

Key Points in the Revised General Instruction

This summary has been compiled to highlight certain significant revisions to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and the Norms for the Celebration and Distribution of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States. This summary also offers clarification on existing norms and, finally, communicates particular determinations for the celebration of the Eucharist in the Diocese of Worcester. This summary is by no means meant to serve as a substitute for the careful reading and studying of the revised General Instruction and the Norms for the Celebration and Distribution of Holy Communion.

The liturgical assembly

The celebration of the Eucharist is an action of the whole Church, and each person present — ordained, lay ministers, members of the faithful — should be helped to realize that this Sunday celebration is of utmost importance in the life of the parish, and is, in fact, the center of the whole Christian life of the Church. (#1–#26)¹

Everyone who takes part in the celebration of the Eucharist is to prepare himself or herself before the liturgy. Silence, as an aid to this preparation, should be provided for all. (# 45) It is appropriate to observe a few moments of silence before the Mass begins.

This **silence** should also be observed within the course of the celebration of the Mass, particularly at the following moments, as appropriate:

- after the invitation of the priest to pray,
- after the proclamation of the first and second readings,
- after the homily, and after communion. (# 45)

Participation of the faithful throughout the celebration of Mass is to be encouraged and fostered, particularly in those parts of the Mass that are usually sung. (#39–#41) This participation is further realized in the common postures and gestures which the faithful are called upon to make or observe

- by bowing in the Creed at the words, “by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” (# 137)
- by standing, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, after the priest’s invitation to “Pray, brothers and sisters, that our sacrifice may be acceptable . . .” and before they respond, “May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands . . .” (#43, #146)
- by kneeling during the Eucharistic Prayer after the Sanctus is sung and until after the singing of the Amen. (# 43)
(Note: When Mass is celebrated in a place that does not allow for kneeling— for example, in a gym—then the faithful all bow when the priest genuflects after the consecration of the bread and

- after the consecration of the wine. (# 43)
- by kneeling after the Lamb of God (# 43)
- by bowing his or her head to the Eucharistic elements in the hands of the minister as a sign of reverence before receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord in communion. (# 160)
- by normally standing for the reception of Holy Communion. (# 160)

All the faithful are normally to receive elements consecrated at the same Mass. (# 85) The faithful may receive the consecrated host either in the hand or on the tongue, as they decide. (# 160) Self-intinction by the communicant is never allowed. (see Norms, # 50, GIRM, # 287)

The priest

The Eucharistic liturgy is the gift from God to his Church and as such, no one is permitted — including the priest celebrant — to add, remove, or change anything in the celebration of the Mass, except where the norms allow for a decision between options. (# 24)

If the tabernacle is located behind the altar in the sanctuary of the church, then the priest and ministers genuflect before it when they approach the altar and when the procession leaves at the end of Mass, but never during the liturgy. (# 274)

Prayers which the priest prays in his own name (that is, before reading the Gospel, at the preparation of the gifts, and also before and after the communion of the priest) are to be said quietly. (# 33)

It is not permitted to substitute or add non-biblical texts to the Liturgy of the Word. (# 57).

The homily is a most important element of the Liturgy of the Word and care should be taken in its preparation. The homily may not be omitted on Sundays or holy days of obligation. It is given by the priest celebrant, a concelebrating priest, or the deacon, but is not to be given by a lay person. (# 66)

For the Creed, only a formula approved by the Church is allowed for liturgical use. (# 67)

For Mass on weekdays in Ordinary Time, the prayers from the previous Sunday, orations from another Sunday in Ordinary Time, or one of the prayers for various needs provided in the Missal may be used. (# 363)

During the preparation of the gifts, the prayers of blessing for the bread and the wine are to be said

¹All numbers refer to the revised General Instruction of the Roman Missal

separately, not at the same time. These prayers are said before either the chalice or the paten are placed on the altar. (# 141–# 142)

It is very appropriate that the priest, if he is able, sing those parts of the Eucharistic Prayer for which musical notation is provided. (# 147)

