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# "Without Sunday, We Cannot Live"

**A Pastoral Letter  
on the Sunday Celebration  
of the Eucharist**

Archdiocese of Manila, 2009

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# WITHOUT SUNDAY, WE CANNOT LIVE

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## Introduction

1. "Without Sunday, we cannot live." This was the firm declaration of the second century Abythinian Martyrs. The early Christians called Sunday or the first day of the week the "Lord's Day". It was the day when the Lord, having risen from the dead, appeared to his disciples gathered in assembly. The familiar story of the two disciples making their way to Emmaus on the day of the resurrection (*Lk 24: 13-35*) confirms the Church's belief that on Sunday Jesus manifests himself in a special way to the liturgical assembly through the preaching of the word and the sacramental signs of bread and wine.

2. The two disciples went on a journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Their journey was not without any destination: they were fleeing back to their home in Emmaus after the tragic events that befell Jesus in Jerusalem. They were running away from Jerusalem, the city of suffering and defeat. Had they known earlier that Christ had been raised from the dead, their courage and hope could have also been raised. We too are subject to the fear of suffering and defeat. We experience too our own Jerusalem. Like the disciples we need to experience the power of the resurrection.

3. There were two disciples. They represented an assembly, for the Lord said that "where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am, in their midst" (*Mt. 18:20*). As they walked, the two disciples conversed about everything that had taken place in Jerusalem. They opened their hearts to each other as they shared the same story. They clearly and lovingly remembered their Lord and Master. Is this not the thing that happens in our celebration of the Eucharist? As we gather to remember that the Lord suffered, died, and rose again for us, we share with each other our own lives

with their joys, doubts, and sufferings. As we do so, we become united together as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

4. "As they were speaking and discussing with one another, Jesus himself came to them and walked with them. But they were blinded and they did not recognize him". The Risen One journeys with us on the road of life, but often we fail to recognize him. Sometimes we ask for signs of his presence and love, forgetting that the Eucharist is the primary and sure sign that the Risen One walks with us and among us as we make our journey through life.

5. Jesus asked them: "What are you discussing?" Jesus takes the initiative. He does not wait for us to approach him: he comes on his own initiative. This is what happens in the Eucharist; it is the Lord who takes the initiative. He calls and gathers us together to form one people in him. When we gather together, we manifest the mystery of the Church, his mystical body. This is re-echoed by the vision-mission of the Archdiocese of Manila which states that "we are called by the Father in Jesus to become a people".

6. Our Sunday Eucharist is indeed a powerful sign that proclaims the comforting presence of Christ in our midst. As we gather on Sunday in our parochial churches, Christ appears to us as his word is proclaimed and the Eucharistic bread is broken. He continues to speak to us his word of life and to nourish us with his body and blood through the bread and wine that the priest blesses and shares with us in Holy Communion.

7. To keep alive the memory of the crucified and glorified Lord and to re-experience his presence, the Church has always celebrated the Eucharist on Sunday. Throughout the centuries, even in our time, the Church faithfully observes

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Sunday even at the risk of persecution. The Church cannot live without Sunday, the day when the liturgical assembly gathers together as Church to celebrate Christ's resurrection and experience his presence. We are told that in the second century the Christian martyrs of Abythinia had requested that they be allowed to celebrate the Sunday Eucharist in prison. "Without Sunday," they said, "we cannot live". For how else could they give meaning to their lives except by experiencing Christ's presence in the Sunday assembly through the preaching of the word and communion in his body and blood? Christians always held the Lord's Day in such high regard, that they would not wilfully omit its chief observance, namely the Eucharist, even in times of persecution or in the midst of cultures and societies alien or hostile to the Christian faith. The many stories of how persecuted Christians gathered and continue to gather secretly on Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist at the risk of losing their lives are a powerful and touching witness to this.

**8.** Today, as always, the Eucharist continues to be the source and summit of Christian life. The Church reminds us, "that the Eucharist holds within itself the whole spiritual treasure of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Passover and our living bread." (*LG 11/CCC nos. 1328, 1332*)

**9.** The Sunday Eucharist crowns the Church's life and activities of the whole week. With this basic premise in mind, we offer these reflections on our Eucharistic celebration and indicate the course of action we should take so that our Sunday Eucharist may become a more genuine expression of our worship of God and a rich source of our sanctification.

