



**Letter to the Archdiocese of Ottawa  
on the Implementation of the Third Edition  
of the  
*General Instruction of the Roman Missal***

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

The First Sunday of Advent sees the introduction of a new translation of the Roman Missal for the English-speaking members of the Archdiocese. I am confident that the priests of the Archdiocese have been preparing the faithful on the new prayers and responses contained in the new translation. November 27 is also the date on which a new version of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* comes into effect.

After discussing with priests how to carry out these changes in our liturgical life, I have determined that, in the Archdiocese of Ottawa, we will do this in stages, gradually putting into effect practices that the Universal Church is inviting us to adopt so as to enrich the sacred liturgy as an offering pleasing to God.

I will be writing you several times in the new liturgical year, proposing an ordered implementation of new directives, some of which will come into effect in Advent, others in Lent, still others during Eastertide and at Pentecost.

In the meantime, I encourage priests, religious and the faithful to read and reflect upon the Third Edition of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)*. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* may be found in the new Roman Missal, is available as an offprint from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and may be downloaded from the website of its Liturgy Office [ cf. [www.romanmissal.ca/GIRM.pdf](http://www.romanmissal.ca/GIRM.pdf) ]. Liturgy committees will profit from studying it carefully in order to understand the new norms in context.

On this occasion, I wish to draw your attention to several matters: the *General Instruction's* invitation to unity in the congregation assembled for the Eucharist—including in posture; the call in the *General Instruction* for reflective silence at Mass; the Creed to be recited on Sundays and major feasts; and a change with regard to the lectionary in the entrance procession.

The *General Instruction* offers a wonderful expression of the ideal of unity in the People of God gathered for Eucharistic worship in paragraphs 95–96, which read as follows:

*In the celebration of Mass the faithful form a holy people, a people of God's own possession and a royal priesthood, so that they may give thanks to God and offer the unblemished sacrificial Victim not only by*

*means of the hands of the Priest but also together with him and so that they may learn to offer their very selves. They should, moreover, take care to show this by their deep religious sense and their charity toward brothers and sisters who participate with them in the same celebration. They are consequently to avoid any appearance of singularity or division, keeping in mind that they have only one Father in heaven and that hence are all brothers or sisters one to the other.*

*Moreover, they are to form one body, whether in hearing the Word of God, or in taking part in the prayers and in the singing, or above all by the common offering of the Sacrifice and by participating together at the Lord's table. This unity is beautifully apparent from the gestures and bodily postures observed together by the faithful.*

The ideal, then, is realized in part when the faithful manifest their unity by common postures. The postures to be observed at various parts of the Mass are spelled out in #43; we are familiar with most of these, including the call to kneel for the consecration (which in the Archdiocese of Ottawa means from the end of the *Holy, holy, holy* until the acclamation of faith following the Consecration).

What is new is that, except for kneeling at the Consecration, the *General Instruction* says that the faithful should stand “from the invitation, *Orate, fratres* (*Pray, brethren*) until the end of Mass”. How this is to function in practice will have to be worked out in particular circumstances, as #43 also says that the faithful may sit “if appropriate, during the period of sacred silence after Communion”. Some liturgical experts have suggested that the congregation remain standing until the

last person has received Holy Communion at which point people kneel or sit in reverent prayer. When queried whether people may kneel or sit on returning to their place after receiving Holy Communion as, generally speaking, we have been accustomed to doing, the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship said that the expression of unity should not be so emphasized that people are not free to kneel or sit in prayer after Communion.

The note about silent prayer following Communion is part of a wider call for reflective silence at key points in the Mass: in recollection before the Penitential Act; after the celebrant says, "Let us pray"; following the readings and the homily. The *General Instruction* calls us to reflection and an unhurried pace in order to foster true liturgical devotion (cf. #45 and 56).

The new Roman Missal indicates that the Apostles' Creed, following a long-standing tradition, is appropriate to Lent and Easter. Accordingly, I ask that the Nicene Creed be proclaimed on the other Sundays and holy days of the year when the profession of faith is to be said.

This year our Pastoral Theme—"The Word of God grew and multiplied" Acts 12.24—strives to have us focus on the power of God's Word in our lives. I will speak about this in my next reflection on liturgy in January 2012. The liturgy gives priority to the Gospel and so the description of the entrance procession stresses the Book of the Gospels over the lectionary (cf. GIRM #120 d). Accordingly, the lectionary may no longer be brought in procession but should be placed on the ambo. If a Book of the Gospels is available (the English Sector of the Canadian

Church hopes this will be available in a couple of years), it is carried in procession and placed on the altar until it is brought to the ambo.

Changes in the liturgy, dear brothers and sisters, are demanding as they interrupt habitual practices which have become second nature to us. So, I counsel patience at this time and openness to what the Lord is asking of us for our greater spiritual good in this transition.

When he published Third Edition of the Roman Missal, Blessed Pope John Paul II wished this new book of liturgical prayer to open us to new prayer formulas and to liturgical celebration of newly-canonized saints. He saw it as the ongoing manifestation of the renewal of the Sacred Liturgy desired by the Second Vatican Council.

Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will move us to grow more fully into our dignity as the holy people of God by our embracing these new prayers and modified liturgical practices.

Devotedly yours in Christ,

Terrence Prendergast, S.J.  
Archbishop of Ottawa

On the Solemnity of Christ the King  
November 20, 2011