



# Word on Worship

Newsletter of the Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark, NJ

## In This Issue:

- The “Action” of the Mass!
- Participation in Worship: More Than the Doing
- By Now: Liturgy in the Twenty-First Century
- RCIA Reminders

They were exciting times. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council were convening in Rome and I was studying theology in Innsbruck, Austria, where the likes of Karl Rahner and Josef Jungmann held sway. The seminarians at the Canisianum also had access to the unpublished lectures of other German theological giants through their mimeographed notes made available to us. I was especially taken by the course notes on the Eucharist by an up and coming young professor from Regensburg, Fr. Josef Ratzinger. I later used these notes in my own teaching.

One insight in particular captured my attention. Professor Ratzinger asserted that the Eucharist must be understood from Easter, not from Christmas, from the resurrection, not from the incarnation. To refer to the Eucharist as an Easter sacrament means that it is to be understood from the *actio* and the *passio* of the paschal mystery in the dynamic unfolding of the reality of Easter. He further contrasted this dynamic understanding of

the early Church with the more static approach of the Middle Ages, when, for example, the preface from Christmas Mass was chosen for the feast of Corpus Christi.

What does all this mean? To be sure, Christ is really, truly, substantially present in the eucharistic forms of bread and wine. But this transformation needs to be seen in the larger context of the action of the Mass, the sacrifice of the Mass, when the entire paschal mystery of Christ dying and rising is recalled and made present.

This insight on the Eucharist as an Easter sacrament from the future Pope Benedict XVI continues to have relevance today. The provision for Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest is one such example. The *Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* was issued by the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship in 1988. The praiseworthy intention was to make holy Communion available to the faithful in “priestless” parishes. It is clear, however, that such services should not be considered the norm for eucharistic celebrations; otherwise we are left with an incomplete understanding of the eucharistic mystery.

The Eucharist is more than holy Communion; it is the representation of the very mystery of Christ of which holy Communion is an integral part. An exclusive use of

communion services can highlight the real (somatic) presence of Christ but at the neglect of the commemorative actual presence of the work of redemption. This commemorative actual presence means that the risen Christ offers himself through the hands of the ministerial priest in a ritual sacrifice in which all the faithful are invited to participate by their own self-offering and commitment. The sacramental forms of the Lord’s Body and Blood received at holy Communion need to be seen as the fruit of the whole eucharistic action of memorial sacrifice.

A further application of the Eucharist as an action could be made to the practice of Eucharistic exposition and benediction growing in some quarters and with good reason. A very special concern these days is a diminishing consciousness of the centrality of the Eucharist in Catholic Christian life. Whenever I visit a church and peruse the parish bulletin, I look for the parish mission statement. Does the mission statement make any mention of the Eucharist or the sacramental life of the Church? Sadly, many Catholics who have drifted away never really appreciated how central the Mass is to our Catholic identity. It seems the Mass was just the name of the worship service conducted in the Catholic Church on Sunday mornings and not appreciated as the very source

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## THE “ACTION” OF THE MASS

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of Sacrifice.

## General Instruction of the Roman Missal The Eucharistic Prayer

and summit of our lives. Eucharistic worship apart from Mass can intensify our love and devotion to the Risen Christ present in the sacrament of the altar, but it should never be seen in isolation from the sacrifice of the Mass of which the Blessed Sacrament is the fruit to be received in holy Communion. Karl Rahner used to say that we should relate our visits to the Blessed Sacrament to the last time we participated at Mass and at the same time look forward to our next eucharistic communion. As the late Godfrey Diekmann put it: "Eucharistic exposition and adoration are nothing else than the action of the Mass held in contemplation."

