



Catholic Diocese of Sioux Falls

Office of the Bishop

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September 29, 2011

Dear Priests and Deacons of the Diocese,

The most Holy Eucharist is the center, source, and summit of our lives as Catholics. It is the food which sustains us in our personal pilgrimage toward the promised land of Heaven. Coming to understand this, led to my conversion to the Catholic Faith. What is more, as I noted in my first pastoral letter, “joy comes in the Eucharist” (*That your joy may be complete*, 1) precisely because in and through the Eucharist we discover the living presence of the God who loves us in such a personal way that He humbly remains with us until the end of the age (cf. *Mt 28.20*).

Pope Benedict XVI reminded the entire Church of this centrality of the Eucharist when he wrote these moving words in his first apostolic exhortation:

‘The Eucharist draws us into Jesus’ act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate Logos, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving.’ Jesus ‘draws us into himself.’ The substantial conversion of bread and wine into his body and blood introduces within creation the principle of a radical change, a sort of ‘nuclear fission,’ to use an image familiar to us today, which penetrates to the heart of all being, a change meant to set off a process which transforms reality, a process leading ultimately to the transfiguration of the entire world, to the point where God will be all in all (cf. *1 Cor 15:28*) (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 11).

Unfortunately, at times we “undervalue the mystery entrusted” to us (cf. Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 52) and even become casual in our response to this true and real presence of God. Sadly, examples of this casualness can be found in our day. We see this in simple ways such as how we dress for Holy Mass or how we comport ourselves while in the church, for instance gum chewing when receiving Holy Communion or conversing loudly in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. We see it in more profound ways through the decrease in Mass attendance and in the short lines for Confession by which we properly prepare our hearts to receive Holy Communion. It is also revealed in certain abuses in the manner in which Holy Mass is celebrated while the liturgical norms of the Mass are not faithfully observed. All of this has led to the publication of certain magisterial documents, particularly, *The Collaboration of the non-ordained in the Sacred Ministry of Priests* (1997), *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (2003), *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (2004), *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007), and, in our own diocese, *Norms for the Purification of Vessels* (2006).

Recently it has been brought to my attention that that same casualness has crept into our own parishes and, in a particular way, in the ministry of extraordinary ministers distributing Holy Communion to the homebound and infirm. This realization evidences the need for a general examination in each parish of the formation it provides and the practices followed by extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

Thus, with this document, I issue the following norms that are effective immediately. These norms will also be incorporated into a forthcoming revision to the Diocesan policies relating to the celebration of the Mass.

I recognize that these norms may necessitate changes in some parish practices. However, they will better assure that the Blessed Sacrament is properly respected and protected.

Yours in Christ,

<signed copy on file at Chancery>

The Most Reverend Paul J. Swain
Bishop of Sioux Falls