

DIOCESE OF PEORIA

**"ONE BODY,
ONE SPIRIT
IN CHRIST"**

**A PASTORAL LETTER
ON THE LITURGY**

November 30, 2003

Introduction

1. In its very first document, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Second Vatican Council called for a renewal of the liturgical life of the Church. In response to this call, the Church changed the way the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated. In 1970 the new General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) was promulgated by Pope Paul VI. The changes in the Mass were a dramatic shift from the experience of Catholics as the Mass moved from Latin to English and the style of Mass was simplified. Unfortunately, the people of God were not always well catechized on the reasons for these changes, or well prepared for this transition. During the years that followed, the celebration of the Mass went through many adjustments. Over time, we became more familiar with the *Novus Ordo* Mass that is now offered.

2. In 2002, Pope John Paul II issued a revised General Instruction of the Roman Missal, which has been translated into English and approved this year. This gives us a fresh opportunity to look at the celebration of the Mass again and enter more deeply into the mysteries we celebrate. I hope that we can use the new General Instruction to provide renewed catechesis on the Mass for the clergy and the faithful.

3. Some may believe that the changes in the celebration of the Mass are confusing. Some may even believe that the Church has changed its basic teachings about our worship of God. Furthermore, the changing of translations and gestures, as well as the delays in the approval and publication of liturgical books, may lead some to think that the liturgy is simply an arbitrary matter of taste. But we remain confident that, while there have been changes in style, the worship of the Church and the doctrines of our faith remain unchanged.

4. The celebration of the Mass is not simply a human creation or a product of our personal tastes or sensibilities. The Mass has been given to the Church by Jesus Christ who first celebrated the Eucharist at the Last Supper. The Church is the guardian of the celebration of the Eucharist, and we stand with our fellow Catholics throughout the centuries when we gather at the altar to offer the same sacrifice of praise.

5. We have inherited a rich liturgical tradition that has developed over time as the Church has grown in wisdom and understanding. This tradition continues to be renewed to meet the needs of the Church in every age. We stand in union with the whole Catholic Church and our Holy Father in celebrating the Mass that we have received. The Mass is a life-giving and unbroken tradition of sacramental

celebration that the Church has diligently safeguarded, preserved, and protected for almost two thousand years.

6. The revised General Instruction is a privileged opportunity to fall more deeply in love with the Mass and the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The General Instruction is not a straight jacket that prevents certain practices. Instead, it gives us the "Rules of the Road" for the celebration of Mass. The General Instruction is a guide that points us to the central mysteries that we celebrate.

7. This guide defines the space in which we celebrate the Eucharist. As the General Instruction is studied, we discover that the Church gives us a fair amount of latitude in adapting the Mass to our local parishes and local circumstances. At the same time, it is a guide that helps us to draw all together into a common celebration of God's love. The General Instruction gives us the boundaries and defines our common practices so that we, "who are nourished by [Jesus'] body and blood, may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ" (Eucharistic Prayer III).

Catholic Liturgy: Our Experience of Life in God

8. It is only in Jesus Christ that we can know that God is a Trinity of persons-the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit-living in a communion of life and love. We are God's adopted children, and we are destined for life with Him. Here on earth, we prepare for eternal life in heaven. In God's loving plan, He wants to draw us into this divine life, which we experience in the Church and her sacred sacramental worship. The sacraments are so real that St. Paul tells us that when we are baptized, we die with Christ in the hope of rising with him (cf. Rom 6:4). When we have been claimed by Christ, we become temples of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 6:19).

9. God made each one of us in love and calls us to give ourselves in love. This is what we call holiness. An essential way we get to know and love God is through our prayer. Through our private prayers and our participation in the public prayer of the Mass, we become more holy by responding to the action of God's grace in our lives. The Mass is our opportunity to encounter the Lord Jesus and fall more deeply in love with Him.

10. The truth of the matter is that it takes time to learn to do things well. Anything worth doing is worth the effort it takes to do well. When I was young, Sr. Mary Sharon made us, who wanted to serve, recite over and over the responses that we

were to say in Latin at the Mass. When the day came for us to serve, we were very nervous and it took time to get used to the pace at which our priests would say the prayers. Over time, we improved and became good servers. It took time, practice, and experience to learn to serve well, and this change did not happen overnight. At the Mass, we learned what it means to be Catholic, and we fell in love with what we saw.

