

Prot. 13/15
Prot. Pers. 10/2015



Monsignor Luigi Negri
By the Grace of God and the Apostolic See
Archbishop of Ferrara-Comacchio, Italy
Abbot of Pomposa

From the beginning of my episcopal ministry among you there have been many occasions, ordinary and extraordinary, on which I have been able to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in our Cathedral-Basilica of Ferrara, in the Co-Cathedral of Comacchio, in the Abbey of Pomposa, in the Basilica of St. George-outside-the-Walls, as in so many other extremely beautiful churches that give God the worship due him and enhance both the territory and the faith of our people.

Inasmuch as I am directly responsible for the sanctification of the people who have been entrusted to me as leader and pastor, I share with you all my personal and pastoral concern to point out the ever-greater risk in our society, and no less in our beloved diocese, of losing the sense of the sacred. This risk brings with it all its dramatic consequences – not only religious, but also ethical and social.

The Second Vatican Council identifies in the liturgy the primary source through which Christ's action, translated into the Church's action, restores man in Man. Indeed, **Sacrosanctum Concilium no. 14** reasserts that the liturgy is *"the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit; and therefore pastors of souls must zealously strive to achieve it, by means of the necessary instruction, in all their pastoral work. Yet it would be futile to entertain any hopes of realizing this unless the pastors themselves, in the first place, become thoroughly imbued with the spirit and power of the liturgy, and undertake to give instruction about it."*

In conformity, therefore, with the Council and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, and very mindful of my ministry to you, I intend to welcome with strength the conciliar

indication. This indication was corroborated fully by the invaluable Magisterium of Pope Benedict XVI concerning how good liturgy is a driving force of correct belief, and as such, necessary for the re-formation of man according to the heart of Christ.

Indeed, it is particularly in the Most Holy Eucharist that the [restorative] action of Christ is made present, permanent, and efficacious, because in the Eucharist “*the whole spiritual wealth of the Church is contained – namely Christ, our Paschal Lamb – [...] source and summit of the whole of Christian life*” (**Redemptionis Sacramentum, no. 2**).

In many of our celebrations I have noticed that the risk of not guaranteeing maximum care for the Eucharistic Species is not merely hypothetical but real. Providentially, Holy Church, as a loving mother, gives us all the tools to avoid such a risk and to honor the Body and Blood of the Lord, which is given to us unto Eternal Life. These tools are: the Magisterial documents;¹ the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*; the teaching of the Roman Pontiffs – especially of St. John Paul II,² Pope Benedict XVI,³ and Pope Francis;⁴ the leadership of pastors, and principally that of the Bishop, who has first and immediate responsibility for the liturgy.

* * * * *

With these sentiments of obedience to Christ the Lord, love for the Holy Catholic Church, and paternal care for the people entrusted to me

I REAFFIRM

the following articles of the **General Instruction of the Roman Missal** according to the **Third Typical Edition**, currently in vigor, and enhanced by the more recently disciplinary document, the **Instruction Redemptoris Sacramentum**,⁵ promulgated by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments during the pontificate of St. John Paul II:

160. It is not permitted for the faithful to take the consecrated Bread or the sacred chalice by themselves and, still less, to hand them on from one to another among themselves. The faithful receive communion either kneeling or standing, as established by the Episcopal Conference. However, when they receive communion standing, before receiving they should make an appropriate gesture of reverence, to be established by the same norms. *Cf. also R.S. no. 90.*

161. If Communion is given only under the species of bread, the Priest raises the host slightly and shows it to each, saying, The Body of Christ. The communicant replies, Amen, and receives the Sacrament either on the tongue or, where this is allowed, in the hand, the choice lying with

¹ Above all, the Instruction of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, of 25 March 2004.

² Above all, the Encyclical Letter, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 17 April 2003.

³ Above all, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 22 February 2007.