Still another application of the recovery of the Eucharist as a sacrificial action is the connection that can be made to eucharistic spirituality. Sometimes good people remark: "I'm not getting

anything out of Mass." To be sure, they are nourished from the table of God's word and from the eucharistic table. But a more penetrating counter-question would be this: "What are you bringing to the Mass?" The Mass is a sacramental sacrifice, a memorial sacrifice, as conveyed by the Greek *anamnesis*. The paschal mystery of Christ's dying and rising is recalled and made present as the gift of our salvation and redemption. It also calls forth our own inner participation; our union with Christ's sacrifice, as we join ourselves to our High Priest in his offering to the Father. We offer our efforts to respond to God's grace by living a virtuous life. We offer the pain and suffering in life we patiently endure from whatever source. Growth in holiness calls for a dying to our selfishness and egocentricism, living out the paschal mystery of Christ's dying and rising in our very own lives and in the life of the

Church. We need to recall the exchange between the priest presider and the congregation before the prayer over the gifts: "Pray, brothers and sisters, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father." Re-read the Scripture passages which speak of the spiritual sacrifices we bring to the altar to be united with the perfect sacrifice of Christ.

I urge you therefore... by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1)  
Or again:  
Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God, and, like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 2:4-5)

We can so easily become too passive and routine about our participation at Mass. The doctrine that the Mass is a sacrifice challenges us to a greater re-commitment and dedication of ourselves to Christ. The third edition of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* when speaking of the eucharistic prayer states that "the meaning of the Prayer is that the entire congregation of the faithful should join itself with Christ in confessing the great deeds of God and in the offering of Sacrifice." (GIRM, 78)

### CONCLUSION

The most ancient sacramentary manuscripts refer to the eucharistic prayer as the *actio*, the sacred activity. As Josef Jungmann has noted, this name is found in the heading over the introductory dialogue that begins the preface of the eucharistic prayer: *Incipit canon actionis*, that is, "Here begins the canon of the action." Later, the word canon was used all by itself in the same sense, hence the Roman Canon, our present Eucharistic Prayer I. Maybe we are used to thinking about the Mass as an exchange of words only: e.g. "I heard Mass" or "The priest said Mass." A far better approach would be to consider the Mass as a sacred action we do together in union with Christ.

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# PARTICIPATION IN WORSHIP: MORE THAN THE DOING

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One of the most oft-quoted phrases of the Second Vatican Council is “full, conscious and active participation.” It seems like more than Catholics have heard this challenge and have responded with attempts to bring about a more lively and welcoming worship experience—one much more “user friendly.” Most denominations have introduced more contemporary music, drama, visual arts, dance and other full-body, hands-on worship elements. In all this our hearts are in the right place: we want our worship services to touch the individuals who come, facilitate an encounter with the Divine, overflow in praise and thanks and make a difference in the way we live. There remains a question, however: what did the Council really have in mind when it spoke to a new way to participate in worship?

Many if not most Christian denominations are struggling with what lies underneath this clarion call of the Council for full, conscious and active participation. It simply won't do to have people come to church and be bumps on a log; worship is definitely not a spectator sport! We are concerned with our young people who don't seem interested in established worship patterns. We are scrambling for solutions to the contemporary vs. traditional worship style battles. At the same time, “participation” in worship actually raises some deep issues to which we must attend if we continue on our journey of worship renewal. Some of these issues will

become clear as we reflect on what it means to participate in liturgy fully, consciously and actively.

## “PARTICIPATION” IN THE *CONSTITUTION ON THE SACRED LITURGY*

Although the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*: the first document promulgated by the Council, on December 4, 1963) is a document produced by a Roman Catholic body for the Roman Catholic Church, in many ways it has truly become a significant document providing the blueprint for worship renewal in a wide spectrum of Christian denominations. The *Constitution* has even become something of an ecumenical document. So it is not surprising that it is quoted well beyond Catholic circles. It might be well, however, to take a closer look at what the *Constitution* says about participation.

No fewer than five paragraphs (a numbering system used in official documents of the Catholic Church; “paragraph” can actually include more than one grammatical paragraph) address the issue of participation by all the congregation in the worship experience. Only one paragraph, however, uses the full phrase, “full, conscious, and active participation” (CSL, 14). One other uses “full, active participation,” thus repeating two out of three of the adjectives for participation used in paragraph 14 (see CSL, 41). In all other cases the *Constitution* refers

only to “active” participation (see CSL, 27, 30, and 50). The most interesting paragraph perhaps is no. 30 which even lists the envisioned active participation: everyone actively participates through acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons, hymns, actions, gestures, bodily attitudes and reverent silence.

