

A Diocesan Instruction for the Parish Celebration of the Holy Mass

I. Introduction

1. The following is offered as a guide to assist our parishes and missions in the Diocese of Tyler, to prepare with care and attention for the celebration of the Sunday Mass and other liturgical celebrations. Pope Benedict in the Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, invites us to contemplate and put into practice the "*ars celebrandi*", the art of celebrating the liturgy.

2. The particular instructions of the Bishop as the promoter of liturgical life in the diocese, invite us to adhere to the norms and the spirit of the magisterium of the Holy Father:

i. The primary way to foster the participation of the People of God in the sacred rite is the proper celebration of the rite itself. The *ars celebrandi* is the best way to ensure their *actuosa participatio*. (S Car 38)

ii. Adherence to the liturgical norms sustains faith. (S Car 38)

iii. All who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders have a grave responsibility to foster the correct *ars celebrandi*, the Bishop as chief steward of the mysteries of God in the particular Church entrusted to him, must foster in the faithful and model in the Liturgies he celebrates a deeper participation in the rites. (S Car 39)

iv. Great respect must be shown towards the liturgical books and signs used in the liturgy. (S Car 40)

v. The environment, art, sacred vessels and vestments should foster a sense of the sacred. (S Car 40)

vi. Attentiveness needs to be paid to the language of the Liturgy: words, music, silence and gesture. (S Car 40)

vii. The architecture of the Church should highlight the unity of the furnishings in the sanctuary, such as the altar, the crucifix, the tabernacle and the celebrant's chair. Religious iconography should be directed to sacramental mystagogy. (S Car 41)

viii. In the *ars celebrandi*, liturgical song has a preeminent place. As an element of the liturgy song, should be well integrated into the overall celebration, suited to the rites, time and seasons. The use of Gregorian chant is to be suitably esteemed and employed, not excluding different styles and traditions.

II. Parish Commissions and Deanery Contacts

3. It is the desire of the Bishop that each parish should have a liturgical commission and a parish liturgical coordinator to prepare for the Sunday Mass and the diverse Sacramental celebrations in the spiritual life of the parish in accordance with the aforementioned norms. The commission will consist of priests, deacons, musicians and others who have a deep love for the Liturgy. They will be people grounded in daily prayer and endeavor to embrace a liturgical spirituality. The commission will be formed in the Liturgy according to the documents of the Church and diocesan pastoral practice. The parish team will be assisted in their formation by the Diocesan Liturgical Commission. It will be the specific task of the liturgical coordinator to bring the members of the team together to assist in planning. The role of the deanery contacts will be to assist the parish liturgical commissions in connecting with the Diocesan Liturgical Commission to assist with formation opportunities, and to coordinate events at the deanery level

4. The commission has the task of bringing together the various elements that will help to foster a devout, attentive and prayerful celebration of the Mass that invites all participants to engage in the worship of God at a deep level. The commission will need to meet monthly, to coordinate ministers of the liturgy, prepare the ritual music, hymns or chants and address specifics for the liturgical seasons.

III. Preparation

5. Attention must be paid in a special way to the external signs in the sacred liturgy. Pope Benedict says; *'Everything related to the Eucharist should be marked by beauty. Special care and respect must be given to the vestments, the furnishings and the sacred vessels, so that by their harmonious arrangement they will foster awe for the mystery of God, manifest the unity of the faith and strengthen devotion. (S Car 41)*

6. The following therefore are kept in mind:

- i. All cassocks, surplices, albs and cinctures for servers should be clean, neat and fit properly. Suitable attire should be worn underneath the vestments
- ii. Priests and deacons should always be sure their proper vesture is clean neat, fits properly and worn in according to the norms of the liturgical books. *(GIRM 345-357, RS 121-128)* The sign value of the vestments is emphasized in the *ars celebrandi. (S Car. 40)*
- iii. The altar linens should be clean and neat. They should be made from absorbent fabric to enable the purification of the sacred vessels.
- iv. The candlesticks, thurible and any other metal materials should be cleaned and polished as befits their sacred use.
- v. The sacred vessels are to conform to the norms of the Church *(GIRM 327-334, RS 117-120.)*
- vi. In selecting sacred Music for the celebration of the Mass the following should be considered:
 - a. Does the choice of music reflect the season, feast or occasion?
 - b. Does it continue to developing a stable repertoire?
 - c. Can it be easily remembered and sung as it accompanies the ritual act?
 - d. Does the music chosen respect the priorities of music in the liturgy, for example: have the more important musical pieces been attended to in the first place?
 - e. Are the choices in harmony with the vision of the Diocese as contained in the recent instruction on Sacred Music and the Liturgy, issued by the Bishop?
 - f. Has attention been given to the place of sacred silence?

7. Preparation for the celebration of the Mass will involve:

i. Remote preparation: Praying over the texts of the Roman Missal and the Biblical Readings is the first step to be taken by the members of the commission. Pope Benedict says; *"The Eucharistic celebration is enhanced when priests and liturgical leaders are committed to making known the current liturgical texts and norms, making available the great riches found in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and the Order of Readings for Mass". (S Car 40)*

Having prayed over the texts, the commission is able to make the necessary musical choices for the Mass being celebrated and the ritual music that will accompany the different rites. Specifics of the liturgical year will need attention. The prayers of the faithful may be composed by the commission according to the norms of the Missal. Coordination is needed to access how many ushers, servers, readers, deacons, concelebrants or other ministers are needed. A practice with the priest and ministers should be set especially for those Liturgies that fall outside the regular schedule.

ii. Proximate Preparation: Before the Mass is celebrated it will be necessary to be sure the following are prepared and in order.