**10.** Toward this end, we desire further to deepen the understanding and practice of lay liturgical ministries that are

already actively exercised in our parishes. Looking back at the growth and development of lay ecclesial ministries in our parishes, we see that in the past thirty years God has amply blessed the Archdiocese of Manila. We offer these recommendations and directions even as we gratefully recognize the on-going development of our lay liturgical ministries.

**11.** As we face the great challenges of the modern world and of our nation in particular – socio-political, economic, environmental, and spiritual – we as a people called by the Father to be a Church, desire to give witness to our fellow brothers and sisters about the power of the Eucharist. With the conviction of faith, we are able to assure the flock of Christ that the Eucharist is able to transform people and make them agents of firm hope and true change in our society and parishes.

**12.** As authentic worshipers and ministers of the Church, we center our lives on the memorial of the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ through the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist. Saint Ignatius of Antioch expressed this truth when he described Christians as “those who have attained a new hope,” and “those living in accordance with the Lord’s Day.” (*Ad Magnes.*, 9, 1: PG 5, 670) It means that we should be constantly aware of the liberation brought by Christ. It means that we should make our lives a constant self-offering to God, so that Christ’s victory may be fully revealed to all humankind through a profoundly renewed existence. (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 72) We are called to heal a broken world and to work for the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Eucharist nourishes us for our work of healing human relationships, of promoting peace and justice, and of proclaiming the Good News.



Part I

# T HE LITURGICAL ASSEMBLY

*The Church: Assembly of the People of God*

13. By its very nature the Church is the assembly of the People of God. It is the Father who gathers us in Jesus Christ "to form a holy people, a people whom God has made His own, a royal priesthood, so that they may give thanks to God and offer the spotless Victim not only through the hands of the priest but also together with Him, and so that they may learn to offer themselves." (*GIRM, 95*)

14. The liturgical assembly is not only a collection of individuals but the gathering of God's people called by God to exercise its royal priesthood in the offering of the sacrifice of praise. Everything in the celebration is so arranged to promote and develop an awareness of the assembly's common dignity and purpose, its mutual relationship, and its connectedness with the whole church.

15. The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebration called for by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people' (*1 Peter 2:9; see 2:45*) is their right and duty by reason of their baptism (*SC 14, RS 37*).

### Liturgical Ministries

**16.** Our Archdiocesan vision opens with the statement about the truth of what we are: we are called by the Father in Jesus Christ. Through the sacrament of baptism we became sharers in the priesthood of Christ. The call grows in us and we see it blossom especially in the many different ministries rendered to our Church by both ordained and lay ministers. All the members of the assembly contribute their share in the celebration of the Eucharist, though in ways proper to their specific order or liturgical ministry. (*SC 28*)

**17.** As your pastors, parish priests share with you their pastoral obligation to ensure that the liturgy is celebrated authentically with due regard for liturgical norms and the needs of the faithful. Parish priests have the duty to promote the full and active participation by all the people, since the liturgy is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful derive the true Christian spirit (*SC 14*). Pastors are thus responsible for the instruction of the assembly regarding their duties and roles in the celebration of the liturgy and for the proper training and formation of lay ministers.

**18.** We desire that our lay liturgical ministers receive formation not only in liturgical matters, but also in Christian life and spirituality. To this end, the Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission offers formation modules consisting of holistic, basic, on-going, and specialized programs. We desire that these formation programs be made mandatory for all liturgical ministers, so that they may grow in their understanding, love, and dedication to their duties in consonance with the liturgical direction of the Archdiocese of Manila. Every available means should be used to advance these programs. Our parishes are exhorted to give priority

to liturgical instruction and formation and even offer their lay ministers the necessary financial assistance. We are aware that a number of parishes subsidize or finance these programs and we recognize the great help they extend to their lay liturgical ministers. In the end all our efforts to help our lay liturgical ministers will be always for the good of the Church and for the glory of God.

