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The following are bulletin announcements from the Worship Office of the Archdiocese of Detroit. They are meant to instruct the faithful in preparation for use of the new Roman Missal, which will be introduced in Advent 2011.

The Introductory Rites

When the Church gathers for the celebration of the Eucharist, the Introductory Rites are meant to focus the community's attention on the mystery to be celebrated and prepare them to participate more worthily in that mystery. There are many elements used in these rites:

Entrance Procession and Hymn: In every celebration of the Eucharist, the procession of liturgical ministers into the midst of the people who have gathered is led by the Cross. We are Christians who follow the Cross on which Christ died to save us from our sins.

That same Christ is here with us for He promised, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Matthew 18:20). Christ is present in the community gathered. He is present in the priest who makes the invisible visible to the eyes of faith. Christ will lead us in this celebration. All have come together to praise and honor God for the gift of his only Son, who reveals to us the way to eternal happiness. The Cross is accompanied by at least two lighted candles and sometimes by incense. The Gospel Book is carried by the deacon and placed on the altar where, later, the bread and wine will be placed, because the food of the Word cannot be separated from the food of the Eucharist. And we sing.

Sign of the Cross: Upon reaching the chair, the priest leads the assembly in the Sign of the Cross to remind us of our baptism, which gave us the right to participate in this mystery. Romano Guardini, the noted theologian, wrote: "When we cross ourselves, let it be with a real sign of the cross...let us make a large, unhurried sign, from forehead to breast, from shoulder to shoulder, consciously feeling how it includes the whole of us... It is the holiest of signs" (Sacred Signs, 1956, p.13). Allow Christ who was crucified on the cross to touch our bodies and draw us into the mystery.

Greeting: Upon arriving at the chair, the priest greets the assembly. *The Lord be with you.* This greeting is, in reality, expressive of the desire that the people actually experience the presence and power of the Lord in the community they form. It is Christ who greets us with this wish. The assembly responds: *And with your Spirit.* This response will be new for us. It is a more formal language, to be sure, but it is there to remind us that this gathering is not like any other gathering. It is special. By restoring the more literal ancient greeting, "And with your Spirit," the community will be calling more expressly on the "spirit" of the priest.

Act of Penitence: One of the things that Christ was most frequently criticized for by leaders of the Jews was that he drew sinners to himself. He ate with sinners, he cured sinners, and reached out to sinners who were most in need of God's mercy. As the community of faithful gathers to celebrate this paschal mystery, it acknowledges that it too is a sinful people. We confess our

sinfulness to God, to each other, and to all the angels and saints.

Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling with Water: During the Easter Season, and sometimes on Sundays and more solemn occasions, the Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling may be used as a reminder of our baptism and thereby of our call to share in the Paschal Mystery.

Gloria: This hymn is often called the *Angelic Hymn* because its first words were used by angels at the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. As we join the choirs of angels and sing the glory and praise of God, we are reminded of the great gift God has given to us in the Incarnation. Christ was sent by the Father to become truly flesh of our flesh and like us in all things but sin. We are filled with awe that God would do this for us and so we cry out in hymn the glory of God the Father, in his Son, and through the Holy Spirit. Although it is permitted to recite the Gloria, we must realize that something of the awesomeness of the mystery it reminds us of can be lost in mere recitation.

Opening Prayer [Collect]: The Introductory Rites end with the Opening Prayer or Collect, the prayer of the gathered community who, having acknowledged its sinfulness but having rejoiced in the Triune God, is now aware that it is in God's presence. The community is invited to pray and given a brief time to silently present its needs to God. The priest then collects these prayers and presents them to the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. The people make the prayer their own by responding Amen. We are now prepared to hear God's Word.

The Liturgy of the Word

At the celebration of the Eucharist we are nourished at two tables...the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist. Both are necessary. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal says: "When the Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself is speaking to his people and Christ, present in his own word, is proclaiming the Gospel". (GIRM, n.29) We need to ponder these words and make them our own.

The words of Sacred Scripture are a way God reveals himself to us, the means by which we come to know the depth of God's love for us and the responsibilities entailed in being Christ's followers, members of his Body. What is more, this Word of God proclaimed in the liturgy possesses a special power to bring about in us what it proclaims.

At the celebration of the Eucharist God speaks and we respond. First, God speaks through the stories of the Old Testament. We respond with a moment of silence then a sung psalm, in other words, we use the Word of God to respond to the Word of God. The psalm assigned for the day's readings helps us to uncover the core meaning and challenge of the first reading. We respond with a moment of silence. Then the Gospel is proclaimed. There are special honors which we give to the Gospel: for example, the Book of the Gospels has been carried in the Entrance Procession and placed on the altar; just before the Gospel is read the assembly stands and sings Alleluia to welcome Christ present in the Gospel as the deacon or priest carries the Gospel book to the ambo; the Gospel may be incensed before the reading and is kissed at its conclusion.