11. Similarly, it takes us a lifetime to learn to praise God with our whole heart, mind, body, and soul. We need to practice worshiping God, and the more we practice, the better we get. We worship God in the Mass, and the more we participate in the Mass, the more we learn from God and the more we learn to give ourselves to God.

12. We experience what it means to be Catholic every time we gather for Mass. We share in God's grace as a Church each Sunday as we honor the Lord's Day. This gift of God's grace is so special that we also draw from its fruits at daily Mass. We are extraordinarily blessed to know the love of Christ that we experience in the Eucharist and in the Mass.

13. Whenever we really love something we have been given, we don't try to change the gift, or master it, but we honor and revere it for what it is. The Church is the steward of these sacred mysteries and we marvel in the gift that is given to us. It is not our place to alter or adjust the Mass, but to give thanks to God for the privilege that we have to be called to participate in God's gift of divine life in such an intimate way. For this reason, a priest, and even a bishop, must always be a servant of the liturgy, not presuming to add, remove, or change anything on his own initiative (cf. GIRM, 24).

Reverence: How we show our love for God

14. Of all the changes in the new edition of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, I am impressed by the number of times the document speaks of reverence. Reverence is a word we use to speak of the way we approach the most sacred things in our life. We appreciate the things we like. We show interest in things we enjoy. But we revere the things that are truly holy. If I had to explain the renewal of the Mass in just one sentence, I would ask everyone to show greater reverence for the mysteries we celebrate.

15. We show reverence even before Mass begins by being properly disposed. Proper disposition is a term we use to describe the way in which we prepare for Mass. We

prepare by reviewing the Sunday readings and praying about them before we come to church. We prepare by dressing up, coming to church on time, and praying before Mass for the graces God wishes to give us. We prepare by observing the hour fast before Communion. We prepare by practicing the virtues and treating our neighbor with Christian charity. We also prepare by calling to mind the times we have not been charitable to our neighbor and by asking for forgiveness. We prepare by regularly going to confession and living a life of self-denial.

16. Most of all, we prepare by our daily prayer. We cannot grow in holiness without a regular and habitual life of prayer. When we come to Mass, we bring our own private prayer to church with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Together, we also share in the prayer of the Church in which we each participate. In the public prayer of the Church, the priest offers the perfect prayer of Jesus Christ to the Father along with our private prayers. In this way, we pray that the sacrifice of the individual believer may be united with the sacrifice of the Church and become acceptable to God, the Almighty Father.

17. Reverence means more than just being properly disposed. We participate by lifting up our hands, our hearts, and our minds to God. The Church asks of us "conscious, active, and full participation" so we might enter into these mysteries (GIRM, 18). This participation means that we leave behind the day-to-day world and enter into the heavenly celebration of the Mass. We turn off our cell phones and our distractions and give our full attention to God. We respond when it is time to respond. Sing when it is time to sing. Pray when it is time to pray. We also keep silence when it is time to be silent. By responding, we enter into the liturgy and offer ourselves to God.

18. It may seem strange to describe being silent as a way of participating in the Mass. If silence means daydreaming about what fun things we will do after Mass is over, then we are not participating in the Mass. However, our silent participation is "active and conscious" when we mentally digest the words and actions of the mystery that envelops us. Silent prayer is not just a mental exercise of running the words of the Mass over in our mind. Silence is a way of being present to the actions in the Mass. Silence is necessary to allow the mysteries to soak deeply into our soul. Silence is essential if we are to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking in our hearts.

19. The Church asks us to be silent before Mass so we can prepare ourselves. Even priests and ministers are challenged to be silent in the sacristy as they prepare to offer Mass. We use the moment of silence before the penitential rite to call to mind

our personal sins and seek God's mercy. We use the moment of silence before the opening prayer to collect our thoughts and prepare to enter into the priest's prayer. We use the silence after the readings and the homily to ponder God's word. We use silence after receiving Communion to give thanks and praise to God in our hearts (cf. GIRM, 45).

