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Implementation of *Redemptionis Sacramentum* in the Diocese of Fargo

Dear Fathers and Deacons,

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments released the instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* on March 19, 2004. This instruction concerns “certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist.” Its motivation derives from Pope John Paul II’s encyclical letter, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, where it is written that “priests who faithfully celebrate Mass according to the liturgical norms, and communities which conform to these norms, quietly but eloquently demonstrate their love for the Church.”¹

The instruction further reminds priests, in paragraph 32, of the gift and task given to them regarding the liturgical life of the faithful entrusted to them. “Let the Parish Priest strive so that the Most Holy Eucharist will be the center of the parish congregation of the faithful; let him work to ensure that Christ’s faithful are nourished through the devout celebration of the Sacraments, and in particular, that they frequently approach the Most Holy Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance; let him strive, furthermore, to ensure that the faithful are encouraged to offer prayers in their families as well, and to participate consciously and actively in the Sacred Liturgy, which the Parish Priest, under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, is bound to regulate and supervise in his parish lest abuses occur.”²

This reminder to the priest also points to the role of the Diocesan Bishop. “The diocesan Bishop, the first steward of the mysteries of God in the particular Church entrusted to him, is the moderator, promoter and guardian of her whole liturgical life.”³ Citing the Second Vatican Council’s *Lumen Gentium*, the Instruction also notes in paragraphs 19-21 that, “every lawful celebration of the Eucharist is directed by the Bishop, to whom is entrusted the office of presenting the worship of the Christian religion to the Divine Majesty and ordering it according to the precepts of the Lord and the laws of the Church, further specified by his own particular judgment for the Diocese.”⁴ As the Code of

¹ Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 52: AAS 95 (2003).

² *Code of Canon Law*, can. 528 §2.

³ *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 19. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops, *Christus Dominus*, 28 October 1965, no. 15; cf. also Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 41; *Code of Canon Law*, can. 387.

⁴ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 26.

Canon Law specifies, it is for the Diocesan Bishop, “within the limits of his competence, to set forth liturgical norms in his Diocese, by which all are bound.”⁵

In fulfillment of my role as the moderator and guardian of the liturgical life for the Diocese of Fargo, I present the following highlights and norms based upon the content of *Redemptionis Sacramentum*. The decisions indicated below will take effect on the First Sunday of Advent, 2004.

- I expect each member of the clergy of the Diocese of Fargo to read, study, and pray regarding the full content of *Redemptionis Sacramentum*. All within the Diocese of Fargo will observe the norms outlined within the document in their entirety.
- The text of *Redemptionis Sacramentum* may be found on the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy website at <http://www.nccbuscc.org/liturgy/index.shtml>. The document may be ordered by calling **1-800-235-8722** and asking for No. 5-619.
- Specific liturgical principles and practices highlighted by *Redemptionis Sacramentum* include:
 - “Conformity of thought and of word, of external action and of the application of the heart.” This is done with the intent of fostering “conformity of our own understanding with that of Christ” (*RS*, 5).
 - Lay participation is to be “regarded as a true exercise of faith and of the baptismal dignity” (*RS*, 37).
 - An understanding of “the nature of the Eucharist not only as a meal, but also and pre-eminently as a Sacrifice” (*RS*, 38).
 - “...the power of the liturgical celebrations does not consist in frequently altering the Rites, but in probing more deeply the word of God and the mystery being celebrated” (*RS*, 39).
 - Participation in the liturgy is interior and not merely superficially active (*RS*, 40-41).
 - There is a connection between the liturgical life and devotional practices, particularly the Marian Rosary (*RS*, 41). The devotion of the rosary is also fitting for Eucharistic adoration (*RS*, 137).
 - “The people, however, are always involved actively and never merely passively: for they ‘silently join themselves with the Priest in faith, as well as in their interventions during the course of the Eucharistic Prayer as prescribed...’” (*RS*, 54).
 - “It is certainly best that all who are participating in the celebration of Holy Mass with the necessary dispositions should receive Communion” (*RS*, 83).
 - “It is the duty of Pastors at an opportune moment to inform those present of the authenticity and the discipline that are to be strictly observed” with

⁵ *Code of Canon Law*, can. 838 §4.

- respect to non-Catholics or non-Christians coming forward for Holy Communion (*RS*, 84).
- “It is preferable that the faithful be able to receive hosts consecrated in the same Mass” (*RS*, 89).
- Daily celebration of the Eucharist by the priest, even if the faithful cannot be present (*RS*, 110).
- Care is to be taken in the washing of linens, especially those which will receive the sacred species. “It is praiseworthy for this to be done by pouring the water from the first washing, done by hand, into the church’s sacarium or into the ground in a suitable place. After this a second washing can be done in the usual way” (*RS*, 120). Please see attached document for the proper washing of sacred linens, i.e. purificators, corporals, and any cloth on which there is the sacred species. The priests of the parish are responsible to ensure that persons are instructed in the proper purification of linens.
- Decisions referred to the Diocesan Bishop:
 - The role of girls or women in service at the altar (*RS*, 47).
 - “The diocesan Bishop must diligently oversee the preaching of the homily...” (*RS*, 67).
 - Occasions for receiving Holy Communion under both kinds (*RS*, 101).
 - Excluding Communion with the tube or the spoon (*RS*, 103).
 - Any celebration of the Eucharist outside of a sacred place, on a case-by-case basis (*RS*, 108).
 - Blessing and judgment of worthiness of sacred vessels (*RS*, 118).
 - Decisions on liturgical vestments for Rites of the Church (*RS*, 126 and Rite of Penance, 14).
 - Designation of a church building for perpetual adoration (*RS*, 140).
 - Usual permission for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) (*RS*, 155).
 - Special norms with respect to the practice of EMHC (*RS*, 160).
 - Distribution of Holy Communion when a priest is not present for Sunday celebrations (*RS*, 164).
 - Permission for distribution of Holy Communion for weekday celebrations in the absence of a priest (*RS*, 166).
 - Reviewing complaints regarding abuse in the liturgy (*RS*, 184).
- Practices and Principles specifically addressed by *Redemptionis Sacramentum*:
 - Reprobated (forbidden) Practices:
 - Breaking the host at the time of consecration (*RS*, 55).
 - Altering or varying the sacred texts in the liturgy (*RS*, 59).
 - Any homily by a non-ordained (*RS*, 65, 74).
 - Distribution of unconsecrated hosts, or edible or inedible things during Mass or before “after the manner of Communion” (*RS*, 96).

