

SHEPHERDS AFTER MY OWN HEART
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LITURGICAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
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These questions were asked by priests at the on-going formation course during the five sessions in 2007.

SESSION ONE: JANUARY 2007

Question one

Please treat the topic „when is the correct time to hear confessions of those to be received into the Catholic Church especially if I am alone in the parish on the Lord's Day.

The ideal would be that a person who has entered into full communion with the Catholic Church receives all the sacraments of Christian initiation. For a person who already received a valid baptism what would be remaining after instruction and acceptance of Catholic doctrine would be the reception of confirmation and communion. An adult with personal sins committed after baptism would also need the reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation before communion. Following a strict logical order, it is only after a person has publicly made the profession of the faith and has been received in the community, that he or she can receive the Church's sacraments. This would mean that within the Mass in which the person is accepted into the Catholic Church, the priest would lead the convert to the confessional after which he can receive communion.

However, in the situation of the questioner this does not seem practical. Apart from the time involved, it is awkward and bad liturgy for the priest celebrant to leave the altar and go to administer the sacrament of Reconciliation while

the rest of the congregation is kept waiting. The penitent who is new to the faith might not feel at ease to confess at length, knowing that other people are kept waiting. The priest too might feel the need to rush for the same reasons. Besides, even though we know that we are all sinners, it is embarrassing for the new comer to be the centre of attention in an entire church as one who is confessing his or her sins. Charity as well as necessity alone would suggest that the sacrament of reconciliation is administered prior to the official admission into the Catholic community. In fact, since the law of love is the first commandment, the Church in this case permits reception of reconciliation prior to baptism. In the rite of *Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church* it is stated:

If the profession of faith and reception take place within Mass, the candidate, according to his or her own conscience, should make a confession of sins beforehand, first informing the confessor that he or she is about to be received into full communion. Any confessor who is lawfully approved may hear the candidate's confession.¹

For a priest who is alone in a parish, the solution then is to find a time that does not interfere with the pastoral duties, preferably prior to the actual day of reception into the Catholic Church.

Question two

¹ Cf. The Rites of the Catholic Church, *Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church*, no. 482.

Some people sing Alleluia on St. Joseph's feast day (19th March) when it is celebrated in Lent. Also Alleluia [is sung] on Final Commendation when the body is being lowered into the grave. Why?

To answer briefly, it is alright to sing *Alleluia* on the solemnity of St. Joseph when celebrated in Lent.

First of all we need to know when the *Alleluia* is to be sung and why. Then we need to know when it is not sung.

According to the General Instruction to the Roman Missal, the *Alleluia* is sung during all seasons except Lent.² In the Liturgy of the Word it is used as an acclamation to welcome the gospel. Within Lent not only is it not sung at the Gospel Acclamation, but also avoided in any other song which contains the word "*Alleluia*".

One can find an extensive exposition of the meaning of the word *Alleluia* in any average biblical dictionary. But besides its depth of meaning in the bible it has also undergone a long and complicated history in the course of the Church's liturgy. In this booklet suffice it to mention a few details that are necessary for a more knowledgeable appreciation of the term in the context of liturgical celebration.

The word *Alleluia* comes from the Hebrew "*hallelû*" (imperative for "hillel", to praise) and "Jah", abbreviation for "Jahvè," God. Thus, the word literally means "praise God!"

In the liturgy it is used in a number of ways. It is used as an antiphon or it is attached to antiphons in responsories and

² GIRM, 37a.

in acclamations, such as the Gospel Acclamation. It is an expression of joy and praise to God for what he has done and what he does. It is placed appropriately before the proclamation of the gospel, that is, the good news of our salvation. The Easter season is the season of the *Alleluia*, when we celebrate and praise God for his Son's victory over death that gave us the hope of salvation that we had lost.

“*Alleluia*” is one of those words that have been accepted throughout Christian history without actual translation. It is accepted and its meaning understood from one language to another. In the first centuries of Christianity, when Greek was the official language of the Church, the word was transliterated from Hebrew to Greek, by simply knocking off the first “H”. It was retained even when the liturgical language in the West became Latin, substituting Greek. Today it is accepted as it is (without translation) in the major languages as well as the less widely spoken languages in which the liturgy is celebrated. The phenomenon of borrowing words from one language and using them as they are in another tongue is not restricted to the liturgy. In practically all cultures there is a tendency of borrowing terms and transliterating them into the receiving language without actual translation. In English, French words like “Restaurant,” “Rapprochement,” “Rendezvous,” “liaison,” are understood as they are. The word “boss” is also accepted in many modern languages other than English. People understand when one uses such Italian words like “ciao!” “pizza,” “Madonna.” Swahili words like “safari,” “Jambo” are also gaining international usage.

The liturgical history of the word '*Alleluia*' is rather misty. But its use in the Eucharistic liturgy is generally traced back to Pope Damasus (368-384), who acted at the recommendation of St. Jerome based on the practice of the Church in Jerusalem. The *Alleluia* was later restricted to the Easter season in the 5th century. Then St. Gregory the Great (c 540-604) extended it to the entire liturgical year with the exception of the Lenten season. In time the Acclamation was enriched with verses from scripture that gave a reason for the praise of God.

To come back to the question, is it appropriate to sing it on the feast of St. Joseph when it falls in Lent? Yes, it is. Celebrations change rank when they happen to occur in a major seasons like Lent, Easter or Advent. They become feasts if they were solemnities. They become memorias if they were feasts. And they become optional if they were obligatory memorias. When these feasts fall on a Sunday, they are shifted to the nearest convenient date if they are major. Otherwise, they are suppressed for that year. But if a feast is important enough to retain the status of a solemnity even in Lent, then the Lenten mood for that day is suspended. The colors are of the feast, so are the readings. It is then appropriate to sing the *Alleluia* as well. Once the Church decides that a feast should be celebrated, then it should be celebrated appropriately. This is not restricted to feasts and solemnities in the universal calendar alone, but also of the particular Church that have received the approval of the universal Church. If the celebration of the Uganda Martyrs which is a memorial in the universal calendar and a solemnity in the local Church in Uganda had

been located around March (time for Lent) it would be celebrated with Alleluia as well, in spite of the Lenten season.

Question three

Can Psalms take the place of readings during Mass?

No, Psalms cannot replace readings. Readings are the word of God to us. That is why at the end of a reading the reader tells us: “This is the word of the Lord.” Psalms on the other hand, although part of the inspired word, are for the greater part songs of praise, lamenting, petition, supplication, etc. of God by human beings, (even though some of them represent God addressing his people). In other words, for the greater part in the Psalms it is people speaking to God, not the other way round. That is why Psalms constitute a suitable response to the word of God in the form of the responsorial psalm. It would be false to say at the end of psalm: “this is the word of God.”

Example: If a well-intentioned couple preparation for Marriage or a funeral or some other function suggested to you as a priest that they would like to have Psalm 23: “The Lord is my Shepherd” as their first reading, you can gently explain to them to allow God speak to them with a reading conveying the same message, so that they can respond with their favorite Psalm, either as recited or sung. You might suggest to them the text of Ezekiel:

11 "For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeks out his

flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³ And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the fountains, and in all the inhabited places of the country. ¹⁴ I will feed them with good pasture, and upon the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on fat pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. ¹⁶ I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will watch over; I will feed them in justice. (Ezekiel 34:11-16)

After such a reading it makes perfect sense, (I am sure even to a couple who had in mind Psalm 23 as a reading) to have the psalm as a response. Just read it to see what I mean:

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want;

² he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters;

³ he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

⁵ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever. (Psalms 23)

We have an abundance of scripture in which God addresses us, that we need not use Psalms to serve that purpose. As a matter of fact not all the inspired scriptures are used in the present three cycles for Sunday and feast days, as well as two cycles for weekday readings.

The present arrangement of the lectionary does not provide psalms as readings for Mass.

However, Catholic liturgy has been arranged in such a way that we can exploit the Psalms exhaustively as Christian prayer. While during Mass the Psalms are very much edited to form a response to the reading, we have the Liturgy of the Hours where Psalms form the bulk of the prayer. There the Psalms are celebrated in a more comprehensive way. As if that is not enough we again encounter them in the office of readings. A person who celebrates the liturgy of the Hours actually goes practically through all the Psalms apart from a few cursing Psalms which have been left out of Christian prayer in order to avoid exegetical complexity.

As an experiment listen to the first reading next time you celebrate Mass and the responsorial psalm that follows it. Try to see the link between the two, and to appreciate how the psalm is indeed a response of the assembly to the word of God just heard, using the inspired words of other human beings that composed the psalms.

SESSION TWO: MARCH 2007

1. “Is the *Alleluia* hymn when the coffin is being placed into the grave sung during Lent?”

The actual hymn sung at the lowering of the coffin into the grave is the *Benedictus*, with *Alleluia* as a refrain.

The question as to whether or not the *Alleluia* should be sung at burial came in the previous booklet (January 2007). Possibly the questioner read the answer given and is not quite satisfied. As a matter of fact, if he did, he has a right not to be satisfied. I reread the answer myself and found that the question was not adequately answered. In that booklet it was a double question regarding the singing of *Alleluia* on the solemnity of St. Joseph as well as during funerals in Lent. The former was answered, the latter not fully.

