

*Participating Fully,
Consciously and Actively
in the Mass*

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How we often preside and participate

For many Catholics, the high points of the mass are the consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ and the reception of communion. Whether they receive communion from the tabernacle or the altar doesn't matter to them, as long as they are sharing in the gift of the real presence.

Participating as a priest

“Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the nature of the liturgy itself, and to which the Christian people, ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people’ (1 Peter 2:9; cf. 4-5) have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism.” SC 14.

Give thanks and offer

“In the celebration of Mass the faithful form a holy people, a people of God’s own possession and a royal Priesthood, so that they may give thanks to God and offer the unblemished sacrificial Victim not only by means of the hands of the Priest but also together with him and so that they may learn [*discant*] to offer their very selves.” GIRM 95.

The Sacrifice of Christ

“At the Last Supper, Our Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood, by which the Sacrifice of his Cross is perpetuated until he comes again; and till then he entrusts the memorial of his Death and Resurrection to his beloved spouse, the Church.” SC 47

Priest and people

Especially at the eucharistic prayer, “the whole congregation of the faithful joins with Christ in confessing the great deeds of God and in the offering of Sacrifice” (GIRM 78).



GIRM 78

The Priest calls upon the people to lift up their hearts towards the Lord in prayer and thanksgiving; he associates the people with himself in the Prayer that he addresses in the name of the entire community to God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit



EUCHARISTIÆ PARTICIPATIONEM

17. In reciting prayers, especially the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest must avoid not only a dry, monotonous style of reading but an overly subjective and emotional manner of speaking and acting as well. As he presides over the function, he must be careful in reading, singing or acting to help the participants form a true community, celebrating and living the memorial of the Lord.

Offering Christ

Eucharistic Prayer III:
“we offer you in
thanksgiving this holy
and living sacrifice”

Prayer IV: “we offer
you his Body and
Blood, the sacrifice
acceptable to you.”



Offering themselves

Sacrifice doesn't have to hurt

Time, talent and treasure

People offer themselves “by their deep religious sense and their charity toward brothers and sisters who participate with them in the same celebration” (GIRM 95).

Procession of the gifts - a sign of ourselves

What we give

- GIRM 73: Even though the faithful no longer bring from their own possessions the bread and wine intended for the liturgy as was nevertheless the rite of carrying up the offerings still keeps its spiritual efficacy and significance.



Placing the bread and wine on the altar

The Priest accepts the paten with the bread at the altar, holds it slightly raised above the altar with both hands and says quietly... *Blessed are you, Lord God.* Then he places the paten with the bread on the corporal. (GIRM 141)

...He returns to the middle of the altar and with both hands raises the chalice a little, and says quietly, ...*Blessed are you, Lord God.* Then he places the chalice on the corporal.... (GIRM 142)

Offering ourselves

“by the mercies of God. . . offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship” (Romans 12:1)

Prayer I: “accept this oblation of our service.”

Prayer III: “make of us an eternal offering to you.”

Uniting our sacrifices

“With humble spirit and contrite heart may we be accepted by you, O Lord, and may our sacrifice in your sight this day be pleasing to you, Lord God.”

Pray “that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.”

Second Prayer for Masses of Reconciliation:
“accept us also, together with your Son.”

Incense

The Collect

“Next the Priest calls upon the people to pray and everybody, together with the Priest, observes a brief silence so that they may become aware of being in God’s presence and may call to mind their intentions.” GIRM 54

The Universal Prayer

“In the Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful, the people respond in some sense to the Word of God which they have received in faith and, exercising the office of their baptismal Priesthood, offer prayers to God for the salvation of all.” GIRM 69

Praying as priests

Eucharistic Prayer III prays for “the peace and salvation of the world,” the “pilgrim Church on earth,” “this family,” God’s “children scattered throughout the world,” “our departed brothers and sisters,” and even those outside the Christian family who were pleasing to God “at their passing from this life.”