- a. The priest, deacons, readers, servers and others are present.
- b. The proper Liturgical Books are ready. These are the Missal, Lectionary and the Book of the Gospels. (Missaletes, leaflets or loose sheets are never used to proclaim the texts of the Sacred Liturgy during the celebration.) A suitable folder may be prepared for the Prayers of the Faithful or the announcements; these are to be pre approved by the celebrant. Materials or hymnals for the congregation should be readily at hand.
- c. The Altar is suitably prepared, candles lit and the sanctuary suitably furnished. Sufficient hosts and wine should be at the table where the procession of the gifts will begin. In the sanctuary the sacred vessels with the purificators, corporals, palls, lavabo bowl and towel are ready.
- d. The musicians are prepared and the congregation ready to join in the ritual music as the celebration begins and the Mass continues

8. In the planning for the celebration of the Mass, it is important to understand the principle of **progressive solemnity**. This is the idea that the use of ceremonial and sacred music is greater according to the season, feast, time of the Mass and availability of ministers and musicians. (*Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship USCCB 2007 110-114*)

The Missal gives important guidance here: *"Great importance should therefore be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass, with due consideration for the culture and abilities of each liturgical assembly. Although it is not always necessary (e.g. weekday Masses) to sing all the texts that are of themselves meant to be sung, every care should be taken that singing by the ministers and the people is not absent in the celebrations that occur on Sundays and holy days of obligation. In the choosing of the parts actually to be sung, however, preference should be given to those that are of greater importance and especially to those to be sung by the priest or the deacon or the lector with the people responding, or by the priest and people together (GIRM 40)*

IV. The Celebration of Mass

9. To assist our preparation and celebration we reflect on the four processions in the Mass:

- i. The Entrance procession to the Altar
- ii. The Gospel Procession
- iii. The Procession with the gifts
- iv. The Communion procession

10. As we penetrate their meaning and understand their symbolism, we prayerfully engage in these ritual actions and open ourselves to the action of the Holy Spirit. He will lead us to true worship, to adoration, praise, supplication and thanksgiving. In prayerful recollection we enter into the prayer of Christ: through Him, with Him and in Him offer the sacrifice of our own lives, that they may be transformed by the Eucharistic Sacrifice for our good and the good of His Holy Church.

"First of all there is a need to reflect on the inherent unity of the rite of Mass. Both in catechesis and in the actual manner of celebration one must avoid giving the impression that the two parts of the rite are merely juxtaposed. The liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic liturgy, with the rites of introduction and conclusion are so closely connected that they form but one single act of worship. There is an intrinsic bond between the word of God and the Eucharist. From listening to the word of God, faith is born or strengthened: in the Eucharist the Word made flesh gives himself to us as our spiritual food. Thus from the two tables of the Word of God and the Body of Christ, the Church receives and gives to the faithful the bread of life. Consequently it must be kept constantly in mind that the word of God, read and proclaimed by the Church in the Liturgy, leads to the Eucharist as to its own connatural end." (S. Car 44)

V. The Entrance, the procession to the Altar (GIRM 46-50)

11. The celebration of the Mass begins with a procession. Since the time of the Temple, the people of God have gathered in prayerful communion to join with their priests in the worship of God and the celebration of sacred rites. Processions employ movement, song and direction. Liturgical tradition has understood the procession as a symbol of the human family on its way through history, returning to the Father in thanksgiving and praise. As attention is focused on this procession to the Altar of God, it is not an opportune time to make announcements about the celebrant or guest preacher. These sentiments of welcome are proper well before the procession begins

12. At the Entrance, the focus of the procession is the Altar. The procession in the Sunday Mass is ordered in the following way:

- i. Thurifer (if incense is used)
- ii. Crucifer accompanied by candles
- iii. Other servers if needed
- iv. The deacon with the book of the Gospels
- v. The priest (another deacon may accompany him)

13. The altar is the center point of the Church. The Church is built to house the altar and it is on the altar that Eucharistic Sacrifice is offered. Through the action that will be accomplished on the Altar, the Church will enter into the Holy of Holies, the Heavenly city, the banquet of the Kingdom. The veneration of the altar is significant because:

i. The altar is a symbol of Christ Himself, "the stone rejected by the builders to become the corner stone", He is the head and teacher, who lays down his life for the sheep who is priest and victim. From antiquity the altar has been made from stone, symbolic of solidity, strength and permanence (other worthy materials may also be used). On the day of its dedication, the altar was anointed with Holy Chrism five times, symbolic of the five wounds of Our Lord Jesus. It is covered in a white cloth, evoking the glory and purity of the Risen Lord. On or near the altar there will be two to six candles: acknowledging Him who is the light of the world. When a Bishop celebrates on the altar, there are seven candles. As successor to the Apostles, the Bishop has the fullness of Holy Orders; he may celebrate all the seven sacraments. The seven candles may also call to mind the vision of Saint John recorded in the book of Revelation in the liturgical context of the Lord's Day. Here the Son of Man is surrounded by seven golden candleholders.

ii. The altar is symbolic of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Holy Church. Christians, who give themselves to prayer, offer petitions to God and present sacrifices of supplication are living stones from which the Lord Jesus builds the Church's altar. (*Rite of dedication of Church and an altar ch.2 no.2*)

iii. Since the middle ages relics from martyrs and saints have been placed in altars in recognition of their unity in Christ, in His sacrifice by the shedding of their blood and in memory of the time when Mass was offered in the catacombs.

14. On or near the altar there will be a crucifix: *"There is also to be a cross, with the image of Christ crucified upon it, where it is clearly visible to the assembled congregation. It is appropriate that such a cross, which calls to mind the saving passion of the Lord, remain near the altar even outside of liturgical celebrations"* (GIRM 308)

The figure of the crucified Christ presiding at the altar and in the sanctuary is an element not to be missed. What is taking place at the Mass, the unbloody representation of the sacrifice of Calvary, is

symbolized for priest and people through the image of the crucifix. It represents what will be actualized through the prayer of the Sacred Liturgy.