**19.** Regular opportunities should be made available to the different liturgical ministers to pray together and be renewed in their ministry. Catechesis is to be made so that each lay ministry will be viewed in the context of the whole Church and for the service of whole Church. Unhealthy competition and the evil of jealousy are contrary to the unity that should prevail in the development of the lay liturgical ministries, which are necessarily diversified. The different ministries give manifestation to the rich and diverse charisms given by the Spirit and they all work for the unity of the Body of Christ. (*Rom 6*)

### **Priest Celebrant**

**20.** As we celebrate the "Year of Priests," to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> death anniversary of St. John Mary Vianney, the patron of all priests, we seek to rediscover the fruitfulness of his pastoral life rooted in his love for the Eucharist. Likewise we pursue his determined effort to bring his parishioners back to the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist, which they had neglected. St. John Mary Vianney is as an outstanding example of how priests are to promote the prayerfulness and dignity of the Eucharistic celebration of which they are the presiders. We exhort our priests to be profoundly conscious that they preside over the assembly in the name and person of Christ the High Priest and that the proper observance of the rite gives fitting expression to their leadership." (cf. *GIRM*, 93)

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21. At his ordination the priest promises to celebrate the mysteries of Christ faithfully and religiously according to what the Church has handed down to us for the glory of God and the sanctification of Christ's people, and to exercise the ministry of the word worthily and wisely, preaching the Gospel and explaining the Catholic Faith. (*Rite of Ordination of Priests, 15; RS, 31*) Thus every priest should cultivate his liturgical knowledge and ability, so that through his liturgical ministry God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will be praised in an ever more excellent manner by the Christian communities entrusted to them. (*PO, 5; Ecclesia de Eucharistia, 52*)

- Through the proper unfolding of his liturgical presidency, the priest inspires the faithful to participate fully, while he coordinates their participation so that it may become one harmonious action. The presider at Mass should not appropriate the functions that the liturgical norms assign to lesser ministers, except in case of necessity. He should however be aware that he is, in truth, responsible for the correct and smooth flow of the entire celebration. (*Lectionary for Mass, 38; Eucharisticae Participationem 1973, 346-347.*)
- The homily belongs to the office of the presiding priest. Preaching is an integral part of the liturgy. It is obligatory when the community gathers for the celebration of the Eucharist on Sundays and holydays of obligation. (*GIRM, 65-66.*)
- The homily is done at the ambo or the chair but not at the altar or the nave of the church.
- When the presider invites the assembly to prayer with the words, "Let us pray," he leads the assem-

bly to some moments of silence in which they place themselves in God's presence and make their own petitions. (*GIRM 54*) The assembly makes the presidential prayer their own and expresses its assent by the acclamation "Amen." (*GIRM, 54*)

- Proper vestments should at all times be worn in keeping with the liturgical norms. Liturgical vesture signifies the sacredness and dignity of the celebration in which Christ and his paschal mystery are at hand.

### Reader

**22.** In union with Pope Benedict XVI, we wish to exhort all lectors to be convinced of the importance of their ministry: "I urge that every effort be made to ensure that the liturgical proclamation of the word of God is entrusted to well-prepared readers. Let us never forget that 'when the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people'". (*Sacramentum Caritatis, 45*)

**23.** Lectors have the grave obligation to proclaim the Word of the Lord effectively. To this end, they should exert every effort to study the Scripture readings, meditate on them, and live what they proclaim. Through diligent and prayerful preparation the lectors will be able to proclaim the Word of the Lord and not simply read, as if by routine, the text of the Scriptures before the Christian assembly.

**24.** More than forty years after the Council, it is timely that our Christians communities evaluate their progress in the area of proclaiming God's word. It is not enough that the biblical passages are read in the vernacular: they should also be proclaimed with care, preparation, and devout attention so that the Word of God may touch the minds and

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hearts of Christ's faithful gathered as a Sunday assembly.  
(*Mane Nobiscum Domine*, 13)

- Lectors, especially those assigned for Sunday celebrations, are to come together during the week to study the Sunday readings, meditate devoutly on them, and discover the significance of the Word of God in their lives. (*Dies Domini*, 45)
- Lectors should employ every means so that they may proclaim effectively the Word of God. They need to prepare and familiarize themselves with the biblical text before they proclaim it to the assembly.
- When there is no deacon, a reader may carry the Book of the Gospels in front of the presiding priest in the entrance procession and lay it on the center of the altar. (*GIRM*, 118b, 119, 120 194-5)
- When there is no deacon, the reader announces the intentions of the General intercessions from the ambo. (*GIRM*, 71, 197)

