

Bishop Thomas Daly has instructed the priests of the Spokane Diocese to implement a couple of liturgical changes regarding the issue of postures at Mass. He writes:

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) states that for dioceses in the United States, “The faithful kneel after the 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 ... 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.

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.

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.

This change may be difficult for some to accept. For others it is very welcome. Regardless of our opinion I ask you to join me our bishop’s desire for uniformity throughout our diocese. It may take a few weeks for us to all remember but soon it will become second nature.

Fr Mike