



*Statement on the Implementation of
Redemptionis Sacramentum in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles*

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In the years since the Second Vatican Council my predecessor, Cardinal Timothy Manning, and I have consistently encouraged and supported the celebration of the Liturgy in accord with the spirit and the letter of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, as well as with subsequent official liturgical documents designed to implement that spirit.

Many of you are aware of the recent Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (March 25, 2004) issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. This Instruction deals with certain matters regarding the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist. But this Instruction cannot be read in isolation. Rather, it is a Congregation document following the extraordinary Letter by Pope John Paul II issued on Holy Thursday (April 17, 2003) entitled *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. The title is taken from the first sentence of the Letter: "The Church draws her life from the Eucharist" (no. 1). All of the positive elements of our Holy Father's Letter remain our principal focus when treating of the Eucharist in our time.

Early in *Redemptionis Sacramentum* the role of the Diocesan Bishop as the "moderator, promoter and guardian" (no. 19) of the liturgical life of the Local Church is clearly stated. "The Bishop governs the particular Church entrusted to him," (no. 22; *Lumen Gentium* 21, 27; *Christus Dominus* 3) and it is "within the limits of his competence to set forth liturgical norms in his (Arch)diocese, by which all are bound" (no. 21; Canon 838, §4).

Redemptionis Sacramentum calls us to a two-fold task: to make certain that the Eucharist is celebrated in its fullness in the spirit of *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, and to be alert to possible abuses in that celebration. The Instruction is part of the ongoing process in which our understanding of the Liturgy is continually enhanced. It invites us to deepen the reverence and the care with which we celebrate the Eucharist. Adherence to liturgical norms and guidelines assures good order within the Christian community when the Body of Christ comes together to celebrate Christ's mysteries in Word and Sacrament.

In the early 1990s, the Archdiocesan Office for Worship began extensive training programs across the Archdiocese to implement the vision and mandate of the Second Vatican Council: "In the restoration and development of the Sacred Liturgy the full and active participation by all the people is the paramount concern, for it is the primary, indeed the indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, II. 141).

Priests, deacons, religious, liturgical leaders and ministers, parish liturgy committees and others have been continuously trained in all aspects of proper liturgical renewal, with great spiritual and pastoral fruitfulness.

In preparation for the great Jubilee 2000, I prepared a Pastoral Letter in order to assist all parishes in planning and celebrating each Sunday Eucharist with the full and active participation by all the people. Released on September 4, 1997, the Feast of Our Lady of the Angels, *Gather Faithfully Together: Guide for Sunday Mass* sets down timetables for the implementation of the liturgical vision expressed in the Letter. Where this vision has been implemented a new surge of liturgical vitality has unfolded. The primacy of distributing Holy Communion under Both Kinds is emphasized in paragraphs 74 and 169 of the Letter. Many parishes also took the opportunity to renovate their Church sanctuaries to allow for the fuller celebration of the Eucharist and the other Sacraments.

While we all must constantly re-evaluate our liturgical practice and not allow it to become routine or careless, I have determined that there is no need to make any significant changes in our liturgical practice at this time. Our Auxiliary Bishops, our Deans, and I have been visiting the parishes throughout the Archdiocese regularly over these past years. Especially following the promulgation of *Gather Faithfully Together*, we have been pleased with the care with which the Eucharist is planned and celebrated. We have not become aware of any serious abuses.

Most of the abuses mentioned in *Redemptionis Sacramentum* do not pertain to the celebration of the Eucharist in our Archdiocese because of our many efforts to provide intensive and extensive training in proper liturgical norms and practice. However, in order to assist each parish community evaluate its liturgical practices, I am developing a process and a Liturgy Evaluation Form which will allow priests, deacons, religious, parish liturgists, and others in liturgical leadership to assess all aspects of liturgical preparation and celebration.

Some have inquired about the continued use of specially designed carafes in which the wine is presented at the Preparation of the Gifts, placed upon the altar, consecrated during the Eucharistic Prayer, and then distributed into smaller chalices for Holy Communion. Our overwhelming experience with this practice over the years has been most positive.

Because our practice has become an Archdiocesan custom of over seven years, with both the Catholic faithful and the ministers accustomed to this practice, I am willing to grant exceptions to no. 106 of *Redemptionis Sacramentum* for legitimate reasons, such as the following: where the altar table is too small to accommodate many chalices, thus creating a greater danger for spillage; and where the number of chalices is so large that they would visibly detract from the important sign of One Bread and One Cup, as well as increase the danger of tipping over the chalices.

In all cases, the carafes must be artistically designed for the specific purpose of holding the Precious Blood, and all ministers must be fully trained and have demonstrated their ability to pour the Precious Blood without danger. The Liturgy Evaluation Form will assist parishes to evaluate which procedure they should continue.

Ongoing liturgical formation and dissemination of information have been central to the mission of our Office for Worship. Special attention has been given to assist the clergy, religious, and laity in implementing recent and newly revised documents such as the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, issued in English in 2003. Certification programs, workshops, formation days and other educational opportunities are offered to parish liturgical ministers in order to foster vibrant communities engaged in “full, conscious and active participation” in the liturgical life of the Church. We will continue to support the celebration of the Liturgy in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles fully in accord with the spirit of all our Liturgical Documents, with special attention to our Holy Father’s most recent *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*.