



Redemptionis Sacramentum

VATICAN CITY, APR 23, 2004 (VIS) - "Redemptionis Sacramentum, On Certain Matters To Be Observed Or To Be Avoided Regarding The Most Holy Eucharist," the document from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of Sacraments, was presented today at a press conference in the Holy See Press Office by Cardinal Francis Arinze and Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino, respectively prefect and secretary of the congregation. Also present was Archbishop Angelo Amato, S.D.B., secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith which collaborated in preparing this document.

The document consists of an Introduction, 8 Chapters and a Conclusion, divided into 186 paragraphs.

Chapter I, "The Regulation of the Sacred Liturgy," speaks of the role of the Apostolic See, the diocesan bishop, the Episcopal conference, priests and deacons in the regulation of the liturgy, drawing particular attention on "The Diocesan Bishop, High Priests of His Flock." Para 22 states: "The Bishop governs the particular Church entrusted to him and it is his task to regulate, to direct, to encourage, and sometimes also to reprove; this is a sacred task that he has received through Episcopal ordination, which he fulfills in order to build up his flock in truth and holiness."

Para 24 adds. "It is the right of the Christian people themselves that their diocesan bishop should take care to prevent the occurrence of abuses in ecclesiastical discipline, especially as regards the ministry of the word, the celebration of the Sacraments and sacramentals, the worship of God and devotion to the saints."

Regarding Episcopal conferences, Para 28 states: "All liturgical norms that a conference of bishops will have established for its territory in accordance with the law are to be submitted to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for the 'recognitio', without which they lack any binding force."

In the section on priests, Para 31 says: ". They ought not to detract from the profound meaning of their own ministry by corrupting the liturgical celebration either through alteration or omission, or through arbitrary additions."

Chapter II is entitled "The Participation of the Lay Christian Faithful in the Eucharistic Celebration."

Para 36 notes that "the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical Priesthood, though they differ in essence and not only in degree, are ordered to one another, for both partake, each in its own way, of the one Priesthood of Christ."

Para 42 clarifies: "Nor is the Eucharistic Sacrifice to be considered a "concelebration", in the univocal sense, of the Priest along with the people who are present. On the contrary, the Eucharist celebrated by the Priests 'is a gift which radically transcends the power of the community' . . . The community that gathers for the celebration of the Eucharist absolutely requires an ordained Priest, who presides over it so that it may truly be a Eucharistic convocation. On the other hand, the community is by itself incapable of providing an ordained minister. Accordingly, terms such as 'celebrating community' or 'celebrating assembly' (in other languages 'asamblea celebrante') and similar terms should not be used injudiciously."

On the question of altar servers, Para 47 states: "It is altogether laudable to maintain the noble custom by which boys or youths, customarily termed servers, provide service of the altar after the manner of acolytes, and receive catechesis regarding their function in accordance with their power of comprehension. Nor should it be forgotten that a great number of sacred ministers over the course of the centuries have come from among boys such as these. Associations for them, including also the participation and assistance of their parents, should be established or promoted, and in such a way greater pastoral care will be provided for the ministers. Whenever such associations are international in nature, it pertains to the competence of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments to establish them or to approve and revise their statutes. Girls or women may also be admitted to this service of the altar, at the discretion of the diocesan Bishop and in observance of the established norms."

Chapter III, "The Proper Celebration of the Mass," highlights "The Matter of the Most Holy Eucharist" in Para 48: "The bread used in the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharistic Sacrifice must be unleavened, purely of wheat, and recently made so that there is no danger of decomposition" and in Para 50 "The wine that is used in the most sacred celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice must be natural, from the fruit of the grape, pure and incorrupt, not mixed with other substances."

Para 52 underscores that "the proclamation of the Eucharistic Prayer, which by its very nature is the climax of the whole celebration, is proper to the Priest by virtue of his Ordination."

Para 59 affirms: "The reprobated practice by which Priests, Deacons or the faithful here and there alter or vary at will the texts of the Sacred Liturgy that they are charged to pronounce, must cease. For in doing thus, they render the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy unstable, and not infrequently distort the authentic meaning of the Liturgy."

Para 62 continues: "It is also illicit to omit or to substitute the prescribed biblical readings on one's own initiative, and especially "to substitute other, non-biblical texts for the readings and responsorial Psalm, which contain the word of God".

