



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

It is a pleasure to present these Liturgical Norms and Policies for use in the Archdiocese of Washington. They reflect the liturgical and canonical directives of the Church Universal, norms emanating from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and our own archdiocesan policies.

Since by baptism we are adopted children of God, we can rejoice in the very life of God. We do this through the spiritual action of the Church, her Liturgy. Here we encounter Christ with us in a way that actually transforms us, making us one with him. The sacraments are unique in that they realize what they signify.

Just as the Word took on a human body and became man, so too the Church, the continuing presence of the Risen Lord, takes on the elements of the Liturgy to continue the work of Jesus. The Church uses words, signs, symbols, and all forms of reality to accomplish her work — just as her Divine Founder did. We call this mysterious working of God's grace through human words and actions the Liturgy.

We can readily see how significant Liturgy is. We are a people formed by Christ into his new body — his Church. He calls us together so that we might not only profess our faith in him but also worship the Father as Christ's new body — members and head. While not diminishing the importance of individual private prayer, liturgical prayer is meant to be the pre-eminent way in which we join ourselves to Christ in the worship of God.

Several years ago in consultation with the archdiocesan Priest Council, it was determined that the norms and policies of the archdiocese needed to be updated to reflect more fully recent developments in the Liturgy as expressed in directives, particularly from the Apostolic See. A task force involving pastors and archdiocesan officials began the work of reviewing all of the previous policy. These *Liturgical Norms and Policies* are the fruit of this effort and were reviewed by Priest Council and emendations to the text were made following those discussions. The present text is now promulgated for use in the Archdiocese of Washington effective Monday, February 22, 2010, the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter.

Liturgical norms are intended to facilitate the Church at worship and to reflect, as the Second Vatican Council in its *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* taught, how the realities of prayer, community and sacramentality converge in the Liturgy. Here the Church speaks of the very presence of Christ in the Liturgy. “Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her Liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass.... By his power he is present in the sacraments.... He is present in his word.... He is present finally when the Church prays and sings, for he promised: ‘Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them’ (Matt 20:18).” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7)

Liturgy, the most perfect ecclesial act of worship, is the action of the Church as it publicly worships uniting itself to its Spouse and Head, Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that the Council proclaims: “Rightly, then, the Liturgy is considered as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ.” (SC 7)

Liturgical norms and policies exist to assist every minister to celebrate faithfully and devoutly the sacred mysteries according to the tradition of the Church. Policies are practical expressions of the communion we share and that communion is the context of our liturgical celebrations.

In providing these *Liturgical Norms and Policies*, my hope is that they will be of benefit to all of us as we seek worthily to administer the sacred mysteries. For that reason, there is extensive explanatory material to provide the theological and catechetical context for these norms.

As these norms and policies take effect, we thank God for the great gift of his Church that guides and nurtures us in the wondrous mystery of Christ’s enduring presence with his people that is the Liturgy.

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald Wuerl", with a small cross symbol to the left of the first letter.

Archbishop of Washington

January 25, 2010
The Conversion of Saint Paul