⁴ Cf. *Decree Regarding the Mention of the Name of St. Joseph in the Eucharistic Prayers II, III, and IV of the Roman Missal*, planned by Benedict XVI and confirmed on 1 May 2013 by Pope Francis, shortly after his election; cf. also the Circular Letter entitled *The Ritual Expression of the Gift of Peace at Mass*, of 8 June 2014, which the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments sent on behalf of the Holy Father.

⁵ Hereafter, “R.S.”

the communicant. As soon as the communicant receives the host, he or she consumes the whole of it.

Cf. R.S. no. 91:

“Therefore, it is not licit to deny Holy Communion to any of Christ’s faithful solely on the grounds, for example, that the person wishes to receive the Eucharist kneeling or standing.”

Cf. R.S. no. 92:

“Although each of the faithful always has the right to receive Holy Communion on the tongue, at his choice, if any communicant should wish to receive the Sacrament in the hand, in areas where the Bishops’ Conference with the recognition of the Apostolic See has given permission, the sacred host is to be administered to him or her. However, special care should be taken to ensure that the host is consumed by the communicant in the presence of the minister, so that no one goes away carrying the Eucharistic species in his hand. If there is a risk of profanation, then Holy Communion should not be given in the hand to the faithful.”

118. Likewise these should be prepared: [...] the communion-plate for the communion of the faithful; and whatever is needed for the washing of hands. It is a praiseworthy practice for the chalice to be covered with a veil, which may be either of the color of the day or white. **Cf. R.S. no. 93**

150. A little before the Consecration, if appropriate, a minister rings a small bell as a signal to the faithful. The minister also rings the small bell at each elevation by the Priest, according to local custom.

* * * * *

Having considered, then, the real danger of profanations, and taking account of the applicable norms

I DECREE

1) That from next Sunday and for the entire duration of Lent, before the distribution of Communion in the Cathedral church and in all the other churches of the Archdiocese, at every Sunday and Vigil Holy Mass, the following message should be read:

THOSE WHO RECEIVE THE LORD IN THE HAND SHOULD DO SO WITH DEVOTION, THEY SHOULD BE CAREFUL NOT TO LOSE ANY PARTICLE, AND THEY SHOULD CONSUME THE HOST RIGHT AWAY IN FRONT OF THE MINISTER.

THE FAITHFUL ARE REMINDED THAT COMMUNION IS RECEIVED KNEELING OR STANDING; IN THIS LAST CASE IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT, BEFORE RECEIVING THE SACRAMENT, THE

FAITHFUL SHOULD MAKE THE APPROPRIATE GESTURE OF REVERENCE, AT LEAST BOWING THE HEAD.⁶

REMEMBER ALSO THAT THOSE WHO INTEND TO RECEIVE THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST IN COMMUNION MUST BE IN THE PROPER CONDITION TO BE ABLE TO DO SO:

- **THEY MUST KNOW THAT THEY ARE RECEIVING THE LORD JESUS, WHO IS PRESENT BODY, BLOOD, SOUL, AND DIVINITY;**
- **THEY MUST NOT BE IMPEDED BY CANON LAW;**
- **THEY MUST NOT BE IN THE STATE OF MORTAL SIN, SINCE, IN SUCH A CASE, IT IS NECESSARY TO RECEIVE ABSOLUTION BEFOREHAND IN THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION.**

In all churches the above message shall remain posted in an appropriate place that is easily visible to the faithful. At the discretion of the pastor or rector of the church, it is good that this message should be reread periodically even on days other than Sunday (at least once a month) during Masses at which the people are present, above all on occasions with larger crowds of the faithful, even after the time of Lent.

2) Wherever it is possible the communion-plate shall be used for the communion of the faithful in order to avoid undesired dispersal of the inevitable particles of the Body of Christ. When it is done being used, the plate should then be purified with care together with the other sacred vessels.

3) All churches should return to the use of the small bell, especially those with larger crowds of the faithful and/or tourists, in order to summon the attention of all those who may not have been paying proper attention to the mystery celebrated.

