy Thursday, Holy Communion is to be distributed only under the form of the Consecrated Host (except as noted for the special feeding need).

Prior to Holy Thursday a renewed catechesis on the practice of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds will be made available under my direction from the Office for Worship.

Liturgical Music and Environment

Music Directors, Musicians and Liturgical Art and Environment individuals and committees really need to work, as always, with their pastor's input and pastors ought to be attentive to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and diocesan guidelines. Particularly when decorating the church, please take special note of the altar itself, the free standing altar is freestanding so that the priest can walk around it. Displays of flowers or the Nativity or other decorations are not in keeping with the directive of the Second Vatican Council which intended the altar to be beautifully decorated but not obscured.

With regards to music, again, I leave it to the pastors to work with your liturgical music ministry to plan according to the Liturgical Seasons.

In the end we believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is of the utmost importance for us as Catholics. And so, we should be vigilant in ensuring that the dignity of our celebrations be enhanced. In promoting such dignity, the beauty of the sacred place, of the music, and of art should contribute as greatly as possible.