This brief survey of data from the *Constitution* raises a simple question: what, really, is intended when we speak of worship participation? In the next section of this brief reflection we explore the three synonyms used to describe participation in paragraph 14 of the *Constitution*. We conclude with some comments about how this helps us come to a new self-understanding.

## “FULL, CONSCIOUS, AND ACTIVE”

Is it simply a fluke of the *Constitution* that only one paragraph mentions three adjectives for participation? It would seem that exploring each of these three words might give us deeper insight into what is truly demanded by worship participation.

“Active” participation. We begin our reflection in reverse order intentionally. As noted above with the worship elements/activities listed in paragraph 30, one understanding of participation does unfold at the level of **actively engaging** all those who are present in the worship experience. It won't do to have a choir sing all the hymns; at some point the

whole congregation must be invited to open with full throats their hearts to God. It won't do to have priests or ministers lead the worship service in such a manner that it is clear **they are** doing the worship and the rest are there to watch; worship leadership cannot function apart from those who are being led, namely, the whole congregation.

In a little different vein, it won't do only to use one's head in a worship service. CSL 30 also makes clear that the **whole body** must be engaged in worship. Particularly interesting is the inclusion of attitudes and silence in this list of active worship elements.

First, let's attend to attitude. Sometimes we are not aware how our attitude affects others: if I am bored, this rubs off; if I am angry, this rubs off; if I am enthusiastic, this rubs off; if I am grateful, this rubs off; if I am filled with praise, this rubs off; if I am genuinely concerned for others when I make intercession, this rubs off; if I am committed to being there, this rubs off. All this makes a difference not only by affecting others' participation ability, but it also affects how we are as the church, the body of Christ. If one member slacks off in participation, two things simultaneously happen: first, the body is weakened; second, the others who are participating lift up that person. Thus, the attitude of congregants actually is a give-and-take situation.

Second, let's attend to silence. We might think of silence as a time to do nothing, to vegetate. Silence included with elements of active participation suggests otherwise. In the silence something is to happen **actively**. Silence, in other words, is a time to **do something** (pray, contemplate, encounter) and to *be someone* (creature still before the Creator). Ironically, the moments of silence which we build into our worship services may well become the most engaging, active participation! "Active" participation challenges us to get involved, be engaged, **do** the worship service.

**"Conscious" participation.** The challenge to "conscious" participation only occurs once in the *Constitution* (CSL, 14), but this doesn't make it something unimportant or not worth our serious reflection. As the word "conscious" implies, we are speaking here of awareness, of deliberate effort. The very word "conscious" derives from the Latin noun *consciūs* which means having a common knowledge with another, to be privy to. This etymology suggests, first, that conscious participation involves more than ourselves. In fact, in the very call to worship we are invited to gather and present ourselves before the Lord—ultimately to say **yes** to the divine activity in which we are about to engage ourselves. "Conscious" participation requires of us a **surrender** of ourselves to the worship event.

A second implication of the etymology: since "conscious" is a **common** knowledge, even our yes, our surrender is possible only because of the others who are present with us at worship. We can become privy to Divine presence only when we surrender ourselves to the bigger action which is

not what we as individuals do, but what God does in us. The very word "liturgy" comes from two Greek words meaning "the people's work." The real work of worship is not so much our active participation (as challenging and demanding as that may well be) as it is the work of **surrendering** ourselves to God's presence and God's action.

Most importantly, this surrender means that we let go of our individuality—with our likes and dislikes, our needs and desires—and surrender ourselves to be the body of Christ at worship. Conscious participation in terms of common knowledge isn't something that takes place in our heads; it's not a matter of gaining a new insight. Rather, common knowledge takes place in our surrender to being someone other than our individual selves—our surrender to being the visible, worshipping body of Christ.

