

# *Alter Christus*

*“As an **alter Christus** (another Christ) the priest is in Christ, for Christ and with Christ... Because he belongs to Christ, the priest is radically at the service of all people: he is the minister of their salvation” (Pope Benedict XVI)*

Monthly bulletin dedicated to all the Priests of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

---

## *The Proper Celebration of Mass*

**By John Paul II**

[From the Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum*]

**On certain matters to be observed  
or to be avoided regarding the  
Most Holy Eucharist**

**The Matter of the  
Most Holy Eucharist**

[48.] The bread used in the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharistic Sacrifice must be

unleavened, purely of wheat, and recently made so that there is no danger of decomposition. It follows therefore that bread made from another substance, even if it is grain, or if it is mixed with another substance different from wheat to such an extent that it would not commonly be considered wheat bread, does not constitute valid matter for confecting the Sacrifice and the Eucharistic Sacrament.

[49.] By reason of the sign, it is appropriate that at least some parts of the Eucharistic Bread coming from the fraction should be distributed to at least some of the faithful in Communion. “Small hosts are, however, in no way ruled out when the number of those receiving Holy Communion or other pastoral needs require it”, and indeed small hosts requiring no further fraction ought customarily to be used for the most part.

[50.] The wine that is used in the most sacred celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice must be natural, from the fruit of the grape, pure and incorrupt, not mixed with other substances. During the celebration itself, a small quantity of water is to be mixed with it. Great care should be taken so that the wine intended for the celebration of the Eucharist is well conserved and has not soured. It is altogether forbidden to use wine of doubtful authenticity or provenance,

### Author: Saint John Paul II

Karol J. Wojtyla, known as John Paul II since his October 1978 election to the papacy, was born on May 18, 1920. On July 4, 1958, he was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Cracow by Pope Pius XII, and was consecrated on September 28, 1958. On January 13, 1964, he was nominated Archbishop of Cracow by Pope Paul VI, who made him a cardinal June 26, 1967. His principal documents include 14 encyclicals, 13 apostolic exhortations, 11 apostolic constitutions and 42 apostolic letters.



On May 1, 2011, Pope Benedict XVI beatified Pope John Paul II, and Pope Francis canonized Saint John Paul II alongside Saint John XXIII on April 27, 2014.

“Everyone knows John Paul II: his face, his characteristic way of moving and speaking; his immersion in prayer and his spontaneous cheerfulness. Many of his words have become indelibly engraved in our memories, starting with the passionate cry with which he introduced himself to the people at the beginning of his pontificate: ‘Open wide the doors to Christ, and be not afraid of him!’ Or this saying: ‘No one can

live a trial life; no one can love experimentally.’ An entire pontificate is condensed in words like these. It is as though he would like to open the doors for Christ everywhere and wishes to open up to people the gate that leads to true life, to true love.” (Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI)

for the Church requires certainty regarding the conditions necessary for the validity of the sacraments. Nor are other drinks of any kind to be admitted for any reason, as they do not constitute valid matter.

### The Eucharistic Prayer

[51.] Only those Eucharistic Prayers are to be used which are found in the Roman Missal or are legitimately approved by the Apostolic See, and according to the manner and the terms set forth by it. “It is not to be tolerated that some Priests take upon themselves the right to compose their own Eucharistic Prayers” (Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Vicesimus quintus annus*, n. 13) or to change the same texts approved by the Church, or to introduce others composed by private individuals (S. Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, Instruction *Inaestimabile donum*).

**The reprobated practice by which Priests, Deacons or the faithful here and there alter or vary at will the texts of the Sacred Liturgy that they are charged to pronounce, must cease. For in doing thus, they render the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy unstable, and not infrequently distort the authentic meaning of the Liturgy.**

[52.] The proclamation of the Eucharistic Prayer, which by its very nature is the climax of the whole celebration, is proper to the Priest by virtue of his Ordination. It is therefore an abuse to proffer it in such a way that some parts of the Eucharistic Prayer are recited by a Deacon, a lay minister, or by an individual member of the faithful, or by all members of the faithful together. The Eucharistic Prayer, then, is to be recited by the Priest alone in full.

[53.] While the Priest proclaims the Eucharistic Prayer “there should be no other prayers or singing, and the organ or other musical instruments should be silent”, except for the people’s acclamations that have been duly approved, as described below.

[55.] In some places there has existed an abuse by which the Priest breaks the host at the time of the consecration in the Holy Mass. This

abuse is contrary to the tradition of the Church. It is reprobated and is to be corrected with haste.

### **The Other Parts of the Mass**

[59.] The reprobated practice by which Priests, Deacons or the faithful here and there alter or vary at will the texts of the Sacred Liturgy that they are charged to pronounce, must cease. For in doing thus, they render the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy unstable, and not infrequently distort the authentic meaning of the Liturgy.

