

## Catholic Etiquette in Sacred Liturgy

### Feast of Heaven and Earth



“By the Eucharistic celebration we already unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life, when God will be all in all.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church –CCC, 1326*)

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Sacrosanctum Concilium gave us the words "active participation" which restores the proper participation of the laity due to their membership within the priesthood of the faithful. Thus, the reformed liturgy of the Second Vatican Council brought about a beautiful relationship between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood of the faithful.

Unfortunately, many members of the clergy deny the essential difference between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood of the faithful, leading to liturgical abuses.

*In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, a minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle; we sing a hymn to the Lord's glory with all the warriors of the heavenly army; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them; we eagerly await the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, until he, our life, shall appear and we too will appear with him in glory. (Second Vatican Council, Sacrosanctum Concilium, 8)*

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This brochure is excerpted from an article by Father James Farfaglia, Pastor of St. Helena of the True Cross of Jesus Catholic Church in Corpus Christi, Texas.

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## The Worshipping Body

In recent times, there has been much confusion regarding certain aspects of our hand gestures during the Catholic Mass. At the present moment, there is not a single ruling on the subject of hand gestures, either from the Congregation of Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments or from the US Conference of Bishops. Definitive norms on gesturing would provide clarity and uniformity.

### **Three questions always being asked:**

**1) Is gesturing toward the priest with the hand while responding, "And also with you" considered correct?**

**2) Should the congregation pray with hands held in the orans position during the Our Father?**

**3) Is holding hands as the congregation recites the Our Father correct or even appropriate?**

Regarding these innovative gestures and the silence on the part of the Holy See and the Bishops' Conference, keep in mind that the liturgical reform mandated by the Second Vatican Council organically flows from the Tridentine liturgy. Therefore, since there is no evidence of innovative hand gestures in the Tridentine liturgy, there should be no innovative hand gestures in the Vatican II liturgy

without a clear and precise decision from Church authority.

Thus we can draw the following conclusions: 1) the use of hand gestures towards the priest with the response "And also with you" is an innovation that has no place within the Catholic Mass; 2) the use of the orans, a position with an established historical precedent in Christian prayer, should not be introduced into the Catholic Mass until a definition has been given by the authority of the Church; 3) the gesture of holding hands during the Our Father has no historical tradition in the Catholic liturgy and should not be introduced into the Catholic Mass unless the competent ecclesial authorities were to decide to introduce it.

The Church says: "Therefore no other persons whatsoever, not even a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on their own authority" (Vatican II, Sacrosanctum Concilium, 22.3).

## The Language of Worship

The widespread use of the vernacular, the language of the people, was another good reform from the Second Vatican Council and particularly with respect to the Liturgy of the Word.

However, it was not the mind of the Council that the Latin language should be considered something of the past, never to be used again in the Catholic Liturgy. The liturgical life of a parish must both embrace the vernacular and frequently present the Latin prayers of the Mass and liturgical music throughout the liturgical year.

On the subject of the use of Latin,

Pope Benedict once wrote:

*All the same I must admit that in the wake of the Council a lot of things happened far too quickly and abruptly, with the result that many of the faithful could not see the inner continuity with what had gone before.*

*In part it is simply a fact that the Council was pushed aside. For instance, it had said that the language of the Latin Rite was to remain Latin, although suitable scope was to be given to the vernacular.*

*Today we might ask: Is there a Latin Rite at all any more? Certainly there is not an awareness of it. (The Feast of Faith, 84)*

## The Sacred in Silence & Action

Silence is essential. There are moments when brief periods of silence are to take place within the Catholic Mass. In addition, we need to recapture the practice of silence before the Mass begins and after it is has ended. It is incorrect that social conversations take place in the church before Mass and after Mass. All social life can be conducted outside of the church before Mass begins, and all social life after Mass can take place outside of the church or in the parish hall.

Silence allows an individual to really encounter God will develop the community life of the parish. We cannot have an encounter with one another unless we can have an encounter with God. When we encounter the transcendent in the liturgy, we will automatically reach out to our brothers and sisters. But the encounter with God can only take place within silence.