Throughout all of this we are called to listen... to listen as we would if our eyes were open and

we could see Christ speaking to us. We are invited to open ourselves to the Holy Spirit who will reveal what in our life needs to change so that we could be more like Christ. The Word of God is living and active. Each of us individually, and all of us together, are called to make a response that affects our daily lives.

Henri Nouwen tells a wonderful story that may shed some light on this process: A sculptor was chipping away a huge block of marble. A little boy watched him work for many weeks until, finally, he was amazed to see that the sculptor had created a beautiful lion. The little boy ran up to the sculptor with eyes wide with wonder, and he exclaimed, "Hey, Mister, how did you know there was a lion hidden in that rock."

God is the sculptor. We are block of marble. If we allow the word of God to chip away at us, the possibilities that lie within us will come to vision.

The Creed

On Sundays and solemnities the Creed is to be sung or said by the priest together with the people. The purpose of this prayer is to call to mind and confess the great mysteries of the faith before the mysteries are celebrated in the Eucharist.

There will be some changes to the words used in the Nicene Creed. Permission has been granted to use the Apostles Creed, especially during Lent and Easter time. More importantly, we are reminded once again about the rubric that is to be included when the Creed is recited, namely, in the Nicene Creed, all bow at the words "and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man," and in the Apostles Creed, all bow at the words "who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born the Virgin Mary,"

By this simple gesture, we pro-fess our belief in the Incarnation. This simple bow reminds us of what Paul taught: "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient, to the point of death— even death on a cross" (Philippians 2: 5–8).

The Prayer of the Faithful

The last part of the Liturgy of the Word is called the Prayer of the Faithful, the prayer of the baptized. In this prayer the baptized have a special opportunity to exercise their priestly ministry.

The bishop or priest opens this prayer with an invitation to the assembly, "Let us pray..."

Next, the deacon or another minister announces the intentions and the community responds with a common prayer. Finally, the priest gathers up all the intentions and directs them to God.

In the scriptures Christ, has been teaching us how to be concerned about all peoples, how to be servant of all peoples. The way we pray the Prayer of the Faithful reveals how well we have learned the lessons Christ has taught us. In preparing these intentions, it will be important to ask ourselves what or who in our world needs the compassion of Christ, his mercy, his healing, and his tenderness?

The challenge in composing the intentions is to make them as universal as possible while at the same time attending to the needs of the community at worship. This is not the time to single out one individual or group of individuals from the immediate community. Rather, this is the time to pray for all individuals who may have the

same need as some individuals in our community.

One of the greatest dangers in composing these intentions is the temptation to propose the answer to the need prayed for by including a “that phrase.” In a word, we tell God what to do. These kinds of petitions are prayers in which we presume that we know better than God how to answer this need.

Another difficulty is that the community response sometimes lacks a prayer quality. It becomes the sing-song response of a semi-conscious assembly. Inviting the community to sing its response can have the effect of slowing the response and making it more deliberate. There are many simple sung responses, such as, “O God, hear us, hear our prayer,” or “Lord, hear our prayer,” that can enhance the quality of this prayer.

Lastly, it is important for the community to understand that all that has been prayed is carried forth with the procession of gifts. All are placed in Christ’s hands for transformation.

The Preparation of the Altar and Gifts

The seemingly simple and utilitarian action of bringing forth gifts and setting the table is actually a profound moment in the Mass. The spiritual meaning of this action is that the faithful are offering themselves along with the gifts in this Eucharistic celebration.

Bread and wine are brought forward. The wheat and grapes used in their production a gift from God, but God has not made the bread and wine from these gifts, we have. These gifts represent cooperation between God, the Creator, and his creatures, human beings.

Bread and wine are very strong symbols in themselves. Bread is among the most basic of foods common in every culture. It is “the staff of life” representing

what we need to stay alive. Wine is at the other end of the food spectrum. It is elegant, refined, and festive. Wine is a symbol of living well. Psalm 104 tells us that “wine gladdens men’s hearts.”

Jesus takes these two powerful natural symbols and makes them so much more by turning them into his very Body and Blood.

We place these gifts in the hands of Christ to be transformed, by placing them in the hands of the priest. By doing so, we ask that our lives may become what Christ’s life was and is.

The Eucharistic Prayer

The Eucharistic Prayer or Canon of the Mass is the central prayer of the entire celebration. Most Catholics have been made aware from their earliest days that during the Eucharistic Prayer the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. What many Catholics are not aware of, however, is that the Eucharistic Prayer is about more than adoring Christ who becomes present in our midst.