You can choose a different song or a suitable prayer to replace the *Benedictus*, or you can sing the *Benedictus* without the *Alleluia*. This is not blind improvisation. It is making up for the deficiency owed to the poverty of our vernacular translations from the typical editions that keep the bare essentials and leave out the many alternatives given in the typical editions. This they do in good faith: to economize on costs, or to make the work of translation manageable where you have a shortage of experts, or to place in one

concise liturgical manual all that a pastor needs for the different pastoral situations.

Here is an example: The *Ganda* speaking dioceses use “*Ekitabo Kyómukristu*” as a concise liturgy manual. It is a very useful book for the usual prayers, as a Missal, as a lectionary for Sundays and feast days, and for the administration of sacraments and some sacramentals including funerals. Obviously, to have all that contained in one book requires that you abbreviate the rites as much as possible. In the *Ekitabo Kyómukristu* only five pages are dedicated to funeral rites. Different language groups may have funeral rituals which are not much bigger in content. In contrast, the *Order of Christian Funerals* (which is a translation of the original Latin typical edition made by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy and approved for use in the dioceses of England, Wales and Scotland) has 437 pages. You can see how many details are left out in our funeral ritual. There is a little bigger ritual in the form of a booklet, entitled “*Emikolo gyéklesia mu Kufirwa*” published for Kampala Archdiocese. This too is an abbreviation.

The point being made is that the singing of the *Benedictus* with *Alleluia* as a refrain is one among many alternatives given at the lowering of the body into the grave. The abbreviated rituals did not include the other possible alternatives, and a pastor may wonder how to adapt the singing of the *Alleluia* during Lent. The easiest thing to do

is to choose a different alternative.³ But even where you do have an abbreviated ritual you can choose a different suitable song to accompany the lowering of the coffin. The important thing to remember is that the singing of the *Benedictus* was intended to express our hope in the resurrection which we share with the deceased. It also serves as a form of giving courage to the bereaving close relatives and friends, particularly at this moment when the separation by death is felt more vividly. While some may be wailing with despair, those who can must support them with a song of hope.

As a *nota bene*, every priest is advised to equip himself with some basic rituals that are either typical editions (for those who can read Latin) or more comprehensive translations of the typical editions in English. This broadens a pastor's view, giving him a certain liturgical liberty, without however, encouraging misguided and harmful experimentation.

³ As a matter of fact, the ritual does not suggest any particular song to be sung at this moment. For the cultures for which this translation was made and approved, the lowering of the coffin takes a short time since it is not accompanied with the burial by those around. For that reason a prayer before or during the lowering is sufficient to cover the action. In our present circumstances too, where cemented graves are replacing traditional burials, the singing of the *Alleluia* can also assume a role that was not its own at the beginning. It was a song accompanying an action – namely, pouring soil into the grave – not a liturgical action in itself.

REGARDING “AND TO YOU MY BROTHERS
AND SISTERS”

2. *“When confessing – ‘I confess to the almighty God, and to you my brothers and sisters...’ is it not necessary to mention ‘sisters’ even when they are not physically present?”*

First of all, I must point out that I am not aware of any official teaching on this matter. If one comes across one that contradicts what I am about to say, then that official teaching holds.

There are two positions opinions regarding the mention of “brothers and sisters” in the Confiteor. The first position takes into account the fact that Mass is a prayer that is effective not just for the small gathered assembly, but for the entire Church, and indeed the whole world. Therefore, even if all are not here present, all are addressed.

The second position does not deny the universal efficacy of the Mass, but asserts that to confess to those present alone does not make the Mass less effective for the whole world.

There are several moments in the celebration of the Mass that encompass the whole world. For instance in the intercessions we usually pray first for the needs of the whole Church, then those of the civil world, for those suffering in one way or another, for the local community and for the dead. This clearly shows how Mass benefits everyone. Similarly, in the Eucharistic Prayer the words of consecration bring out how Christ’s sacrifice was offered to benefit all: “this is my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant, which will be poured out for you *and*

for all (men), so that sins may be forgiven...” Or again in the intercessions of the Eucharistic prayer we pray for the pope, the clergy, for all the faithful, for the departed, etc. These are but a few examples that show how Mass benefits all. For instance, consider the following words in the 3rd Eucharistic Prayer:

May he make us an everlasting gift to you and enable us to share in the inheritance of your saints, with Mary, the virgin Mother of God...Lord, may this sacrifice, which has made our peace with you, advance the peace and salvation of all the world.

At the same time the universal effects of the Mass do not overlook the fact that Mass is celebrated by a specific group of individuals located in time and space. Again there are aspects of the Mass that bring out this truth. When the word of God is proclaimed and explained, its immediate benefit is to those who hear it. Others can benefit only indirectly, that is, if we who are present, by living by the word we have heard, can transmit God’s goodness to them. It is not Catholic practice to use mega loudspeakers with the purpose of preaching also to those who are not part of the gathered assembly, like many other churches do. When on large gatherings such speakers are used, it is for the benefit of the gathered assembly not for outsiders, even though we know that the word of God is meant for all. Again, having prayed for peace in the world, the celebrant or deacon invites the present community to wish each other a sign of peace. That is for us here present. We do not have to make a farce by gesticulating in the air, wishing peace to those who are not present.

In the same way, in the prayer “I Confess” we acknowledge our weakness first of all to almighty God, from whom we can never hide, and who alone in his mercy and love has the power to forgive sins. We confess to those present who in a way represent all who are not present and whom our sins harmed in one way or another. These here present can hear us; those who are not here cannot. Therefore it makes no sense to confess to those that are absent. We ask the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, all angels and saints, because we know that even though we cannot see or hear them, they see and hear us, and they love us and do indeed intercede for us, especially when we ask them to. We ask the intercession of those present because they too can hear us. Moreover, even though their love may not be perfect, at least we have acknowledged together that we are all sinful, so in that common malady we acknowledge we need each other’s assistance. We do not ask for the intercession of those living human beings who are not here with us; they cannot hear and heed the plea. Those present represent them.

If you agree with this way of looking at the prayer, then you must also agree that it makes sense to look around and note whom you are addressing, and choose the appropriate manner of address. It can be “and to you my brothers and sisters”, in a normal celebration comprising males and females; or it can be “and to you my brothers” where all celebrating are males, or “and to you my brother and sisters” where a community or group of females is celebrating Mass officiated by one priest, or “to you my brothers and sister” where there is one female. Outside of

Mass the phrase can also be “and to you my sisters” where a community or group of females have a service or some prayer function that includes the “Confiteor”.

Following the same rationale, in a private Mass celebrated by a priest alone, it makes no sense to mention the phrase at all: “I confess... to you my brothers and sisters” when these are not around. In fact, some parts of the Mass that address the assembly should be left out in a private Mass.⁴ You can sit and reflect on the readings, but not preach a homily, even though you know Mass has universal value. Do not wish yourself peace by shaking the left hand with the right, or tell the pews to lift up their hearts.

WHAT IS THE APPROPRIATE PENANCE TO GIVE?

3. *“What type of Penance should one give a penitent during or after confession, especially during Christmas or Easter? Is it just “Our Father” three times or “Hail Mary” two times?”*

In the present rite of Penance, the nature of the satisfaction given after confession is left to the judgment and discretion of the confessor. There is no prescribed form of penance as was the case sometime in the past, when the Church had what is called “Tariff Penance.” Experts in liturgical law worked out very elaborately the appropriate penance for

⁴ “Mass should not be celebrated without a minister or at least one of the faithful, except for a just and reasonable cause. In this case, the greetings, the introductory or explanatory remarks (*monitiones*), and the blessing at the end of Mass are omitted.” *General Instruction to the Roman Missal* of the year 2002, no. 254.

the different sins, much in the same way as the Legislature or whoever is responsible, works out the different sentences for the different offences. We must not quickly judge this form of penance that has existed in the course of the Church, without fully understanding the circumstances in which it developed and was employed. However, the fact is that this method is no longer in operation.

Having said that, we need to point out to the questioner that there are guidelines the liturgy gives to the Confessor to help him choose an appropriate penance. The first thing to bear in mind is the purpose of giving penance or satisfaction.

1) Penance is not a punishment that cancels or pays for the sin committed. We cannot remove our sins, only God can by forgiving us. Only Jesus Christ paid for the damage of our sins, and he gives his forgiveness freely. If you think that asking someone to say three Our Fathers or two Hail Marias is too little, think of the example of Jesus Christ. To the woman caught in adultery whose prescribed punishment according to Mosaic Law was death by stoning he said: “neither do I condemn you, go and do not sin anymore.” Her penance was not to sin anymore. That in a way is far too little compared to what the Jews wanted her to have; but in another way it is easier to die than to stop sinning any more. Many of us know that by experience. Scripture does not tell us what happened to her afterwards; whether she never sinned again. But even if she sinned again and came to Jesus, we know that he would forgive her again, as he does to us. Think of the “good” thief. For

all his crimes Jesus answered him, “today you will be with me in paradise.” He did not promise him a century in purgatory after his lifetime of crime. He did not even require a week’s penance from him. Make the penitent realize that God’s forgiveness is free.