- Pouring the Blood of Christ after the consecration from one vessel to another (*RS*, 106). Please note that wine may not be consecrated in a separate wine holder and then poured into chalices. The wine to be consecrated must be poured into chalices, which are placed on the altar on a corporal during the offertory of the Mass. The chalices should be placed off to the side of the altar so that the one chalice and ciborium containing hosts and the large host are central.
 - Non-celebration of Mass as a kind of “Eucharistic Fast” (*RS*, 115).
 - Use of common vessels for the celebration of Mass, “as also other vessels made from glass, earthenware, clay, or other materials that break easily. This norm is to be applied even as regards metals and other materials that easily rust or deteriorate” (*RS*, 117). Please note that any breakable chalices, i.e. glass, clay, earthenware, etc. may no longer be used.
 - Celebrating Sacred Rites without proper vestments or with only a stole (*RS*, 122-126).
 - Priests abstaining from distributing Holy Communion, handing this task over to laypersons (*RS*, 157).
- Principles or Practices to be avoided:
- Priests and people “concelebrating” in a univocal sense (*RS*, 42).
 - Use of the terms “celebrating community” or “celebrating assembly” (*RS*, 42).
 - Proffering parts of the Eucharistic prayer to Deacons or lay faithful which are proper to the priest (*RS*, 52).
 - Other prayers, singing, or accompaniment during the priest’s proclamation of the Eucharistic prayer (*RS*, 53). Please note that no music may be played in the background of the Eucharistic Prayer.
 - Omission of the Pope or Bishop’s name from the Eucharistic prayer (*RS*, 56.)
 - Substitution or omission of biblical texts, particularly substitution of non-biblical texts for the readings and responsorial Psalm (*RS*, 62).
 - Use of any Creed or Profession of Faith not found in approved liturgical books (*RS*, 69).
 - Placement of contributions near the Eucharistic table (*RS*, 70). Please note the contributions may be placed near the ambo, placed near the credence table, or taken to the sacristy. The only gifts brought forward to be placed on the altar are the bread and wine. Nothing else brought forward is to be placed near the altar or in front of it.
 - Celebration of Holy Mass “in any way into the setting of a common meal” or “joined with this kind of banquet” (*RS*, 77).

- Introduction of elements “contrary to the prescriptions of the liturgical books and taken from the rites of other religions” (*RS*, 79).
- Self-communication by the faithful, passing Holy Communion to one another, or the administration of Holy Communion by spouses to each other at a Nuptial Mass (*RS*, 94).
- A priest celebrant or concelebrant waiting until the people’s Communion is finished before receiving Communion himself (*RS*, 97).
- Self-intinction or reception of intincted host in the hand (*RS*, 104).
- Priests participating in the Mass in the manner of the lay faithful (*RS*, 128). Please note the celebrant’s chair is always to be in the sanctuary and is never to be placed in the congregation or outside of the sanctuary.
- Not going directly to a sick person’s home with Holy Communion or not celebrating from the Roman ritual for Communion to the sick (*RS*, 133).
- Use of terminology other than Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion for the lay faithful in that role (*RS*, 156).

In addition to these norms, I wish to note once again, that each pastor is to ensure that these norms, those outlined in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, and the recent changes made by the U.S. Bishops concerning the time to kneel, stand and sit, are to be followed. As noted in the *Documents of Vatican II*, “absolutely no other person, not even a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 22, 3). Improvising with the liturgy only causes confusion and disunity within the diocese and the universal Church.

I want to highlight too the importance of silent reflection in the liturgy. At times there is a tendency to rush the penitential rite when we invite persons to call to mind their sins. I encourage that deacons and priests allow at least 15 to 20 seconds of silence before beginning the penitential invocations or Confiteor. This is true too when we invite the people to pray at the time of the opening prayer as well as at the prayer after communion. If a period of silent reflection has taken place after Holy Communion, then silence is not necessary prior to the praying of the prayer after communion.

The training of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Lectors, and Servers is essential for the reverent celebration of the Eucharist. Laypersons who participate in these roles need to be trained so that they carry out their service with confidence and reverence.

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During this year of the Eucharist, it is my prayer that we be one in Christ Jesus, our Head, and that our liturgies may truly be those envisioned by the Second Vatican Council. In the Eucharistic Sacrifice we share here on earth the heavenly liturgy, because it is “an action of Christ the priest and of His Body the Church... a sacred action surpassing all others (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7-8).” May reverence and love for the Eucharist grow and burn in the hearts of all the faithful in the Church of Fargo.

Given at Fargo on the first day of November, the Solemnity of All Saints, in the Year of the Lord 2004.

†Most Rev. Samuel J. Aquila
Bishop of Fargo

Very Rev. Joseph P. Goering
Chancellor