

Rome: Mass norms have to be followed

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The norms for celebrating Mass must be followed exactly to ensure reverence for the Eucharist and to preserve the unity of the Catholic Church, said a new Vatican document.

"In some places the perpetration of liturgical abuses has become almost habitual, a fact which obviously cannot be allowed and must cease," said the document, *Redemptoris Sacramentum* ("The Sacrament of Redemption"), written by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments.

The instruction, approved by Pope John Paul II and released at an April 23 Vatican press conference, particularly cited as abuses the use of eucharistic prayers not approved by the church, changing approved prayer texts, and allowing lay people to carry out functions reserved to a priest or deacon.

The document said that while it was "laudable" to encourage boys and young men to be altar servers, girls and women can be altar servers if the local bishop permitted the practice.

The norms reaffirm church teaching that a Catholic, in a situation of serious sin, must go to confession before approaching the Eucharist.

Cardinal Francis Arinze, prefect of the congregation, refused to answer a direct question about whether Massachusetts Sen. John F. Kerry, the probable Democratic nominee for U.S. president and a supporter of legalized abortion, should be denied Communion unless he goes to confession and repents for his position.

However, when asked more generally if a priest should refuse Communion to a politician who supports abortion, Cardinal Arinze said, "Yes."

The document recognized as legitimate the various practices that lo-

cal bishops have been authorized to permit, including Communion in the hand and the distribution of Communion under the species of bread and wine.

At the same time, it insisted that lay people delegated to assist with the distribution of Communion be referred to as "extraordinary ministers of holy Communion," rather than as eucharistic ministers to emphasize the fact that in the Catholic liturgy the priest is the minister of the Eucharist.

Extraordinary ministers are to assist only when the number of communicants would make it difficult for the priests present to distribute Communion to everyone.

If other priests are present at the Mass and able to help distribute Communion they must do so before extraordinary ministers do, it said.

The document said the Second Vatican Council fostered the participation of lay people in the Mass through "responses, psalms, antiphons and canticles, as well as actions or movements and gestures, and called for sacred silence to be maintained at the proper times."

Following the council's direction, it said, in the choice of music, optional prayers, church decoration and the homily, "there is ample possibility for introducing into each celebration a certain variety."

But only approved Scripture readings are allowed, only a priest or deacon may give the homily and only approved eucharistic prayers can be recited — and those only by priests.

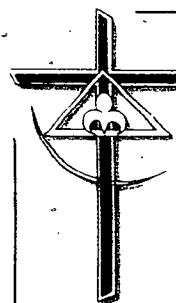
EDITOR'S NOTE: The document can be found on the Vatican Web site at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20040423_redemptoris-sacramentum_en.html.



Mike Crupi/Catholic Courier

Fire cleanup

ServiceMaster employee David Young stands on a scaffold April 27 to scrub soot off the ceiling of the sacristy at St. Ann Church in Hornell, which suffered damage in an April 22 blaze. The fire — which resulted in \$50,000 in damage — was caused by an improperly disposed charcoal incense briquet. Soot and ash was scattered all over the church, but damage was most extensive in the sacristy area, where firefighters had to punch holes in some of the plaster walls seen above. Frank Pagano, owner of ServiceMaster, said he hoped to have the means to clean the higher walls and ceiling of the sanctuary sometime during the week of May 3. During the cleanup, St. Ann is keeping its regular weekend Mass times of Saturday at 4:30 p.m. and Sunday at 10 a.m., while neighboring St. Ignatius Loyola is continuing its Sunday 8:15 a.m. liturgy and has added a Sunday 7 a.m. Mass.



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