### Music Ministers

**25.** A psalmist, a cantor, an organist or other instrumentalist, a choir, and a music director assist the assembly for full participation in songs, responses, and acclamations that are constitutive elements of the liturgy. These ministers of music exercise liturgical functions within the assembly and by their role add beauty and solemnity to the celebration. (*GIRM*, 103-4, 39-41)

**26.** St. Augustine rightly says in a famous sermon that "the new person sings a new song." Singing is an expression of joy, and if we consider the matter fully, it is an expression

of love. (*Sermo 34: 1: PL 38, 210*) When we gather for our Sunday Eucharist, we worship God by singing his praises. Music is a significant action of the assembly. It gives beauty, solemnity, and depth to our Sunday Eucharistic celebration. It is not to be treated only as an adjunct to our worship; it is to be regarded as an outward manifestation of the noble beauty of the mystery we celebrate and a sign of the sincerity and depth of our praise of God.

- The choir is at all times a part of the assembly. It should not replace the assembly or dominate the assembly in songs that rightfully belong to them. The members of the choir participate in the liturgical celebration like the rest of the assembly, but as choir they are also agents of active participation. They exercise their role by leading the assembly in the singing of the praises of God. (*GIRM, 103*)
- The music director, working collaboratively with other ministers, has a particular responsibility to help select musical settings that allow the worthy celebration of the liturgy, respecting the different nature of the texts and actions of the liturgy, the feast, and the liturgical seasons. (*GIRM, 111,352,366; Sacramentum Caritatis, 42*)
- To ensure the proper exercise of the ministry of music, we strongly recommend that the members of the choir avail themselves of the formation programs offered by the Archdiocesan Music Ministry and the Institute of Music in the Liturgy.

### Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

**27.** Bishops, priests, and deacons are the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion. If a large number of people are to receive Communion, the ordinary ministers will frequently need assistance in distributing it, so that the communion rite is not unduly prolonged. This assistance is given by extraordinary ministers, be they instituted acolytes or commissioned ministers of Communion formally commissioned for a given period of time. In case of true necessity the priest may depute persons of good moral standing to help in the distribution of Holy Communion. (*GIRM, 162*)

**30.** Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion serve the assembly by ministering Christ's Body and Blood to their brothers and sisters. They also serve the unity of the worshipping community by bringing Communion to those members that are prevented to join the Sunday assembly because of sickness, old age, or other causes.

- We feel the need to commission other extraordinary ministers whose principal task is to bring Holy Communion to the sick and the home-bound. We do not expect every commissioned extraordinary minister of Holy Communion to possess the necessary qualifications and aptitude to deal with the particular situations of the sick and their families. It is our desire that special formation program be designed to train them in this special ministry to the sick.
- Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should regard their ministry as essentially related to all the other ministries in the liturgical celebration. Thus, they should develop a more collaborative disposi-

tion that will express the reality of the unity of the Body of Christ, which they serve and receive.

- There is a need to intensify parochial formation programs that will supplement the annual formation program given by the Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission, so that the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion will be continually formed both liturgically and spiritually for the exercise of their ministry.

### Altar Servers

28. From antiquity, the altars servers have exercised their ministry within the assembly and they have helped to enhance the quality of the celebration by taking part in processions and by ensuring that all the requisites for the celebration are available at the appropriate time. (*GIRM, 100*)

- It is a proven fact that many ordained ministers developed their vocation to the priesthood because of their membership in this ministry when they were young. We therefore wish to continue the practice of reserving this ministry to young boys, in order to introduce them to the life and ministry of the Church. (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*)
- Much remains to be done in the area of the formation of altar servers. Programs that will suit their age need to be designed by pastors and those that are in charge of them. This ministry is a storehouse of priestly vocation. The young altar servers should be diligently guided and formed by competent and God-fearing persons.