2) At the same time asking a penitent to do penance has its value. Many sins wrong our neighbour. One must do what is possible in order to repair the harm (e.g., return stolen goods, restore the reputation of someone slandered, pay compensation for injuries). Simple justice requires as much. But sin also injures and weakens the sinner himself, as well as his relationships with God and neighbour. Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused. Raised up from sin, the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for the sin: he must ‘make satisfaction for’ or ‘expiate’ the damage caused by sin. This satisfaction is also called ‘penance’. Think of sin as a serious physical ailment that has been treated. Even after a cure, the body must be helped to regain health.

The *penance* the confessor imposes must take into account the penitent’s personal situation and must seek his spiritual good. It must correspond as far as possible to the gravity and nature of the sins committed. It can consist of prayer, (Our Father, Hail Mary, Magnificat, a Psalm, meditation on a particular scriptural text, spontaneous prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, etc.), an offering, works of mercy, service of neighbour, voluntary self-denial, sacrifices, and above all, the penitent’s acceptance of the cross in his or

her life. Such penance helps configure us to Christ, who alone expiated our sins once for all.⁵

It is your responsibility as a confessor to judge what appropriate penance to give. Some penitents might feel cheated if given a penance that is too light. Some might feel overwhelmed by a penance that is too difficult for them to execute. Make your judgement, but if you make a mistake, let it be on the side of mercy rather than of hardness. In the confessional you are in the shoes of the Father who is compared to a shepherd who rejoiced over his lost sheep, or to a father who rejoiced over his prodigal son that returned.

You mention the seasons of Christmas or Easter. I am not sure what you have in mind, mentioning these seasons. Sin is sin, regardless of in which season it is committed. But in your counselling or choice of penance you can certainly draw the penitent's attention to the particular liturgical season. One of the strategies in the art of healing souls is to draw the attention of the sinner from self to God's mercy; from morbid remorse to genuine repentance. In the Christmas season our sins are ultimately a lack of appreciation of God's love that prompted him to send his Son to assume our nature that we may share in his divinity. In the Easter season our sins draw us away from the full appreciation of the joy of our salvation, assured by the Lord's resurrection after submitting to death. You can find a way of bringing the particular season into play in the course of giving penance.

⁵ Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1459-1460.

ORIGIN, MEANING AND FREQUENCY OF LITURGICAL PROCESSIONS

4) *“The aspect of Liturgical Processions: How did they come about? When in Mass should they be placed? How many processions are permitted in one Mass?”*

Meaning and types

The term “liturgical procession” simply defined, is a liturgical assembly on the move. There are so many types of liturgical processions, each with its rules. People going on a pilgrimage can walk in a liturgical procession. On Corpus Christi and on Palm Sunday or the feast of Presentation of the Lord we make liturgical processions. These are processions that involve the whole worshipping assembly. We also have processions of particular members of the worshipping assembly. The main celebrant, concelebrants and servers make a simple liturgical procession of entrance and exit to the liturgical act. We are familiar with marriage processions as well as processions at ordinations. On solemn occasions they may make the procession more elaborate with a procession cross, candles, incense etc. Within Mass people who bring gifts walk in procession. Again those who are to communicate make a communion procession. Particularly in African culture, but not exclusively, we have procession dances which may be located at the beginning of Mass, before all the readings or before the gospel, at the Presentation of Gifts, and at thanksgiving.

I have the impression that the one who asked this question had a specific liturgical procession in mind. He is free to make his question more specific.

Origin

Each type of procession has its own origin and history. The entrance and exit procession by the celebrant and ministers for instance was not part of the original celebrations of apostolic times. During the earliest celebrations of the Eucharist there was not much solemnity with regard to how to begin. People gathered for the Eucharist and the presider began; as simple as that. In the second volume of the Divine Office, the second reading of the Office of Readings of Sunday, third week of Easter, taken from the “first apology of St. Justin Martyr in defense of the Christians” has a beautiful summary of the Eucharist of the patristic period. We notice, among other things, that there was no entrance procession at the beginning of celebration. Having clarified the Christian understanding of the Eucharist in contradistinction from ordinary food, St Justin goes on to explain its structure in these terms:

...On Sundays there is an assembly of all who live in towns or in the country, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read for as long as time allows. Then the reading is brought to an end, and the president delivers an address in which he admonishes and encourages us to imitate in our own lives the beautiful lessons we have heard read. Then we all stand up together and pray. When we have finished the prayer, as I have said, bread and wine and water are brought up; the president offers prayers and thanksgiving as best he can, and the people say ‘Amen’ as an

expression of their agreement. Then follows the distribution of the food over which the prayer of thanksgiving has been recited; all present receive some of it, and the deacons carry some to those who are absent. Those who are well provided for, if they wish to do so, contribute what each thinks fits; this is collected and left with the president, so that he can help the orphans and the widows and the sick, and all who are in need for any other reason, such as prisoners and visitors from abroad; in short he provides for all who are in want...”⁶

As time went on and the celebration became a regular feature of worship, also a customary manner developed. Bigger occasions called for correspondingly greater solemnity. This is most likely to have happened in the fourth century after the peace granted by the Emperor Constantine, when the Church expanded in numbers and had the liberty to celebrate with pomp.

The procession dance, which to some might seem to be a much later development, may in actual fact be a lot earlier. We read about David dancing before the Ark of the Covenant carried in procession:

“...David and all the House of Israel danced before Yahweh with all their might, singing to the accompaniment of lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets, and cymbals... and David danced whirling round before Yahweh with all his might, wearing a linen loincloth round him. Thus David and all the House of Israel brought up the ark of Yahweh with acclaim and the sound of the horn. Now as the ark of Yahweh entered the Citadel of David, Michal the daughter of Saul was watching from the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before Yahweh; and she despised him in her heart... as

⁶ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, chap. 67.

David was coming back to bless his household Michal, the daughter of Saul, went to meet him. 'What a fine reputation the king of Israel has won himself today,' she said 'displaying himself under the eyes of his servant-maids, as any buffoon might display himself.' David answered Michal, 'I was dancing for Yahweh, not for them. As Yahweh lives, who chose me in preference to your father and his whole House to make me leader of Israel, Yahweh's people, I shall dance before Yahweh and demean myself even more. In your eyes I may be base, but by the maids you speak of I shall be held in honour' (2 Samuel 6:1ff).

Meaning

We see from the dialogue between King David and his wife Michal, that already from Old Testament times, there were divided opinions about the appropriateness of dance within the liturgy. Even today there are those who consider dance as something that should be left out of the liturgy; an action that is mundane and unspiritual; that tends towards the sensual. Some would tolerate it as long as it does not involve those who officiate, much as Michal might have tolerated it if it had been confined to the maids and had not included the king. There are others who feel that dance is a genuine expression of joy and gratitude before the Creator. One's attitude on liturgical dance is largely shaped by cultural background. However, the bottom line is whether or not dance helps the particular congregation to pray better. The directive given in the Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy applies also to procession dance:

...among some peoples, song is instinctively linked with handclapping, rhythmic corporeal movements and even

dance. Such are external forms of interior sentiment and are part of popular traditions, especially on occasions such as patronal feasts. Clearly, such should be genuine expressions of communal prayer and not merely theatrical spectacles. The fact of their prevalence in one area, however, should not be regarded as a reason for their promotion in other areas, especially where they would not be spontaneous.⁷

Particularly in African liturgies, the procession dance is one of the great achievements of inculturation. When well prepared it is an excellent expression of the people's joy in worship. But like all things that go in the liturgy, the procession dance should be very well prepared. While it is an expression of joy before the Lord, it must retain the soberness of worship.

Employment of young children in procession dances is particularly attractive because of their beautiful innocence. The Lord who so often wanted that little children come to him would surely be pleased when these little ones are made to precede the worshipping community. Their dance may not be as elaborate as that of adults, but when well prepared children are willing to learn. A choir dress, if affordable adds to the beauty of the procession. The procession dance should also not take a time that is disproportionately longer than what is normal for the entrance.

⁷ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of Sacraments, *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines*, Catholic Truth Society, 2002, no. 17.

Frequency

Where it is customary to have procession dances they can be located at different moments in the liturgy: during the entrance rite, preparation of gifts, post communion and at the end of Mass. However, one needn't have three procession dances within the same Mass. Personally, I feel that one procession dance that is well prepared is sufficient at any one occasion. I have seen liturgies where the number of procession dances have proved a distraction rather than a help to worship.

Things to Avoid during the Procession

It is important to realize that with the beginning of the procession prayer has commenced. Especially on solemn occasions that gather a large number of priests, it is not uncommon to see the priests talking to each other on mundane matters during a procession, even while the entrance song is being sung. Others may be seen greeting acquaintances among those outside the procession, waving to people they know or just wandering about with their eyes. Certainly one need not exaggerate or affect solemnity. If people one knows try hard to capture one's attention one should respond kindly, perhaps with a little smile of recognition and greeting. However, those who walk in procession ought to make an effort to compose themselves for prayer, and to join in the singing of the entrance procession hymn if they can. That way they set an example for the rest of the congregation so that they too compose themselves for prayer.