"In the New Testament the memorial takes on new meaning. When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ's Passover, and it is made present: the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross remains ever present. As often as the sacrifice of the cross by which Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed is celebrated on the Altar, the work of our redemption is carried out" (CCC 1364)

15. The procession to the altar begins as the ministers of the liturgy make their way to the sanctuary. On Sundays, Feasts and special occasions the deacons, one carrying the Book of the Gospels (or lector in the absence of a deacon) with servers carrying candles, cross and incense will accompany the priest or Bishop celebrant. When the Bishop celebrates the Mass he is assisted by deacons and servers. Priests normally concelebrate with the Bishop. At a daily Mass the priest is generally accompanied by fewer ministers.

16. This procession is rich in meaning and significance. The altar will become the throne of the Blessed Trinity during the Mass, as the procession moves towards the altar we are reminded that the Church herself is moving towards the fullness of the Kingdom of the Father, we are about to enter into the Heavenly Liturgy. The incense and lights formerly carried in antiquity to honor civic leaders are now carried before the Gospel of Christ and his sacred ministers. During the celebration of the Mass the symbols of light and incense will be used to honor the various modes of Christ's presence in the Mass; in the faithful, in the priest, in the Divine Word and in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

17. The nature of the procession especially on Sundays and special celebrations requires that suitable song accompanies the entrance rite. Since Apostolic times, music and song have been integral to the liturgy. Saint Paul tells us: "sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God" (Col 3:16-17). The Roman Missal reminds of the purpose of the entrance chant or hymn. (*GIRM 47*)

- i. to open the celebration
- ii. foster the unity of the congregation
- iii. introduce the thoughts of the congregation to the liturgical season or feast
- iv. accompany the priest and ministers in procession

18. When the procession reaches the altar, the priest and the ministers genuflect to the Blessed Sacrament if the tabernacle is in a central position in the sanctuary. (*GIRM 274*)

19. If the Blessed Sacrament is not in the sanctuary, they make a profound bow to the altar. The ministers make their reverence two by two and go to their places. The deacon of the Word omits the reverence and places the Book of the Gospels on the altar. (*GIRM 173*)

It is important to note that the servers and clergy do not all wait at the foot of the altar to venerate together, but all take their proper places after they have come to the altar and made the appropriate veneration.

The sacred ministers go to the altar and reverence it with a kiss. (*GIRM 49*)

After this veneration with the kiss the celebrant may incense the altar and the cross. (*GIRM 49*)

The deacons accompany the celebrant, one at each side, as he encircles the altar and incenses it with single swings of the thurible. As they pass in front of the cross they bow and the priest incenses the cross with three double swings. After the incensation of the cross they bow to the cross and continue to incense the altar.

20. The use of incense in Divine Worship is of great antiquity and was already required by the Lord in the liturgy of the old law (Leviticus 16:12-13). In the Roman Liturgy incense has been used as a sign of honor towards holy things and holy people. It came into the Roman Mass in the sixth century as part of the entrance procession and by the twelfth century was incorporated into the rite with the incensation of the altar, Book of the Gospels, the priest, sacred ministers, the faithful and the elevations of the Blessed Sacrament

As the blessed incense ascends to the Blessed Trinity, it envelopes the altar in a sweet smelling cloud. The use of incense is a sign of praise and intercession while also signifying purification and sacrifice. It is used in the Sacred Liturgy as a symbol of prayer, worship and sacrifice. (Ps 140, Rev. 5:8) Incense will be used to honor the various modes of the presence of Christ in the Mass and is a powerful sign of our communion with the Heavenly Liturgy. (*Rev 8:3-5*)

21. It is important that the chant or hymn chosen for the procession to the altar should be of the same length of the rite itself. It is to be avoided that the music concludes before the procession or incensation of the altar is completed. When this happens the rites can lose some of their efficacy. It is entirely permissible and recommended that when the lyrics of the entrance chant or hymn have finished, continuing to accompany the rites with instrumental music. This applies at all times during the different processions and their ritual actions.

VI. The Sign of the Cross and the Greeting

22. When the Entrance chant is concluded, the priest stands at the chair and together with the whole gathering, makes the Sign of the Cross. Then he signifies the presence of the Lord to the community gathered there by means of the Greeting. By this Greeting and the people's response, the mystery of the Church gathered together is made manifest.
(*GIRM 50*)

Each celebration of the Holy Mass has one focus, making present the event of our salvation; the Paschal Mystery. In the Paschal Mystery the whole life of Christ finds completion. In our on going meditation we realize that the mysteries of our faith i.e. Revelation, Incarnation and their purpose, union with the Holy Trinity are open to us in the Eucharist

Our initiation into the mystery of Triune life offered in the Mass is begun by Baptism. In Holy Baptism we were sealed with the sign of the cross through Holy Chrism. This sign or seal of the Cross is a sign of Christ's ownership of His Flock, a mark of his protective care a badge of membership in the army of Christ.

23. When we make the sign of the Cross at Mass, we recall our Baptismal grace. Therefore the external sign of the cross should be accompanied by an interior act of faith in the mystery of the Holy Trinity, with a consciousness of what it means to be a follower of Christ. It is because we are disciples that we want to hear His word and participate in His Sacrifice. Through the sign of the Cross we recognize the central Truth of our Faith: God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He has come to us. It is especially appropriate that with solemnity we invoke the God of Revelation as we open and close the principle celebration of our Faith.

24. Following the sign of the cross the priest greets the assembly with the options given in the Missal. This greeting is found throughout the Old Testament and in the Epistles. It is reminder of Christ's promise to be always with His People; Christ is Emmanuel, God with us.

