



NewsLetter

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Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery outside Mass to Be Implemented on the First Sunday of Advent 2024

After a standard editorial review process by the Secretariat of Divine Worship, along with additional dialogue with the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, a timeline has been set for the implementation of *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery outside Mass* (HCWEMOM), and was issued on January 25, 2024 in a decree of promulgation by Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, USCCB President.

The Holy See confirmed HCWEMOM for liturgical use in the United States on March 7, 2023 (Prot. n. 99/22); the text was received by the USCCB the following month and announced in the May-June 2023 *Newsletter*. Several U.S. adaptations were approved, almost all of them found in the Order of Eucharistic Exposition and Benediction in chapter III.

The goal of the adaptations is to harmonize the book with existing customs for Eucharistic Adoration in this country, for example:

- No. 92 – a rubric has been added to officially permit the priest or deacon to wear a white cope for Exposition;
- Nos. 93 and 97 – the lyrics of the traditional hymns *O salutaris Hostia* and *Tantum ergo Sacramentum*, in Latin and English, have been inserted; other Eucharistic hymns may continue to be used;
- No. 96 – clarifying instructions have been added for praying the *Liturgy of the Hours* during Adoration, especially Morning and Evening Prayer;
- No. 99 – the text of the Divine Praises has been inserted for use during Benediction;
- No. 100 – in addition to saying an acclamation, the people may alternatively sing a hymn as the minister withdraws after Benediction.

Ritual editions will go on sale beginning August 1, 2024, and its optional use will be permitted as of September 14, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The obligatory-use date of HCWEMOM has been established for the United States as the First Sunday of Advent, December 1.

Five publishers will produce liturgical books: Catholic Book Publishing Co., Liturgical Press, Liturgy Training Publications, Magnificat, and Midwest Theological Forum, and further information on their editions will be released in a future *Newsletter*.

The USCCB decree of promulgation is reprinted on the next page for the benefit of our readers:

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS
DECREE OF PROMULGATION

In accord with the norms established by the Holy See, this edition of *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery outside Mass* is declared to be the definitive approved English translation of *De sacra communione et de cultu mysterii eucharistici extra Missam, editio typica* (1973), and is hereby promulgated by authority of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery outside Mass was canonically approved for use by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on November 17, 2021, and was subsequently confirmed by the Apostolic See by decree of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on March 7, 2023 (Prot. n. 99/22).

This rite may be used in the Liturgy as of September 14, 2024, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, and its use is obligatory as of the First Sunday of Advent, December 1, 2024. From that date forward, no other English translation of the rite may be used in the dioceses of the United States of America.

Given at the General Secretariat of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC, on January 25, 2024, the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul the Apostle.

✠ Timothy P. Broglio
Archbishop for the Military Services, USA
President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Rev. Michael J.K. Fuller
General Secretary

Pastoral Note on the Passion Narratives

The Chairmen of the Committees on Divine Worship and Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs issued a memo to the publishers of worship aids, hymnals, and missals on February 1, 2023. The memo requires the following statement to be printed before the text of the Passion narrative on Good Friday in all future publications beginning in 2024. In the 1990s and again in the 2000s the Committees provided guidance on the preparation of homilies and created a similar statement to be included in worship aids alongside the proclamation of the passion during Holy Week to help ensure that the proclamation of the Lord's Passion is not misused to promote anti-Jewish sentiment. The statement is available in English and Spanish:

The passion narratives are proclaimed in full so that all see vividly the love of Christ for each person. In light of this, the crimes during the Passion of Christ cannot be attributed, in either preaching or catechesis, indiscriminately to all Jews of that time, nor to Jews today. The Jewish people should not be referred to as though rejected or cursed, as if this view followed from Scripture. The Church ever keeps in mind that Jesus, his mother Mary, and the apostles all were Jewish. As the Church has always held, Christ freely suffered his passion and death because of the sins of all, that all might be saved.

Las narraciones de la pasión se proclaman en su totalidad para que todos vean vívidamente el amor de Cristo por cada persona. A la luz de esto, los crímenes durante la Pasión de Cristo no pueden atribuirse, ni en la predicación ni en la catequesis, indiscriminadamente a todos los judíos de ese tiempo, ni a los judíos de hoy. El pueblo judío no debe ser referido como si fuera reprobado de Dios o maldito, como si este punto de vista se dedujera de las Sagradas Escrituras. La Iglesia siempre tiene en mente que Jesús, su madre María y los apóstoles eran todos judíos. Como la Iglesia siempre ha sostenido, Cristo sufrió libremente su pasión y muerte a causa de los pecados de todos, para que todos pudieran ser salvados.

Holy Communion outside Mass

Continuing the series on a catechetical review of the forthcoming Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery outside Mass, attention now turns to chapter I, “Holy Communion outside Mass.” Chapter II, “Administration of Communion and Viaticum to the Sick by an Extraordinary Minister,” was explored in the July–August and September 2023 issues of the Newsletter, and those from May, June, and July–August 2022 explored chapter III, “Various Forms of Worship of the Most Holy Eucharist.”

The term “Holy Communion” emphasizes the sacred bond of unity within the Church that we share as members of the Body of Christ: we commune with Christ, with one another, and with all the saints. As recipients we communally share in the Body and Blood of Christ, are transformed by it, and brought into union with Christ and his sacrifice on the cross.

The place where this communion normally occurs is at Mass. The purpose of our obligation on Sundays and holy days is to participate in the Paschal Mystery, the death and resurrection of our Lord, and this participation in the Paschal Mystery is recalled in the Eucharistic sacrifice and culminates in the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion. Because of the connection between sacrifice and communion, “[t]he faithful should be encouraged to receive Communion during the Eucharistic Celebration itself.”¹

Nevertheless, there are those who seek Holy Communion outside Mass for a just cause. Among these are persons who due to circumstances are legitimately prevented from attending: the sick and aged, those in imminent danger of death, prisoners, or any who cannot leave their place “without danger or grave difficulty.”² To those who are properly disposed and motivated by a just cause, priests should not deny Holy Communion; therefore, the Church provides ritual forms for the distribution of Holy Communion outside Mass.