SESSION THREE JUNE 2007

1. Is it possible for an unbaptised adult to receive the sacrament of Penance before receiving Baptism and First Holy Communion?

It is possible but not necessary. The sacrament of Baptism removes original sin, as well as any other sin committed before its reception. Baptism is the sacrament that constitutes children of God and members of the Church, so it is the first sacrament to be received. All other sacraments are administered to members of the Church, therefore, to people who are already baptized. This should be clearly explained to the baptismal candidate.

An adult entering the Church might benefit with some kind of counselling in order to see how best to overcome weaknesses in his or her life, in the same way as counselling is sometimes given in the context of the sacrament of Reconciliation. That can be given before Baptism and First Holy Communion, but not as a form of sacrament.

2. Why don't we place the cross on the altar here when saying Mass?

We don't place a cross at the altar because we do already have a cross behind the altar. A duplication or multiplication of religious symbols is not necessary. The purpose of a cross at the altar is to remind us of the sacrifice and suffering the Lord underwent to give us this

sacrament of his love. We do not need two crucifixes to be reminded of that.

Normally in a Church there is a crucifix hanging in a prominent place either above or behind the altar. This is sufficient. When Mass is celebrated outside a church building, or within a Church that for some reason lacks a cross placed in a prominent place for all to see, then it is necessary to have a cross at the altar or on the side of the altar.

However, when there has been a procession preceded by a cross, usually that cross is placed in an honorable position, say on the side of the altar, even where you have a big cross behind.

3. What is the right liturgical posture for the praying of the "Our Father?"

It is better perhaps to talk of the customary rather than the "right" liturgical posture for the Our Father. Gestures and postures are necessitated by our being limitations as human being, with a spiritual and material nature. We want to communicate to the divine who is pure spirit, but we can only do so as we are. In other words, we compose ourselves and reflect on what we are doing (spiritual nature) and we use movements of our bodies to accompany our sentiments (physical nature). The outside signs are conditioned by our cultural background.

To use an example from the secular world, many cultures shake their heads to indicate negation and nod them to indicate assent or approval. Indians shake their heads to

indicate approval. What matters is the inner sentiment and the fact that the gesture is understood within the context of the culture in which it is applied.

The customary and widely used gesture for the Our Father is the opening of the hands and raising them slightly in front. It is a favorite gesture of petitionary prayer, and the Our Father is one of these. Normally, the main celebrant who prays on behalf of the congregation uses this gesture in the presidential prayers, (that is prayers specific to him as president). However, at the Our Father he invites each and every one to pray directly and confidently to the heavenly Father as Jesus Christ taught us. So at this moment it makes sense that everyone can use the gesture of petition to the Father.

There are many cultures where the gesture is left to the main celebrant and perhaps the concelebrants. As already said, this is also acceptable, as long as it is customary in these cultures.

For the sake of unity in worship the General Introduction to the Roman Missal makes a minimum of prescription of the more widely acceptable gestures, and leaves others to the discretion of individual Episcopal Conferences or groups of Episcopal Conferences. With regard to the gesture accompanying the Our Father the General Instruction speaks only about the celebrant. This does not mean that it forbids or allows the congregation to use the same gesture. Here is what it says.

The priest invites the people to pray, and all should say this prayer with him. The invitation is made with joined hands, while the actual praying is done with outstretched hands.⁸

Elevation of the hands has always been used by the celebrant, for instance during the presidential prayers and at principal consecratory actions. However, traditionally it was not a gesture exclusive to the main celebrant. Rather it was used by the entire congregation in the early Church. This is attested to in the ancient liturgical texts and from iconography. The gesture was also widely used at Jewish worship.⁹

4. This year the feast of the Uganda Martyrs (3rd June) coincided with the solemnity of the Holy Trinity. The Church in Uganda celebrated Martyrs' Day instead of Trinity Sunday. Why?

The celebration of the Uganda Martyrs is indicated as a memorial in the Universal Calendar, but it is celebrated as a solemnity in Uganda. It is normal practice throughout the

⁸ *General Instruction 2002*, no. 152.

⁹ *Exodus 9:29* Moses said to [Pharaoh], "As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will stretch out my hands to the LORD; the thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the Lord's. *Exodus 17: 9-12*, Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; so his hands were steady until the sun set. *Psalms 28:2*, Hear the voice of my supplication, as I cry to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary. *Isaiah 1:15*, when you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. *Lamentations 3:41*, Let us lift up our hearts as well as our hands to God in heaven.

Catholic Church for regions to celebrate as solemnities particular saints of special importance to them, who otherwise in the General Calendar are commemorated as memorials or even optional memorials. Another example is the feast of St. Patrick which in Ireland is celebrated as a solemnity whereas in the rest of the world it is a memorial. St. Patrick evangelized this nation and is of special importance to the nationals.

When such a local solemnity coincides with a more important solemnity in the universal calendar, then the local Church (the Episcopal Conference) has the prerogative to make a decision which celebration to suppress or shift, guided by the pastoral good of the people. If they have a particular calendar published, such decisions are foreseen and permission for them is sought from and granted by the Congregation for Divine Worship in Rome.

You probably recall that a few years ago again the celebration of the Uganda Martyrs coincided with the solemnity of Pentecost. Many pilgrims who came had in mind a single idea, namely the Uganda Martyrs. But it is not difficult to show them that the Uganda Martyrs attained to their victory solely through the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

5. Here at the institute we have to set time aside for a singing practice in preparation for daily and Sunday liturgy, if we are to have a vivid and lively praise of the Lord.

I agree with the statement. Every good liturgy has to be prepared well, and this includes singing. Even though we may not all be gifted in singing, our singing could greatly improve if we practiced before.

However, like in many other matters the staff of St. Augustine's institute is keenly aware that the participants are mature priests. For that reason maximum room is given to personal initiative. The participants are free to discuss the possibility of setting aside time for practice for singing. Past groups have proposed to themselves such devotional practices like the Way of the Cross during Lent and the celebration of the Rosary. When a decision of that kind is decided upon by the group, the institution administration gives whatever necessary assistance is required. What is avoided is giving people the impression that they are back to the seminary, which is not the case.

6. Both the staff and participant priests should be allocated time in the rota to act as main celebrants during the celebration of the Eucharist. This will enhance a better spirit of unity and a sense of family in the praise and service of the Lord of the Lord.

The staff has in fact been indicated time for the celebration as main celebrants during the last week of the course, aside from the fact that the inaugural Mass was celebrated by one of them. This is normal practice of the institute.

SESSION FOUR: SEPTEMBER 2007

1. *Why is it that gestures performed during Mass differ from place to place, and why are they not uniform in the same way they are for Moslems? Gestures like standing, kneeling or sitting. What should be done when?*

I don't know about Moslem gestures and I do not know whether they use exactly the same gestures throughout their liturgy. But even if they did, we have no obligation to imitate them. We do things because we believe them to be right. For instance, we no longer use the same language for the liturgy even when it is not understood, as the Moslems do.

The Church is both universal and local, and the same applies to its liturgy. This means that there are essential elements that are the same everywhere. In the less essential elements there is room for local variation or inculturation. Wherever one goes for instance, one finds that the words of Consecration are the same. For this is an essential element. Or again one finds that the general plan of the readings throughout the liturgical year is the same in the entire Catholic Church, even though there are provisions for choosing other readings to suit local needs. The basic principle that governs the adaptation of the liturgy is stated in the document on the Sacred Liturgy: "The Liturgy is made up of unchangeable elements divinely instituted, and of elements subject to change. These latter not only may be changed but ought to be changed with the passage of time, if they have suffered from the intrusion of anything out of

harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy or have become less suitable.” (SC, 21).

Gestures and postures are some of the elements that can be varied without doing harm to the universality of the Church. There are those prescribed for the entire Church. Below are some regulations of movements and postures in the liturgy found in the General Instruction to the Roman Missal. I underline the texts to pay attention to in answer to your question. At the same time I place my own comments in italics where appropriate.

Movements and Posture

42. *This number explains the general value and meaning of movements and postures.* The gestures and posture of the priest, the deacon, and the ministers, as well as those of the people, ought to contribute to making the entire celebration resplendent with beauty and noble simplicity, so that the true and full meaning of the different parts of the celebration is evident and that the participation of all is fostered.⁵² Therefore, attention should be paid to what is determined by this General Instruction and the traditional practice of the Roman Rite and to what serves the common spiritual good of the People of God, rather than private inclination or arbitrary choice.

A common posture, to be observed by all participants, is a sign of the unity of the members of the Christian community gathered for the Sacred

Liturgy: it both expresses and fosters the intention and spiritual attitude of the participants. (*Note here that the unity emphasized is that of the gathered community and not the universal Church. Note also that exceptions can always be made. For instance one with a bad knee can sit even when the rest are standing or kneeling*).

