Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith Issues Notice on Sacramental Formulas

On February 3, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith released a doctrinal Note concerning the importance of using the approved words for the celebration of the sacraments. The document, entitled Gestis verbisque, or “Deeds and Words,” is intended to offer “some elements of a doctrinal nature with regard to discernment on the validity of the celebration of the sacraments, paying attention also to some disciplinary and pastoral implications” (4).

The 11-page text, published in Italian, notes that all seven sacraments have been instituted by Christ. As such, the
Church is not the “master,” but rather, the “minister” of the sacraments, which have been divinely revealed to the world. The Church “receives their grace, guards them, and in turn is guarded by them” (11). Much like the Church recognizes Scripture to be the Word of God written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, She similarly receives, recognizes, and preserves the sacraments, “determining their number and indicating the essential elements for each of them” (11).

*Gestis verbisque* recalls the traditional teaching of the Council of Trent concerning the three elements that are required for the valid celebration of the sacraments: the matter (or element of the sacrament), the form (or proper words “which confer a transcendent meaning on the matter” [13]), and the intention of the minister to “do what the Church intends” when celebrating the sacraments. Altogether, “matter, form, and intention are intrinsically united: they are integrated into the sacramental action in such a way that intention becomes the unifying principle of matter and form, making them a sacred sign by which grace is conferred” (18).

In its commentary, the Dicastery laments that ministers sometimes erroneously use words other than the approved formulas when celebrating the sacraments, noting that such actions “rob the faithful what is due to them.” Recent examples of this include changes made to the essential words for the celebration of baptism which have rendered “the sacrament null and void” (2). The Dicastery notes that, in some extreme instances, it has even become necessary to repeat these celebrations along with the sacraments received subsequently, as the initial “baptisms” were judged to be invalid or at least doubtfully valid. In these cases, it is not only the changes made to the words of the sacramental formulas which are of concern, but the intention of the minister as well: “Serious modification of the essential elements introduces doubt about the real intention of the minister, invalidating the validity of the sacrament celebrated. In principle, in fact, the intention to do what the Church does is expressed in the use of the matter and form that the Church has established” (19).

This is not to say, however, that the liturgical books do not allow for legitimate variations to be observed in the celebration of the sacraments. The rites themselves frequently make provision for a choice amongst approved texts or even for Episcopal Conferences to introduce general
adaptations with the approval of the Holy See. However, to modify these celebrations on one's own initiative “inflicts a wound” on the same ecclesial communion which fosters and allows for approved adaptations (22). It is for this reason that the Second Vatican Council affirmed that, aside from the Apostolic See, or, in particular cases, the Episcopal Conference or Bishop, “no other person, even if he be a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority” (Sacrosanctum concilium, 22).

The Note observes that, when a priest, in particular, celebrates the sacraments, he acts in the person of Christ, who gives Himself in love to His Bride, the Church. As such, liturgical presidency is truly an act of service [diakonia] to the ecclesial community, and it should not become an occasion for imposing one's personal opinions or whims on the People of God. In mirroring the living presence of Christ the Good Shepherd, the minister of the sacraments should always seek to lead his flock to become authentic disciples via a “humble obedience to the liturgical norms” (26).

The document concludes with a reflection on the need to protect the sacramental treasures of the Church, noting that they are expressions of Christ's redeeming work in this and every age: “The whole Church is called to safeguard the riches contained in them, so that the primacy of God's salvific action in history may never be obscured, even in the fragile mediation of signs and gestures proper to human nature” (28).

**Selected Sacramental Formulas**

**Baptism:** “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

**Confirmation:** “N., be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

**Eucharist:** “Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you.”

“Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this in memory of me.”

**Penance:** “God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and poured out the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God grant you pardon and peace. And I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, + and of the Holy Spirit.”

**Anointing of the Sick:** “Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up.”
Groups within the RCIA

The RCIA often involves different groups of persons in a parish, each of which has a unique set of liturgical, pastoral, and catechetical needs. The following is a summary of these items. For additional information, please contact the Office of Liturgy, the Chancery, or the Catechumenate Office.

The unbaptized adult or older adolescent
After an appropriate pastoral formation in the catechumenate lasting at least one full liturgical year, the catechumen is admitted to all three sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil. The parish priest is the presiding minister. No delegation is required.