Assisting at Mass: Serving God with Reverence

20. Reverence is not just for the faithful in the pews. Reverence is of utmost importance for those who serve at the Mass. Our priests and deacons, readers and servers, ushers and extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist are all called to perform their duties reverently. The General Instruction very wisely asks that the Mass be "resplendent with beauty and noble simplicity" (GIRM, 42). This reverence is not so complicated and elaborate that we find ourselves unable to pray. Nor is this reverence so plain and bare that we find our prayer mundane and ordinary. We give God the best that we have to offer with hearts filled with joy. In the end, the work of the liturgy is directed toward the praise of God and fostering a sincere devotion among the faithful.

21. It is important for us to use the best for God. At a family celebration of Thanksgiving, think of all the work behind the scenes to prepare the food, to clean the house, and to welcome the guests. When the meal is served, think how we try to make the best presentation for the family gathered together. We show that our family is important by serving good food and sharing fond memories as we eat together. The meal that is prepared shows the tender love and care we have for one another. The Mass is a spiritual celebration of thanksgiving. We show the importance of the Eucharist by giving our best in the Mass. A clean and polished chalice shows the importance of the Precious Blood. A beautiful and maintained lectionary or Book of the Gospels shows respect for the Word of God. A worthy and attractive vestment or altar cloth shows the importance of the celebration of the Mass. However, when items are not cared for, the subtle message is sent that these things are not very important. Giving God the best means doing the best we can to make the liturgy beautiful and sacred (cf. GIRM, 327).

22. Yet, we should not be satisfied simply with beautiful chalices, books, vestments, and altars. We try to give our very best in everything we do, and that takes practice. It is worth the time for lectors to practice the readings for Mass and to practice projecting their voices so they can be heard clearly and distinctly. It is worth the time for musicians to practice so they can lead the people in song and inspire them by the beauty of their music. It is worth the time for extraordinary ministers of the

Eucharist to be properly trained in their role of distributing Holy Communion and piously caring for the sacred vessels. In addition to the lay ministers, it is also worth the time for deacons and priests to prepare their homilies, reverently perform their duties at Mass, and spiritually enter into the work of the liturgy. Practice means not only performing our part well, but also understanding the role we play and its importance in giving glory to God.

23. The Church gives us many options in the celebration of Mass. We should be familiar with the various rituals that are part of our living heritage and tradition. We should know how to chant the preface dialogue and the Our Father, which are regularly used at solemn occasions throughout the diocese. We should not be afraid to learn the common parts of the Mass in Latin, since these can be used at special times and in multi-lingual gatherings (cf. GIRM, 41). We should also be familiar with the other options at Mass, such as the use of incense, the use of the solemn blessing at the end of Mass, and the procession with the Book of the Gospels, often accompanied by servers holding candles. These options are extra, which means that they are not required for the celebration of the Mass. But these extras should not be altogether avoided. We should use them especially in more solemn liturgical celebrations.

24. By working on the reverent celebration of the Mass, we grow in our love and respect for these mysteries. These elements add to a richer experience of the Mass and can become outward signs of reverence that increase our inner love of God. These outward signs help us to better understand who we are and how great it is to be Catholic.

Sacred Music: Praising God with Full Voice

25. Priests, deacons, readers, and servers should be well prepared to perform their duties in the liturgy. However, special attention should be given to those who provide music at the Mass. There is nothing quite like a good, rousing, Catholic hymn to focus our attention on the wonderful mysteries we celebrate in the Mass. It is hard to imagine Easter Sunday without a joyous, "Jesus Christ is Risen Today," or Christmas Day without singing, "O Come, All Ye Faithful." What Catholic can remain unmoved by "All Glory, Laud and Honor" on Palm Sunday or "For All the Saints" on the celebration of All Saints. At our recent Rosary Congress, I don't think there was a dry eye in the congregation when the people held up their candles and sang, "Ave, Ave Maria," as the image of the Blessed Mother was carried through the Cathedral. During the last thirty years, we have found contemporary hymns that

effectively draw us into the Mass. We have also rediscovered the vast wealth of traditional music that brings our rich musical heritage into our modern celebration. Both contemporary and traditional music can help us to praise Almighty God.

26. Music is an important part of the liturgy and musicians should be challenged to work diligently to make the Mass beautiful and prayerful. The General Instruction speaks frequently of the benefit of music in the Mass, especially in singing the parts of the Mass. It has already been noted that we are encouraged to learn to chant the Latin Mass parts and the Our Father. We are also encouraged to sing the Gloria and the Alleluia.