The instructions state in Para 64 that a homily is given by a priest, occasionally by a concelebrating priest or deacon "but never by a lay person."

At the moment of the sign of peace being extended before Holy Communion, says Para 72, "It is appropriate 'that each one give the sign of peace only to those who are nearest and in a sober manner'. 'The Priest may give the sign of peace to the ministers but always remains within the sanctuary, so as not to disturb the celebration."

This Chapter concludes with Para 79: "Finally, it is strictly to be considered an abuse to introduce into the celebration of Holy Mass elements that are contrary to the prescriptions of the liturgical books and taken from the rites of other religions."

Chapter IV, "Holy Communion," includes the Dispositions for the Reception of Holy Communion, including Para 81: "The Church's custom shows that it is necessary for each person to examine himself at depth and that anyone who is conscious of grave sin should not celebrate or receive the Body of the Lord without prior sacramental confession, except for grave reason when the possibility of confession is lacking; in this case he will remember that he is bound by the obligation of making an act of perfect contrition, which includes the intention to confess as soon as possible."

"On First Communion of Children," Para 87 states: "The First Communion of children must always be preceded by sacramental confession and absolution. Moreover, First Communion should always be administered by a Priest and never outside the celebration of Mass."

Concerning the reception of communion, the document notes the right of all the faithful to receive it in the mouth or by hand. In this latter case, notes Para 92, "in areas where the Bishops' Conference with the 'recognitio' of the Apostolic See has given permission, . 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."

Para 101 states: "In order for Holy Communion under both kinds to be administered to the lay members of Christ's faithful, due consideration should be given to the circumstances, as judged first of all by the diocesan Bishop." Para 104 underscores the prohibition: "The communicant must not be permitted to intinct the host himself in the chalice, nor to receive the intincted host in the hand:"

In Chapter V, "Certain Other Matters Concerning the Eucharist," it is underscored in Para 109 that "It is never lawful for a Priest to celebrate in a temple or sacred place of any non-Christian religion."

Para 112 states "Except in the case of celebrations of the Mass that are scheduled by the ecclesiastical authorities to take place in the language of the people, Priests are always and everywhere permitted to celebrate Mass in Latin."

Regarding the sacred vessels, Para 117 states in part: "Reprobated, therefore, is any practice of using for the celebration of Mass common vessels, or others lacking in quality, or devoid of all artistic merit or which are mere containers, as also other vessels made from glass, earthenware, clay, or other materials that break easily. This norm is to be applied even as regards metals and other materials that easily rust or deteriorate."

On priestly vestments, it says that "the vestment proper to the priest celebrant at Mass, is the chasuble, worn over the alb and stole. Likewise, the Priest, in putting on the chasuble according to the rubrics, is not to omit the stole." Para 142 says: "A faculty is given in the Roman Missal for the Priest concelebrants at Mass other than the principal concelebrant (who should always put on a chasuble of the prescribed color), for a just reason such as a large number of concelebrants or a lack of vestments, to omit the chasuble, using the stole over the alb."

Chapter VI is entitled "The Reservation of the Most Holy Eucharist and Eucharistic Worship Outside Mass." Para 130 states: "The Most Holy Sacrament is to be reserved in a tabernacle in a part of the church that is noble, prominent, readily visible, and adorned in a dignified manner. . It should also be borne in mind that removing or retaining the consecrated species for a sacrilegious purpose or casting them away are graviora delicta, the absolution of which is reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith."

The Instruction recommends "both public and private devotion to the Most Holy Eucharist even outside Mass should be vigorously promoted, for by means of it the faithful give adoration to Christ, truly and really present."

"Extraordinary functions of the Lay Faithful is the title of Chapter VII which recalls in Para 151 that "Only out of true necessity is there to be recourse to the assistance of extraordinary ministers in the celebration of the Liturgy." Para 153 adds. "Furthermore, it is never licit for lay persons to assume the role or the vesture of a Priest or a Deacon or other clothing similar to such vesture."

Para 158 states: "Indeed, the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion may administer Communion only when the Priest and Deacon are lacking, when the Priest is prevented by weakness or advanced age or some other genuine reason, or when the number of faithful coming to Communion is so great that the very celebration of Mass would be unduly prolonged."

