



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF GREEN BAY

P.O. Box 23825 • Green Bay, WI 54305-3825 • 920-272-8194 • FAX 920-435-1330

January 25, 2018

Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, Apostle

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,


The Eucharistic sacrifice is the "source and summit of the Christian life" (*Lumen Gentium*, 11). It is the foundation for living a life as a disciple of Jesus Christ in which we are nourished at the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist and formed to live lives which proclaim the Good News to all the world.

Pope Paul VI recommended that priests "worthily and devoutly offer Mass each day in order that both they and the rest of the faithful may enjoy the benefits that flow so richly from the sacrifice of the cross." Pope John Paul II echoes these words in recalling that the celebration of the Eucharist be the "most important moment of the priest's day, the center of his life."

Yet, in recent years, due to the current reduction in the number of priests available to celebrate Mass on a daily basis for our parish communities, it is not always possible for the faithful to participate in a local celebration of Mass on a daily basis. In these situations during the week, the Church provides the *Rite for Distributing Holy Communion Outside Mass with the Celebration of the Word* for the faithful to both continue to be nourished by the Word and to receive Holy Communion when unable to participate in holy sacrifice of the Mass.

I am therefore pleased to approve the following updated *Diocesan Policy Concerning the Rite for Distributing Holy Communion Outside Mass with the Celebration of the Word*, replacing the 2000 edition of the *Diocesan Policy Concerning Weekday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*, for the Diocese of Green Bay. It is my hope that it will continue to provide guidance for the use of the Rite within our local Church as we continue to be strengthened on our mission as disciples of Jesus. With prayers and blessings, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,


+ Most Rev. David L. Ricken, DD, JCL
Bishop of Green Bay


Chancellor

Diocesan Policy Concerning the Rite for Distributing Holy Communion Outside Mass with the Celebration of the Word

Most Rev. Bishop David L. Ricken, DD, JCL, Bishop of Green Bay
Approved: January 25, 2018
(Previously Promulgated/Revised: June 1995, October 2000)

Introduction

The celebration of Mass is central to the life of the Church and the life of the parish. The Mass in a special way is “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows.” (CSL, 10)

It is especially from the celebration of Mass that the grace of the Spirit is poured out on us. It is in and through the celebration of the Eucharist that the principal works of the Church are accomplished with the greatest effectiveness: the glorification of God and the sanctification of God’s people.

For these reasons the Church urges priests to celebrate Mass daily, even in the absence of a community: “...priests are to celebrate frequently; indeed daily celebration is strongly recommended, since even if the faithful cannot be present, it is the act of Christ and the Church at which priests fulfill their principal function.” (Canon 904) However, when Mass is not celebrated on a weekday at a parish site, it in fact remains “proper that those who are prevented from being present at the community’s celebration should be refreshed with the eucharist.” (*Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*, 14)

To accommodate this desire, the *Rite for Distributing Holy Communion Outside Mass with the Celebration of the Word* [hereafter referred to as “The Rite”] may be used when Mass is not celebrated locally on a given weekday.

The Rite is not the same as the celebration of Mass, where the faithful are ordinarily encouraged to receive Holy Communion. Although it responds to the congregation’s need and desire to worship and to be nourished by the Word of God and the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, it is not the means given us by Jesus Christ in which we can join in his once and for all sacrificial offering of himself in love to the Father.

The purpose of this “Diocesan Policy Concerning the Rite for Distributing Holy Communion Outside Mass with the Celebration of the Word” is to encourage the celebration of daily Mass as much as reasonably possible, to avoid practices which could convey the mistaken notion that the Rite can take the place of Mass on a weekday, and to promote the best possible celebration of the Rite when necessary.

This policy does not refer to the *Distribution of Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound*, *Viaticum*, or *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*.

General Norms

1. Whenever possible, daily Mass should be celebrated in a parish.
2. On a weekday when Mass is regularly celebrated at a parish worship site, it is not appropriate to also schedule the Rite on that day at the parish site.
3. When used, the Rite should never detract from "the celebration of the Eucharist [as] the center of the entire Christian life." Every effort must be undertaken to avoid any confusion between the Rite and the Mass and furthermore should never be seen as an equal choice with participation at Mass. Rather, the Rite should encourage the faithful to be present at and to participate in the celebration of Mass.
4. Whenever possible, the Mass schedule of nearby parishes should be available to parishioners. If a nearby parish is celebrating Mass on a given weekday, serious consideration should be given to encouraging parishioners to participate in that Mass rather than the parish using the Rite. The text and provisions of *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* are also not to be used in these circumstances.
5. The Rite should never be used for the purpose of 'providing a role' for deacons or lay ministers.
6. The Rite is not to be used for gatherings of children, e.g. in school or religious education classes. Rather, the Mass is appropriate for such gatherings. An alternative could be the Liturgy of the Word or Morning Prayer.
7. The text for the Rite is found in *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass* [HCWEOM]. The specialized provisions of *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* are not appropriate for the Rite.

The Minister

8. The pastor or pastoral leader assigns a deacon or a properly prepared lay minister as a leader of prayer for the Rite. Each parish should have more than one properly prepared leader of prayer.
 - a. Lay leaders of prayer are to be selected according to the Diocesan criteria and trained in the Diocesan formation program or its equivalent.
 - b. The Diocese of Green Bay is responsible to present a formation program for lay leaders of prayer recommended by the pastor or pastoral leader.
 - c. The following qualifications and formation are required for a lay leader of prayer in the Diocese of Green Bay:
 - i. they are commissioned as Extraordinary Ministers of Communion in the parish;
 - ii. a Catholic in good standing with the Church who practices the faith and supports the teachings of the Church;

- iii. a person who is interested, capable, and willing to serve as a leader of prayer and is also willing to complete the appropriate courses provided by the Diocese;
 - iv. a person who shows leadership qualities for public prayer and who will generally be accepted and affirmed by the parish leadership and the community.
9. The deacon or lay minister is to wear an alb. The deacon also wears the stole over the alb, without a dalmatic.
 10. The deacon or lay minister should use a chair other than the presidential chair, seated either with the faithful or in a less conspicuous place.

Liturgical Preparations

11. The liturgical year will determine decisions concerning readings, music, environment and color of vesture for deacons.
12. The Scripture readings are to be selected from those designated by the Lectionary for Mass on that day and are to be read from the Lectionary, placed on the ambo. The “Short Form of the Reading of the Word” (HCWEOM., no. 44) should not be utilized in normal circumstances.
13. An intention for an increase of vocations to the priesthood is to be added to the General Intercessions (Universal Prayer).
14. Liturgical ministers are to function in their roles: musicians, readers, servers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, and ministers of hospitality.
15. Since music is integral to all liturgy, it is not to be omitted.
16. The altar, covered with a cloth, is to be used only at Communion time before the distribution of Holy Communion for the placement of the ciborium atop a corporal. There should be two lighted candles.
17. Each parish should make available the following ritual books for the Rite:
 - a. *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass.*
 - b. *Weekday Lectionary*