"Conscious" participation challenges us to surrender to being the body of Christ where God works through us and within us.

**"Full" participation.** Two paragraphs of the *Constitution* mention "full" participation (CSL, 14 and 41) but give us little clue about what the Council bishops had in mind. We might take our clue from our previous two reflections. Active engagement and conscious surrender both take us beyond ourselves. As characteristics of our worship participation they render us able to allow God to work within us. Full participation, then, has to do with how God **transforms** us through the worship event into being more perfect members of the body of Christ.

Worship involves a bi-directional giving. We give God

ourselves in praise and thanks; God gives us Godself as a share in divine life which transforms us into an ever-deepening identity as children of God. Participation reaches its apex when God transforms us. Thus, worship is always a life-threatening experience: through our engagement and surrender God makes us other than we are when we begin worship. Interestingly enough, while we often think of worship as what we give God, full participation implies that the most important gift of worship is what God gives to us. This does not mean that our gifts are not important—either of the offering or of ourselves—for they are! It does mean that God, who receives our sincere and true gifts, transforms them with divine life.

Moreover, this transformation of ourselves at worship is not simply for our own sake. Indeed, this transformation is precisely what enables us to be sent forth from worship to transform our broken and fractured world as we ourselves are transformed. Full participation, then, thrusts us toward mission. We are transformed in order to continue Jesus' saving ministry. "Full" participation challenges us to be transformed by God into ever more perfect members of the body of Christ; as we are transformed, so is our world transformed.

#### **PARTICIPATION IN WORSHIP: MORE THAN THE DOING**

Our reflections on a broader meaning for "full, conscious and active participation" help us realize that worship is far more than doing, as important as that is. This kind of participation leads us from the doing to **being** the body of Christ fully conscious of our encounter with the Divine and open to and receptive of the

action the Divine takes on our behalf. This is ultimately the source of our deepest praise and thanksgiving—what God continues to do in and through us.

Moreover, in order for participation in worship to be fully realized, we surrender ourselves to being the body of Christ. This means that there are **ecclesial** (church) implications for what takes place at any given worship service. The Church is at once the body of Christ made visible in our world today and at the same time is the way Christ continues his saving ministry. Full, conscious and active participation, then, always leads us to mission on behalf of others. This kind of participation always takes us beyond ourselves and the gifts God bestows on each and every one of us, to the realization that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. When another is in need, I am in need. When another is hurting, I am hurting. When another is encouraged, I am encouraged. When another is graced, I am graced.

As all Christians come to a more full, conscious and active participation in our own separate churches, perhaps we will also come to a greater realization that in Christ we are all made one. The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, a document of one Church, and its challenge to full, conscious and active participation, has the potential to draw us together as one body in the one saving ministry of Christ.

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First published to the website of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship in June, 2005; visit [www.calvin.edu/worship](http://www.calvin.edu/worship) for other related articles by Sr. Joyce Ann. This article is reprinted here with her kind permission.

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# BY NOW: LITURGY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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It has been over forty years since Vatican II and the promulgation of the highest ranking document on the liturgy: *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, better known in the vernacular as *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. We have come a long way from Mass in Latin with the priest's back to the people, but we are also well beyond the immediate post-conciliar period of experimentation with things like clown liturgies and using John Denver songs as Communion hymns. It is time to assess where we have come from to make certain we are headed in the right direction. In other words, **by now** we should be over certain things; **by now** we should have implemented certain changes; **by now** we should have left bad habits behind.

It is true that the Church moves slowly, that sometimes people like certain things even if they are not completely legitimate for the liturgy, that we need to take our time in implementing change. Still, if we do not have a plan at all, a sense of movement and progress, then we have to wonder if the people are being well served and if the liturgy is being celebrated the way the Church intends. In this article, several items will be looked at which, **by now**, should be removed, adjusted or fully implemented.

