
This past week, Bishop Daly sent a letter to the priests of the diocese regarding postures at Mass. In the letter, he communicated two minor changes that are to be introduced. The first change is from a standing to kneeling posture following the recitation of the Lamb of God. The faithful then are to remain kneeling until rising to go to communion. The second change of posture is that the faithful are to kneel, rather than stand, upon returning from receiving communion. These changes will begin on the First Sunday of Advent, December 3, 2017. Following are excerpts from the Bishop's letter.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) states that for dioceses in the United States, "The faithful kneel after the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) unless the Diocesan Bishop determines otherwise." I have decided to ask the faithful to kneel so as to be in harmony with most of the other dioceses in the United States. More importantly, I believe this posture of kneeling while the priest shows the Sacred Species to the people is a more accurate response to the declaration "*Ecce Agnus Dei.*" The translation of the Roman Missal, third typical edition, uses the word "behold" the Lamb of God instead of "this is" the Lamb of God. The word "behold" is a more accurate imperative which reflects the transcendent mystery before us – a mystery that should indeed drive us to our knees in love and adoration.

While kneeling can be an expression of penance, it can also reflect love and adoration. We see this when a young man traditionally kneels to propose marriage to his future bride or when a mother kneels to lovingly comfort a child who has skinned her knee.

I understand that the practice of standing until the last person receives is an expression of communion among the faithful. While that is a noble sentiment, I am concerned about those who are unable to stand because of advanced age or a physical handicap. I do not want the sick, elderly, and those with handicaps to feel further marginalized by their inability to physically demonstrate communion.

As I have celebrated Masses throughout eastern Washington, I have noticed that the lived experience of this practice in parishes is that some people stand, some sit, some kneel, and others just look confused. If anything, this practice has become an expression of disunity.

"I have also observed that the practice of standing after receiving Holy Communion has become clerical. It is very common for people to stand until the priest himself sits down rather than after the last layperson has received. This is not expressing unity with one another and, instead, takes on an unnecessary clerical focus.

Finally, in my experience as a pastor and bishop, I have noted a significant amount of anecdotal evidence which suggests that people much prefer the opportunity to return to their pew after receiving Holy Communion and kneel down for a brief moment of intimacy with the Lord. In a busy and loud world, I am in favor of supporting this quiet moment of love and thanksgiving before people then participate in the Communion hymn.

I hope this letter helps to explain my decision to ask all parishes throughout the Diocese of Spokane to kneel (if physically possible) after the Lamb of God and after receiving Holy Communion. This change should be implemented by the First Sunday of Advent, December 3, 2017. Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. Asking for the prayers of Our Lady of Lourdes, patroness of our diocese, I remain,



In Christ,

Most Reverend Thomas Daly
Bishop of Spokane