43. The faithful should stand from the beginning of the Entrance chant, or while the priest approaches the altar, until the end of the Collect; for the *Alleluia* chant before the Gospel; while the Gospel itself is proclaimed; during the Profession of Faith and the Prayer of the Faithful; from the invitation, *Orate, fratres (Pray, brethren)*, before the prayer over the offerings until the end of Mass, except at the places indicated below.

They should, however, sit while the readings before the Gospel and the responsorial Psalm are proclaimed and for the homily and while the Preparation of the Gifts at the Offertory is taking place; and, as circumstances allow, they may sit or kneel while the period of sacred silence after Communion is observed.

Different regions can prescribe a common gesture and ask for permission to have it endorsed by the Universal Church as the US Episcopal Conference has done:

In the dioceses of the United States of America, they should kneel beginning after the singing or recitation of the *Sanctus* until after the *Amen* of the

Eucharistic Prayer, except when prevented on occasion by reasons of health, lack of space, the large number of people present, or some other good reason. Those who do not kneel ought to make a profound bow when the priest genuflects after the consecration. The faithful kneel after the Agnus Dei unless the Diocesan Bishop determines otherwise.⁵³

With a view to a uniformity in gestures and postures during one and the same celebration, the faithful should follow the directions which the deacon, lay minister, or priest gives according to whatever is indicated in the Missal.

2. *Where should the crucifix placed at the altar face during the celebration of Mass?*

The crucifix should face the people not the priest. In the main Church the crucifix faces the congregation. There it is not necessary to have another crucifix at the altar. Outside the main Church where there is no crucifix in the sanctuary we then use one at the altar. It faces the people as usual. The crucifix is a reminder to the congregation of the sacrifice Jesus offered for our redemption which is reenacted at the altar. In the same way as the main celebrant blesses the people without including himself in the blessing he makes the crucifix face the people not himself. Blessing the people with the words “the Lord be with you” instead of “the Lord be with us” does not mean that he has no need of God’s blessing. In the same way it is

as if he does not need a visual reminder of Christ's sacrifice.

The liturgical crucifix is not primarily for the private devotion of the celebrant but is a sign in the midst of the Eucharistic assembly proclaiming that the Mass is the same Sacrifice as Calvary. In the Tridentine Missal, at various moments during the celebration of the Mass, the priest was required to look at the crucifix. In the present Missal that is no longer required. For that reason it should face the people and not the main celebrant. Especially for Masses celebrated outside the main church, the cross should not be laid on the altar "on its back" for then the people do not see it. It should be made to stand. One needs to acquire a crucifix that either has a stand or can be fixed to one. Modern Mass kits usually have that provision.

3. *A parish is heavily populated with Catholic Charismatic Renewal pastoral movements whose practice is the imposition of the hands over people when praying; which is proper to the ordained ministers. What must I do?*

You must do nothing to stop them! The imposition of the hands by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal does not make the imposition of the hands by the ordained minister any less important. From the earliest times of the Church, or even before in Jewish liturgies, the gesture of imposition of hands was not exclusive to ordained ministers. The Catholic Charismatic Movement is an authentic movement within the Church through which God is doing a wonderful job among his people. It has renewed so many people in the faith. It has prevented many others to go off

to inauthentic movements outside the Church that have a similar style. If we are friends of the bridegroom we should only rejoice if the bridegroom is winning more friends. We shouldn't fight those through whom he is doing it just because they do things differently from us.

Like all good things of course even the members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal are subject to error and need guidance. This guidance must be given by competent pastors, but always in a spirit of love and understanding, and not of rivalry and antagonism. To fight the Renewal is not to fight for Christ as many think. It is the opposite. First of all before making any rash judgment it is important to seek to understand the Movement from within. Take time to read good literature either written by members of the Renewal or by the Church as guideline with regard to the movement. Seek to talk to those knowledgeable about the Movement. There are usually willing to talk to whoever is seeking to understand. Try to appreciate all the good the Movement is doing. Then you can also be in position to judge their mistakes without prejudice.

Be aware of the fact that God knows how different we are and he calls us according to our temperaments. Some would prefer a devotion to Our Lord, others would prefer that of the Charismatic. Some are contemplative and would want to be secluded in prayer; others are missionary. The beauty of the Catholic Church, unlike many other Christian denominations is its unity in diversity. When a member of one denomination disagrees with others he or she starts

another Church! Not so with the Catholic Church. Learn to accept the diversity in a spirit of love.

4. *I have never read the diocesan policy on the sacrament of Reconciliation. A penitent comes confessing having committed several abortions (five times). In principle the priest (confessor) has to seek permission from the bishop for absolution. What should I do to the penitent?*

The general principle is that if you must make a mistake make it on the side of mercy not of judgment. If you do not know whether or not your bishop has given a general permission to all priests with the faculty to confess also to absolve those who have committed abortion, give absolution. It is excusable for you to err once. But you have the obligation to find out afterwards so that you do not fall under the same mistake again.

It is important to know that women who have committed abortion often are very much weighed down by conscience due to the gravity of their sin. Some cannot forgive themselves even after they have received absolution. Without making light of their sin, do not add to the burden of their guilt, if you can help it. Even where the sin of abortion is still reserved to the bishop or to a canon penitentiary, help the sinner as much as you can, possibly by counselling. Help them meet the desired confessor where it is difficult for them to do so on their own.

5. *Some priests (especially those belonging to the renewal ministry) use oils to anoint people as they pray for them. These are some of the cases I have witnessed: 1) Praying for*

candidates, 2) Before a journey, 3) Deliverance. Which oils are used, and is this permissible?

When oil is used in such cases it is used as matter for a sacramental, not a sacrament. It is the duty of pastors to help people understand the difference. For instance, lay people cannot give the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, but there is nothing that forbids them to pray for the sick and to help them with appropriate sacramentals. However, there must not be pretence to the administration of a sacrament.

Fr. Mubiru Patrick, a member of the Charismatic Renewal who made his doctoral theses on the Movement wrote: “There is in the Roman Ritual a blessing of olive oil (or other vegetable oil) called the Oil of Gladness, which is a special sacramental and which lay persons can use for healing and other suitable purposes. Such a practice, however, would be an opportunity for lay people to exercise the ministry of healing by virtue of their baptism and confirmation. This could be done when they visit and pray for the sick at home, in prayer meetings, Small Christian Communities and hospitals.”¹⁰ Note that the blessing referred to is not the blessing of oils for sacraments (oil of catechumens, oil for the sick, and sacred chrism) made during Chrism Mass. That is contained in the Missal, in the respective rituals and in the Ceremonial of Bishops.

¹⁰ Mubiru Patrick, *Mission and Healing Ministry: A Missiological Approach to the Christian Healing Ministry in Africa*, (doctoral dissertation), Rome 2003. p. 284.

In the Book of Blessings one finds an “Order for the Blessing of Food or Drink or other Elements Connected with Devotions.” Among the items that can be blessed is enlisted oil. In the introduction to this blessing the ritual points out that “In such a celebration parish priests (pastors) are to ensure that the faithful have a correct understanding of the true meaning of the blessing.”¹¹ The readings prescribed for the blessing of oils include Sir 39:30-40 in which it is written: “Good things were created from the beginning for good men... the prime needs of mankind for living are water and fire, iron and salt, wheat-flower, milk and honey, the juice of the grape, oil and clothing...” The suggested gospel texts include Luke 10:30-37 in which the Good Samaritan dressed the wounds of a man who fell in the hands of brigands where the Priest and Levite passed by. The prayer of blessing as a sacrament is placed side by side with the prayer of blessing of oils for use in the sacrament of anointing for the sick.

¹¹ No. 1781.

Blessing of oil for the sacramental	Blessing of oil for the sacrament
<p><i>God of compassion, mercy and love, in the midst of the pain and suffering of the world your Son came among us to heal our infirmities and soothe our wounds. May all who use this oil... be blessed with health of mind and body. We ask this through Christ our Lord.</i></p>	<p><i>Lord God, loving Father, you bring healing to the sick through your Son Jesus Christ. Hear us as we pray to you in faith, and send the Holy Spirit, man's Helper and Friend, upon this oil, which nature has provided to serve the needs of men. May your blessing come upon all who are anointed with this oil, that they may be freed from pain and illness and made well again in body, mind, and soul. Father, may this oil be blessed for our use in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...</i></p>

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SESSION FIVE: OCTOBER 2007

1) Should the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick be administered even to the faithful who have only a simple headache or flue?

Any member of the faithful who, having reached the age of reason begins to be in danger of death by reason of sickness or old age is eligible for the sacrament.¹² This sickness is not just a simple sickness that is only

¹² Can. 1004.

scrupulously judged as serious. On the other hand those who are in a serious condition should not be neglected. If necessary and possible a doctor's advice may be consulted.

The sacrament may also be given if one recovers from a sickness in which he was anointed and falls sick again by the same sickness,¹³ or if the same sickness becomes worse. It is given before one undergoes a dangerous surgery. It is also conferred to the elderly people who are notably weak, as well as to people who have lost reason but could have asked for the sacrament while in their full senses.¹⁴ It is given to people in comma who could have asked for the sacrament in their senses.¹⁵ Finally it is given to people about who it is doubtful whether: a) they have reached the age of reason or not, b) they are dangerously ill or not and c) they are dead or not.