## ENVIRONMENT

**By now**, everyone who works with enhancing the liturgical

environment should be familiar with the maxim, "Less is more." Altars should have nothing in front of them. Ever! No flowers, cornucopias, globes, hearts, nothing, and if they are made of a worthy material, altars should be as visible as possible with a simple white cloth on the mensa. Altars of lesser quality (plywood, etc.) can be covered more fully in a quality altar cloth.

**By now**, manger scenes should not be placed anywhere in the sanctuary, and certainly never in front of the altar. They should be somewhere approachable so that adults and children can get close to see them, just as St. Francis envisioned. **By now**, it should be common knowledge that electric trains, Teddy bears, Santa Claus and birthday cakes are never appropriate in churches before, during or after the Christmas season.

It should be clear **by now** that water stays in the font all year, including Lent, with the exception of part of the Triduum. People need to bless themselves coming into church; caskets need to be sprinkled when brought in for funerals. Why sprinkle water from a bucket while a dignified baptismal font suited for the purpose stands empty? Above all, **by now** no font should ever serve as anything other than a receptacle for water – a place of baptizing and signing. There should never be found sand, cacti or any other foreign material in

the place where living waters flow.

**By now**, unless they are truly works of art appropriate for the space, banners and cheap colored cloths should be permanently removed from our churches. "Rather than a festal gesture for the assembly, banners often are a form of disposable ecclesiastical art bearing disposable thoughts which foster a disposable piety. Such banners should be disposed of."<sup>1</sup>

## LITURGICAL YEAR

**By now**, everyone should at least be vaguely familiar with the term "Liturgical Year." It is not a school calendar or a secular calendar, but a liturgical calendar which the Church follows. "By means of the yearly cycle the Church celebrates the whole mystery of Christ, from his incarnation until the day of Pentecost and the expectation of his coming again."<sup>2</sup> The liturgical year is never tampered with, even if it is Arbor Day, Columbus Day or the Fourth of July. When preparing liturgy, what matters most are the seasons and feasts of the year with proper allowances made for votive and ritual Masses when appropriate. If it is a feast day, like that of St. Luke (October 18), then no, you shouldn't do a votive Mass of the Holy Spirit for the school that day. Would it be such a crime for the children to hear about a great saint of the church?

**By now**, we should look at the

calendar of the liturgical year **first** before booking weddings and funerals or preparing a school Mass or any other liturgy. Make it clear to those involved (brides and grooms, families of the deceased, school principals) what is required of the liturgy. If necessary, celebrate the liturgy outside of Mass, as is allowed with weddings and funerals. The liturgical calendar shapes us, we don't shape the liturgical calendar.

As for Sunday, there is only one purpose for gathering on the first day of the week. **By now** everyone should know that purpose is **Jesus Christ**. It is not Scout Sunday or Compassion Sunday or even Pro-life Sunday. Jesus Christ is compassionate, pro-life and he does a good turn daily. True, we do need to draw important themes out of the experience of meeting the risen Christ in the Eucharist, but if we let the liturgy do its work, we will not need to come up with superfluous actions or ideas which fall far short of the Christ centered rituals and symbols of the Church.

It is okay to draw attention to relevant issues of the day in the light of the Gospel, pray for them in the intercessions, even refer to them in the homily, as long as it is clear how they are rooted in the paschal mystery being celebrated. When people find Christ in the liturgy, the ethical implications for their lives are far greater than any

single theme chosen by a committee. People don't come to Mass to meet an ideology, they come to Mass to meet the Lord, and it is from there that they grow into the body of Christ, concerned with the ethical issues of the world.

#### CLERGY

**By now**, priests should know that the Mass begins with a sacred greeting of Christ's presence among the assembly such as, "The Lord be with you." and never with a secular greeting like "Good morning everybody." **By now**, we should have moved away from black as a liturgical color. **By now**, the connection should have been made between funerals and the paschal mystery as stated in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, "The rite of funerals should express more clearly the paschal character of Christian death...This applies also to the liturgical color to be used."<sup>3</sup>

The introductory rites of the funeral Mass are imbued with baptismal imagery such as the sprinkling, the placing of the white pall and the prominence of the Easter candle. It is through baptism that we enter into the paschal mystery; the white pall and white vesture bring to mind the journey that the deceased has made through baptism and death to the resurrection of Christ.