In the question of preaching, Para 161 notes that "the homily on account of its importance and its nature is reserved to the Priest or Deacon during Mass." Para 162 adds: "Therefore when it is

difficult to have the celebration of Mass on a Sunday in a parish church or in another community of Christ's faithful, the diocesan Bishop together with his Priests should consider appropriate remedies. Among such solutions will be that other Priests be called upon for this purpose, or that the faithful transfer to a church in a nearby place so as to participate in the Eucharistic mystery there."

In Para 164 we see that "if participation at the celebration of the Eucharist is impossible on account of the absence of a sacred minister or for some other grave cause, then it is the Christian people's right that the diocesan Bishop should provide as far as he is able for some celebration to be held on Sundays for that community under his authority and according to the Church's norms. Sunday celebrations of this specific kind, however, are to be considered altogether extraordinary. (Para 165) It is necessary to avoid any sort of confusion between this type of gathering and the celebration of the Eucharist."

Para 167 underscores that "similarly it is unthinkable on the Lord's Day to substitute for Holy Mass either ecumenical celebrations of the word or services of common prayer with Christians from the Ecclesial Communities or even participation in these communities' liturgical services."

With respect to "Those Who Have Left the Clerical State," they are "prohibited from exercising the power of order. It is therefore not licit for him to celebrate the sacraments under any pretext whatsoever save in the exceptional case set forth by law, nor is it licit for Christ's faithful to have recourse to him for the celebration, since there is no reason which would permit this according to canon 1335."

In Chapter VII, entitled "Remedies," it is recalled in Para 171 that "Among the various abuses there are some which are objectively graviora delicta or otherwise constitute grave matters, as well as others which are nonetheless to be carefully avoided and corrected." Bearing in mind everything that is treated especially in Chapter I of this Instruction, attention should be paid to what follows.

Para 172 says the "'Graviora delicta' against the sanctity of the Most August Sacrifice and Sacrament of the Eucharist are to be handled in accordance with the Norms concerning 'graviora delicta' reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, namely: a) taking away or retaining the consecrated species for sacrilegious ends, or throwing them away; b) the attempted celebration of the liturgical action of the Eucharistic Sacrifice or the simulation of the same; c) the forbidden concelebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice with ministers of Ecclesial Communities that do not have the apostolic succession nor acknowledge the sacramental dignity of priestly Ordination; d) the consecration for sacrilegious ends of one matter without the other in the celebration of the Eucharist or even of both outside the celebration of the Eucharist.

Para 175 underscores that "the things set forth in this Instruction obviously do not encompass all the violations against the Church and its discipline that are defined in the canons, in the liturgical laws and in other norms of the Church for the sake of the teaching of the Magisterium or sound tradition. Where something wrong has been committed, it is to be corrected according to the norm of law."

The Diocesan Bishop, says the document, in Para 177, "Since he must safeguard the unity of the universal Church, the Bishop is bound to promote the discipline common to the entire Church and therefore to insist upon the observance of all ecclesiastical laws. He is to be watchful lest abuses encroach upon ecclesiastical discipline, especially as regards the ministry of the Word, the celebration of the Sacraments and sacramentals, the worship of God and the veneration of the Saints."

Para 179 affirms: "Delicts against the faith as well as graviora delicta committed in the celebration of the Eucharist and the other Sacraments are to be referred without delay to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which 'examines [them] and, if necessary, proceeds to the declaration or imposition of canonical sanctions according to the norm of common or proper law'."

"Any Catholic," says Para 184, "whether Priest or Deacon or lay member of Christ's faithful, has the right to lodge a complaint regarding a liturgical abuse to the diocesan Bishop or the competent Ordinary equivalent to him in law, or to the Apostolic See on account of the primacy of the Roman Pontiff. It is fitting, however, insofar as possible, that the report or complaint be submitted first to the diocesan Bishop. This is naturally to be done in truth and charity."

In concluding, Cardinal Arinze and Archbishop Sorrentino, both of whom signed the document, expressed the hope that by the diligent application of those things that are recalled in this Instruction, human weakness may come to pose less of an obstacle to the action of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, and that with all distortion set aside and every reprobated practice removed, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, "Woman of the Eucharist", the saving presence of Christ in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood may shine brightly upon all people. "Cupidatat The Code of Canon Law is very specific with respect to the requirements for the matter and form of the Eucharistic Sacrament.
