

New Vatican Instruction Issued on Holy Eucharist

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Communion a second time on the same day.

The Instruction states that there are various circumstances in which a lack of sufficient ministers for the distribution of Holy Communion can occur. It might happen during Mass, for example, because of the size of a congregation, or a particular difficulty in which a celebrant finds himself, or outside of Mass when the number of sick in hospitals and similar institutions requires many ministers.

Local bishops can designate this faculty to auxiliary bishops, episcopal vicars, and episcopal delegates, and may even permit individual priests to appoint a suitable person who, in cases of

genuine necessity would distribute Holy Communion for a specific occasion.

The Instruction states that these faculties are granted only for the spiritual good of the faithful and for cases of necessity. Thus, "priests are to remember that they are not thereby excused from the task of distributing the Eucharist to the faithful, and especially from taking and giving it to the sick."

In the United States, the practice of designating extraordinary ministers of Communion has been growing steadily since 1970 when it was first authorized by the Vatican.

The second major section of the Instruction increases the number of occasions when the

faithful may receive Communion twice in the same day.

The Church's current discipline of Holy Communion once a day is a general norm to which several exceptions are already permitted. Moreover, diocesan bishops currently enjoy the right, under certain conditions, to dispense individuals and communities from the discipline when requested to do so on a particular occasion.

The new legislation specifies a number of additional occasions when Holy Communion can be received more than once a day, including Masses in which the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Anointing of the Sick, Sacred Orders and Matrimony are administered, and Masses at which some members of the congregation are making their first Communion.

It states, moreover, that in addition to the instances spelled out in the Instruction, local bishops may grant permission to receive Holy Communion twice in the same day each time they judge it truly justified.

The Instruction states, however, that the norm by which the faithful are permitted to receive Holy Communion only once a day may not be set aside "merely from motives of devotion."

In its third major point, the Instruction reduces the Eucharistic fast for the sick and the elderly.

The new legislation reduces the Eucharistic fast from food and alcoholic drink to approximately one quarter of an hour for the following:

—This sick in hospitals or in their own homes, even if they are not confined to bed.

—The faithful advanced in age who must remain at home because of age or who are living in a home for the aged.

—Sick priests, even if not confined to bed, and elderly priests, who wish to celebrate Mass or receive Holy Communion.

—Persons looking after the sick and the aged as well as those relatives of the sick and aged wishing to receive Holy Communion with them, whenever they are unable to observe the fast of one hour without inconvenience.

Principal Points Of New Instruction

On March 29, 1973, the Vatican's Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments issued a new instruction for Catholics concerning reception of Holy Communion. Following are the main points of this document as they pertain to the United States.

1. Individual bishops on their own initiative can permit the distribution of Holy Communion by persons other than priests, including religious, lay men, and lay women. The practice itself has been permitted since 1969, when authorized by the Holy See in response to a request from a national conference of bishops. The practice is already fairly common in the United States, where the bishops' conference received Vatican authorization for it some three years ago.

2. Holy Communion can be received twice in the same day by persons attending a second Mass for a special occasion. Examples of special occasions include Baptisms, Confirmations, weddings, ordinations, and funerals. However, Communion may not be received a second time in the same day simply for reasons of piety or devotion.

3. The sick and the aged are now required to fast from food and alcoholic drink for a quarter of an hour before receiving Holy Communion — a reduction from the previous requirements of an hour's fasting. The requirement of fasting for an hour remains in effect for persons who are not sick or aged.

4. Guidelines are established to ensure proper reverence in receiving Holy Communion in the hand where it is permitted. The practice is not permitted in the United States. In approximately 15 countries throughout the world Roman Catholics do have permission to receive Holy Communion in the hand. However, this practice has not been authorized in the United States, and the situation in this country is not changed by the new document.

Parishioners Okay Jr. High Merger

By BARBARA MOYNEHAN

With the acceptance by parishioners, the decision process is complete: the junior high classes of Blessed Sacrament and St. John, Humboldt St. will merge in September at St. John's.

Blessed Sacrament's 18-member parish council, Sunday afternoon, voted unanimously to go ahead with the pilot project, reported the council's president, Bill Biche.

St. John's 11-member school board accepted the plan a few hours later. Fred Benway, president of the school board said, "It was passed in a 10-to-1 vote."

Both parishes held meetings last week to inform the parish at large of the plan for a year of cooperation that would consist of instructing 102 Blessed Sacrament junior high students with St. John's 95, at St. John's. The final decision lay with the parishes.

During the intervening week the parishioners had the opportunity to register their opinion of the pilot project with school board or parish council members.

Blessed Sacrament council

members had many calls and letters, Biche said, calling it the greatest outside participation of any decision ever made by the parish council.

Dissenting opinion in both parishes grew out of concern for what will come after this year of cooperation.


A petition signed by 25 Blessed Sacrament Families expressed fear that this was the first step toward closing the school. They were reassured that the purpose was just the opposite.

Calls to St. John's school board members were few, Benway said, and mainly showed concern "not for this year but for what comes next year."

The next step, Biche and Benway agreed, is forming the joint junior high school board, which will have five members from each school participating in this pilot project and one member from St. Boniface, which hopes to be in on later consolidation plans.

The five members will be the pastor and principal, one present school board member, one parent of a student involved in the consolidated junior high, and one member from the parish at large.

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