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“Worship of God in the Holy Mass Unites Us”

14 December 2021

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

*Pax et bonum!* This traditional Christian greeting in Latin can be translated: “Peace and all good!” and was used as early as the 15th Century by the followers of St. Francis of Assisi to express the disposition and hope that they sought to convey to everyone they encountered. They wanted to share that it is the Lord, and the Lord alone, who gives us true and lasting peace. During this Advent Season, we are drawn into prayer and reflection about the hope of our salvation through Christ’s victory over sin and death. And so, we are focused on preparing ourselves to celebrate our Savior’s birth in Bethlehem, something St. Francis also sought to emphasize by giving us and encouraging the use of the Nativity Scene, or Crèche, in our homes and churches. Through our readings at Mass and the prayers of this season of anticipation, we encounter so many reminders that God is with us through Jesus, our Emmanuel. Come, Lord Jesus, and give us your peace!

During these last few months, we have experienced many challenges: a global pandemic; polarizing forces in our society that threaten our communion and solidarity with one another; threats to religious liberty; and a seeming decline in faith and religious practice to name a few. For those without faith, it can seem on the surface that these experiences are fraught with hopelessness and even despair. Yet, in the midst of the brokenness and difficulties of our time, the eternal truth of our Provident God shines through, calling us beyond. As our Holy Father, Pope Francis, relates over and over again, to navigate the stormy waters of this life we are called to a culture of encounter, accompaniment and synodality to reach the safe harbor of a deeply personal relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church.

In this life, there is no greater way to foster this relationship to Christ and the Church than through the gift and mystery of the Most Holy Eucharist and the fruitful celebration of the Mass. Indeed, the Eucharist is at the heart of our relationship with Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. As we read in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (1963) of the Second Vatican Council, the Eucharist is our glimpse of the eternal banquet:

*In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where*

*Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, a minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle; we sing a hymn to the Lord's glory with all the warriors of the heavenly army; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them; we eagerly await the Savior, Our Lord Jesus Christ, until He, our life, shall appear and we too will appear with Him in glory (8).*

Therefore, we are called to celebrate the gift of the Sacrament of the Eucharist in the Mass until Jesus comes again in glory. In doing so, we stand side by side with the angels and the saints in joyful expectation of our Lord's return. Anticipating Jesus' return in glory, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* reminds us of this about our life while here on earth:

*Nevertheless, the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time, it is the font from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper (10).*

Everything that we do as members of Christ's body flows from and back to this our "source and summit" in the Eucharistic celebration. The effects of receiving Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament in our lives are many: including increasing our union with the Lord; forgiving our venial sins; preserving us from grave sins; reinforcing the unity of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ; and enabling our Christian initiation. Finally, in our worship of God at Mass, we are called, equipped and sent to be missionary disciples into the world!

As we journey in our pilgrimage here on earth and carry out our mission to proclaim the good news of the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that mission is rooted in our fruitful participation in Mass, celebrated fully and well. While we are unified in the Catholic Church in our celebration of the Eucharist, we also celebrate the richness of our diversity in the manner in which we celebrate. Did you know that there are several legitimate forms of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the Catholic Church? The Mass which most people are familiar nowadays follows the *Roman Missal* promulgated by St. Paul VI and St. John Paul II after Vatican II, which can be celebrated in the vernacular languages of the world as well as in the official language of the Catholic Church, Ecclesiastical Latin, and which is commonly and often advisably celebrated with the priest facing the people. The liturgical books promulgated by Saints Paul VI and John Paul II, in conformity with the decrees of Vatican Council II, constitute the unique expression of the Roman Rite. There is also the Eucharistic Sacrifice using the *Roman Missal of St. John XXIII of 1962*, which is the Mass prior to Vatican II (only celebrated in Latin, under specific conditions, and with the priest and the people facing in the same direction.) The *Divine Liturgy* is shared by the Eastern Catholic Churches, which is celebrated in their many vernacular languages. Examples of these celebrated in our Archdiocese include those from the Byzantine Catholic Church and Syro-Malabar Catholic Church. Indeed, there are other forms of the Mass within the Latin Rites of the Catholic Church – including the Mass according to the missal of the Order of Preachers, also known as the Dominican Rite, which is very similar to the Mass of the *Roman Missal of St. John XXIII of 1962*. Additionally, there is also the use of *Divine Worship: The Missal* by members of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter. Like a diocese, the Ordinariate is for groups of Anglicans who have become fully Roman Catholic, while retaining