The Greeting is more than a wish, it is a reality. The Lord is present in the priest through the gift of Orders and is present with each Baptized Catholic in his soul, additionally Christ has promised, where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst"

In the Mass of Bishop the greeting is; *Peace be with you, Pax vobis*, this is the greeting of the Risen Christ to the Apostles, the priestly greeting *par excellance*.

25. In greeting the people the celebrant extends his hands towards the people, to become one with them and embrace them in prayer. This gesture in the Mass is a priestly one, recalling that it is always the Crucified Christ who is the celebrant of each Mass and that it is to Him, we turn in prayer.

VII. The Act of Penitence

26. *Then the priest invites those present, to take part in the act of penitence, which after a brief pause for silence, the entire community carries out through a formula of general confession. The rite concludes with the priest's absolution, which however, lacks the efficacy of the Sacrament of Penance.*

On Sundays especially in the Season of Easter, in place of the customary Act of Penitence, from time to time the blessing and sprinkling of water to recall Baptism may take place (GIRM 51)

In the history of the Roman Mass it is recalled, that the Pope when about to begin the Eucharist, would spend some time in prayer before the altar, recognizing his sinfulness and unworthiness to celebrate the Mass. Today both priest and people acknowledge their sinfulness in a common penitential act.

Saint Paul reminds us: "Every one is to recollect himself before eating this Bread and drinking this Cup, because a person who eats and drinks without recognizing the Body is eating and drinking his own condemnation." (1 Corinthians 11: 28-30).

"The Church's custom shows that it is necessary for each person to examine himself at depth, and that anyone who is conscious of grave sins should not celebrate or receive the Body of the Lord without prior sacramental confession, except for grave reason when the possibility of confession is lacking; in this case the obligation of making an act of perfect contrition, which includes the intention to confess as soon as possible." (RS 81)

"The faithful should be insistently to the practice whereby they approach the Sacrament of Penance outside the celebration of the Mass, especially at the scheduled times, so that the Sacrament may be administered in a manner that is tranquil and truly beneficial to them, so as not to be prevented from active participation at Mass. Those who are accustomed to receiving Communion often or daily should be instructed that they should approach the Sacrament of Penance at appropriate intervals, in accordance with the condition of each." (RS 86)

27. The penitential rite is not a substitute for sacramental confession. In this rite we praise God for His mercy and call to mind our particular faults and failings. Through the power of the Eucharistic mystery we will receive the Divine Power necessary to heal our sins and weakness. In this part of the Mass we can focus on our need for God. In the past some may have so regarded sin as to forget the mercy of God, today many fail to recognize their need for forgiveness. In a way, the penitential act keeps us honest with ourselves and God. It places upon our lips the prayer of the publican; "My God have mercy on me a sinner" (Luke 18: 10 -14). By the example of the publican we learn that humility of heart is necessary for true prayer. In this act the Catholic Church proclaims that she is a Church of sinners, not one for the elite or the already saved, but one that celebrates the forgiveness of God.

The rite may take one of four forms:

- i. The *Confiteor*, absolution and *Kyrie*
- ii. Psalm verses
- iii. *Kyrie* litany with tropes (poetic prayers from scripture or liturgical sources)

iv. The rite of blessing and sprinkling of Holy water

The Confiteor

28. This is a very ancient prayer in the life of the Church and is codified as part of the Mass by at least the eleventh century. In this prayer all acknowledge their sinfulness and need of forgiveness, the pope, bishops, priests, deacons and all those at Mass confess before the heavenly Church and the Church on earth, that we stand before God with open hands seeking mercy.

This prayer reminds us of our union with Our Lady, the angels and the saints. They are with us as we prepare to enter into the heavenly Liturgy, the Eucharistic Sacrifice of Our Lord Jesus. We can help each other by our prayers, as we call to mind sins of thoughts, words, deeds and omissions. As we observe our Churches, we see this reality symbolized through the various art forms present; architecture, paintings, icons, statues and frescoes. These signs help to lift us in prayer and to remind us of the intense spiritual communion we share with Our Lady, the saints and each other.

In this prayer we make the ancient gesture of beating our breast three times. This gesture is profoundly biblical and in antiquity a sign of mourning, it has become a cultural symbol of humility, guilt and unworthiness. At the death of Our Lord, Saint Luke records that the crowd returned to their homes; "beating their breasts" (*Luke 23:48*). The prophet Zachariah tells us: "they will look on the one whom they have pierced; they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child." (*Zach 12:10*).

Conscious then of our sin, we imitate the tax collector not only in his prayer but also in his outward sign of repentance; "standing far off would not even lift his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." (*Luke 18: 13*)

The Absolution

29. The normal context for the forgiveness of mortal sins is through the reception of the sacrament of penance. In this penitential act the church asks for the forgiveness of venial sins and imperfections recognizing that; "*Daily conversion and penance find their source and nourishment in the Eucharist, for in it is made present the sacrifice of Christ which has reconciled us with God. Through the Eucharist those who live from the life of Christ are fed and strengthened. It is a remedy to free us from our daily faults and to preserve us from mortal sins.*" CCC 1436

The Kyrie

30. In the chant of the *Kyrie* we acknowledge in prayer the central aspect of the Christian Religion; Jesus is Lord and Christ. This chant is not just a plea for Divine mercy but a creedal formula that acknowledges the identity of Christ and His consubstantial relationship to the Father. In the Old Testament as an act of reverence, the all Holy name of God was not pronounced. In order to call on the name of God, the very respectful title, Lord, was used in the place of the Holy name. The Old Testament testifies to the truth of the Oneness and Existence of God, against the culture of polytheism it proclaims monotheism, that God is one. This is important for us to understand when we examine the primitive *kerygma* of the Church proclaimed by Saint Peter on the day of Pentecost; "*Let the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified*" (*Acts 2:36*)

The title Lord identifies Jesus in an altogether unique way with the God of the Old Testament. It is the title given to Jesus in praise and adoration, which will later be expounded upon in the Nicene Creed. In the liturgical tradition of East and West the original Greek has always been retained as this was the

original language of most of the New Testament and the Christological councils, a reminder of our past and a sign of shared theological heritage

The Gloria

31. The great hymn of the Gloria is part of that great tradition of hymnody found in the New Testament itself. In the letters of Saint Paul we find the Christological hymns, modeled on the psalms, these apostolic texts offer profound meditation on these saving truths of our Redemption in Christ. The Gloria is an expression of this apostolic tradition and its song is an echo of the Heavenly Liturgy sung by the angels in praise of the Incarnation. It is an invitation to worship, praise and adoration.