[60.] In the celebration of Mass, the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are intimately connected to one another, and form one single act of worship. For this reason it is not licit to separate one of these parts from the other and celebrate them at different times or places. Nor is it licit to carry out the individual parts of Holy Mass at different times of the same day.

[62.] It is also illicit to omit or to substitute the prescribed biblical readings on one's own initiative, and especially "to substitute other, non-biblical texts for the readings and responsorial Psalm, which contain the word of God" (*Missale Romanum, Institutio Generalis*, n. 57).

**In some places there has existed an abuse by which the Priest breaks the host at the time of the consecration in the Holy Mass. This abuse is contrary to the tradition of the Church. It is reprobated and is to be corrected with haste.**

[63.] "Within the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, the reading of the Gospel, which is "the high point of the Liturgy of the Word", is reserved by the Church's tradition to an ordained minister. Thus it is not permitted for a layperson, even a religious, to proclaim the Gospel reading in the celebration of Holy Mass, nor in

other cases in which the norms do not explicitly permit it.

[64.] The homily, which is given in the course of the celebration of Holy Mass and is a part of the Liturgy itself, "should ordinarily be given by the Priest celebrant himself. He may entrust it to a concelebrating

Priest or occasionally, according to circumstances, to a Deacon, but never to a layperson.

[66.] The prohibition of the admission of laypersons to preach within the Mass applies also to seminarians, students of theological disciplines, and those who have assumed the function of those known as “pastoral assistants”; nor is there to be any exception for any other kind of layperson, or group, or community, or association.

[68.] The diocesan Bishop must diligently oversee the preaching of the homily, also publishing norms and distributing guidelines and auxiliary tools to the sacred ministers, and promoting meetings and other projects for this purpose so that they may have the opportunity to consider the nature of the homily more precisely and find help in its preparation.

[70.] The offerings that Christ’s faithful are accustomed to present for

the Liturgy of the Eucharist in Holy Mass are not necessarily limited to bread and wine for the eucharistic celebration, but may also include gifts given by the faithful in the form of money or other things for the sake of charity toward the poor. In order to preserve the dignity of the Sacred Liturgy, in any event, the external

offerings should be brought forward in an appropriate manner.

[71.] The practice of the Roman Rite is to be maintained according to which the peace is extended shortly before Holy C o m m u n i o n . For according to the tradition of the Roman Rite, this practice does not have the

connotation either of reconciliation or of a remission of sins, but instead signifies peace, communion and charity before the reception of the Most Holy Eucharist. It is rather the Penitential Act to be carried out at the beginning of Mass (especially in its first form) which has the character of reconciliation among brothers and sisters.

**It is also illicit to omit or to substitute the prescribed biblical readings on one’s own initiative, and especially “to substitute other, non-biblical texts for the readings and responsorial Psalm, which contain the word of God.**

[73.] In the celebration of Holy Mass the breaking of the Eucharistic Bread – done only by the Priest celebrant, if necessary with the help of a Deacon or of a concelebrant – begins after the exchange of peace, while the Lamb of God is being recited. For this reason the rite must be carried out with great reverence. Even so, it should be brief. The abuse that has prevailed in some places, by which this rite is unnecessarily prolonged and given undue emphasis, with laypersons also helping in contradiction to the norms, should be corrected with all haste.

[74.] If the need arises for the gathered faithful to be given instruction or testimony by a layperson in a Church concerning the Christian life, it is altogether preferable that this be done outside Mass. Nevertheless, for serious reasons it is permissible that this type of instruction or testimony be given after the Priest has proclaimed the Prayer after

Communion. This should not become a regular practice, however. Furthermore, these instructions and testimony should not be of such a nature that they could be confused with the homily, nor is it permissible to dispense with the homily on their account.

[77.] Mass is not to be celebrated without grave necessity on a dinner table nor in a dining room or banquet hall, nor in a room where food is present, nor in a place where the participants during the celebration itself are seated at tables. If out of grave necessity Mass must be celebrated in the same place where eating will later take place, there is to be a clear interval of time between the conclusion of Mass and the beginning of the meal, and ordinary food is not to be set before the faithful during the celebration of Mass.

[79.] Finally, it is strictly to be considered an abuse to introduce into the celebration of Holy Mass

***It is not licit for the faithful to take by themselves and, still less, to hand from one to another the sacred host or the sacred chalice.***

***The communicant must not be permitted to intinct the host himself in the chalice, nor to receive the intincted host in the hand.***

elements that are contrary to the prescriptions of the liturgical books and taken from the rites of other religions.