True, black is listed as an option after white and violet for All Souls Day and Masses for the dead, including funerals, but **by now** we have to realize that just because something is permitted in the liturgy does not mean that it is always appropriate. The use of a color other than white compromises the clarity of the baptismal symbolism inherent in the introductory rites of the

funeral Mass. Would anyone even think of using violet or black for the celebration of baptism?

**By now**, no priest anywhere ever should pick up the large host during the eucharistic prayer and break it as he says, "Jesus took the bread, *broke it...*" Does the priest hand the consecrated bread to the people when he says the next line of the narrative, "...and *gave it to them...*?" Not if he ever wants to preside at Mass again. So why is he breaking it then? The Mass is a ritual, not an historical reenactment. **By now**, every priest should know that the primary actions of the Liturgy of the eucharist are: *taking* (preparation of the gifts), *blessing/thanking* (the Eucharistic prayer), *breaking* (Lamb of God/fraction rite) and *giving* (distribution of Communion). Each part has its own rite and it is imperative to wait for the "right" time to do the "rite" thing so that the language of the liturgy may speak clearly to the assembly.

**By now**, deacons should know that they do not take the roles of other ministers, but have a liturgical ministry of their own to fulfill, which does not include saying "Let us proclaim the mystery of faith" or any other part of the eucharistic prayer, including the doxology, all of which are roles reserved to the priest-presider.

**By now**, deacons serving at Mass should be ready to assist with the Act of Penitence when form C is used. **By now**, priests and deacons should know that when a deacon serves at Mass, he always proclaims the Gospel just as the priest always prays the eucharistic prayer. **By now**, the deacon should know that he is the primary minister of the cup. The priest and the

deacon do not each take a plate while extraordinary ministers of Communion take cups. Wrong! The priest and lay minister take a plate and the deacon and lay ministers take the cups.

#### SILENCE

**By now**, when a priest says "Let us pray," at the opening prayer, he should mean it and give the people a chance to pray in silence for at least fifteen seconds. "Let us pray" is an invitation. The presider is asking the assembly to do something. No one can say a prayer to God in 1/10<sup>th</sup> of a second. "Let us pray" needs to be followed by a period of silence before the collect is prayed. Further, "let us pray" does not mean "let us stand." **By now**, after Communion, if the assembly does not naturally stand up when the presider does, the priest should give a slight gesture to the assembly to stand and then say, "let us pray." In a few weeks, the gesture will no longer be needed as the people will automatically rise with the priest.

**By now**, there should be a moment of silence after the first and second readings respectively. The liturgy of the word is not a roller-coaster ride to the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Without silence, one has the feeling that the church is hurriedly ticking off a list of things to do: first reading. Check. Responsorial psalm. Check. Second reading. Check... Silence gives space to the liturgy for prayer and reflection. If during the opening prayer and after the first and second reading there were moments of silence and if there were silence after the homily and communion, it would add only minutes to the liturgy. **By now**, moments of silence for

prayer and reflection should be added to each Mass.

#### MUSIC

**By now**, "every care should be taken that singing by the ministers and the people is not absent in celebrations that occur on Sundays and on holy days of obligation."<sup>4</sup> In other words, there should never be a Sunday Mass without music.

All church musicians should know **by now** that if it isn't sacred music, it isn't played in church, including and especially at weddings and funerals. Even if he was the world's biggest Yankee's fan, "Take Me out To the Ballgame" is not an option for a Communion hymn. Further, everyone should know that "The Wind Beneath My Wings" is as inappropriate to a wedding liturgy as "On Eagle's Wings" is to a wedding reception.