### **Greeters and Collectors**

**29.** Whenever the Christian community assembled together, St. Paul exhorted them “to welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, to the glory of God”. (*Rom. 15:7*) Christian hospitality is expressed in the ministry of greeters and collectors who welcome the faithful at the door of the Church and help them with song books and other materials needed for the celebration. (*GIRM, 105d*) As the faithful gather together around the table of the Lord, they do so as brothers and sisters. The greeters manifest this reality when they welcome the faithful in the name of the Church.

- Greeters should have the personality and temperament expressive of Christian hospitality. They should remember that they exhibit the image of a welcoming and open Church.
- Greeters may assist with the collection and with the offering of the gifts.

### **Liturgy Coordinator**

**30.** We should not belittle the importance of preparing thoroughly our Sunday Eucharistic celebration, if we want it to be a source of spiritual growth of our brothers and sisters and the summit to which all activities of the Church are directed. (*GIRM, 111,352, RS, 39*) We strongly recommend that every parish should have a liturgy coordinator designated to help and assist the pastors in the preparation and coordination of liturgical celebrations. (*GIRM, 106*) The liturgy coordinator works in collaboration with the pastor and the other lay liturgical ministers.

- The person to be appointed as liturgy coordinator should have received formation through the liturgy programs of the Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission intended for this position.
- The liturgy coordinator should foster and promote team work and coordination among the liturgical ministers.

### Parish Master of Liturgical Celebrations

**31.** The General Instruction on the Roman Missal (*no. 106*) encourages the appointment of competent ministers called Master of Ceremonies in parishes who will “oversee the proper planning of sacred actions and their being carried out by the sacred ministers and the lay faithful with decorum, order, and devotion.” “For a liturgical celebration...to be distinguished by grace, simplicity and order,” the Ceremonial of Bishops suggests, “a master of ceremonies is needed.”

**32.** Many parish priests have attested to the great help such ministers contribute to parish liturgical celebrations as well as to the need for their necessary formation and training. Since liturgy is not only about rubrics and norms, the Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission will offer liturgical formation with the historical, theological and pastoral aspects and the spirituality of the liturgy.

### Ministry for Liturgical Environment

**33.** The materials used for divine worship must always be worthy, beautiful and dignified. (*Cf. SC, 122-124; GIRM, 288*) The Mother Butler Guild and in some parishes called

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Ladies of the Altar are tasked to take care of the vessels, vestments, and other liturgical paraphernalia. They are to ensure that these are kept clean, orderly and worthy of the divine realities they signify.

**34.** The liturgical documents have recognized the need to “seek the noble assistance of the arts and welcomes artistic expressions.” (*GIRM*, 289) The parish can tap the talents and skills of the members of the community who are artistically inclined. They can help in the planning and the preparation of an environment that encourages active participation and serves worthily and beautifully the dignity of worship. Their gifts of creativity, vision and the depthness to see beyond the ordinary lead the people of God to a profound experience of the sacred.

Part II

# T HE SUNDAY EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

**35.** At Sunday Mass, Christians relive with particular intensity the experience of the Apostles on the evening of Easter when the Risen Lord appeared to them as they were gathered together in the Cenacle (*cf Jn 20:19*). In a sense, that small nucleus of disciples, the first fruits of the Church, represented the People of God in every time and place. (*Dies Domini, 33*)

**36.** Because of its special solemnity and the obligatory presence of the community, and because it is celebrated “on the day when Christ conquered death and gave us a share in his immortal life,” the Sunday Eucharist expresses more fully the nature of the Church. The Sunday Eucharist is the paradigm for other Eucharistic celebrations during the week. Each community, gathering all its members for the “breaking of the bread,” is the place where the mystery of the Church is manifested. In celebrating the Eucharist, the community unites itself with the Universal Church, as it implores the Father to “remember the Church throughout the world” and make her grow in the unity of all the faithful with the Pope and with the Pastors of the particular Churches, until love is brought to perfection. (*Dies Domini, 34*)

