

XII. A Second Look

This is the twelfth in a series of eleven or so articles on the celebration of the Mass.

What we have announced so far...

You will find, below, a collection of all of the announcements made *so far* concerning implementing the *General Instruction* here at St. John's. You will note that we began to phase in several elements from it the month before the First Sunday of Advent, which was the archdiocesan target date for implementation of the GIRM.

We hope to continue this method of catechesis if it is valuable to you.

Announcement for the weekend of November 1st to 2nd, 2003 – Silence

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* calls for several changes in the way we look at the Mass and the ways we 'do' parts of the Mass. ***You may have noticed*** that there are a few more significant moments of silence in the liturgy. Here's why:

The *General Instruction* says that, "The liturgy of the word must be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation." It urges the ministers to avoid haste in the performance of their service and it invites all the faithful to adopt an attitude of contemplative attention, especially at various moments during Mass.

One such place for silence occurs after the 2nd reading during the Liturgy of the Word. We have already begun to observe a 25 second pause there – again, both to avoid haste and to foster an atmosphere of meditation after this reading. But, how are we to do this? What are we to do?

Here's a way to engage the silence: First, listen attentively to the first and second scripture readings. Second, while you are hearing the Word, notice which words or phrases or images stand out for you. Next, be aware of how you respond to what you hear – attraction, confusion, repulsion, or the like. Finally, in the silence after the 2nd reading, bring all these together and simply talk to God about your response.

We hope this reflection will help all of us enter more deeply into the prayer of the Church at liturgy. Thank you.

The liturgy of the word must be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation. For this reason, any sort of haste that hinders recollection must be clearly avoided. During the liturgy of the word, it is also appropriate to include brief periods of silence, accommodated to the assembly gathered together, in which, by the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, the word of God may be grasped by the heart and a response may be prepared through prayer. Such periods of silence may appropriately be observed for example, before the liturgy of the word itself begins, after the first and second reading and after the homily. GIRM 56

Announcement for the weekend of November 8th to 9th, 2003 – the AMBO

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* calls for several changes in the way we look at the Mass and the ways we 'do' parts of the Mass. ***You may have noticed or will notice now*** that we will be making announcements from this side of the sanctuary. Here's why:

The *General Instruction* reminds us that, "The dignity of the word of God requires the church to have a place that is suitable for proclamation of the word and is a natural focal point for the faithful during the liturgy of the word." This 'place' is what the *Instruction* calls the *ambo*, what most of us have called the *lectern* for some years now.

The *General Instruction* identifies the altar and the ambo by saying that, "... in the Mass the table both of God's word and of Christ's Body is laid, from which the faithful may be instructed and refreshed.

Therefore, just as the altar is reserved for the actions and prayers that surround the Eucharist, so too the ambo is reserved for the various proclamations of the Word. So, *all* the scripture readings, the responsorial psalm, and the Easter Proclamation are to be proclaimed from the ambo. And, it may be used also for giving the homily and announcing the intentions of the general intercessions.

To insure that we do in fact honor the Word in our liturgy, we begin now to make all announcements over here, apart from the ambo.

We hope this reflection – as well as this shift in our practice – will help all of us enter more deeply into the prayer of the Church at liturgy. Thank you.

The dignity of the word of God requires the church to have a place that is suitable for proclamation of the word and is a natural focal point for the faithful during the liturgy of the word.

It is appropriate that, normally, this place be a stationary ambo and not simply a movable lectern. In keeping with the design of each church, the ambo must be placed so that the ordained ministers and lectors may be easily seen and heard by the faithful.

The readings, the responsorial psalm, and the Easter Proclamation are proclaimed only from the ambo; it may be used also for giving the homily and announcing the intentions of the general intercessions. The dignity of the ambo requires that only a minister of the word should go up to it.

It is appropriate that, before it is set aside for liturgical use, a new ambo be blessed according to the rite described in the Roman Ritual." GIRM 309

Announcement for the weekend of November 29th to 30th, 2003 – Bowing

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* calls for several changes in the way we look at the Mass and the ways we 'do' parts of the Mass. **You may recall this announcement from two weeks ago:** that more people may be bowing at the moment of receiving Communion. Here's why:

The *General Instruction* recognizes that people do, in fact, pray using bodily postures and that the use of those postures both add to the beauty of the celebration and encourage a more active participation of the whole worshiping body.

It says, "A bow is a sign of reverence and honor offered to the persons themselves or to the things that signify them. There are two kinds of bows, a bow of the head and a bow of the body."

The bishops of the United States have determined that the act of reverence to be employed by the faithful when receiving Communion is a simple bow of the head. The *General Instruction* asks all who receive Communion to use this simple gesture of reverence.

Number 160 tells us that, "*When receiving Holy Communion standing, the communicant bows his or her head before the sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives the Body of the Lord from the minister...*" This applies also to all of us who receive from the cup.

So, when receiving Communion, please step up to the minister, hold out your hand, answer "Amen" to the brief proclamation, and bow as the minister places the host in your hand. (*Repeat* for clarity's sake.)

"The external actions, movements, and posture of the priest, the deacon, and the ministers, as well as of the people ought to draw things together in such a way that the entire celebration shines with beauty and noble simplicity, that the true and full meaning of the different parts of the celebration is perceived, and that the participation of all is encouraged" GIRM 42

Announcement for the weekend of November 22nd to 23rd, 2003 – Book of Gospels

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* calls for several changes in the way we look at the Mass and the ways we 'do' parts of the Mass. **You may have noticed** that a large red book has been placed upon the altar at the conclusion of the entrance procession. Here's why:

The *General Instruction* invites us to attend to the presence of Christ in the Word, especially in the Gospel as it is proclaimed. The *Instruction* says, "*When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself is speaking to his people, and Christ, present in his own word, is proclaiming the Gospel.*"

Christ proclaims the Gospel through the words of the minister. That is why various other signs of reverence and respect are shown to the gospel book: incensing it, kissing it, and showing it to the people.

"*The reading of the Gospel is the high point of the liturgy of the word. The Liturgy itself teaches the great reverence to be shown to it, setting it off from the other readings by special marks of honor.*"

So, at the conclusion of the entrance procession, the lector places the Gospel book on the altar. This action points to the unity between Word and Eucharist, between ambo and altar. We are nourished by the Word. We are instructed by the Sacrament.

During the singing of the Alleluia, the presider raises the book slightly during a brief procession to the ambo, lifts it high for us to acknowledge, and invites us, through the dialogue, to open our hearts to Christ speaking in the Word.

For discussion/reflection:

- What did you learn new from these announcements? What did you find helpful here? What did you find challenging?

What is the Church trying to get at – what deeper or greater good does it seek – from these directives?

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