The Gloria is divided into two parts: in the first movement the Church exalts the Divine Transcendence and in adoration invites the soul to give thanks to God for His great glory. In the second movement, the perfection of the peace that the Lord Jesus has brought to humanity is recalled. The faithful address themselves in love and confidence to the One who sits at the right hand of the Father in glory. As a liturgical hymn that presents the Trinitarian and Christological teaching of the Church, the Missal is clear that the text of the Gloria may never be altered, substituted or changed. "*The text of this hymn may not be replaced by any other text*" (GIRM 53)

VIII. The Gospel Procession (GIRM 62-66)

32. The second procession of the Mass begins as the *Alleluia* is sung by the entire congregation. There are many musical settings to this ancient chant which should be carefully chosen to enable the procession to be carried out with the noble simplicity that the rite demands. The *Alleluia* may be repeated as often as is necessary between verses until the procession to the ambo is complete. In Lent the *Alleluia* is replaced by another chant (GIRM 36, 37, 62)

The *Alleluia* is of great antiquity in the liturgical life of the people of God. Used as an acclamation in the psalms and in the prayers of the synagogue it entered the Christian Liturgy in apostolic times. It is a chant of praise and joy honoring the presence of Christ who will speak in the words of the Holy Gospel. The proclamation of the Gospel carried out with much solemnity rightly appears as the culmination of the Liturgy of the Word.

33. Before the procession the deacon (*in his absence the priest who prays for purification that he may worthily proclaim the Gospel.*) takes the Book of the Gospels from the altar, a sign that it is from Jesus Christ that the Good News comes to us, the deacon seeks a blessing from the celebrant that he too may be worthy to proclaim the Gospel. Like the procession to the altar, the minister is preceded by servers with incense and candles, the Book of the Gospels receives the honor of lights and incense as befits the holiness of Christ present in His Word. The Gospel procession may remind us of many events: the Incarnation, the Word coming down to earth to assume flesh and be the definitive Word of Truth, the reality of the Lordship of Jesus: in the culture in which the form of the Liturgy took shape a similar procession was used to honor the magistrate and the book of laws. In the Eucharistic Sacrifice we turn our hearts and minds to the supreme law of love to the true lawgiver, Jesus Christ the Redeemer.

34. At the proclamation of the Sacred Text, the Gospel is allotted some of the signs of reverence used toward God: the minister bows before the open Gospel book, incenses it with three double swings. Before the reading the minister makes the sign of the cross with his thumb on the Gospel book and then signs himself on the forehead, lips and heart. The faithful join in this gesture praying that the Word of God will fill their minds and hearts with wisdom and truth and that their words will echo those of Christ. This gesture attunes the senses to the sacred text. After the proclamation, the deacon brings the Book of the Gospels to the Bishop who will reverence the text with a kiss, praying that the words of the Gospel may purify us from sin. He may give a blessing with the Book. If the Bishop is not the celebrant of the

Mass, the minister kisses the text and prays the prayer. The Book of the Gospels is then placed in a suitable place. (*GIRM* 133, 134, 175)

35. The Liturgy of the Word should always be celebrated with care and attention. The liturgical proclamation of God's word should only be entrusted to well prepared readers, for when the scriptures are proclaimed, it is God Himself who speaks. Following the proclamation of the scriptures the homily is given by the priest or deacon. The Creed is recited or sung by all. The prayers of the faithful are introduced and concluded by the priest. The intentions are read by the deacon or in his absence the lector.

"If it is to be properly understood the word of God must be listened to and accepted in a spirit of communion with the Church and a clear awareness of its unity with the sacrament of the Eucharist. Indeed the word which we proclaim and accept is the Word made Flesh; it is inseparably linked to Christ's person and the sacramental mode of his continued presence in our midst. Christ does not speak in the past, but in the present, even as he is present in the liturgical action. In this sacramental context of Christian revelation knowledge and study of the word of God enable us better to appreciate, celebrate and live the Eucharist. Here too we can see how "ignorance of the scriptures is ignorance of Christ" (S.Car 45)

36. Pastoral initiatives should lead the faithful to a deeper knowledge and encounter with the word of God through the practice of prayerful reading of the Bible. The Liturgy of the Hours is highly commended as a method of prayer that assists in the encounter with Christ. *"By praying the psalms, the Scripture readings and the readings drawn from the great tradition which are included in the Divine Office, we can come to a deeper experience of the Christ event and the economy of salvation, which in turn enrich our understanding and participation in the celebration of the Eucharist."* (S. Car 45)

IX. The Procession with the Gifts (*GIRM* 73-77)

37. After the homily, Creed and prayer of the faithful we enter into the Liturgy of the Eucharist. As the Mass is a single rite in itself, the procession with the gifts is not an interval between the liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The symbolism of this rite begins in the history of the Jewish people as they brought their gifts for sacrifice before the Lord. We continue this as we bring forward what is necessary for the Eucharist i.e. the bread and wine which will be blessed, consecrated into the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of the Lord and offered in the Holy Sacrifice. The Roman Missal attaches some solemnity to this rite; the bread and wine are brought by the faithful and received by the deacon or the priest at the appropriate place before being set on the altar. As the gifts are brought in procession the offertory chant is sung and the faithful are invited to offer themselves as a living sacrifice with the bread and wine that will be transubstantiated into the Body and Blood of Christ.

