

~ LITURGICAL PARTICIPATION ~
Doing our part regarding the revision of the Roman Missal

ROMAN MISSAL - THIRD EDITION

The celebration of Mass is an act of the whole assembly gathered for worship. In the Mass, the Church is joined to the action of Christ. We are joined to this divine action through Baptism, which incorporates us into the risen Christ. This action, which lies at “the center of the whole of Christian life” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [GIRM], no. 16), is initiated not by us but by God acting in and through the Church as the Body of the risen Christ. The Liturgy is designed to bring about in all those who make up the worshipping assembly a “participation of the faithful, namely in body and in mind, a participation fervent with faith, hope, and charity” (GIRM, no. 18). By such participation we make the actions and prayers of the Liturgy our own; we enter more fully into our personal communion with Christ’s redeeming act and perfect worship. The participation of each person in the Liturgy is important. Each person needs to do his or her part.

LITURGICAL MINISTRIES:

In addition to the ordained ministries, some roles in the Liturgy are exercised by lay people who place their time and talent at the service of the liturgical assembly as acolytes (altar servers), sacristans, lectors, Extraordinary Ministers, cantors, choir members, instrumentalists, leaders of song, and Hospitality Ministers. Others contribute their time and talent to planning and

organizing the Liturgy; to keeping the church and the vestments, vessels, and other items clean and well ordered; or to providing decorations that reflect the spirit of the liturgical feast or season. This variety of offices and roles is vital and should be maintained. A wide variety of services needs to be performed, and it is preferable that different individuals exercise those services so that the talents and gifts God has placed within the Christian community are fully used. Those engaged in liturgical roles need to be well prepared for those roles and to know how to carry them out with reverence, dignity, and understanding. All the baptized need to understand that part of their duty regarding the Liturgy is to accept some responsibility for the Liturgy, to place themselves and their God-given talents at the service of the liturgical community whenever possible. Not all members of the parish community will have the time, energy, strength, or ability to serve in certain roles. However, individuals must be careful not to excuse themselves too easily. It is important to understand that the celebration of Liturgy is not just the responsibility of the pastor, although he is delegated by the bishop to oversee the liturgical life of the parish. Pastors need the help of people who are serious about living out their baptismal right and responsibility to worship.

THE ROLE OF THE BAPTIZED:

All of the people who come together for Liturgy are more than spectators. “Full, conscious, and active participation” in the Liturgy (as commended by the Second Vatican Council) is not only their right but also their duty and their responsibility. That responsibility includes full engagement throughout the liturgical celebration. The baptized faithful who form the congregation are called to join in praise and thanksgiving, in song and spoken word, to listen attentively to God’s Word, and to exercise their baptismal priesthood in prayer for the Church, the world, and all in need during the General Intercessions.

In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the baptized faithful join their prayer to that of the priest celebrant, offering Christ the Victim, “not only by means of the hands of the priest but also together with him,” and offer themselves as well (GIRM, no. 95). Their participation culminates in the reception of the Body and Blood of the Lord, the sacrament that unites them more fully with Christ their Head and with one another. We need to be aware, therefore, that “participation” does not refer primarily to external activity or function during the celebration of Mass; rather, it refers to a deeply spiritual, interior participation of mind and heart, filled with devotion and penetrating the very depths of the mysteries we celebrate. The enthusiastic song and verbal responses made by the faithful with conviction can encourage others to sing and respond; their very presence at the celebration of Mass when so many other enticing options might have been chosen instead supports and reinforces others who

have made the same choice. The Liturgy, then, is about the action of God’s own people, each with different offices and roles. When we play our roles in the Liturgy with our bodies, minds, and hearts fully engaged, we take to God a perfect sacrifice of praise. Continue to keep watching the bulletin for more information regarding the revised Roman Missal.