



Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon **OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**

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December 7, 2023
St. Ambrose, Bishop & Doctor

Liturgical Directives Update

Dear Pastors, Clergy, and Parish Life Directors of the Diocese of Saskatoon:

The beginning of the Church liturgical year prompts me to respond to a number of issues and questions concerning liturgical practice in the diocese. Some of these issues are linked to the directives provided over a year ago in response to the Covid 19 pandemic, and others have arisen due to other circumstances.

I begin by pointing out that the general guidelines regarding the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy are of course provided in: The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM); the Catechism of the Catholic Church; the Code of Canon Law. For the sake of brevity and of expressing the spirit of this update, I refer to the following from the Code of Canon Law:

*Can. 837 §1 “Liturgical actions are not private actions but celebrations of the Church itself which is the **sacrament of unity**, that is, a holy people gathered and ordered under the bishops. Liturgical actions therefore belong to the whole body of the Church and manifest and affect it; they touch its individual members in different ways, however, according to the diversity of orders, functions, and actual participation.”*

§2. “Inasmuch as liturgical actions by their nature entail a common celebration, they are to be celebrated with the presence and active participation of the Christian faithful where possible.”

Updates, General Directives

- 1. Reception of the Body and Blood of Christ will be maintained through the reception of consecrated host.** This practice will be revisited later in the Spring 2024, when we are through the winter cold and flu season. Please note: it is important to stress to all the Catholic faithful that *they receive the fullness of the Body and Blood of Christ* when they receive the consecrated host. When the communicate responds “Amen” to the words of the priest, deacon, or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, “The Body of Christ” – they are responding that they believe that they are fully receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. (see CCC 1390)
- 2. Respect for persons who practice personal distancing and wearing masks.** Many persons who currently attend Mass and other liturgical celebrations are attempting to mitigate getting sick or spreading potential causes of sickness, by these practices. Many are elderly, persons who are health-compromised, or are recovering from sickness. *Please also note that the elderly, those who are health-compromised, or those who are dealing with current sickness – including colds and flus – are dispensed from attending Sunday Mass, as a general norm of the Church.* (see CCC #2181; canon 1248 §2)

3. Celebrating all liturgical action in full communion and with consistent practice with the universal Church and local directives and custom.

Any change in the universal and local practice needs to be discerned carefully, in full accord with Church teaching and guidelines, and in respect of local (diocesan) directives and practice. Examples where careful discernment is important include;

- the renovation of church spaces, and especially sanctuary areas (GIRM 291);
- the mandating and training of persons assisting in liturgical action, such as *Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion*;
- the practice of celebrating the Holy Eucharist *facing the people (versus populum)*, contrasted with the practice of celebrating *ad orientem*, as broadly implemented by this diocese as a key feature of the liturgical renewal of the Second Vatican Council;
- the encouragement and involvement of girls in the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy and the life of the parish. If parishes are emphasizing the practice of “altar boys” for the sake of encouraging vocations to the priesthood – a well-intentioned and recognized practice – this must not diminish but rather requires the encouragement of the involvement of girls and women in the liturgical and ministerial life of the parish. (See *Christifideles laici*, 51; Canon 230 §1; *Spiritus Domini*, Pope Francis, January 2021.)¹

Please note that the Sacred Heart of Jesus Latin Mass community – created as a *Public Association of the Christian Faithful* in 2020 in our diocese, operates in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church and the directives outlined by *Traditionis custodes*, Pope Francis, July 2021.


I encourage any pastor, priest, parish life director or lay ecclesial leader to contact me directly to discuss any issue or question on any of these or other matters.

On the memorial of St. Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor of the Church - we celebrate an early apostle of the church who worked strenuously for ecclesiastical unity on both a theological and practical level. Among the many sayings of St. Ambrose, I cite as follows: “...to whatever church you come, observe its custom, if you do not want to suffer or give offense.” (quoted in Augustine, *Ad Casolanum*, Epistle 86, as quoted in *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part IV, p. 387) Let us be inspired and guided by his mind and heart as we fulfil our role as shepherds of Christ’s faithful for our liturgical and pastoral ministry.

Blessings to you all in this Advent season.

Sincerely, in Christ,


✠ Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen
Bishop of Saskatoon


Rev. Darryl Millette
Chancellor

¹ “A doctrinal development has taken place in recent years which has highlighted how certain ministries instituted by the Church are based on the common condition of being baptized and the royal priesthood received in the Sacrament of Baptism; *they are essentially distinct from the ordained ministry received in the Sacrament of Orders*. A consolidated practice in the Latin Church has also confirmed that *these lay ministries, since they are based on the Sacrament of Baptism*, may be entrusted to all suitable faithful, whether male or female, in accordance with what is already implicitly provided for by Canon 230 § 2.” – *Spiritus Domini*