The unbaptized child of catechetical age seeking baptism
These children should undergo a period of formation at a level adapted to their age and faith development. This formation is usually at least one full year, but may be longer, depending on the development of the child. As long as the liturgical rites of the catechumenate are prepared for and celebrated, catechesis can take place in the context of the parish religious education program. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are celebrated together at the Easter Vigil. The parish priest is the presiding minister. No delegation is required.

The validly baptized non-Catholic who is uncatechized
After an appropriate pastoral formation adapted to their needs, Confirmation and Eucharist are celebrated together during the Easter Season, or whenever the candidate is prepared to receive the sacraments. At that time, the candidate is received into full communion and completes initiation. While not preferred, the celebration of Reception into Full Communion may take place at the Easter Vigil for pastoral reasons. The parish priest is the presiding minister. No delegation is required.

The adult or older adolescent baptized Catholic who is uncatechized
After an appropriate pastoral formation, Confirmation and Eucharist can be celebrated together during the Easter Season, or whenever the candidate is prepared to receive the sacraments. If the preparation takes place as part of the parish catechumenate, the candidate may receive these sacraments at the Easter Vigil, although this is not preferred. In individual cases and with delegation of the Vicar General, those who have fully participated in the process and catechesis of the RCIA or its equivalent may be confirmed and receive communion from a priest within the Eucharistic liturgy during the Easter season.

The adult or older adolescent baptized non-Catholic who is catechized in their faith
Pastoral formation should include both doctrinal and spiritual preparation for reception into full communion. The length of preparation is determined by the amount of formation needed. Preparation need not necessarily be a part of the catechumenate process. Candidates may be received into the Church and receive the Sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation at any Sunday Eucharist throughout the year, although the Easter season is an especially appropriate time. The parish priest is the presiding minister. No delegation is required.
Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside Mass Use Date Announced

In February, the USCCB announced that the new English translation of the ritual book *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside Mass* may be used as of September 14 (Exaltation of the Cross), 2024, and its use will become obligatory on December 1 (First Sunday of Advent), 2024.

This liturgical text was first promulgated by the Congregation of Divine Worship in 1973, and the current English translation for the dioceses of the United States has been in use since 1976. While the text is not frequently used within liturgical celebrations themselves, it nevertheless serves as an important reference for matters having to do with Eucharistic actions that take place outside of Mass. For example, its General Introduction describes the relationship between Eucharistic Worship outside Mass and the Eucharistic Celebration itself. It also speaks to the purpose of Eucharistic Reservation and the proper place for the reserved Eucharist. The various chapters of the text present rituals and theological commentary on the Distribution of Holy Communion Outside Mass, Exposition of the Holy Eucharist, Eucharistic Processions, and Eucharistic Congresses. The forthcoming book will additionally include several adaptations for the United States:

- a rubric has been added to officially permit the priest or deacon to wear a white cope for Exposition;
- the lyrics of the traditional hymns *O salutaris Hostia* and *Tantum ergo Sacramentum*, in Latin and English, have been inserted; other Eucharistic hymns may continue to be used;
- clarifying instructions have been added for praying the Liturgy of the Hours during Adoration, especially Morning and Evening Prayer; and
- the text of the Divine Praises has been inserted for use during Benediction.

Catholic Book Publishing, Liturgical Press, Liturgy Training Publications, Magnificat, and Midwest Theological Forum have announced an August 1 publication of the new text. Parishes in the Archdiocese of New York may wish to take advantage of discount pricing on this ritual text through the ICS website later this year.
FDLC Offers Weekly Presentations on Eucharistic Adoration and Exposition

As part of current efforts to support a Eucharistic revival in the United States, the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions has announced an ongoing series of webinars which will feature expert presenters, online chats, and downloadable handouts on the practice of Eucharistic Adoration and Exposition. These webinars are designed to assist clergy, religious, and laity in rediscovering the beauty and power of the Eucharist, the source and summit of the Catholic faith. Each presentation will be offered at 1:00 pm on the dates listed below, in English, and will be 75 minutes in length. More information and registration may be found on the FDLC website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>PRESEONTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1 and 8</td>
<td>History and Theology of Eucharistic Adoration after Vatican II, Parts 1 and 2</td>
<td>Rev. Ed Foley, OFM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>Music for a Period of Exposition</td>
<td>Dr. Steve Janco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 22</td>
<td>Best Practices for Adoration and Exposition</td>
<td>Fr. Matthew Ernest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 5</td>
<td>An Examination of the Newly Revised Liturgical Text, <em>Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside Mass</em></td>
<td>Fr. Dustin Dought (USCCB) and FDLC Staff</td>
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New Archdiocesan Guidelines for Music at Weddings