27. Sacred music is more than just songs that are performed by artists in a church building while Mass is going on. In fact, sacred music is even more than just an important part of the liturgy. Sacred music is intimately at the service of the liturgy. The music we sing can help us to praise God with full voice, or to quietly and calmly meditate on what God has done for us. Music can help us mourn when we are suffering, and celebrate when we are filled with delight. Music gives expression to our longing in Advent, our joy at Christmas, our repentance in Lent, and our exultation at the Easter Resurrection. Singing together brings the entire congregation into one family when the Mass begins, and sends us forth as an army of disciples ready to love and serve the Lord when Mass ends.

28. Because music serves the liturgy, the hymns that are chosen should reflect the season of the year and, when possible, the readings at the Mass. It is desirable that some music be sung by the cantor or choir along with the congregation, such as the opening or closing hymn. It is also permissible for some music to be sung by the cantor or choir alone, such as during the offertory or Communion rites. The words we sing should reflect our belief in our rich Catholic Faith which we hold dear. Music should not be chosen merely to showcase the talents of the performers, but to draw together the congregation in prayer. Sometimes the celebration of the liturgy requires the length of a song be adjusted. For example, at the offertory or the distribution of Communion, it may be necessary to shorten or lengthen the music to complement the sacred actions at the Mass.

Posture: Reverence with our Bodies

29. We use different postures at Mass that correspond to what is happening in the liturgy. The new General Instruction has asked us to change some of the postures at Mass, which may lead us to believe that these changes are simply arbitrary. Rather,

the postures we use at Mass lead us more deeply into prayer. Standing, kneeling, and sitting have special meaning, as do genuflecting and bowing. We give our attention to the readings by sitting and listening carefully. We show our respect for the Gospel by standing. We show our reverence for the consecration of the Eucharist by kneeling. In each way, the posture of our body helps us to focus our mind and heart on the mystery at hand.

30. When it comes to posture, we often think of our individual posture, whether we are standing or sitting. Think for a moment about our common posture. Seeing the entire congregation standing, sitting, or kneeling together is a powerful sign of the unity of the Church. When a room full of people simultaneously gives an actor a standing ovation, it shows that the audience stands united in honoring a great performance. The audience is of one mind in responding the same way. The Church asks the people of God to show that same unity as the Body of Christ by using a common posture (cf. GIRM, 42). We show that the Church is not just a group of individuals each acting independently, but a common family of believers working to attain the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God (cf. Eph 4:13).

31. The General Instruction has reaffirmed the traditional custom of bowing profoundly at the words of the Creed, "By the power of the Holy Spirit, He was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man." In honor of the Incarnation, we are furthermore invited to genuflect at these words during Masses on Christmas and the Annunciation (cf. GIRM, 137). The Church encourages the venerable practice of bowing the head each time the name of Jesus is spoken or heard, and also at the name of Mary or the saint of the day (cf. GIRM, 275). In our contemporary culture, we are painfully aware of how often the name of Jesus is taken in vain, used disrespectfully, or even spoken blasphemously. For this reason, we realize how important it is for Catholics to show reverence for the Holy Name. Pastors, teachers, catechists, and especially parents in their homes should make every effort to promote greater reverence for what is holy. As St. Paul tells us, "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:10-11).

32. There is one change in the General Instruction that is likely to cause some confusion. During the Offertory Rite, the Church asks us to remain seated as the priest invites the people, "Pray, brethren, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the Almighty Father." After the people have been invited by the celebrant to pray, the people stand and say, "May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his Church." It is

customary to stand for prayer. Because the people's response is a prayer, it is appropriate to stand for this prayer after we have been invited by the celebrant (cf. GIRM, 146). Adjusting to this change will take some time.

33. The normal posture during the Eucharistic Prayer is kneeling. However, there are exceptions to the rule. Occasionally, because of an unusually large number of people present or a lack of space, the congregation may be directed to stand, such as at a school Mass in a gymnasium or another similar circumstance (cf. GIRM, 43). For the sake of unity, it is important to follow the directions given at Mass. The priest or deacon may give instructions to the congregation on a particular occasion. While standing is permitted in extraordinary circumstances, it should truly be extraordinary. The faithful should generally be able to kneel at the Eucharistic Prayer. Parishes should make adjustments to allow for kneeling if this is not currently available. The General Instruction gives the local bishop the prerogative to determine the posture after the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God). In the Diocese of Peoria, I want to continue the longstanding custom of kneeling after the Agnus Dei until coming forward for Communion. It should be noted that a person who cannot kneel because of sickness or age is always welcome to remain seated.