### The Liturgy of the Word

**37.** On the way to Emmaus the risen Lord explained the meaning of the Scriptures to the two disciples: "Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures." (*Lk 24:28*) In other words, the risen Lord proclaimed the Scriptures to them and gave them the key to understand Scriptures in the light of his person, his paschal mystery, and the events of his suffering, death and resurrection. What do we do when we participate in the Sunday Eucharist? We listen to the Scriptures in the light of our faith in the risen Lord. Through this proclamation we encounter the risen Lord and re-live in faith his life, death, and resurrection. But as we listen to the Scriptures we also catch a glimpse of the mystery of our own life, our sufferings and resurrections. As we proclaim in the Scriptures the marvellous works of God, we become aware that God continues to fulfil even today the wonderful mystery of our salvation in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. The Word of God becomes the food that nourishes our faith, sustains us in hope, and enlivens our love. Like the two disciples, we pray to the Lord: "Stay with us for, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." (*Lk. 24:29*)

**38.** Rightly the Church reminds us that the Mass is made up of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which are so closely connected as to form one act of worship. In the Eucharist the new and everlasting covenant is embodied and renewed. (*GIRM, 28; LM, 10*)

**39.** We realize how the Church desires to nourish us with the Word of God in the Eucharistic celebration. After the council it produced a new Lectionary for the Mass that unfolds the full treasury of the Bible, so that a richer fare might

be provided for the faithful at the table of God's word.

- The announcement of Mass intentions either at the beginning or at any part of the Mass has been discouraged. We reiterate this policy and strongly urge our parishes and Christian communities to follow this Archdiocesan directive so as not to perpetuate the misunderstanding among our people that they pay for the Mass. We need to correct the long standing impression about commercialism in the administration of the sacraments. The catechesis we issued on this should be reviewed by all our pastors and lay liturgical ministers.
- The readings are to be proclaimed from the ambo. (*GIRM 58*)
- It is appropriate that a period of silence be observed after the readings and the Gospel proclamation. This is to help the assembly, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, welcome the Word of God into their hearts and prayerfully respond to it. (*GIRM 56*)
- The high point of the Liturgy of the Word is the proclamation of the Gospel. The liturgy expresses this through solemn and special gestures of reverence. Particularly on Sundays, solemnities, and feasts, the use of the Book of the Gospel is highly recommended. (*GIRM 60*)
- It is preferable that the responsorial psalm be sung. The singing of psalms may be done in various ways. The usual form is responsorial: the psalmist or cantor sings the verses and the whole assembly takes up the response. In direct form, which is also permitted, there is no intervening response and the can-

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tor, or the whole assembly together, sings the verses consecutively. (*LM 20*)

- The homily is an integral part of the liturgy and a necessary source of nourishment for Christian life. In the homily, firmly based on the mysteries of salvation, the mysteries of the faith and the guiding principles of Christian life are expounded from the Scriptures that have been proclaimed, and as the need arises, also from the other texts and rites of the liturgy. (*SC 52; GIRM 65; RS 67*)

**40.** After it has been enlightened and challenged by God's word, the assembly exercises its priestly function by interceding for all humankind. Because "the joy and hope, the struggle and anguish of the people of this age and especially of the poor and those suffering in any way are the joy and hope, the struggle and anguish of Christ's disciples," (*GS 1*) the Church prays not only for her needs but also for the salvation of the world, for civil authorities, for those oppressed by any burden, for the local community, and those who are sick or who have died.

- The minister for the intentions of the prayers of the faithful is the deacon or, in his absence, the lector. (*GIRM 71*)
- The place where this is announced is the ambo. (*GIRM 71*)

### The Liturgy of the Eucharist

**41.** The two disciples of Emmaus thought that they had arrived at their destination. But Jesus led them on to a farther destination. He led them to the Eucharist. This was to be the climax of their journey with the risen Lord. When

Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke, and gave it to them, they finally recognized his person. Paradoxically, it was when they recognized him that he disappeared from their sight. But he left with them the sure and effective signs of his enduring presence: the bread that was blessed, broken, and shared. Until today Christ is truly with us when we obey what he has commanded us to do, when the priest takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it, and shares it with the assembly. Today and always, the risen Lord will make his presence known and felt through his abiding presence in the Eucharistic signs of bread and wine and the through the assembly gathered together in faith, hope, and love.