"This humble and simple gesture is actually very significant; in the bread and wine that we bring to the altar, all creation is taken up by Christ the Redeemer to be transformed and presented to the Father. In this way we also bring to the altar all the pain and suffering of the world, in the certainty that every thing has value in God's eyes. The authentic meaning of this gesture can be expressed without the need for undue emphasis or complexity. It enables us to appreciate how God invites man to participate in bringing to fulfillment his handiwork, and in so doing, gives human labor its authentic meaning, since through the celebration of the Eucharist, it is united to the redemptive sacrifice of Christ. (S. Car. 47)

38. The Missal reminds us that the meaning of this rite comes from the teaching of Jesus himself. In the Gospels we see the Eucharistic action of Jesus in the miracle of the loaves and fishes (Mt 14:18ff). This miracle is not only a preparation for the great mystery of the Eucharistic Presence, but a preparation for the action of the Eucharist itself. We make note of the actions; receiving, blessing, breaking and giving. The Missal continues; *"Accordingly the Church has arranged the entire celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist in parts corresponding to precisely these words and actions of Christ:*

- a. *At the Preparation of the gifts, the bread and wine with water are brought to the altar, the same elements Christ took in His own hands*
- b. *In the Eucharistic Prayer, thanks is given to God for the whole work of salvation, and the offerings become the Body and Blood of Christ*
- c. *Through the fraction and through Communion, the faithful though they are many, receive from the one bread the Lord's Body and one chalice the Lord's Blood in the same way the Apostles received them from Christ's own hands. (GIRM 72)*

39. Preparation here is central. As the altar is prepared by the ministers, out lined in *GIRM 73-74*, the faithful prepare themselves for the offering to follow. We need to reflect on the things being prepared and by our thoughts to make them our own. They are to be our gifts standing before God. As the bread and wine will be transformed into Christ, we should intend to offer ourselves to God that our lives be transformed into what He wants them to be.

40. The bread and wine are brought forward by the faithful and accepted by the priest or deacon; if the Bishop is the celebrant of the Mass the gifts are brought to him at a convenient place and then carried to the altar.

"Even though the faithful no longer bring from their own possessions the bread and wine intended for the liturgy as in the past, nevertheless the rite of carrying up the offerings still retains its force and its spiritual significance. It is well also that money or other gifts for the poor or for the Church, brought by the faithful or collected in the Church should be received. These are to put in a suitable place but away from the Eucharistic table." (GIRM 73)

41. It was natural in a completely agrarian society such as the early Church era, that the faithful should provide the matter for consecration: bread and wine represented the essential elements on which the economy was built, today we offer our money as a sacrifice not only to support the poor, but to provide what is necessary to sustain the mission of the Church given to her by Christ.

42. The procession with the gifts is one of joy; song may always accompany the rite. Care should be taken to ensure that the chant or hymn is appropriate and continues throughout the celebration of the rite i.e. from the beginning of the procession to the invitation; *"Pray brothers and sisters..."*

43. The offerings are placed upon the altar using the prescribed formulas. One of the beautiful symbols employed at this point of the Mass is the commingling of the water and the wine. On one level it recalls the union of the Divinity and Humanity of Christ as the prayer itself makes clear. This profound truth is the instrument of our salvation. For our Redemption, which is made present at every Mass, Jesus experienced death in His humanity, but to gloriously raise His humanity by His Divine power and enable our participation in this event by sharing the Paschal Feast. On another level the water as a sign of Christ's humanity, also recalls our humanity united in the one Body of Christ by baptism. The prayers may be said inaudibly or the priest may recite the prayers (when there is no song) with the people responding: *Blessed be God forever*.

44. If incense is used the gifts are incensed with three double swings or by making the sign of the cross over the offerings, before the incensation of the altar and the cross. This incensation reminds us that now the bread and wine are offered to God, about to become the Body and Blood of the Lord in this Eucharistic Sacrifice. Christ present in His priest is also incensed with three double swings as are the faithful, baptized into the royal priesthood. These incensations honor Christ and are also a new evocation of the great celestial liturgy, of which our earthly liturgies are a reflection. (*GIRM 75, 277*)

45. The celebrant now washes his hands with the accompanying prayer. This action goes back to the very origins of our worship. While ablutions and prayers were customary in the East, this rite is

reminiscent of the Lord washing the feet of the disciples, the night of the institution of the Mass, a part of the memorial of that event but interpreted by the liturgy as a petition for inner purity. This interior purification is necessary to stand before the altar of sacrifice. (*GIRM 76*)

46. As we proceed to the apex of the celebration, the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest using again a prayer from antiquity invites the faithful to unite themselves with the Sacrifice which is to take place on the altar. In the *"Pray brothers and sisters"* the priestly offerings of the faithful are joined in prayer with Christ the High Priest who acts personally in the priest who celebrates the Mass. In solemn prayer the priest prays the prayer over the offerings, once the only prayer assigned to the celebrant during the preparation of the bread and wine. This collect is prayed in the name of the Church; the priest has received the offerings on behalf of Christ and His Church and now assigns them their place in our sacrificial worship. (*GIRM 77*)

X. The Communion Procession (*GIRM 84-89*)

47. Among the ways that are open to us for active participation in the liturgy, the reception of the Lord in Holy Communion enables our participation in the Paschal Mystery to be fully realized. It is this act that draws us most deeply into the mystery that the Lord Jesus has left us and it is the one that manifests most clearly our desire to participate in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus for the salvation of the world. The inner meaning of the act of receiving Holy Communion is the most intimate union we can enjoy with Christ in this world. This gift was promised to us by Jesus as we read in the Gospel of Saint John chapters 6 and 13. The act of receiving Holy Communion is one of the four main actions of the Eucharist: Jesus has perpetuated the Paschal mystery through the Mass, not only that we might offer a perfect sacrifice through him, but that we might receive the fruit of the Sacrifice of the Mass which is the sharing in his glorious Body, Blood Soul and Divinity. When the Eucharist is received, the action of Jesus reaches fulfillment, the sharing of His Body that we might become His Mystical Body in the world.