## Holy Communion

### Dispositions for the Reception of Holy Communion

[81.] The Church's custom shows that it is necessary for each person to examine himself at depth, and that anyone who is conscious of grave sin should not celebrate or receive the Body of the Lord without prior sacramental confession, except for grave reason when the possibility of confession is lacking; in this case he will remember that he is bound by the obligation of making an act of perfect contrition, which includes the intention to confess as soon as possible". (Cf. Code of Canon Law, can. 916)

[84.] Furthermore when Holy Mass is celebrated for a large crowd - for example, in large cities - care should be taken lest out of ignorance non-Catholics or even non-Christians come forward for Holy Communion, without taking into account the Church's Magisterium in matters pertaining to doctrine and discipline.

### The distribution of Holy Communion

[88.] It is the Priest celebrant's responsibility to minister Communion, perhaps assisted by other Priests or Deacons; and he should not resume the Mass until after the Communion of the faithful is concluded. Only when there is a necessity may extraordinary ministers assist the Priest celebrant in accordance with the norm of law.

[89.] "So that even by means of the signs Communion may stand out more clearly as a participation in the Sacrifice being celebrated", it is preferable that the faithful be able to receive hosts consecrated in the same Mass.

[90.] "The faithful should receive Communion kneeling or standing, as the Conference of Bishops will have determined", with its acts having received the recognitio of the Apostolic See.

[92.] Although each of the faithful always has the right to receive Holy Communion on the tongue, at his choice, if any communicant should wish to receive the Sacrament in the hand, in areas where the Bishops' Conference with the *recognitio* of the

Apostolic See has given permission, the sacred host is to be administered to him or her. However, special care should be taken to ensure that the host is consumed by the communicant in the presence of the minister, so that no one goes away carrying the Eucharistic species in his hand. If there is a risk of profanation, then Holy Communion should not be given in the hand to the faithful.

[94.] It is not licit for the faithful “to take by themselves and, still less, to hand from one to another” the sacred host or the sacred chalice. (Missale Romanum, *Institutio Generalis*, n. 160)

### **The Communion of Priests**

[98.] The Communion of Priest concelebrants should proceed according to the norms prescribed in the liturgical books, always using hosts consecrated at the same Mass and always with Communion under both kinds being received by all of the concelebrants.

### **Communion under Both Kinds**

[104.] The communicant must not be permitted to intinct the host himself in the chalice, nor to receive the intincted host in the hand. As for the host to be used for the intinction, it should be made of valid matter, also consecrated; it is altogether forbidden to use non-consecrated bread or other matter.

### **Sacred Vessels**

[117.] Sacred vessels for containing the Body and Blood of the Lord must be made in strict conformity with the norms of tradition and of the liturgical books. (...) It is strictly required, however, that such materials be truly noble in the common

estimation within a given region, so that honour will be given to the Lord by their use, and all risk of diminishing the doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharistic species in the eyes of the faithful will be avoided. Reprobated, therefore, is any practice of using for the celebration of Mass common vessels,

***The Communion of Priest concelebrants should proceed according to the norms prescribed in the liturgical books, always using hosts consecrated at the same Mass and always with Communion under both kinds being received by all of the concelebrants.***



or others lacking in quality, or devoid of all artistic merit or which are mere containers, as also other vessels made from glass, earthenware, clay, or other materials that break easily.

### Liturgical Vesture

[124.] A faculty is given in the Roman Missal for the Priest concelebrants at Mass other than the principal concelebrant (who should always put on a chasuble of the prescribed colour), for a just reason such as a large number of concelebrants or a lack of vestments, to omit “the chasuble, using the stole over the alb”.

[126.] The abuse is reprobated whereby the sacred ministers celebrate Holy Mass or other rites without sacred vestments or with only a stole over the monastic cowl or the common habit of religious or ordinary clothes, contrary to the prescriptions of the liturgical books, even when there is only one minister participating.

***The abuse is reprobated whereby the sacred ministers celebrate Holy Mass or other rites without sacred vestments or with only a stole over the monastic cowl or the common habit of religious or ordinary clothes, contrary to the prescriptions of the liturgical books.***

[128.] It is preferable therefore that “Priests who are present at a Eucharistic Celebration, unless excused for a good reason, should as a rule exercise the office proper to their Order and thus take part as concelebrants, wearing the sacred vestments. Otherwise, they wear their proper choir dress or a surplice over a cassock.” It is not fitting, except in rare and exceptional cases and with reasonable cause, for them to participate at Mass, as regards to externals, in the manner of the lay faithful.

This Instruction, prepared by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments by mandate of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II in collaboration with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, was approved by the same Pontiff on the Solemnity of St. Joseph, 19 March 2004, and he ordered it to be published and to be observed immediately by all concerned.