* * * * *

Moreover, having considered the document of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, **Tabula in Medio Ecclesiae**, recently reiterated by the Italian Episcopal Conference through its Liturgy Office, and in order to recover inseparability of the sacrificial dimension of Holy Mass from its meal and community dimensions,

I REAFFIRM

that concerning the correct manner of arranging the church or sanctuary on the occasion of the First Communion of children or of the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, the applicable liturgical and pastoral norms must be upheld, according to which **it is forbidden to set up one or more tables** in addition to the table of the altar, inasmuch as it proves to be "symbolically a repetition, pedagogically a distraction, and pastorally an inconsistency, since it

⁶ In the case of large celebrations in which a great number of the faithful is foreseen, the following phrase shall be added to this point: **GIVEN THE NUMEROUS PARTICIPATION OF THE FAITHFUL AT THIS LARGE CELEBRATION, IT IS SUGGESTED THAT THE EUCHARIST BE RECEIVED WHILE STANDING, WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THE FREEDOM OF INDIVIDUALS.**

*distracts the people from the altar, upsets the sense of the importance of the Church's individual architectural elements, and does not favor the participation of the faithful at all."*⁷

* * * * *

Concerning the correct procedure to be used for the liturgical sign of peace, since when *"the faithful through their ritual gestures do not appreciate and do not show themselves to be living the authentic meaning of the rite of peace, the Christian concept of peace is weakened and their fruitful participation at the Eucharist is impaired"*,⁸ one should refer to the Circular Letter of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments published on the Solemnity of Pentecost, 8 June 2014, entitled **The Ritual Expression of the Gift of Peace at Mass**. In a particular way

I REAFFIRM

No. 6a: "If it is foreseen that the 'sign of peace' will not take place properly due to specific circumstances or if it is not considered pedagogically wise to carry it out on certain occasions, **it can be omitted**, and sometimes ought to be omitted. It is worth recalling that the rubric from the Missal states: *"Then, **if appropriate**, the Deacon or the Priest, adds: 'Let us offer each other the sign of peace'."*

No. 6c: "It will be necessary, at the time of the exchange of peace, to definitively avoid abuses such as:

- *the introduction of a "song for peace", which is non-existent in the Roman Rite.*
- *the movement of the faithful from their places to exchange the sign of peace amongst themselves.*
- *the departure of the priest from the altar in order to give the sign of peace to some of the faithful.*
- *that in certain circumstances, such as at the Solemnity of Easter or of Christmas, or during ritual celebrations such as Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, Matrimony, Sacred Ordinations, Religious Professions, and Funerals, the exchange of peace being the occasion for expressing congratulations, best wishes or condolences among those present."*

* * * * *

Following the splendid example of Pope Francis; having considered the *Decree Regarding the Mention of the Divine Name of St. Joseph in the Eucharistic Prayers II, III, and IV* issued on 1 May 2013 by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments; and desiring to promote great devotion to St. Joseph, patron of the Church

⁷ Cf. *Tabula in Medio Ecclesiae*, of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments and reaffirmed by the National Liturgy Office of the Italian Episcopal Conference.

⁸ Circular Letter *The Ritual Expression of the Gift of Peace at Mass*, no. 5.

I REAFFIRM

that the Holy See, in the above-mentioned document, has defined the following formulas concerning the name of St. Joseph:

- 1) in Eucharistic Prayer II: “that with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with blessed Joseph, her Spouse, with the blessed Apostles...”
- 2) in Eucharistic Prayer III: “with the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with blessed Joseph, her Spouse, with your blessed Apostles and glorious Martyrs...”
- 3) in Eucharistic Prayer IV: “with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with blessed Joseph, her Spouse, and with your Apostles...”

**CONTRARIIS NON OBSTANTIBUS QUIBUSLIBET
TEXTUS ABROGATUS
EX AEDE ARCHIEPISOPALI FERRARIENSIS
DIE 18 MENSIS FEBRUARII A. D. MMXV**

+ Luigi Negri
Archbishop of Ferrara-Comacchio
Abbot of Pomposa

Rev. Enrico D'Urso
Curial Notary