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Mass changes

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tabernacle could be placed in the sanctuary if a chapel of reservation "is impossible because of the structure of the church."

The new instruction gives equal weight to the options of reserving the Eucharist in a chapel or "in the sanctuary, apart from the altar of celebration." If a chapel of reservation is used, it says the chapel should be "integrally connected with the church" and "conspicuous to the faithful."

If the tabernacle is in the sanctuary, it should "not be on the altar on which Mass is celebrated," the instruction says — answering a question of some who argued the 1975 instruction did not prohibit placing the tabernacle on the altar of celebration.

The new instruction explicitly says the decision on placement of the tabernacle belongs "to the judgment of the diocesan bishop."

The instruction adds that if the reserved Eucharist is in the sanctuary, "the priest, deacon and other ministers genuflect to it when they approach or leave the altar, but not during the celebration of Mass itself" — clarifying a vagueness in the previous instruction that led some to argue that the priest and other ministers should genuflect to the tabernacle whenever they crossed in front of it during Mass.

The instruction says when other ministers would genuflect, those carrying the processional cross or candles bow instead. Only those who are not engaged in ministry during the Mass genuflect whenever they "cross before the most Blessed Sacrament," and they do not do so if they are in a procession.

Workmaster added that when a gift bearer, for example, approaches the altar "it is not necessary to genuflect."

"The whole thing has to do with our theology of what is happening," she said. "The altar is the focus, not the tabernacle at that point. We pay no disrespect to the Blessed Sacrament by focusing on the action at the altar and the action of the Eucharist at the altar."

"Once Mass is completed, then the tabernacle if present in the sanctuary becomes the focus," Workmaster continued. "Then a genuflection as you pass by the tabernacle is most appropriate; if you can't genuflect, a bow would be appropriate."

Some practices previously allowed or not addressed in the 1975 instruction are prohibited by the new instruction.

For example, there is a specific prohibition against carrying the Lectionary in the entrance procession. Like the 1975 instruction, the new one says that the deacon or a reader may carry the Book of the Gospels in the opening procession. But the new one adds the words, "The Lectionary is never carried in procession."

The new instruction also says how the

Book of the Gospels is to be carried during the procession — "elevated slightly."

Some parishioners have been carrying the Lectionary in procession, Workmaster noted, particularly those without a book of the Gospels. The instruction "reminds us more explicitly of the fact the Lectionary is not to be carried," she said. "The book of the Gospels is to be carried in. If there is not a book of the Gospels, the reader walks in without anything."

The Vatican recently confirmed a new edition of the Book of the Gospels for U.S. use. It is to be published this summer.

Workmaster also noted that in the past no instruction was given on how the Gospels were to be carried. "You've got people carrying it up here," she said with her hands over her head. Others have carried it just at arm level.

The new instruction also states that only a priest, deacon or instituted acolyte is to clean the sacred vessels after Communion or after Mass. Other eucharistic ministers or Mass servers are not permitted to do so. Under the 1975 instruction it had become common practice in many U.S. parishes for lay ministers of the Eucharist to cleanse the vessels.

Lay eucharistic ministers "do not approach the altar before the priest has received Communion and always accept from the hands of the priest the vessel" from which they distribute Communion.

"This calls into question a practice that has evolved over a period of time not only here, but across the country, and probably in other episcopal conferences," Workmaster observed. "... I have some concern how to understand or implement what is being requested."

She added that this change would require a great deal of catechesis. Larger churches may have 100 to 200 people who serve on a regular basis.

The old and new texts alike cite "noble simplicity, not ostentation," as a basic norm for church furnishings. But the new text is slightly less restrictive in its treatment of the use of sacred images in church.

The old version said of images, "There is need both to limit their number and to situate them in such a way that they do not distract the people's attention from the celebration. There is to be only one image of any one saint."

The new version says that "care should

be taken that their number is not increased indiscriminately, and that they are situated in such a way that they do not distract the faithful's attention from the celebration. There is to be only one image of any given saint as a rule."

The new instruction specifies that the processional cross is to be "adorned with the figure of Christ crucified," as is a cross on or near the altar.

"This represents a change, in that the previous instruction simply acknowledged a cross," Workmaster said. "It did not say whether to have the Christ crucified on it."

... It has almost always been interpreted to be a plain cross. There has been a great deal of controversy about this issue. A cross is usually interpreted as something without a figure on it. ... There may need to be some adjustment in some parishes."

The reasoning behind the emphasis on a crucifix is the importance of the full mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, noted Father Moroney of the bishops' Secretariat for the Liturgy. Clearly it applies to whatever cross is in permanent placement for adoration by the faithful, he said, whether the processional cross or a fixed cross over the altar or affixed to the wall. Some parishes have only a processional cross, he noted.

The new text also has an expanded description of the sign of peace. It says that to avoid disrupting the celebration, the priest should not leave the sanctuary while exchanging the sign of peace.

The old text said only that the priest "may give the sign of peace to the ministers." The new text adds that he should remain in the sanctuary for that and "do likewise if for a good reason he wishes to offer the sign of peace to a few of the faithful."

Some Rochester diocesan priests do leave the sanctuary to offer the sign of peace, Workmaster acknowledged, adding "some may have to reign themselves in" other than at special ceremonies such as funerals.

"If the sign of peace becomes more elaborate and time-consuming, then a minor element of the Communion rite has taken over the whole thing," she commented.

The sign of peace "is really not a time of greeting one another," she said, but a time for peace and reconciliation. "If you and

your husband had a fight before church, it is much more important you turn to each other and offer peace than run around in church to everyone you know."

The new text reiterates the 1975 rule that all those attending Mass should observe "uniformity in standing, kneeling or sitting" as a sign of their unity.

But the new text strengthens this rule by preceding it with the statement that "greater attention needs to be paid to what is laid down by liturgical law and the traditional practice of the Roman Rite, for the sake of the common spiritual good of the people of God rather than to personal inclination or arbitrary choice."

People "should kneel at the consecration, except when prevented by reasons of health, lack of space, the number of people present or some other good reason," the new text says. That phrasing adds "reasons of health" to the possible exceptions.

The old instruction said nothing else about the posture of those who are not kneeling at the consecration, but the new one says that they "ought to make a profound bow when the priest genuflects after the consecration." A profound bow is a bow of the body from the waist.

This section is not a real change, Workmaster said, adding "they're saying as in the past the faithful are to stand at the response to the injunction 'to pray, my brothers and sisters...' and remain standing right straight through to Communion time except for the consecration, when we kneel."

She noted that the U.S. bishops' appendix to the 1975 instruction allowed for the custom of kneeling for the entire eucharistic prayer. The instruction does not comment on kneelers, she said, adding that "the point is, you stand most of the time."

An entirely new chapter at the end of the new instruction is devoted to "Adaptations Which Are the Competence of Bishops and Conferences of Bishops." It spells out norms for inculturation, the adaptation of the Roman Rite to different cultures.

That section warns that "efforts at inculturation are not in any way aimed at creating new families of rites, but at responding to the needs of a given culture in such a manner that adaptations introduced in the Missal or coordinated with other liturgical books are not at variance with the distinctive character of the Roman Rite."

It also warns that "inculturation requires a necessary amount of time, lest in a hasty and incautious manner the authentic liturgical tradition suffer contamination."

The U.S. bishops' Committee on the Liturgy prepared the English study translation of the text. The official Latin text of the instruction can be found under in the liturgy department section of the Web site www.nccbuscc.org.

The instruction is meant to accompany the third edition of the Roman Missal expected to be published later this year.

Includes reporting by Kathleen Schwarz.



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