The sacrament may not be given to those who persist in a manifestly grave sin.¹⁶ Nor may it be given to those who are not seriously sick.¹⁷ Those who have died may not

¹³ Can. 1004 §2. For further information on the frequency of anointing cf. "Sick, Anointing of, Frequency of" in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Theology*, p. 1161f.

¹⁴ PSC, 14.

¹⁵ Can. 1005.

¹⁶ (can 1007) The anointing of the sick is not to be conferred upon those who obstinately persist in a manifestly grave sin.

¹⁷ PCS 99 states: "The priest should ensure that the abuse of delaying the reception of the sacrament does not occur, and that the celebration takes place while the sick person is capable of active participation. However, the intent of the Conciliar reform (Constitution on the Liturgy, art. 73) that those needing the sacrament should seek it at the beginning of a serious illness should not be used to anoint those who are not proper subjects for the sacrament. The

receive the sacrament either. Another form of prayers is offered for those who have just expired.¹⁸

The faithful should be catechised to ask for the sacrament as soon as the right time comes, as well as to participate in its celebration.

2) This year the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception falls on a Sunday. Can one substitute the Sunday readings with those of the Immaculate Conception given that the parish is celebrating its parish day?

In the first place, according to the Ordo of 2007-2008, this year the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception falls on a Saturday and not on a Sunday.

However, the question can still be asked, that for a parish dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, would it be permissible to replace the Sunday readings under the circumstances described? The answer is yes.

sacrament of the anointing of the sick should be celebrated only when a Christian's health is seriously impaired by sickness or old age." Article 73 of SC referred to above states: "extreme unction," which may also and more fittingly be called "anointing of the Sick", is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. Hence, as soon as anyone of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the fitting time for him to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived." PCS, 108 further adds: "...if the Ordinary decides that many people are to be anointed in the same celebration, either he or his delegate should ensure that all disciplinary norms concerning anointing are observed, as well as the norms for pastoral preparation and liturgical celebration. In particular, the practice of indiscriminately anointing numbers of people on these occasions simply because they are ill or have reached an advanced age is to be avoided. Only those whose health is seriously impaired by sickness or old age are proper subjects for the sacrament."

¹⁸ PCS, 15.

Even though Sunday is the celebration of the Lord's resurrection, the highest even in the liturgical year, Sundays of the year do give way to solemnities or to the feasts of the Lord, especially if these happen to be patron feast days of a particular Church. For a comprehensive answer to similar doubts regarding which celebration takes precedence a table is given below, that is taken from the *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar*. When two celebrations fall on the same day the one that appears first in this table takes precedence.

Table 1: Liturgical Days According to their Order of Precedence¹⁹

Group I
Easter Triduum of the Lord's Passion and resurrection
Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension and Pentecost
Ash Wednesday
Weekdays of Holy Week from Monday to Thursday inclusive
Days within the octave of Easter
Solemnities of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary and saints listed in the General Calendar
All souls
Proper solemnities namely:

¹⁹ GNLY, 59, cf. *Ordo*, p. 5.

solemnity of the principal patron of the place, that is, the city or state
solemnity of the dedication of a particular church and anniversary
solemnity of the title of a particular church
solemnity of the title, or of the founder, or of the principal patron of a religious
order

Group II

Feasts of the Lord in the General Calendar

Sundays of Christmas season and Sundays in Ordinary Time

Feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the saints in the General Calendar

Proper feasts, namely:

feast of the principal patron of a diocese

feast of the anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral

feast of the principal patron of region or province, or a country, or of a wider
territory.

Feasts of the title, founder, or principal patron of an order of a religious
province

Other feasts proper to an individual church

Other feasts listed in the calendar of a diocese or of a religious order or
congregation

Weekdays of Advent from 17 December to 24 December inclusive

Days within the octave of Christmas

Weekdays of Lent

Group III

Obligatory memorials in the General Calendar

Proper obligatory memorials, namely:

memorials of a secondary patron of the place, diocese region, province, congregation, etc.

obligatory memorials listed in the calendar of a diocese, or of an order or congregation

Optional memorials; but these may be celebrated even on the days listed in no. 9 in a special way²⁰

In the same manner obligatory memorials become optional if they fall in the Lenten weekdays.

Weekdays of Advent up to 16 December inclusive

Weekdays of the Christmas season from 2 January until the Saturday after Epiphany

Weekdays of Easter season: Monday after Easter Octave to Saturday before Pentecost inclusive

Weekdays in Ordinary Time.

²⁰ See GIRM and GILH...

The following are the rules for applying the information in the above table: if more than one celebration falls on the same day, then the one of the higher or highest rank takes precedence. Other celebrations are omitted that year, if they are not solemnities. Impeded solemnities are transferred to the nearest day that is not listed in numbers 1-8.

If a celebration falls on a Sunday, the rule (according to no. 5 of the General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar) is that Sunday gives way only to solemnities or feasts of the Lord.²¹ Sundays of Advent, Lent and Easter do not give way to any other celebration. Feasts which are not of the Lord, as well as other celebrations that are lower in rank to feasts, if impeded are not celebrated that year.

If the same day were to call for celebration of evening prayer of that day's office and evening prayer I of the following day, evening prayer of the day with the higher

²¹ It is very important to note in this statement the role of the conjunction "or". Ordinary Sunday gives way to all solemnities, whether they are of the Lord or not. Secondly it gives way to feasts *of the Lord*, and not to any other feasts. Thus "of the Lord" must not be understood to apply to solemnities as well. This makes meaning if looking at the table we observe that Sunday ranks no. 6 after all solemnities and after the feasts of the Lord.

rank in the Table of Liturgical Days takes precedence; in cases of equal rank, evening prayer of the actual day takes precedence.²²

3) *Which parts of the Rite of Mass are to be said only by the presider and not even by the concelebrants, let alone by the assembly?*

In a concelebrated Mass, the only parts exclusive to the celebrant are the orations (The Collect, the Prayer over the Gifts and the Concluding Prayer) as well as the prayers said in silence, (e.g. after the presentation of gifts or before communion). For further clarification on Presidential Prayers read these numbers from the *General Instruction to the Roman Missal* of 2002.

30. Among the parts assigned to the priest, the foremost is the Eucharistic Prayer, which is the high point of the entire celebration. Next are the orations: that is to say, the collect, the prayer over the offerings, and the prayer after Communion. These prayers are addressed to God in the name of the entire holy people and all present, by the priest who presides over the assembly in the person of Christ.⁴³ It is with good reason, therefore, that they are called the "presidential prayers."

31. It is also up to the priest, in the exercise of his office of presiding over the gathered assembly, to offer certain explanations that are foreseen in the rite itself. Where it is indicated in the rubrics, the celebrant is permitted to adapt them somewhat in order that they respond to the understanding of those participating. However, he should

²² GNLY, 61.

always take care to keep to the sense of the text given in the Missal and to express them succinctly. The presiding priest is also to direct the word of God and to impart the final blessing. In addition, he may give the faithful a very brief introduction to the Mass of the day (after the initial Greeting and before the Act of Penitence), to the Liturgy of the Word (before the readings), and to the Eucharistic Prayer (before the Preface), though never during the Eucharistic Prayer itself; he may also make concluding comments to the entire sacred action before the dismissal.

32. The nature of the "presidential" texts demands that they be spoken in a loud and clear voice and that everyone listen with attention.⁴⁴ Thus, while the priest is speaking these texts, there should be no other prayers or singing, and the organ or other musical instruments should be silent.

33. The priest, in fact, as the one who presides, prays in the name of the Church and of the assembled community; but at times he prays only in his own name, asking that he may exercise his ministry with greater attention and devotion. Prayers of this kind, which occur before the reading of the Gospel, at the Preparation of the Gifts, and also before and after the Communion of the priest, are said quietly.

As to the parts taken by the concelebrants you have only to follow the rubrics within the missal.

4) *Why is it that in many dioceses and parishes priests don't sign themselves at reciting the Angelus at the time it is said "And the Word was made flesh..."*

I think it is because they don't consider it so terribly important. Gestures are basically outside expressions of inner sentiment. They can be made without the sentiment, and then they are empty. They can also be omitted while the sentiment is there, and that is what matter.

The reality of the incarnation; of God assuming our humanity so that we may also share his divinity is a mystery that should fill us with reverent awe, with deep gratitude. In the Angelus and in the Creed, at the words of that mention this mystery it is appropriate to bow or to beat the breast as an expression of this deep gratitude. However, unless people fully understand what they express, the gesture can be empty.

5) What do you (priests) actually do during private Masses? Do you say the words and take the readings allowed? or you simply murmur or look at the words and readings in complete silence? In short how is private Mass conducted?