At the sign of peace, the priest ordinarily remains within the sanctuary, but may, for pastoral reasons, offer the sign of peace to a few of those near the sanctuary. (# 154)

The fraction rite is to be carried out only by the priest celebrant. A concelebrating priest and the deacon may assist. This pertains to portioning out the consecrated hosts to communion plates as well as to pouring the Precious Blood into ancillary cups. (# 83; Norms, # 37)

The celebrating priest (and concelebrants, if present) is to receive communion before it is given to anyone else. (# 158, # 160, # 182, # 244) The priest (and the deacon, if present) is to hand the communion vessels containing the consecrated elements—plates and cups—to the extraordinary ministers of communion. (# 83, # 160, Norms, # 40)

Concelebrating priests are normally to vest in the vestments worn when celebrating Mass individually. (# 209)

The deacon

During the procession at the beginning of Mass, the deacon carrying the Book of the Gospels, if it is used, precedes the concelebrants and principal celebrant. He places the Book of the Gospels flat on the altar in preparation for the proclamation of the Gospel. If he is not carrying the Book of the Gospels, he walks to the right of the principal celebrant. (# 194)

NOTE: The Lectionary is not carried in the procession, but rather is placed on the ambo before Mass begins. (# 118, # 120) In the absence of a deacon, a lector may carry the Book of the Gospels, if it is used, in the opening procession. The Book of the Gospels is not carried out in the closing procession. (# 120, # 194) At the conclusion of the Gospel, the Gospel Book is not returned to the altar. It is enthroned in a suitable place.

The deacon receives communion under both species from the priest immediately after the priest's own communion. (# 182) The deacon assists in distributing communion to the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and to the people, and may also assist in distributing vessels to the extraordinary ministers. (# 182, Norms, # 38, # 40) If communion is distributed under both species, the deacon is to minister the Precious Blood. (# 182)

If a deacon assists at the altar, he is the one who usually announces the Prayers of the Faithful and the announcements after the post-communion prayer. (# 177, # 184)

The extraordinary ministers of Holy

Communion

The extraordinary ministers of communion may approach the sanctuary during the Lamb of God. After the priest (and the deacon, if present) has received, he may distribute communion to two of the extraordinary ministers. The priest may then give to one of these two extraordinary ministers a cup of the consecrated wine and to the other, a paten of the consecrated bread. These two ministers may then communicate the remaining ministers. (The deacon, if present, may assist.) After each extraordinary minister has received communion, he or she goes to the altar, where the priest or deacon gives a communion vessel to the minister. The minister then goes to the assigned communion station. (# 162)

Ministers may not add anything to the words of communion: "The Body of Christ," "The Blood of Christ." (See Norms, # 41, # 43)

Extraordinary ministers of communion are to receive before they distribute communion to the rest of the faithful, not afterward. (Norms, #39)

It is forbidden to pour what remains of the Precious Blood into the ground or down the sacrarium. (Norms, # 51 – # 55) NOTE: The norms mention nothing about going to the tabernacle before or during communion in order to bring out consecrated hosts. The norms presume that enough hosts are consecrated so that all who take part in the Eucharist receive hosts consecrated at that Mass. (# 85, # 118c) Furthermore, there is nothing in the norms to prohibit someone other than the priest (for example, the deacon or the extraordinary minister of communion) from taking what is left over of the consecrated hosts to the tabernacle after communion.

The lectors

If the Book of the Gospels is used, the lector may carry it in the absence of a deacon, and lay it flat upon the altar in preparation for the proclamation of the Gospel. (# 194 – # 195)

NOTE: The Lectionary is not carried in the procession, but rather is placed on the ambo before Mass begins. (# 118, # 120)

The Book of the Gospels is not carried out in the closing procession. (# 120, # 194)

Normally, the scriptures proclaimed in the first and second readings are each proclaimed by a separate lector. (# 109) The division of any scriptural readings into parts, except for the Passion, is prohibited. (# 109) When no deacon is present, the lector or another minister announces from the ambo the Prayers of the Faithful. (#99, #197)