elements of their worship traditions and spiritual heritage in their union with the Catholic Church. Many different forms of the Mass are celebrated in the Archdiocese!

Most recently on July 16, 2021, our Holy Father, Pope Francis issued a new *motu proprio* called *Traditionis custodes* for the universal Church, including our local Church, “in order to promote the concord and unity of the Church.” As part of this unity, the Holy Father has asked that the universal Church embrace and celebrate the fullness of the Mass as contained in the *Missal of Saint Paul VI and Saint John Paul II*.

Building upon the wisdom of the Council Fathers of Vatican II (the bishops in unity with the Holy Father) the *Roman Missal of Saint John XXIII* was revised with “the desires to impart an ever-increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faithful; to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions which are subject to change; to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ; to strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of mankind into the household of the Church” (*Sacrosanctum concilium*, 1).

Having heard the Fathers of Vatican II, Saint Paul VI and Saint John Paul II revised the liturgy and the celebration of Mass to what we now call the *Roman Missal of Saint Paul VI and Saint John Paul II*. Having this unique expression in mind, as well as concern for the unity of the Church and the unity of celebration of Mass, Pope Francis promulgated *Traditiones custodes*, regulating the use of the *Roman Missal of Saint John XXIII*.

Pope Francis issued *Traditiones custodes* in order to heal the division that the use of the *Roman Missal of Saint John XXIII* has sometimes caused in some parts of the universal Church. Thankfully, that is not the case here in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. In my general experience, liturgy in the Archdiocese is celebrated joyfully and with reverence.

In keeping with the instructions of Pope Francis, and having before me “paternal solicitude towards those who in any region adhere to liturgical forms antecedent to the reform willed by the Vatican Council II,” I have entrusted a priest-delegate of the Archdiocese “with these celebrations and with the pastoral care of these groups of the faithful,” and I have described local opportunities for the celebration of the *Roman Missal of Saint John XXIII of 1962* in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis later in this document, which will take effect **17 December 2021**. From that date, it is also my desire that all celebrations of the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Roman Rite in the Archdiocese be according to liturgical books promulgated by Saints Paul VI and John Paul II.

Notably, the Holy Father reminds all of the faithful that all Masses are to be celebrated in a respectful manner and with reverence. Celebrating the Sacred Liturgy fully and well is so critical in strengthening the bonds of unity that we share with God one another. Again, from the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of the Second Vatican Council, we are told that “every liturgical celebration is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree” (7).

In the period just prior to the *Year of the Eucharist* and *XI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops* in 2005, and primarily during the pontificate of Saint John Paul II, there

developed a strong focus on a liturgical principle that would come to be known as the *ars celebrandi*, the art of proper celebration. While not explicitly articulated in those terms, the thought and substance of the *ars celebrandi* is presented and is developed in the Church's teaching from the beginning of the modern liturgical movement *and* in the papal and Conciliar writings prior to the promulgation of *Sacramentum caritatis*, the post synodal apostolic exhortation from 2006 that was the fruit of the Synod on the Eucharist at the end of the Year of the Eucharist. In *Sacramentum caritatis*, the principle is articulated in this way:

*In the course of the Synod, there was frequent insistence on the need to avoid any antithesis between the ars celebrandi, the art of proper celebration, and the full, active and fruitful participation of all the faithful. The primary way to foster the participation of the People of God in the sacred rite is the proper celebration of the rite itself. The ars celebrandi is the best way to ensure their active participation. The ars celebrandi is the fruit of faithful adherence to the liturgical norms in all their richness; indeed, for two thousand years this way of celebrating has sustained the faith life of all believers, called to take part in the celebration as the People of God, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (cf. 1 Pt 2:4-5, 9) (38).*

While recalling the 'baptismal' priesthood of all believers, the right and duty of *all* the faithful which comes from baptism, the document defines the art of proper celebration as "the fruit of faithful adherence" to all that the Tradition provides for instruction and guidance for the celebration of the Liturgy. What is particularly powerful about this passage is that it articulates for the first time an important link: the proper celebration of the rites we have received leads us to fullest participation of all the faithful!