48. The Roman Missal tells us that after the celebrant has received both species of the Blessed Eucharist, the Communion chant or hymn is begun and the faithful make their way to the places where Holy Communion will be distributed.

"While the priest is receiving the Sacrament, the Communion chant is begun. Its purpose is to express the communicants union in spirit by means of the unity of their voices, to show joy of heart and to highlight more clearly the "communitarian nature" of the procession to receive Communion. The singing is continued for as long as the Sacrament is being administered to the faithful. If however there is to be a hymn after Communion, the Communion chant should be ended in a timely manner." (*GIRM 86*)

49. This experience of this procession should be one of joy, desire and love. The antiphons and psalms chosen in the Propers for the seasons and feasts evoke great sentiments of trust, adoration and contemplation. Traditionally psalm 34 has been used in this part of the Mass because of the strong Eucharistic themes it evokes: "Taste and see the goodness of the Lord". Other psalms such as 23, 27, 42 and 84 have been employed at this time to focus attention on the ritual act and to foster praise, wonder and sentiments of thanksgiving in the hearts of all who receive the Eucharistic Lord. It is a laudable practice to use these psalms or chants and hymns that are based upon those prayers.

50. Holy Communion is the great paschal feast which the Lord Jesus has prepared for us since the beginning of Mass. In this holy banquet we foretaste the banquet of the kingdom of Heaven. From this reality we can draw some lessons regarding the spirit in which we go to Holy Communion. As the Missal says, the act of reception has a communitarian nature. One does not go to Holy Communion to receive the Lord Jesus in isolation; rather I go to a common altar, the common table of the Lord with my brothers and sisters in Christ. Holy Communion engages me to a life of closer union with them, with the Lord's Church. In the same act of love and self giving that the Lord shows for me, he is also showing His love for all around me. When we share in the banquet of the Lord we share in His sacrifice. Christ's Body

and Blood were first given and offered on the cross before they could be given and offered to the faithful. Receiving Holy Communion is an act by which we confirm in a public way our complete identification with Jesus and His Mystical Body the Church. Finally, by deepening our union with Him we can enter more fully into His obedience and self offering. These attitudes are expressed when all who desire to receive Holy Communion do so in the unity of an ordered procession.

51. As the communicants approach the minister of the Eucharist, they make a bow, as an act of reverence, and will say *Amen* to the acclamation, *The Body of Christ* or *The Blood of Christ*. All are free to receive on the hand or on the tongue. From Christian antiquity the administration of the sacred species has always been accomplished with a short prayer, the most ancient being "*The Body of Christ*" or "*The Blood of Christ*", which are true professions of faith to which the communicant associates himself by saying: *Amen*. No one is to be denied Holy Communion according to the option in which they receive: "The common posture in this country for receiving Holy Communion is standing. But no one will be denied Holy Communion for kneeling, which is an ancient custom in the Church. Consideration should be given to the common practice." (*A Eucharistic Instruction to the faithful of the Diocese of Tyler No. 8*)

52. The Communion procession should begin forming/moving once the priest has communicated. In this way the procession will be formed and waiting, as it were, for the distribution of Holy Communion. The participation in the Communion procession is voluntary and no one should ever be pressured to take their place in the procession, nor should they take part in the procession without a reverence for living in the Communion of Christ. For these reasons, ushers are only to assist in inviting the people in general, not individually to start the procession which can begin either in the back or the front of the church, and then the ushers are to move out of the way. (That is to say the usher steps into sight of the first pew where the procession will begin and motions to enter the aisle. The usher does not step up beside the person and tap them on the shoulder and motion them to the aisle.) After the procession begins, people can enter when and as they wish. If the people choose to go row by row, that is fine, but the usher is not to usher them into the aisle.

53. The communion of the domestic church is experienced in a special way by the household attending Mass together. In this part of the country, frequently the entire household seeks to take an active part in the Communion procession. For example a non-Catholic spouse may well desire to come forward with the rest of their household of faith and to be joined with his spouse and children in the Communion in Christ which they partake of fully, but which he is unable to fully join in. Bishop Corrada has directed that such people bow their head and the one distributing Holy Communion simply says a short prayer for them "*Receive the Risen Lord Jesus into your heart.*" This prayer is said with hand extended over the persons head, but not touching them. It is a form of Spiritual Communion. (Please note it is not a blessing, as blessings are not appropriate in the Communion Procession, see *A Eucharistic Instruction to the faithful in the Diocese of Tyler no 9.*) It is important that while this is an option, there never be any pressure placed upon someone to "come forward" when "every one else is going up". After the reception of Holy Communion the faithful return to their pew reverently and quietly. They may kneel or remain seated according to their preference as they make their thanksgiving.

"I ask everyone especially ordained ministers and those who, after adequate preparation and in cases of genuine need, are authorized to exercise the ministry of distributing the Eucharist, to make every effort to ensure that this simple act preserves its importance as a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus in the sacrament. For the rules governing correct practice in this regard, I would refer to those documents recently issued on the subject. All Christian communities are to observe the current norms faithfully, seeing in them an expression of the faith and love with which we all must regard this sublime sacrament. Furthermore the precious time of thanksgiving after communion should not be neglected; besides the singing of an appropriate hymn it can also be most helpful to remain recollected in silence" (S Car. 50)

54. In the liturgy, sacred silence is not the absence of something; rather it creates the opportunity to be present in a contemplative way to the Lord. There are many words, rites, music and vocalized prayers.