Communion

“It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the Priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord’s Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the cases where this is foreseen, they partake of the chalice (cf. no. 283), so that even by means of the signs Communion may stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated.” GIRM 85

Breaking bread, GIRM 321

[It] is desirable that the Eucharistic bread... be fashioned in such a way that the Priest at Mass with the people is truly able to break it into parts and distribute these to at least some of the faithful... Moreover, the gesture of the fraction or breaking of bread, which was quite simply the term by which the Eucharist was known in apostolic times, will bring out more clearly the force and importance of the sign of the unity of all in the one bread, and of the sign of charity by the fact that the one bread is distributed...

The tabernacle

“It is preferable that the tabernacle be located, according to the judgment of the Diocesan Bishop: a) either in the sanctuary, apart from the altar of celebration, in an appropriate form and place, not excluding its being positioned on an old altar no longer used for celebration (cf. no. 303); b) or even in some chapel suitable for the private adoration and prayer of the faithful and organically connected to the church and readily noticeable by the Christian faithful.” GIRM 315

The altar (GIRM 299, 307)

“The altar should occupy a place where it is truly the center toward which the attention of the whole congregation of the faithful naturally turns.”

“The candlesticks should be appropriately placed... so that... the faithful may not be impeded from a clear view of what takes place at the altar or what is placed upon it.”

People gather at the table of communion and at the altar of sacrifice

Genuflection - GIRM 274

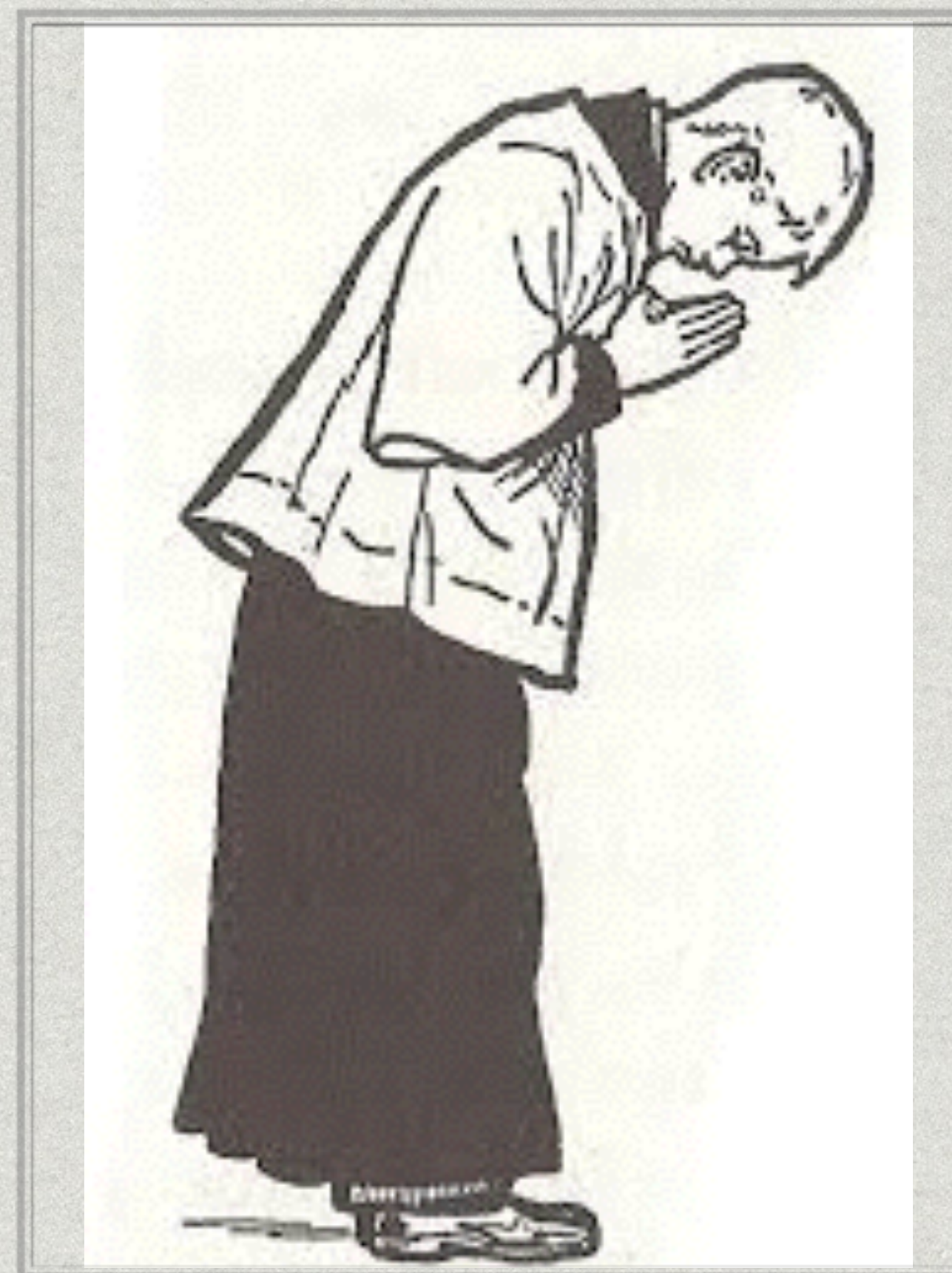
During Mass, three genuflections are made by the Priest Celebrant: namely, after the elevation of the host, after the elevation of the chalice, and before Communion. Certain specific features to be observed in a concelebrated Mass are noted in their proper place (cf. nos. 210–251).