**42.** At the Last Supper, Christ instituted the sacrament of his paschal sacrifice. That sacrament is the Holy Eucharist, our paschal meal that makes the sacrifice of the cross present in the Church. From the days of the Apostles the Church has celebrated that paschal meal by carrying out what the Lord had done and commanded his disciples to do in his memory. Thus the Church again and again takes bread and wine, gives thanks to God over them, breaks the bread, and shares the bread and cup of blessing as the Body and Blood of Christ (*cf.*, *1 Cor. 10:16*) The Church's Eucharist, in all its rich variety of forms and traditions, has always retained this basic shape: the taking of the elements of bread and wine in the preparation of the gifts, the act of thanksgiving in the Eucharistic Prayer, the Breaking of the Bread, and the giving and sharing of the Body and Blood of Christ in Communion. (*GIRM 72*)

### **"He Took the Bread"**

**43.** We prepare the Eucharistic table by bringing the gifts which will become Christ's Body and Blood. (*GIRM 73*) The Church has always encouraged the faithful to bring for-

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ward, and even to provide, the bread and wine through which Christ's offering will be made present. To show the social dimension of the Eucharist, money and other gifts for the sustenance of Christ's body, especially the poor and the needy, are carried also in procession. (*GIRM 73*)

**44.** The procession with the gifts is a convincing expression of the assembly's participation in the Eucharist and in the social mission of the Church. This action should well up from humble and contrite hearts and from dispossession of oneself, which is a prerequisite for making the true offering that pleases God. The procession with the gifts expresses also our eager willingness to be part of the "holy exchange" between God and the Church: "Accept the offerings you have given us, that we in turn may receive the gift of yourself." (*RM: 19 December, Prayer over the Gifts*)

- "Pondo ng Pinoy" collections can be a regular element in this liturgical act, since it can concretely express the gift of self by the faithful in union with Christ's offering of himself to the Father. We have designated the last Sunday of every month for this purpose.
- On the occasions of installation of parish priests, birthdays or anniversaries, and the like, it is discouraged that personal gifts for the priests be brought in procession. These personal gifts should be given to the priests during the reception party.
- We reiterate the instruction given in the past that the use of holy water to bless persons who brought the Eucharistic gifts is not in keeping with liturgical norms and therefore should not be done.

- The collection of money and other gifts are deposited in a suitable place but away from the Eucharistic table. (*GIRM 73*)

### “He Said the Blessing”

**45.** The Eucharistic Prayer is the center and summit of the entire celebration of the Mass. It sums up what the Church means and intends when it celebrates the Eucharist. In the Eucharistic Prayer we proclaim, remember, praise, and thank God for his work of salvation, which Christ accomplished in obedience to his will. We make a memorial of the Last Supper, so that the Body and Blood of Christ are sacramentally made present by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the Eucharistic Prayer the people are joined to Christ in his offering of sacrifice to the Father. This presidential prayer is prayed by the priest celebrant in the person of Christ and in behalf of the whole assembly, which professes its faith and gives its assent through dialogue, acclamations, and the Great Amen. (*GIRM 78*)

- The great importance of the assembly’s response and acclamation can be difficult to bring out in the short word *Amen*. This should be sung or at least spoken loudly both at Sunday and weekday celebrations. Musical settings that moderately prolong the *Amen* or repeat it, though not excessively, can help the assembly respond more adequately to the prayer.

### “He Broke the Bread”

**46.** The action of breaking the bread typifies Christ’s action at the feeding of the multitude, at the Last Supper, and at his meals with the disciples after the resurrection. It was such

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a significant action that the Eucharist received its name “The Breaking of the Bread” from the time of the Apostles. (*Acts 2:42*) The human, the practical, the symbolic, and the spiritual meanings of the action of breaking bread are inextricably bound together in this symbol. Just as many grains of wheat are ground, kneaded, and baked together to become one loaf, which is then broken and shared out among many to bring them into one table-fellowship, so those gathered are made one body in the one bread of life which is Christ (*cf. 1Cor. 10:17*)

- Before the breaking of the bread, the entire assembly prays its family prayer, the prayer Our Lord taught us. It belongs to God’s children; it is the prayer of the assembly. We recommend that each parish should choose one musical setting to be used in all Sunday Masses so as to help the assembly participate fully and devoutly in singing it.
- The proper gesture for the Lord’s Prayer is raised hands.
- The breaking of the bread is done with dignity and deliberation by the priest celebrant, if necessary with the help of a deacon or a concelebrant. (*RS 73*) It should never be done during the words of consecration.
- Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who will assist at Communion should take their place in the sanctuary after the exchange of peace.