These are most necessary but it is essential to understand that silence in the Liturgy is a form of active participation.
(SC 30)

The moments after Holy Communion are a sacred time to enter into the presence of the Lord. Where the right atmosphere has been found, silent thanksgiving not only binds one to God but fosters the unity of the community celebrating the Mass.

55. The Rite of Holy Communion is concludes with a solemn collect offered by the priest in which he prays that the fruits of the mystery celebrated and received will be of benefit to the whole Church. As an expression of their unity in this prayer, the faithful respond with the acclamation: *Amen* (GIRM 89)

XI. The Concluding Rites (GIRM 90)

56. Nourished by the word of Life and the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, the faithful are led to the conclusion of this particular celebration of the Mass with the simplicity of the concluding rites.

"The concluding rites consist of:

- a. Brief announcements, if they are necessary*
- b. The priest's greeting and blessing, which on certain days and occasions is enriched and expressed in the prayer over the people or another more solemn formula;*
- c. The dismissal of the people by the deacon or priest, so that each may go out to do good works, praising and blessing God;*
- d. The kissing of the altar by the priest the deacon, followed by a profound bow to the altar by the priest, the deacon and the other ministers" (GIRM 90)*

57. At this point in the Mass it is permitted to make announcements and to take up a special or second collection. The notices should be brief, concise and be lead by one individual. Care should be taken that the announcements do not disrupt the atmosphere of prayer and recollection. The notices however have a special context in the life of the Christian! As the people prepare to return to their homes and families, the details of the life of the parish community are a reminder that what they have celebrated and offered to the Trinity in the Mass must now be lived in the ordinariness of everyday life. Saint Augustine offers us some parting words; *"You are about to go away, each to your own home. It was good to be together, good to have been glad together, good to have celebrated together; but as we depart from one another; let us not depart from God."* (Liturgy of the Hours Tuesday Week 34, Second Reading)

58. The Eucharistic Sacrifice concludes as it began, calling us into communion with the Blessed Trinity. During this rite we call to mind the great commission given by Jesus to the disciples: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and know that I am with you always, even to the end of time."* (Matthew 28:19-20)

The Lord Jesus in the person of the priest continues to call the faithful to the vows of their Baptism. Invoking upon them the blessing of the Holy Trinity, whom they actually received in Baptism, they are sent to take up their lives in faith, hope and charity.

59. On occasion the rites are expressed with greater solemnity through chant and special prayers over the people. When the Bishop celebrates the Mass his blessing is given in a particular way; there are versicles and responses followed by a triple sign of the cross.

60. It is the duty of the deacon to announce the dismissal and during solemn liturgies to chant the dismissal. The Missal does not envisage further singing at this point. However the *Te Deum*, an antiphon

to the Blessed Virgin Mary or a hymn of praise is customary. Instrumental music may also be employed at this part of the Mass.

XII The Ministers of the Liturgy (*GIRM 91-111*)

61. The entire congregation celebrates the Mass, as it evermore deeply enters in to the Paschal Mystery of Christ engaged in the liturgy, fully, actively and consciously. Through prayer, hymnody, chant, silence and gesture this participation is realized. From the community, members are called to offer their service to Christ in the Sacred Liturgy. They do so as instituted Lectors, they who proclaim the non Gospel texts during the Liturgy of the Word, and instituted Acolytes who assist the deacon and priest during the liturgy of the Eucharist.

62. In the absence of these instituted ministers, the Church encourages readers and altar servers to exercise their functions. The faithful may also be deputed to distribute Holy Communion as extra ordinary ministers. Seats for ministers of the liturgy and other servers are to be arranged so they are clearly distinguished from the clergy and that they may exercise their functions with ease. (*GIRM 310*)

63. The Choir exercises its own liturgical function as does the organist and cantors. The place of the choir and musicians in the Church is determined by the (*GIRM 312.*)

64. While the Mass is always the action of Christ in His Church, it is ordered by Divine Constitution to be celebrated by the entire Body of Christ in its cohesion and hierarchical ordering. Every celebration of the Mass is directed by the Bishop, either in person or by one of the priests delegated by him. The celebration of the Holy Eucharist presided over by the Bishop, with the priests, deacons and faithful of the diocese is a manifestation of the one holy, catholic and apostolic church

65. In the Mass the Bishop or priest acts in the person of Christ, Head of the Body, and so to him belongs the office of offering the Holy Sacrifice and associating the offering of the baptized with him, presiding over the prayer of the people, preaching the Word of God and humbly conveying the presence of Christ. The priest exercises his ministry at the chair, the ambo and the altar.

66. The deacon as a participant in the Sacrament of Holy Orders, shares in a special way in the ministry of the Word, prayer and service at the altar. To him belongs the ministry of service, proclaiming the Gospel, leading the prayer of the faithful, ministering to the priest and distributing the Blessed Eucharist to the people of God.

The chairs of the deacons will be near that of the celebrant (*GIRM 310*)

Documents Cited

Catechism of the Catholic Church (John Paul II)

Ceremonial of Bishops (Congregation for Divine Worship)

General Instruction of the Roman Missal (Congregation for Divine Worship)

Redemptionis Sacramentum (Instruction on the Eucharist, Congregation for Divine Worship)

Sacramentum Caritatis (Apostolic Exhortation of Benedict XVI)

Sacrosanctum Concilium, Vatican Council II Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship (USCCB)

The Eucharistic Instruction to the Faithful of the Diocese of Tyler (Bishop Alvaro Corrada del Rio, S.J.)

Given on this day, Ash Wednesday, February 25, 2009,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+ Alvaro Corrada del Rio". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Alvaro Corrada, S.J.

Bishop of Tyler