If, however, the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is situated in the sanctuary, the Priest, the Deacon, and the other ministers genuflect when they approach the altar and when they depart from it, but not during the celebration of Mass itself.

Otherwise, all who pass before the Most Blessed Sacrament genuflect, unless they are moving in procession.

Bowing to the altar

Ceremonial of Bishops 72: "A deep bow is made to the altar by all who enter the sanctuary (chancel), leave it, or pass before the altar."



Showing and raising the elements

OM 23: “The Priest, standing at the altar, takes the paten with the bread and holds it slightly raised above the altar [*aliquantulum elevatam super altare tenet*] with both hands, saying in a low voice: ‘Blessed are you, Lord God. . . .’”

OM 89: “He shows the consecrated host to the people [*ostendit populo*], places it again on the paten, and genuflects in adoration.”

OM 98: “He takes the chalice and the paten with the host and, raising both [*elevans parum*], he says: ‘Through him. . . .’”

OM 132 “The Priest genuflects, takes the host and, holding it slightly raised [*aliquantulum elevatam*] above the paten or above the chalice, while facing the people, says aloud: ‘Behold the Lamb of God. . . .’”

3 dynamics of the institution narrative

- * Structure
 - * part of the praise we give God while making our petition
 - * one of God's great works is the institution of the eucharist
 - * the command of Jesus explains why we call on the Spirit today

✱ Drama

- ✱ consecratory function of the words
- ✱ taking elements in hand, repeating words of Jesus, enunciating them, lifting eyes and “this precious chalice” in Eucharistic Prayer I

✱ Devotion

- ✱ consecratory result of the words
- ✱ kneeling of the congregation, bowing slightly, genuflections (now reduced in number), showing the elements, optional ringing of bells (not 3 times), optional incense

- * Some add to the drama
 - * Priests looking at the faithful, or breaking the bread
- * Others add to the devotion
 - * Priests extending the showing and genuflections
 - * People bowing their head, striking their breast, whispering “My Lord and my God”

- *Structure, though, is memorial and thanksgiving
- *Restraint in post-conciliar rubrics
- *Choices about eyes, showing, bells, genuflection, incense