The ritual book *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery outside Mass* provides several forms for the distribution of Holy Communion. Two of these forms are found in chapter I, “Holy Communion outside Mass.” The rites for the Administration of Communion and Viaticum to the Sick for lay ministers are found in chapter II of this ritual and also in *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum*.

Chapter I begins with an introduction, and then provides two ritual forms: “The Rite with a Fuller Celebration of the Word of God” and “The Rite with a Brief Celebration of the Word of God.” Hearing the proclamation of Sacred Scripture prepares and disposes the faithful for Eucharistic participation in the prayer of the Church, and so it is not neglected in either rite. The rites consist of four parts: the Introductory Rites, the Celebration of the Word of God (or the Shorter Reading of the Word of God), Holy Communion, and the Concluding Rites. The Introductory Rites begin with the sign of the cross, greeting, and penitential act, similar to the beginning of Mass. The Celebration of the Word of God in the fuller form may use the readings from the Mass of the day, from a votive Mass relating to the Eucharistic Mystery, or other fitting selections taken from the *Lectionary*. One or more readings may be used and, if appropriate, followed by silence. In the brief celebration, the Shorter Reading of the Word of God consists of a Scripture reading of only one or a few verses. In both forms, the Liturgy of the Word concludes with the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful). Holy Communion begins with the Lord’s Prayer, then an optional sign of peace (in the fuller form only), *Behold the Lamb of God* and its response, the distribution of Holy Communion, an optional hymn of praise, and ends with a concluding prayer. The Concluding Rites are a blessing and dismissal. For the opening greeting and the final blessing, there are different texts given for ordinary and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

¹ *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery outside Mass* (HCWEMOM), no. 14; cf. *Redemptionis sacramentum*, no. 88; *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 55; Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium*, no. 31: *AAS* 59 (1967), pg. 558; Pontifical Commission for the Authentic Interpretation of the Code of Canon Law, Response to dubium, June 1, 1988: *AAS* 80 (1988), pg. 1373.

² HCWEMOM, no. 18.

While the distribution of Holy Communion outside Mass to *individuals* by ordinary ministers and duly deputed extraordinary ministers does not require the permission of the diocesan bishop, the celebration of “The Rite with a Fuller Celebration of the Word of God” by deacons and extraordinary ministers on Sundays and weekdays does. On Sundays, these celebrations in the absence of a priest “are to be conducted only in virtue of their convocation by the bishop and only under the pastoral ministry of the pastor.”³ According to *Redemptionis sacramentum*, the matter of distributing Communion within a Liturgy of the Word in the absence of a priest belongs to the exclusive competence of the diocesan bishop, and he must not easily grant permission for these celebrations on weekdays.⁴

In 2000, the then-NCCB Committee on the Liturgy provided additional pastoral considerations regarding these celebrations.⁵ The Committee notes that it is usually not appropriate for these celebrations to occur if Mass has been or will be celebrated at the sacred place, and, when the celebration of Mass at a parish church is not possible on a weekday, it is frequently more fitting to direct parishioners to nearby locations with the celebration of the Eucharist. Additionally, when, after careful discernment, it is clear that pastoral need requires such a celebration, it is important to underline that the Liturgy of the Word with the distribution of Communion is not a substitute for the celebration of the Eucharist.

In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, Pope Benedict XVI underlines the importance of the distribution and reception of the Eucharist: “I ask everyone, especially ordained ministers and those who, after adequate preparation and in cases of genuine need, are authorized to exercise the ministry of distributing the Eucharist, to make every effort to ensure that this simple act preserves its importance as a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus in the sacrament.”⁶ The reception of Holy Communion as a personal encounter is preserved by the distribution’s liturgical form. Indeed, Pope Francis writes in *Desiderio desideravi*:

The Liturgy guarantees for us the possibility of such an encounter. For us a vague memory of the Last Supper would do no good. We need to be present at that Supper, to be able to hear his voice, to eat his Body and to drink his Blood. We need Him. In the Eucharist and in all the sacraments we are guaranteed the possibility of encountering the Lord Jesus and of having the power of his Paschal Mystery reach us... It is the concrete way, by means of his incarnation, that he loves us. It is the way in which he satisfies his own thirst for us that he had declared from the cross (Jn 19:28).⁷

As a personal encounter with the Lord, the reception of the Eucharist is an occasion that raises up and restores the faithful to union with him. It is an object of faith and love and an opportunity for thanksgiving with singing or silent reflection. As a sacramental sign, the experience should lead the communicant to recall the Lord, reflecting on how he has chosen to interact with various people in the Gospels, to heal and to save them, just as he acts to heal and to save us with his divine power.

The importance of frequent, devout, worthy, and fruitful reception of Holy Communion is an essential part of living the Christian life.⁸ Consequently, the Church makes available the possibility of reception of Holy Communion outside Mass, with prudent pastoral discernment for the care of the faithful, so that God’s grace may abound in their lives.



³ Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest (1988), no. 24.

⁴ *Redemptionis sacramentum*, no. 166.

⁵ March 2000 Newsletter: found in *30 Years of the BCL Newsletter*, pgs. 1680-1682; also available online: USCCB.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/frequently-asked-questions/weekday-celebrations-in-the-absence-of-a-priest.

⁶ *Sacramentum caritatis*, no. 50.

⁷ No. 11.

⁸ Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 10; *Lumen gentium*, no. 11.