



Infifax



Physical Posture at the Time of Eucharistic Communion



The new translation of the Roman Missal became effective in October 2011 for the English-speaking faithful, according to the Third Typical Edition of 2002.

Number 43 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, that corresponds to N. 21 of the former version, deals with the question of the physical posture of the faithful at different times during the celebration. One of the main changes concerns the posture after the reception of Holy Communion: in some places, it has become the norm to remain standing until everyone has received communion.

In 2003, such a practice, that is an interpretation of the norm, provoked questions to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, responsible, as indicated by its name, for overseeing Catholic worship. The question was formulated as follows:

“In several places the faithful have the habit of kneeling or sitting in private prayer when they return to their place after receiving the Holy Eucharist during mass. Do the provisions of the Third Typical Edition of the Missal prohibit this practice?” (personal translation).

Here is the response:

No, according to the spirit (of the law).

“The rationale is that by the prescripts of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, N. 43 is intended to give, on the one hand, within broad limits some uniformity of posture in the congregation for the various parts of the celebration of the Holy Mass, and at the same time, on the other hand, not to regulate posture so rigidly that those who wish to remain kneeling or to sit would no longer be free to do so”.

(Latin text in the periodical *Notitiae*, from the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, Oct. 2003, n. 445-446, p. 533).

Number 43 of the GIRM indicates that it is “*the concern of the Conference of Bishops to adapt the gestures and postures described in the Ordinary of the Mass to the mentality and the rightful traditions of the people, according to the norm of law. Nevertheless, it will be ensured that they correspond to the meaning and character of the different parts of the celebration.*” (This text can be found in the Latin, French, Italian and Spanish versions).

Number 387 stipulates:

“The diocesan Bishop, who is to be regarded as the high priest of his flock, and from whom the life in Christ of the faithful under his care in a certain sense derives and upon whom it depends, must promote, regulate, and be vigilant over the liturgical life in his diocese. ... With him lies responsibility above all for fostering the spirit of the sacred Liturgy in the priests, deacons, and faithful”.

Unity of posture constitutes a practice that expresses the unity of the Body of Christ.

However, remaining standing is not always comfortable: meditation is more difficult, particularly when there is no singing. Waiting some time before being able to sit down is physically tiring, especially when there are many people. Finally, it may be tempting to watch the people walking to and from communion.

The lengthy practice of kneeling after receiving Holy Communion has important value in terms of adoration, piety and respect towards the Lord present in the Holy Eucharist.

Since this practice is still possible, favours meditation and highly corresponds with this particularly sacred time of the liturgy, I therefore invite the faithful who have received communion to kneel, once they have returned to their place, to join in the singing if there is any or remain in personal adoration of the Lord received in the Sacrament. Once the distribution of Holy Communion is concluded, the whole community is seated in a time of silent prayer or a song of thanksgiving.

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