34. The custom has become common in some places to hold hands at the Our Father. This practice may continue as the General Instruction does not forbid it or make mention of it. The faithful should be sensitive to those who may not be comfortable with this practice and who do not wish to hold hands. Likewise, care should be taken that the Lord's Prayer lifts us up to contemplate our Heavenly Father, and does not focus solely on our relationship with each other. On the other hand, the faithful are also welcome to use the orans (open hands) posture during the Our Father. Extending the hands is a posture of prayer as we open our hands and our hearts to the action of God's grace in our lives.

35. The Church has also clarified our posture at Communion. As we approach to receive the Eucharist, we remain standing and show a sign of reverence by bowing the head. When the priest or minister holds the host up and says, "The Body of Christ," we respond, "Amen." As we receive Communion, we may extend our tongue to receive the host. Otherwise, we may receive in the hand by holding one hand under the other, receiving the host, and reverently placing the host in our mouth. If we receive from the cup, we similarly make a bow of the head and respond, "Amen," after it is presented. We carefully take the cup that is handed to us, take a small sip of the Precious Blood, and carefully hand the cup back to the minister. It is never appropriate for a person receiving Communion to dip the host

into the cup on one's own. After returning to our pew, we may either sit or kneel as we give thanks to God in our heart for the gift of the Eucharist (cf. GIRM, 43, 160, 161). We are strongly discouraged from leaving the Mass immediately after receiving Communion.

36. A person who is sick should ordinarily refrain from receiving from the cup as a courtesy to the other faithful present, and to prevent the spread of illness. Sacristans and extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist should be sure that vessels are properly purified after Mass, but also regularly cleansed for the health and benefit of all.

37. Those who are not Catholic or who are not properly disposed to receive Communion may receive a blessing. According to local custom, they cross their arms when they approach the priest or minister, and receive a brief blessing. Extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist may not give a priestly blessing, but may offer a simple and short prayer for the person, such as "May God keep you now and for ever."

38. The General Instruction gives us the basic directions for our common way of receiving Communion. Notwithstanding these directions, the moment of receiving the Eucharist is a very intimate and personal encounter with our Creator. The people of God may be accustomed to personal practices of piety in receiving Communion. For example, some make the sign of the cross after receiving Communion. Some are in the habit of receiving the host, stepping to the side and facing the tabernacle or crucifix when consuming the host. The people are permitted to continue those practices so long as they do not interfere with the distribution of Communion or the other communicants who are approaching. As always, singular practices that draw attention to oneself should be avoided. Pastors and all priests should be gentle and patient in explaining the practice of the Church and instructing the consciences of their parishioners.

Communion: The Reverent Distribution of the Body and Blood of Christ

39. The Blessed Sacrament is the source and summit of our faith and the high point of the Sacrifice of the Mass (cf. Lumen Gentium, 11). The General Instruction encourages not only the reverent distribution of the Body of Christ, but even recommends making the Blood of Christ more available to the faithful. Although there are some circumstances when the distribution of both species is not advisable, it is widely encouraged where it is feasible. It is true that a person who receives the host alone, in fact does receive Jesus Christ, body, blood, soul, and divinity.

However, by distributing Communion under both species, "the sign of the eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clear expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord" (GIRM, 281).

40. To assist with the distribution of Communion, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist are often necessary. These ministers are extraordinary and serve only when a suitable number of ordinary ministers (that is, bishops, priests, and deacons) is not available. The General Instruction changes some of the practices of extraordinary ministers and draws a clearer distinction between them and ordained clergy. In particular, extraordinary ministers are not to approach the altar until the priest celebrant has received Communion. They are also to receive the vessels for distributing Communion from the priest celebrant (cf. GIRM, 162). While these changes may slightly prolong the distribution in some parishes, these practices allow both the ordained clergy and the extraordinary ministers to better fulfill the roles that are proper to each of them.