The first question is asked to priests here present and I think to this each one can answer individually? (*Discussion: how do you celebrate private Mass?*)

As to how private is conducted, it must first of all be borne in mind that in the *General Instruction* there are no elaborate instructions given for the celebration of private Masses. Reading between lines you can deduce that in general, Mass celebrated by the priest alone is generally discouraged. Mass is essentially a communal form of prayer, and the minimum foreseen in the liturgical books is to celebrate Mass where at least one person makes the responses.

However, in the event that there is no body else to celebrate with, it is better to celebrate Mass alone than not to do so at all. In that case there is a single line of instruction given:

254. Mass should not be celebrated without a minister or at least one of the faithful, except for a just and reasonable cause. In this case, the greetings, the introductory or explanatory remarks (*monitiones*), and the blessing at the end of Mass are omitted.

6) If a priest is leading a private Mass with his brother priest or priests wearing no vestments (neither alb nor stole), may these also stretch their hands at the time of consecration thus concelebrating?

Under normal circumstances it is required of a priest to wear the proper vestments while celebrating Mass. The regulation in *Redemptionis Sacramentum (On Certain Matters to be Observed or to be Avoided Regarding the Most Holy Eucharist)* it is stated in no. 126:

[The abuse is reprobated whereby the sacred ministers celebrate Holy Mass or other rites without sacred vestments or with only a stole over the monastic cowl or the common habit of religious or ordinary clothes, contrary to the prescriptions of the liturgical books, even when there is only one minister participating.[\[216\]](#) In order that such abuses be corrected as quickly as possible, Ordinaries should take care that in all churches and oratories subject to their jurisdiction there is present an adequate supply of liturgical vestments made in accordance with the norms.

It is important, however, to appreciate the meaning of the use of the vestments, rather than to follow the rule blindly. That meaning is given in the numbers prior to the one quoted. It is stated also in *General Instruction to the Roman Missal*:

335. In the Church, which is the Body of Christ, not all members have the same office. This variety of offices in the celebration of the Eucharist is shown outwardly by the diversity of sacred vestments, which should therefore be a sign of the office proper to each minister. At the same time, however, the sacred vestments should also contribute to the beauty of the sacred action itself. It is appropriate that the vestments to be worn by priests and deacons, as well as those garments to be worn by lay ministers, be blessed according to the rite described in the Roman Ritual¹³⁷ before they put into liturgical use.

Out of dire necessity, for instance where a priest that is imprisoned has the possibility of celebrating Mass while lacking the proper vestments, such a Mass would be both valid and laudable.

7) *In a Mass presided over by the Bishop is it in order for a priest to go for a blessing from the bishop before he proceeds to read the gospel?*

Yes, on solemn occasions it is required of the priest to do so. The *Ceremonial of Bishops* stipulates: “In the absence of a deacon, a presbyter asks for and receives a blessing from the bishop...”²³ However, It is not required that a priest bows to the main celebrant who is not a bishop, before

²³ *Ceremonial of Bishops* 74, 173.

reading the gospel. In the absence of a deacon a priest bows to the altar²⁴ and prays silently for God's blessing.²⁵

8) *Can you say something about General Absolution?*

The question is a wide one. I will explain two main elements of general absolution, namely 1) the regulations regarding it and, 2) A quick and concise answer is given in canons 961-964.

The Regulations (Discipline of General Absolution)

Individual, integral confession and absolution remain the only ordinary way for the faithful to reconcile themselves with God and the Church, unless physical or moral impossibility excuses from this kind of confession. Particular, occasional circumstances may render it lawful and even necessary to give general absolution to a number of penitents without their previous individual confession.

In addition to cases involving danger of death, it is lawful to give sacramental absolution to several of the faithful at the same time, after they have made only a generic confession but have been suitably called to repentance, if

²⁴ Note that the bowing at this moment is not made to the tabernacle. The altar and not the tabernacle is the centre of Eucharistic celebration. The tendency is to reason that if Christ is *really* present in the tabernacle and only *symbolically* present in the altar, why then bow to the altar instead of the tabernacle. However, as Symolarski suggests in his book *How Not to Say Mass*, pg. 52, the rationale behind the rubric in *General Instruction 2002*, no. 132 is that the priest does not bow to the tabernacle in order not to interrupt the liturgical celebration of which Christ's presence in the tabernacle is only the fruit.

²⁵ "In a concelebration where a priest presides... the concelebrant who in the absence of a deacon proclaims the Gospel neither requests nor receives the blessing of the principle celebrant" *General Instruction 2002*, no 212.

there is grave need, namely when, in view of the number of penitents, sufficient confessors are not available to hear individual confessions properly within a suitable period of time, so that the penitents would, through no fault of their own, have to go without sacramental grace or holy communion for a long time. This may happen especially in mission territories but in other places as well and also in groups of persons when the need is established.

General absolution is not lawful, when confessors are available, for the sole reason of the large number of penitents, as may be on the occasion of some major feast or pilgrimages.

The judgement about the presence of the above conditions and the decision concerning the lawfulness of giving general sacramental absolution are reserved to the bishop of the diocese, who is to consult with the other members of the Episcopal conference.

Over and above the cases determined by the diocesan bishop, if any other serious need arises for giving sacramental absolution to several persons together, the priest must have recourse to the local Ordinary beforehand, when this is possible, if he is to give absolution lawfully. Otherwise, he should inform the Ordinary as soon as possible of the need and of the absolution which he gave.

In order that the faithful may profit from sacramental absolution given to several persons at the same time, it is absolutely necessary that they be properly disposed. Each

one should be sorry for his or her sins and resolve to avoid committing them again. They should intend to repair any scandal and harm they may have caused and likewise resolve to confess in due time each one of the grave sins which they cannot confess at present.²⁶ These dispositions and conditions, which are required for the validity of the sacrament, should be carefully recalled to the faithful by priests.

Those who receive pardon for grave sins by a common absolution should go to individual confession before they receive this kind of absolution again, unless they are impeded by a just reason. They are strictly bound, unless this is morally impossible, to go to confession within a year. The precept which obliges each of the faithful to confess at least once a year to a priest all the grave sins which he has not individually confessed before also remains in force in this case too.

Some people may wonder why this discipline and restriction on general absolution. Some would strongly argue in favour of general absolution on the grounds that it is easier for many who have otherwise abandoned the sacrament. Also it is quicker for the busy pastor. It does not leave tensions between penitent and confessor, since the confessor does not get to know the sins of the penitent. Some also use the historical argument: once general

²⁶ Those sins are forgiven at the general absolution. They are confessed again as a test for the sincere intention the penitent had to expose them. This also opens the confessor the healing power of confession. See also canon 965 and the commentary on the code p. 680.

absolution was the norm, and individual penitence was seen as an abuse.²⁷ Some would indeed say that in some areas it is the only meaningful form of confession.

General absolution is minimised so that individual absolution does not fall into total disuse. It is also discouraged because it eliminates the possibility of counselling to the penitent. It excludes the healing power entailed in admitting sin. Indeed some people develop a sense of sin through frequent individual confession. In circumstances where general absolution is the only alternative then it should indeed be advocated.

The Rite of General Absolution

For the reconciliation of penitents by general confession and absolution in the cases provided by law, everything takes place as in the reconciliation of several penitents with individual confession and absolution, with the following exceptions: a) After the homily or during it, the faithful who seek general absolution should be instructed to dispose themselves properly, that is, each one should be sorry for his sins and resolve to avoid committing them again. He or she should intend to repair any scandal and harm he or she may have caused and likewise resolve to confess in due time each one of the grave sins which

²⁷ This argument however, does not take into account all historical facts. When public penance was the norm it was a very severe matter involving humiliation, alienation and suffering. Then private confession was the easier way out. The present public penance is the contrary as it excludes the pain of exposing one's shame. If the Church then avoided an easy escape from the consequences of one's sin, it still does the same through minimising general absolution.

cannot be confessed at present. Some act of penance should be proposed for all; individuals may add to this penance if they wish. a) the deacon, another minister, or the priest then calls upon the penitents who wish to receive absolution to show their intention by some sign (for example, by bowing their heads, kneeling, or giving some other sign determined by the Episcopal conferences). They should also say together a form of general confession (for example, *I confess to almighty God*), which may be followed by a litany or a penitential song. They the Lord's prayer is sung or said by all. c) Then the priest calls upon the grace of the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins, proclaims the victory over sin of Christ's death and resurrection, and gives sacramental absolution to the penitents. d) Finally, the priest invites the people to give thanks, as described in the rite of absolution of several penitents with individual penance above. Omitting the concluding prayer, he immediately blesses and dismisses them.

9) How are Mass intentions recorded when celebrated?

There are printed books used to record Mass intentions which are available in Nsambya procure for instance. One can devise one's own way of recording the Masses as well. The most important factor however, is not how they are recorded, but that they are faithfully celebrated. How you do that, and in some cases, how you show that to the suppliers of the intentions is entirely left to you. It is recommendable to keep a record in order to remind yourself about which intentions you have celebrated and which you have not.

One possible way is to have a table indicating the date on which the intentions were recorded, the person who asked for the intention, the chronological number of the intention, the specific intention (if given, the date of celebration, and the signature of the celebrant. Whatever intentions you receive you write out in the first four columns. Each day you celebrate any of them you fill in the last two columns accordingly.