The *ars celebrandi* concerns pursuing excellence in the liturgy in every way. It impacts the manner of our celebration and exhorts us to a deep appreciation of the richness of our heritage. Finally, the art of proper celebration moves beyond just attentively following the instructions for Mass. Rather, it challenges us to seek what is beautiful, profoundly authentic, and that which truly fosters both the communal and individual prayer of the Church and her members.

Recently, Pope Francis' letter accompanying his *motu proprio*, *Traditionis custodes*, addresses the importance of the *ars celebrandi* in liturgical celebrations:

*I am saddened by abuses in the celebration of the liturgy on all sides. In common with Benedict XVI, I deplore the fact that 'in many places the prescriptions of the new Missal are not observed in celebration, but indeed come to be interpreted as an authorization for or even a requirement of creativity, which leads to almost unbearable distortions.'*

In any celebration of the Mass in the archdiocese, I want to encourage all to celebrate the Sacred Liturgy in such a way that conveys the richness of our Catholic heritage, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Here in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, in union with Holy Father and the universal Catholic Church, the following Masses (other than the *unique expression* of Vatican II) are offered at the following places of worship:

The *Divine Liturgy* of the Byzantine Catholic Church

- Saint Athanasius the Great Byzantine Catholic Church, Indianapolis, Indiana

The *Divine Liturgy* of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church

- Saint Pius X Catholic Church, Indianapolis, Indiana

The *Divine Worship* of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter

- Saint Cuthbert of Lindisfarne Catholic Church (at Good Shepherd Catholic Church, Indianapolis, Indiana)

The *Dominican Rite* of the Order of Preachers

- Saint Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington, Indiana
- Saint John the Apostle Catholic Church, Bloomington, Indiana

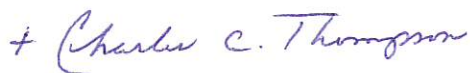
The *Roman Missal of St. John XXII of 1962* (as of 17 December 2021)

- Holy Rosary Catholic Church, Indianapolis, Indiana
- The Oratory of Saints Philomena and Cecilia, Brookville, Indiana
- The Oratory of Our Lady of Providence, Brownstown, Indiana

As you should be aware, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is preparing for what is being called a Eucharistic Revival. Near the end of this ambitious three-year experience, there will be a National Eucharistic Congress hosted here in Indianapolis in 2024. What a great grace for our country as well as our local church here in the Archdiocese! The goal of this initiative is “to renew the Church by enkindling a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.” The Revival will occur in three phases: Year One (2022-2023) focuses on renewal at the diocesan level; Year Two (2023-2024) on renewal at the parish level; and Year Three (2024-2025) on the ongoing revival at all levels nationally (with special attention to the mission to go forth with our faith, especially in the peripheries). A key focus of those assisting with liturgical and devotional aspects of this revival is the promotion of the *ars celebrandi* among the whole Body of Christ in the diversity of its membership. And so, it is my hope that whatever form of the Mass the faithful of our Archdiocesan community are participating in that they do so with reverence and devotion, with a faithful attentiveness to the liturgical norms and guidelines, and with wide open hearts to the presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist at the Holy Mass; and in doing so, may we be united as one as we go forth as missionary disciples in our particular part of the vineyard that is central and southern Indiana.

Humbly asking you to join me in prayer for our unity in the Most Holy Eucharist, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson, D.D., JCL  
Archbishop of Indianapolis