

What Other Changes Can We Expect in Sunday Liturgy?

As a result of the revised General Instruction to the Roman Missal, there will be a few other changes that you may notice in the celebration of Sunday liturgy.

Book of the Gospels – You may notice that the Book of the Gospels will be carried in the entrance procession rather than the Lectionary. It is carried by the deacon or by one of the readers, if no deacon is present. This is really not a change from the 1969 GIRM. The 1969 GIRM was re-introducing a practice that had historical precedent in the seventh and eighth centuries. However, in the 1970's no worthy Books of the Gospels were being published. So parishes substituted the Lectionary which contained all the scripture texts, not just the Gospels. In the last few years however, beautiful and worthy editions of the Book of the Gospels have been published and these are now to be used. The Lectionary is to be placed on the ambo before Mass begins. The Book of the Gospels may be carried in the entrance procession or placed on the altar before Mass begins. (GIRM #117, #120d)

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion – The revised GIRM and the US Norms for Holy Communion under Both Kinds retain the practice of calling upon extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion “when the size of the congregation or the incapacity of the bishop, priest or deacon requires it” (US Norms #28). They may distribute either the Sacred Body or the Precious Blood of the Lord. They may also purify the sacred vessels either immediately after communion or immediately after Mass. (US Indult).

Holy Communion from the Altar, not Tabernacle, during Mass – “The more complete form of participation in the Mass by which the faithful, after the priest’s communion, receive the Lord’s body from the same sacrifice is strongly endorsed” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, CSL #55). This is also supported by the revised GIRM, which states that “it is most desirable that the faithful...receive the Lord’s body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass... so that even by means of the signs, Communion will stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated” (GIRM #85). Only in cases of necessity should the assembly at Mass communicate from the reserved sacrament in the tabernacle.

There are several reasons why the Church reserves the Eucharist outside Mass: for reverent adoration of Christ present in the sacrament, for administration of viaticum to the dying, for communion to the sick and if needed, for communion outside Mass. The reserved sacrament is not intended to be used during the Mass.

Sense of the Sacred – The entire revision of the GIRM calls us to reverence, to develop a deeper sense of the sacred in our communal prayer. Liturgy is a prayer like no other. It is the source and summit of our life as Catholic Christians. So let our words and actions, our prayers and music, our worship spaces and liturgical furnishings and art, be worthy of the profound mystery we celebrate.