Below is an example of a table recording Mass intentions:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Applied for by</i>		<i>Intention</i>	<i>Date of celebration</i>	<i>Said by</i>
24.11.04	Jinja diocese	1	January 2004		
” ” ”	Jinja diocese	2	” ” ”		
” ” ”	Jinja diocese	3	” ” ”		
” ” ”	Jinja diocese	4	” ” ”		
” ” ”	Jinja diocese	5	” ” ”		
” ” ”	Jinja diocese	6	” ” ”		
” ” ”	Jinja diocese	7	” ” ”		

10) How can Holy Mass be enjoyable?

In my opinion the proper question is to ask how Holy Mass can be *made more fruitful in one's life*, rather than how it can be made enjoyable. But usually with the effort of making ourselves disposed so that Holy Mass may become more fruitful in our lives, it may also become more enjoyable. But if it does not, this should not be a source of discouragement. Prayer from which we obtain no personal gratification is not by that fact less fruitful. On the

contrary, the act of will to persevere contrary to our feelings may itself be efficacious. The same applies to the celebration of the Eucharist.

The main areas to look at are 1) Preparation, 2) Celebration, and 3) living afterwards. In other words, if we prepared as well as we know how, if we celebrated every part of the Eucharist with as much attention, concentration and reverence as possible, and if we made every effort to live by what we celebrate in our daily life afterwards, then every Eucharistic celebration would make a difference.

There is a lot to say about each of these three elements, and much of the input for the day will be around them, so there is no need to delve into the matter at this stage.

11) What sacraments cannot or should not be celebrated during Advent and Lent?

The quickest guide is to follow the instructions in the Ordo. But for one who wants a more elaborate answer, the table below is a succinct guide in such cases of doubt. The instruction regarding its interpretation are given below the table.

Solemnities that are holidays of obligation	VI - DI -		
Sundays of Advent, lent, and the Easter Triduum	VI - DI -		
Solemnities other than holidays of obligation All Souls' Day	VI - DI +		
Ash Wednesday, weekdays of Holy Week	VI - DI +		
Days within the Easter Octave	VI - DI+		
Sundays of Christmas, and Sundays of Ordinary Time	VI+ DI+	V2- D2-	
Feasts	VI+ DI+	V2- D2-	
Weekdays 17-24 December	VI+ DI+	V2- D2+	
Days within the Octave of Christmas	VI+ DI+	V2- D2+	
Weekdays of Lent	VI+ DI+	V2- D2+	
Obligatory memorials	VI+ DI+	V2+ D2+	
Weekdays of Advent before 17	VI+ DI+	V2+ D2+	

	December	DI+	D2+	
	Weekdays of Christmas from 2 January	VI+	V2+	
		DI+	D2+	
	Weekdays of the Easter season	VI+	V2+	
		DI+	D2+	
	Weekdays in Ordinary Time	VI+	V2+	V3+
		DI+	D2+	D3+

Table 2: Rubrics governing Different Masses²⁸

Abbreviations:

VI = Ritual Masses²⁹ and Masses for various need and occasions, and votive Masses, in cases of serious need or pastoral advantage, at the direction of the local Ordinary or with his permission.³⁰

V2 = Masses for various needs and occasions and votive Masses, in cases of serious need or pastoral advantage, at

²⁸ See *Ceremonial of Bishops*, Appendix III, p. 336-337; *Ordo*, p. 14.

²⁹ GIRM, 330: “Ritual Masses are forbidden on the Sundays of Advent, Lent and Eastertide, on solemn feasts, within the Octave of Easter, on All Souls, on Ash Wednesday and throughout Holy Week, as stated in the rubrics of the Ritual and the Missal”.

³⁰ GIRM, 333: “If a serious need or some great pastoral opportunity should occur, a Mass appropriate to the occasion may be celebrated at the behest or with the permission of the local ordinary on any day except a solemnity and the Sundays of Advent, Lent and Eastertide, the days within the Octave of Easter, All Souls, Ash Wednesday and the days of Holy Week.

the discretion of the rector of the church or the celebrating priest.³¹

V3 = Masses for various needs and occasions and votive Masses chosen by the celebrating priest for the devotion of the people.³²

DI = Funeral Masses.³³

D2 = Mass celebrated on receiving news of death, Mass of final burial, or on the first anniversary.³⁴

D3 = Daily Mass for the Dead (GIRM 337), When DI and D2 are not permitted, neither, obviously is D3.

³¹ On obligatory memorials, on the weekdays of Advent until 16 December, on weekdays of Christmas time after 2 January and of Eastertide after the octave of Easter, masses for various needs and occasions are forbidden. But if some real need or pastoral advantage requires it, an appropriate Mass may be celebrated with the people, at the discretion of the pastor of the church or the celebrant.

³² GIRM 329b and c: Masses for special occasions are of three kinds... b) Masses for particular needs or intentions which are celebrated when required or periodically. c) Votive Masses of the Mysteries of Christ or in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a particular saint or all the saints. These may be celebrated at will, as prompted by the piety of the faithful.

³³ GIRM 336: Among Masses for the Dead it is the Funeral Mass which holds the first place in importance. It may be celebrated on any day which is neither a holiday of Obligation, the Tuesday, Friday or Saturday of Holy Week, nor a Sunday in Advent, Lent or Eastertide.

³⁴ GIRM, 337: A Mass for the dead may be celebrated as soon as news of a death is received, on the day of final burial, and on the first anniversary. This holds good even during the Christmas octave, on an obligatory memorial and on any weekday which is neither Ash Wednesday nor a day in Holy Week. Other “daily” Masses for the dead may be said on days through the year on which there is an optional memorial or Mass of the day, provided the Mass is in fact offered for the dead.

+ = Permitted

= Not permitted.

12) Christians in our parish regularly come for confessions, saying they missed the daily Mass. Is there any sin committed missing a daily Mass other than Sunday Mass?

There is no sin committed when a member of the faithful misses attending daily Mass. However, it is up to the pastor who encounters such questions to guide the faithful to have a proper understanding of Holy Mass in their lives. Jesus instituted it for us not as a burden to be carried under pain of sinning. To think of it that way is to hurt him in his love. It is a gift of love for our benefit. In it we encounter the Saviour, we are guided by his words, and nourished by his body.

To miss it should be compared to missing an event that one values very much. To use a banal example, food ball fans would never think of missing an important football match as a sin. They consider it only as a lost opportunity. Missing Mass should be considered somewhat like that.

13) When you deny someone from receiving any sacrament of the Church for having defied the ecclesial law especially payment of stole fees, tithes and abuse of drugs, will such a priest or deacon be wrong? Tell us.

Here we go beyond liturgy to include pastoral administration. The pastoral commission in collaboration with the Ordinary usually comes to decisions after careful deliberation. Decisions regarding relationship between stole fees, tithe in relation with the administration of sacraments

should be decided by a diocesan pastoral team, not by individual pastors. Caught up in such a situation, act on the side of mercy until you get to know the policy of the diocese. A deacon in particular who has no charge of a parish has no authority to make such decisions.

14) *Someone has taken crude liquor or even local drinks of any sort and at the communion he/she comes to receive it. What could be immediate step to take, if you come to realise that such a person has already received the Holy Communion?*

If the person has already received communion there are no immediate steps to take. If the person is known to you, you can talk to them later when they are sober.

In the case of one who has not yet received communion, unless the person is in such a state that giving of communion would be a manifest scandal to those watching, do not judge. Talk to the person later, and warn them, but do not humiliate them openly in public by denying them communion. Recall that Jesus did not humiliate Judas in public, even when he knew the state of his soul.

15) *Now supposing a very small child is ill and the parents have requested a priest to anoint (holy unction) What should an appropriate response of a priest?*

If the child has reached the age of reason, it is eligible to receive the sacrament of anointing. If it is difficult for you to judge whether or not it has reached the age of reason, anoint. If you are sure that it has not reached this age, they your task is for you to explain to the parents that the child

does not need this sacrament, and to conduct the appropriate prayers, such as are given in the ritual, in the section “Visit to a Sick Child”.

16) Several times I have realised that some Christians go to confession when they are interdicted from it by the state of their life. For instance a man with 3 wives, or a woman married to a man with other women, or a woman co-habiting with a man. What advice can the Church give us who are challenged with situations such as this?

When people of this kind come to receive the sacrament of reconciliation, either they do not know that their state prevents them from receiving it, or they are people who are aware of this fact, but are looking for peace and perhaps advice as well from the Church. Whatever the case may be, make sure that if people cannot receive forgiveness through the sacraments of the Church, they at least find peace and direction to their lives. Such people also give the pastor an opportunity to start working on bringing them back to the life of sacraments.

In the first place be gentle and receptive. Do not be harsh to such people. Gently explain to them that a basic condition for this sacrament is the intention not to sin again at the moment of reception of the sacrament. If a person is not yet ready to extricate self from the extra-marital status, by that fact that person is not eligible to receive the sacrament. Ask them if they are willing to discuss their condition outside of confession. Pray with and for them. Look out at any possible ways you can help them and bring them to the life of grace.