## “He Gave It to Them”

47. We are faithful to the Lord’s command to “Take and eat,” “Take and drink”. As Eucharistic assembly we, the mystical body of Christ, complete the Eucharistic action by receiving, eating, and drinking the elements consecrated during the celebration.

48. The Communion procession manifests the humble patience of the poor moving forward to be fed, the readiness of God’s people sharing the paschal meal in readiness for their journey, and the joyful confidence of God’s people as they march forward to the Promised Land.

- The faithful are not ordinarily to be given Communion from the tabernacle. (*SC 55; Euch. Myst, nos. 31-32; GIRM 85*) Serious effort should be made to observe this norm as a regular practice in our parishes rather than as the exception.
- Signs of unjust discrimination or social distinction among persons at the Lord’s Table are to be avoided. When there is obvious intent of profanation, the priest and ministers should gently refuse to give Communion, avoiding the attention of the public.
- Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion receive communion from the priest celebrant and receive the vessel of Communion from him.
- The manner of receiving communion, whether by hand or in the mouth, is the prerogative of the communicant. (*RS 90*)

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- The purification of vessels after communion should be done at the side table and not on the altar. (*GIRM 163, 279*)
- Announcements should not interrupt the period of silence after communion. Novenas and other devotions and the collections should not be done during this time.
- Announcements are done after the post Communion Prayer. (*GIRM 184*)

PART III

# O UR SUNDAY EUCHARIST AND MISSION

**49.** “So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them.” (*Lk 24: 33*) After the disciples recognized the risen Lord in the preaching of the word and the breaking of bread, they were filled with strength and courage to return to Jerusalem, the place they were escaping from. The Eucharist transformed them into true proclaimers of the Good News that the Lord is truly risen!

**50.** Having received the Bread of Life, the disciples of Christ were ready to accomplish with courage and dedication the mission that awaited them. For the faithful who have understood and assimilated the meaning of what they have celebrated, the Eucharist does not end with the final blessing. It goes on beyond the church door. Through the words of dismissal, Christ sends them on a mission: “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord”. Like the first witnesses of the resurrection, Christians who gather on Sundays to experience the presence of the Risen Lord are called to be missionaries in their homes and communities by believing what they celebrated in the Eucharist and putting what they believe into practice.

## WITHOUT SUNDAY, WE CANNOT LIVE

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51. The following points are ways to give witness to our faith in the resurrection of Christ. They express our tenet that “without Sunday, we cannot live”.

- Transformation of society through our personal conversion.
- Solicitous care for the poor and the needy.
- Sacrifice for the sake of others and simplicity of life style.
- Spreading hope and joy to all especially where people are vexed with poverty and injustice.
- Lastly, belief in the power of prayer.

As we live out these tenets that are the fruits of our celebration of the Eucharist, we live out our Archdiocesan vision. May our reflections in this pastoral letter bring us to its fulfillment in our life, in our family, in our community, in our nation and in the whole world.

Let this be our special prayer to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Fountain of mercy and love, with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, his mother and our mother too.

May God bless us all.

**+ Gaudencio B. Cardinal Rosales, D.D.**  
*Archbishop of Manila*

June 14, 2009  
Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ

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## Abbreviations

<b>EuchMyst</b>	Congregation of Rites, <i>Instruction Eucharisticum Mysterium, on the worship of the Eucharist</i> , 25 May 1967: AAS 59 (1967)
<b>GIRM</b>	Roman Missal, <i>General Instruction of the Roman Missal</i> , 20 April 2000
<b>GS</b>	Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern world, <i>Gaudium et Spes</i> , 7 December 1965
<b>LM</b>	Roman Missal, <i>Lectionary for Mass</i> , 2nd English Edition, 1981, Introduction
<b>RM</b>	Roman Missal, <i>Roman Missal</i> , Editio Tertia, 20 April 2000
<b>RS</b>	Congregation for Divine Worship, Instruction <i>Redemptionis Sacramentum</i> , 25 March 2004
<b>SC</b>	Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Liturgy, <i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i> , 4 December 1963