The Cathedral: the Mother Church of the Diocese

41. No one is Catholic in isolation or by oneself. Catholics belong to a parish family in which they worship and pray. That parish family is led by a pastor who is to imitate the example of the Good Shepherd for the flock entrusted to his care. By extension, no parish exists in isolation, but rather is connected to a diocesan church under the care of the local Bishop. The Cathedral contains the cathedra (chair) of the Bishop and has a special place as the Mother Church of a diocese. All Catholics in this diocese are welcome at the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception. All Catholics in this diocese should be at home in our Cathedral.

42. It is often said that a good leader cannot ask of others what he is not willing to do himself. It is important that, first and foremost, the liturgy at St. Mary's Cathedral be renewed in light of the General Instruction and the observations in this letter. St. Mary's Cathedral is a remarkable church and an impressive building with its twin spires rising over the Illinois River in downtown Peoria. It has a rich tradition of beautiful liturgy. I want to protect and improve this important part of our diocesan heritage.

43. First, I will continue to promote the Cathedral's solemn Sunday Mass as an example of excellence in worship. The solemn Sunday Mass should be a place where Catholics can experience the rich liturgical options given to the Church, including incense, candles, bells and processions.

44. This solemn Mass leads to an important distinction: Each parish has the freedom to celebrate Mass in a simple or a more elaborate way, what we could compare to a low and a high Mass. When a parish has several Sunday Masses, some thought should be given to differentiating the style of celebration. It is good for some Masses to be more solemn and others to be simpler or quieter. It is good for some Masses to have more traditional music, and others to use more contemporary music, or even to have little music. These differences are important because different Catholics have different needs. What would serve a group of youth is different from what would serve a more elderly congregation. A later Mass with a children's choir may serve families with children, while a shorter, earlier Mass is needed by the farmers bringing in the harvest. At the Cathedral, it is fitting that we have different styles of liturgy, including a Mass in Spanish to serve those Spanish-speaking Catholics in our community. This variety is good.

45. It is a great joy to have a vibrant Spanish Mass celebrated each Sunday at the Cathedral. I am delighted to see so many of our Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters gathered at Spanish Masses throughout the diocese. They are an important part of the Church, with a culture that is deeply rooted in Catholicism. I will work my best to continue to reach out to this growing community and meet their spiritual needs. The Hispanic culture is a great blessing for our diocese and our country.

46. Second, I will continue to invite the people of this Diocese to come to their Cathedral for special celebrations. We celebrate Mass at the Cathedral for priestly ordination, for couples married 50 years, for religious, for boy scouts, for RCIA candidates, for teachers, for Confirmation, and for the pro-life cause. In particular, the celebration of the Chrism Mass during Holy Week is the diocesan Mass at which the priests renew their vows and the holy oils are consecrated and distributed to the parishes of our diocese. I am astounded by how many people who attend, even those who do not live far away, tell me that they are seeing the beauty of their Cathedral for the first time. I hope that many more people in our diocese discover this beautiful church. And to my brother priests, I extend an invitation to concelebrate at any Mass in the Cathedral. The unity of the presbyterate is most visible when the bishop is joined by his priests around the altar of God.

47. Third, it is important to establish rituals and traditions that are proper to the rhythms of life in any church. In this Cathedral dedicated to the Mother of God, I would like to see the Salve Regina or the Ave Maria be a signature hymn of the Cathedral parish. I would also like to see the Liturgy of the Hours more frequently

celebrated in the Cathedral. These are some of our rich liturgical traditions that I hope to see grow and flourish.

Initiatives: Strengthening our Reverence

48. It will take time to implement the General Instruction in each parish and accomplish the goals indicated in this letter. Several steps have already been taken. Our clergy have recently benefited from our diocesan Assembly Days during which we studied the new General Instruction and discussed its implementation. Our deacons will receive their training and instruction at their gatherings over the next year. All the people of the diocese have benefited from the reflections on the Mass that have recently appeared in the Catholic Post. These articles will be printed as a booklet in order to make their insights more widely available to those who are interested in learning more about the Mass. In particular, these articles may be helpful for those who are preparing to enter the Church at Easter.