The Church tells us that liturgy (and the Mass is the highpoint and heart of liturgy) is the *action* of Christ the priest and His Body, the Church. In the celebration of Mass, during the Eucharistic Prayer, not only does Christ become present, body and blood, soul and divinity, under the forms of bread and wine, but Christ’s saving action, His passion, death and resurrection are once again enacted and offered to the Father by Christ Himself in the person of the priest, and by all present.

This is a truth of enormous significance! This action of Christ which brought about our redemption from sin and eternal death, offered once for all on Calvary, becomes present again for us, here and now, in this time and place, so that we can join in Christ’s perfect offering and can ourselves participate in His perfect worship.

Read carefully any of the Eucharistic Prayers. You will see that that prayer is offered, not to Christ, but to the Father: *Father, you are holy indeed...; Father, we bring you these gifts...; Father, we ask you...* It is worship offered to the Father by Christ as it was at the moment of His passion, death and resurrection, but now it is offered through the priest acting in the person of Christ, and it is offered as well by all of us who are part of Christ’s Body, the Church. *This* is the action of Christ’s Body, the Church at Mass.

When the priest prays this prayer he prays “*we* bring you these gifts”; “*we* ask you”; “*we* offer.” That “*we*” signifies that all the baptized present at this Eucharistic celebration make this offering in union with Christ, pray this prayer in union with Him. And what is most important, we do not offer Christ alone; we are called to *offer ourselves*, our lives, our individual efforts to grow more like Christ and our efforts as a community of believers to spread God’s Word and to serve God’s people, to the Father in union with Christ through the hands of the priest. Most wonderful of all, although our offering is in itself imperfect, joined with the offering of Christ it becomes *perfect* praise and thanksgiving to the Father.

And so, during the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass, we have more to do than to look forward to the moment of consecration and remain there while the prayer of the priest continues. Before the consecration we join in the prayer of praise and thanksgiving to the Father known as the Preface and affirm that praise and thanksgiving in our singing of the Holy, Holy, Holy. Following the Consecration we join together in the Memorial Acclamation which proclaims our common faith in Christ’s real presence and is an acclamation expressing our gratitude to Christ for His wonderful gift of salvation. But then our

prayer moves on and we are called to offer Christ, and ourselves with Christ to the Father: “We offer to you, Father, this holy and living sacrifice...” and to pray with the priest that “we who are nourished by His Body and Blood may be filled with the Holy Spirit and become one body, one spirit in Christ...”; we then join our prayers with the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints for our Holy Father the Pope, our bishops and clergy and all God’s people, living and dead. At the conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest sums up all that has gone before: “Through Him (Christ), with Him (Christ), in Him (Christ) in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, forever and ever.” And we who are privileged to make our own offering through, with and in Christ, respond with the most important acclamation of the Mass, the great “amen” by which we profess the action of Christ to be our action as well.

The Communion Rite

The ultimate goal of our Eucharistic celebration is our reception of the Body and Blood of Christ, our Communion. Jesus commands us in the words of the institution narrative to “take and eat” and to “take and drink”. This is the goal that Christ himself sets for us, to be in communion with him and with one another.

We are most immediately prepared for this communion by our prayer in the words of Jesus himself, the Our Father. Two of the petitions in this prayer are directly related to our reception of Holy Communion, asking for our daily bread and asking for forgiveness. The great Fathers of the Church, Tertullian and Cyprian, understood “our daily bread” to be the bread that Jesus was referring to when he said: “the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh” (John 6:51).

The petition asking for forgiveness is a direct preparation for the reception of Holy Communion. Saint Augustine called this petition a “washing of our face before we receive Communion.”

After the Sign of Peace the immediate preparation for Communion is the Breaking of the Bread which reminds us that the Lord’s body was broken on the cross in order to give life to us.

When we receive the Body of Christ we become what we receive. Saint Augustine preaches, “If it is you that are the Body of Christ and its members, it is the mystery meaning you that has been placed on the Lord’s table; what you receive is the mystery that means you.”

The Dismissal Rite at Mass

The Mass ends in a similar way to how it begins, with a ritual greeting. We are liturgically reminded by the words of the priest, “The Lord be with you,” that the dismissal is a new beginning. The Mass is not so much “over,” as it is a new beginning that is connected to the rest of our lives.

In the Latin Mass text the final words of the priest are, “*Ite, missa est.*” This can be literally translated as “Go, you are dismissed” or as “Go, your mission now begins.” The Latin word *missa* is the root of both the words, dismiss and mission. For centuries we called the whole liturgical act by the term Mass (*Missa* in Latin) to remind ourselves that the celebration is not a self-contained act. What we are to do is to take what we celebrate out into the world.

We have received the greatest gift possible from God and every gift of God brings with it a new task. We who celebrate this great act of thanksgiving are called to go forth into the world and to live thankful lives spreading the good news of God’s wonderful grace.