

June, 2013 - Clergy Communications

Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest

As the Archdiocese of Cincinnati responds to the reality of fewer priests to celebrate Mass on Sundays and weekdays, the following norms should be followed with regard to Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest and weekday Liturgy of the Word celebrations with the distribution of Holy Communion.

1) *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest:*

Providing for the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday in every parish is of preeminent importance but, when this is not possible, normally people can travel to nearby parishes if Mass is not available in their parish church. Therefore, Archbishop Schnurr has not granted permission for this ritual to be celebrated in parishes, except in cases of genuine emergencies, such as a priest taking ill at the last minute. In the case of a genuine emergency the following procedures should be followed:

- If there is time, permission from the Chancellor should be obtained to provide a Sunday celebration in the absence of a priest.
- Sunday Mass schedules for nearby parishes should be announced to parishioners so that they can participate in the Sunday Eucharist at a nearby parish. (These Mass times should be posted in the sacristy and narthex of the church so that they can be easily found and announced in an emergency.)
- If there is an immediate emergency and a priest is not present to celebrate Mass, and if it is impractical for the Sunday assembly to travel to another parish church, then the *Rite for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* may be used. Parishes should notify the Chancery afterwards that such a celebration has taken place.
- If a celebration of this nature takes place, those who have gathered in the Church should be informed of the Mass schedules of nearby parishes and allowed to leave. Then for those who remain, a celebration may take place.
- It should be noted that the Sunday celebration in the absence of a priest does not fulfill the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday. Rather, when attendance at Mass on Sunday is deemed a genuine impossibility, Catholics are excused from the obligation.
- Only one such celebration may take place on a Sunday.

2) *Weekday Celebrations of the Liturgy of the Word with the Distribution of Holy Communion:*

A weekday celebration of a Liturgy of the Word with the distribution of Holy Communion may take place only if Mass is not celebrated in the parish on that day. Occasions such as priests' convocation, a priest's vacation, a priest's day off may give rise to such a celebration. However, the following norms should be observed:

- Normally, daily Mass should be celebrated in each parish/pastoral region.
- Daily Mass schedules for nearby parishes should be published so that people may participate in the celebration of the Eucharist if Mass is not being celebrated in the parish.
- If people are unable to participate in a Mass nearby, then a Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion may be celebrated in the parish.
- Whenever a Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion is celebrated, great care must be taken to avoid any confusion between the celebration of the Eucharist and a Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion.
- The appropriate ritual to use for a Liturgy of the Word with distribution of Holy Communion is found in *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*.
- It is appropriate to celebrate word services with the distribution of Holy Communion for those who are in nursing homes, hospitals, and other places where the distribution of Holy Communion takes place for those unable to gather with a parish community.