49. This effort to continue our implementation of the General Instruction will be assisted by a diocesan Commission on Liturgy, Churches, and Chapels that will offer advice and support. With the help of this Commission, additional materials will be made available to help our servers, lectors, extraordinary ministers and sacristans better understand their roles in the service of the liturgy. Additional resources will also be made available to help priests and deacons who have a special responsibility for the reverent celebration of the liturgy. The Office of Divine Worship will also offer assistance in the liturgical formation of musicians.

50. There are future initiatives that should also be considered. Our diocese conducts a Diocesan Summer Institute that provides continuing education for those who work in catechesis. The Summer Institute will take up some liturgical topics this next year. Our seminarians should also be well trained in the liturgy, and the best training comes from good example and good experience. Our seminary program should always promote good liturgy. As they approach ordination, seminarians should be prepared to take a leadership role as ordained deacons and priests. Our seminarians, indeed all our clergy, should remember that our role is one of service in liturgy. We serve the people of God by helping them enter more prayerfully into the mysteries commemorated at the Mass.

51. A church is a building that is specifically designed to foster prayer and devotion in the celebration of the Mass. The Church on earth is a sign of the Church in heaven (cf. GIRM, 288). Whenever churches or chapels are built or renovated, we must always remember that the church is a house of God and a place where Jesus Christ is

praised and adored. I will also ask the Commission on Liturgy, Churches, and Chapels to offer assistance to any parish that wants to undertake a renovation. This assistance can begin by preparing materials that will help a parish building committee with a project. In this way, a church architectural project can better communicate to the people the truths of the faith. The church will also provide a better environment in which the faithful may be disposed to prayer. The Commission may also offer counsel and advice regarding any liturgical norms and diocesan policies. The Commission will also advise me before I approve the renovation or building of a church or chapel (cf. GIRM, 291).

52. In any renovation, the location of the tabernacle should be carefully considered. It appeared in previous documents that the preference was to establish a separate chapel for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. The revised General Instruction shifts the preference to retaining the tabernacle in the sanctuary (cf. GIRM, 315). While these options are discussed in the General Instruction, it is important to consider the impact of the location of the tabernacle on the people of God. I am concerned that, when the majority of the faithful do not see the tabernacle, they become more and more removed from the experience of reverence that we should show the reserved Blessed Sacrament. I personally believe that quiet prayer before the Blessed Sacrament is one of our great consolations, knowing that we can always go before Jesus with our prayers and concerns. This is a privilege that should not be taken from those who do not take the extra time to specifically visit a Blessed Sacrament chapel either before or after Mass. The General Instruction says that the tabernacle should be "truly noble, prominent, readily visible, beautifully decorated and suitable for prayer" (GIRM, 314). This description is a good mark of the reverence we show to the reserved Blessed Sacrament, and a fundamental standard to be applied to any proposed church construction or renovation.

The Fruits of our Renewal

53. By working together to improve the celebration of the Mass, the reverence for the Eucharist and the respect for the liturgical mysteries, we will grow in holiness and our love of God. I hope to see other positive benefits from this work. I hope that Eucharistic Adoration, and even Perpetual Adoration, will become more frequent; that parishes will grow in devotional prayers such as the rosary, the stations of the cross, and other prayers; that the public celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours may be more frequent for the benefit of the lay faithful as well as the clergy and religious.

54. But even beyond the celebration of the Mass, the Eucharist strengthens every

part of our life of faith. We are led to enter more deeply into the other sacraments, especially the regular celebration of the Sacrament of Penance. In receiving Communion, we become more aware of the needs of our brothers and sisters around us. We grow in charity and our concern for the poor. We are challenged to really practice our faith in our daily lives. We are also challenged to share our faith with those around us.

55. Through this renewal of faith, I hope to see other changes throughout this diocese. I hope to see Catholics take their faith more seriously. I hope to see school children become more interested and involved in the Mass. I hope to see more converts to the faith on the part of those who see our reverence in our celebration of the liturgy. I hope to see more young men and women inspired to consider a vocation to priesthood or religious life. But most of all, I hope to see all of our priests, religious, and laity be built up in charity. As we are united around the table of the Lord, I hope to see a family of believers that has become one Body, one Spirit in Christ.

Given at my Chancery this 30th day of November, 2003, The First Sunday of Advent.

+ Daniel R. Jenky C.S.C.

Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C. Bishop of Peoria