**By now**, only psalms (or canticles) should be sung after the first reading, preferably the psalm of the day or if necessary, one of the seasonal psalms. The responsorial psalm should never be replaced with a catchy tune, even if it is found in a hymnal.

#### WORD AND EUCHARIST

**By now**, every parish should have a *Book of the Gospels* carried in procession for Mass by the deacon or in his absence a lector. It should be placed flat on the altar until the Gospel acclamation when it is processed to the ambo. **By now**, no parish should be processing with a Lectionary.

**By now**, every parish should offer Communion under both species. The assembly should be able to "...partake of the chalice, so that even by means of the signs, Communion will stand out more clearly as a

participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated.”<sup>5</sup> **By now**, assemblies should be catechized as to the importance and significance of receiving both the body and blood of Christ.

**By now**, we should be consecrating enough hosts at each Mass for the gathered assembly. “It is most desirable that the faithful...receive the Lord’s Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass...”<sup>6</sup> No more distributing the body of Christ from a previous Mass to the current one. That is more like a Communion service than a Mass.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is more than just giving out consecrated hosts. It is a placing of one’s self on the altar with the gifts of the Mass; it is the epicletic experience of transformation not only of the bread and wine

but of all present into the body of Christ. **By now** people should not be shortchanged of this most important element of participation in the Mass: receiving from the gifts that have been offered to God on their behalf and returned to them for their spiritual nourishment.

#### CONCLUSION

From an historical perspective, the 40 years since the reform of the liturgy is not that long. In fact, 2,000 years since the coming of Christ is not that long. It will take time for a fully authentic implementation of the reforms of the liturgy to take place. Faced with the difficult work of the liturgy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we should not be tempted to retreat to older practices left behind. Still worse, we should not cheapen what is expected by moving forward along the easier path of random liturgical

innovation. We cannot cling to things that once were and are no more, but we cannot justify a *carte blanche* attitude when preparing liturgy. **By now** it should be clear that the liturgy is a gift which continues to evolve and grow while remaining true to the vision of the Church and the spirit of Christ.

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Director  
Office of Divine Worship

<sup>1</sup> Aidan Kavanagh, *Elements of Rite*. (The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN) 1990.

<sup>2</sup> *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*, 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 81.

<sup>4</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 40 (USCCB, Washington, DC) 2003.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 85.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 85.

## ***Dates for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults***

### **The Call to Continuing Conversion**

*Saturday, February 24, 2007*

*Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Newark*

11:00 AM - Essex and Union Counties

1:30 PM – Bergen and Hudson Counties

The Call to Continuing Conversion is for all those adult candidates who are validly baptized (Catholic **or** non-Catholic) for whom **any or all** of the following apply: They are baptized non-Catholics who will be received into the Roman Catholic Church. They are candidates for confirmation. They are candidates for first Communion

### **The Rite of Election**

*Sunday, February 25, 2007*

*Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Newark*

2:30 PM – Essex and Union Counties

4:30 PM – Bergen and Hudson Counties

The Rite of Election is a required part of the RCIA process for all catechumens to become members of the Elect. All those who will be fully initiated at the Easter Vigil (that is, receiving the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist), must attend the Rite of Election. Any parish with a catechumen who does not attend the Rite of Election must receive a dispensation from the Archbishop to licitly celebrate initiation at the Easter Vigil.

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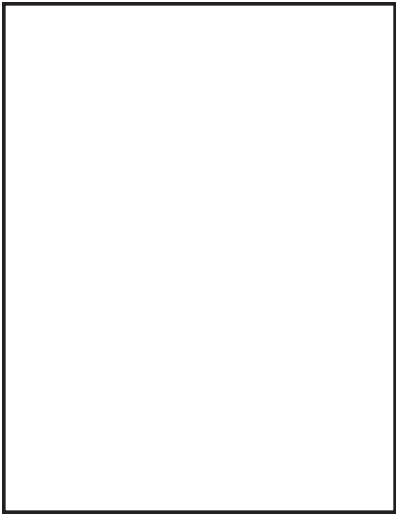
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