

WITH HUMBLE SPIRIT

AUGUST 2025

CALENDAR NOTES

AUG 6

Transfiguration of the Lord

- The Gloria is said.

AUG 15

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

- This is a Holyday of Obligation
- The Gloria and Creed are said.

Looking Ahead

- **BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR MASS** – It is customary to celebrate a Mass of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the Academic year (Votive Masses, #9). This may replace the assigned mass of any day noted V3 or V2 in the Ordo, (ie. any ferial or memorial).

ARS CELEBRANDI

THE CEREMONIAL OF BISHOPS

Q: Why should a priest be familiar with the Ceremonial of Bishops?

A: As the diocesan director of worship and my eighth year as Episcopal Master of Ceremonies, I've personally witnessed how understanding the Ceremonial of Bishops can elevate a priest's celebration of the Mass. The Ceremonial of Bishops is not exclusively reserved for bishops, masters of ceremonies, and those involved in planning episcopal liturgies. In fact, it offers immense benefits to all priests. By studying it, priests gain a deeper understanding of the liturgy's theological underpinnings and the rubrics, leading to a solemn, reverent, and transcendent celebration of the Mass. This heightened understanding fosters a stronger sense of their priestly identity in connection with their bishop, resulting in more solemn and unified parish celebrations.

The Ceremonial of Bishops (CB) expresses a theological perspective on the Church's liturgy, emphasizing the diocesan bishop's role as the high

priest and principal liturgist of the local Church. Vatican II decreed that "the bishop is to be considered as the high priest of his flock, from whom the life in Christ of his faithful is in some way derived and dependent" (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 41). As the high priest, the bishop is the primary steward of the Sacred Mysteries and the chief shepherd guiding his flock in offering proper worship to God the Father, through the Son, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. This role is particularly evident during the celebration of the Stational Mass, where the bishop is "surrounded by his college of presbyters and by his ministers, and with the full, active participation of all God's Holy People" (CB, 11). In these liturgical celebrations, the bishop's roles as teacher, sanctifier, and pastor of his Church are illuminated. "These celebrations should also serve as a model for the entire diocese and be shining examples of active participation by the people" (CB, 12). The entire liturgical life of the diocese should be made manifest in the liturgical celebrations of the bishop.

Additionally, the Ceremonial of Bishops provides deeper insight into rubrical gaps or silences that may be found in other liturgical books frequently used by priests. With respect to the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, for example, the Ceremonial of Bishops provides insight on two aspects: how a priest holds his hands during the Our Father and the use of psalm-prayers. The General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours lacks a rubric for the position of the hands while praying the Our Father. But the Ceremonial of Bishops states, "Customarily in the Church a bishop or presbyter address prayers to God while standing with hands slightly raised and outstretched" (CB, 104). Since the Our Father is addressed to God the Father, it is appropriate for a priest to have hands outstretched during the Our Father at Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer. This same principle could also be applied in the Order of the Baptism of Children which does not provide a rubric for the posture of a priest's hands during the Blessing of Water.

The General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours also mentions the use of psalm prayers "to help in understanding [the Psalms] in a predominantly Christian Way;" but it does not specify how they

should be used. The Ceremonial of Bishops, however, provides precise instructions on how a bishop uses the psalm prayers stating: “When the psalm prayers are used, after the repetition of the antiphon, the bishop puts aside the miter, rises, and once everyone else has stood says, Let us pray. After a brief pause for silent prayer by all, he says the prayer corresponding to the psalm or canticle” (CB, 198). A priest would follow the same rubric omitting the bishop-specific rubrics. These two clarifications given in the Ceremonial of Bishops are examples of valuable guidance to fill in these rubrical gaps in the Liturgy of the Hours.

Similarly, the Ceremonial of Bishops helps provide clarification on unclear or missing liturgical instructions in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. The latter text does provide clear instructions on the placement of the priest’s left hand during a blessing (GIRM, 167); however, it does not state how a priest should hold his right hand. Paragraph 108 of the Ceremonial of Bishops gives the posture for a bishop’s left hand when he makes the sign of the cross or when he gives a blessing, including a footnote that clarifies how the bishop—and, by extension, a priest or deacon—should hold his right hand: “If he blesses others or some object, he points the little finger at the person or thing to be blessed and in blessing extends the whole right hand with all the fingers joined and fully extended” (footnote 81: *Missale Romanum*, ed. 1962, *Ritus seroandus in celebratione Missae*, III, 5).

Still another instance of rubrical clarification is when a priest should join his hands during the recitation of the Collect, Prayer over the Offering, and Prayer after Communion. Both the Ceremonial of Bishops and the General Instruction of the Roman Missal are clear that when a bishop or priest says “Let us pray” his hands are joined, and when he says the prayer his hands are outstretched. But only the Ceremonial of Bishops further states, “for the conclusion of the prayer the bishop joins his hands, saying, We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ or other relevant words” (CB, 136). And again, after the chalice has been prepared and the bishop places it on the corporal, the chalice may be covered with a

pall. This is clearly stated in both the Ceremonial of Bishops and the General Instruction of the Roman Missal; however, the General Instruction of the Roman Missal is silent on when the pall should be removed. The Ceremonial of Bishop explains, “If the cup and ciborium are covered, a deacon uncovers them before the epiclesis” (CB, 155). These norms found in the Ceremonial of Bishops ensure that liturgical practices are carried out with consistency, reverence, and fidelity to the Church’s traditions.

The Ceremonial of Bishops is a rich resource for elevating the liturgy celebrated by parish priests. It can assist the priest in having a greater theological understanding of the liturgy to avoid a merely routine approach to the liturgy and it can provide insight to rubrical indeterminacies. Since the bishop’s liturgies are meant to serve as a model for the entire diocese, understanding the Ceremonial of Bishops provides the opportunity for each parish to celebrate a liturgy that is solemn, reverent, and transcendent. As *Presbyterorum Ordinis* urges, “Let priests take care so to foster a knowledge of and facility in the liturgy, that by their own liturgical ministry Christian communities entrusted to their care may ever more perfectly give praise to God, the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit” (5). Studying the Ceremonial of Bishops can help priests better understand that the liturgy is for the Glory of God and for the sanctification of his people.

—Answered by Father Gabriel Greer
Diocese of Wichita
on adoremus.org



2025 Discipleship Conference

August 9

OKC Convention Center

Priests are encouraged to attend! We will especially need help at the Mass with the distribution of Holy Communion and Confessions from 12 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. [Register here!](#)



Go Make Disciples

DIVINE WORSHIP

ARCHDIOCESE OF OKLAHOMA CITY

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