In February, the Liturgy Office and archdiocesan Liturgical Music Commission published guidelines for music at weddings. In their sacramental union, a married couple becomes a sign of the love that exists between Christ and His Church. As such, the rite of marriage is truly a celebration of the entire Christian community. This is most perfectly expressed when family, friends, and relatives of the engaged couple actively participate in the wedding liturgy through song, word, and gesture. Music, in particular, plays a special and memorable role in these celebrations, and engaged couples, along with parish leadership and staff, frequently seek assistance in the proper selection of music for these liturgies. The document aims to provide guidance to these groups, answering many of the questions that can arise when preparing the rite of marriage. The new guidelines may be accessed and downloaded at the Liturgy Office website.
Liturgical Preparation Aid for Lent, the Sacred Paschal Triduum, and the Easter Season

The Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC) has published a free resource in English and Spanish for Lent, the Sacred Paschal Triduum, and the Easter Season. This preparation aid includes:

• the full text of the Order of Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution;
• music suggestions;
• frequently asked questions;
• an Order for the Reception of the Holy Oils;
• a liturgical calendar advisory for Lent, the Triduum, and the Easter Season; and
• preparation worksheets for the celebration of the Tridium.

This resource may be downloaded from the FDLC website (English/Spanish) and distributed freely.

Upcoming Events

Pueri Cantores Music Festival for Youth (Grades 4-8). March 2, 2024. Church of the Blessed Sacrament in Manhattan: pcchoirs.org

Saint Joseph’s Seminary Easter Concert and Garden Party: Sunday, April 14, 4pm. $35/adults, $20/children, $100/VIP. Tickets: www.dunwoodie.edu
Lenten Day
of Prayer and Reflection for
Liturgical Ministers
The Twofold Imitation of Christ

Saturday, March 16
10:00 AM – 3:00 PM | St. Joseph’s Seminary, Yonkers

SESSION 1: *Imitating Christ as a Child of God*
SESSION 2: *Imitating Christ in His Mysteries*

The great goal of the Christian life is union with God, and this happens most beautifully as we come to a more perfect imitation of Christ. Join us for a day of reflection as we unpack the twofold imitation of Christ and how we imitate Him both as adopted sons and daughters of God and also in the various mysteries of His life – especially those celebrated throughout the liturgical year.

Register by Sunday, March 9 at
DayofPrayer2024.eventbrite.com

Registration fee: $40 (includes lunch)

SPEAKER:
Fr. Peter Martyr Yungwirth, OP
Pastor, St. Vincent Ferrer and St. Catherine of Siena, NYC

Contact info: 914.968.6200 x8177 or x8145 | liturgy@archny.org
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Summer 2024: May 29 – July 19

**Christology** with Fr. John Cush, STD
July 8 – 12 | 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Via Zoom and in-person at Yonkers

**Introduction to the New Testament** with Prof. Annmarie McLaughlin, MA
May 30 – July 11 | Tuesdays and Thursdays | 6:30 PM – 9:30 PM
Via Zoom and in-person at Yonkers

**Ecclesiology** with Msgr. Donald Guglielmi, STD
June 24 – 28 | 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Via Zoom

**RCIA: Theology and Practice** with Dr. Donna Eschenauer
June 4 – July 16 | Tuesdays | 6:30 PM – 9:30 PM
Hy-flex: Hybrid-Flexibility allows students to choose in-person, synchronous / online, or asynchronous online learning
Yonkers on campus | Zoom synchronous | Zoom asynchronous

**Introduction to Liturgy** with Fr. Matthew Ernest, STD
July 15 – 19 | 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Via Zoom and in-person at Yonkers

**Principles of Sacred Music** with Prof. Conner McCain, PhD (cand.)
May 29 – July 10 | Mondays and Wednesdays | 6:30 PM – 9:30 PM
Via Zoom

**Introduction to Church History** with Fr. Michael Bruno, STD
May 30 – July 1 | Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays | 6:30 PM – 9:30 PM
Via Zoom

**The Letters of Romans and Galatians** with Dr. Jose Enrique Aguilar, SSD
May 29 – July 10 | Mondays and Wednesdays | 6:30 PM – 9:30 PM
Via Zoom and in-person at Yonkers

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or email us at sjsacademics@dunwoodie.edu