The Body and Blood

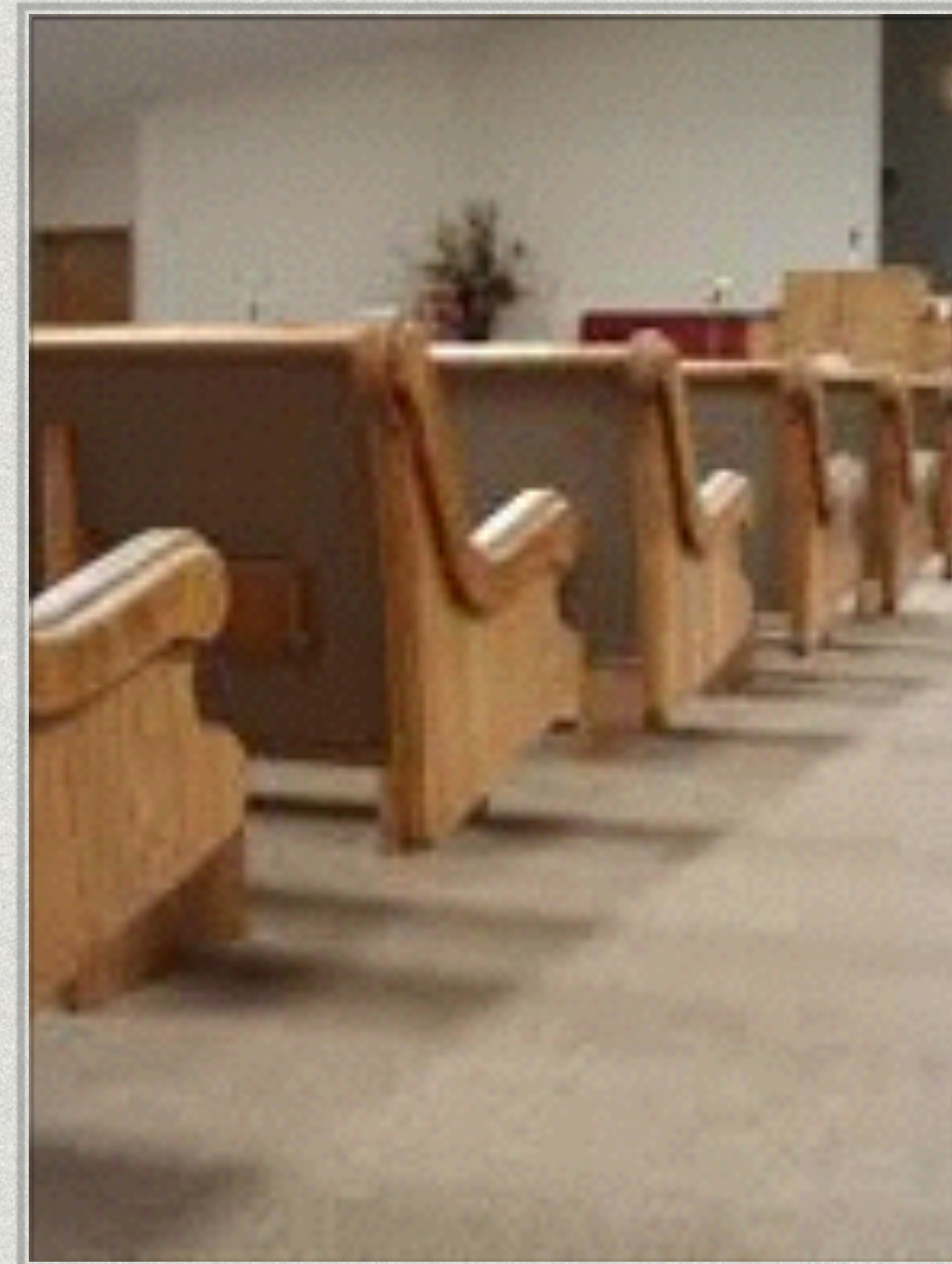
Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it takes place under both kinds. For in this form the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clearer expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord, as also the connection between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Kingdom of the Father (GIRM 281).

Concrete ways to enhance participation

- * Where you sit
- * Candlesticks
- * Dialogues
- * Collect
- * Bows to altar
- * Universal prayer
- * Collection
- * Procession of the gifts
- * Use of corporal
- * Eucharistic prayer
- * Priest breaking bread
- * Size of hosts
- * Tabernacle
- * Both forms

Where you sit

If people are active participants in the celebration of the eucharist, they should sit as close to the altar as possible.



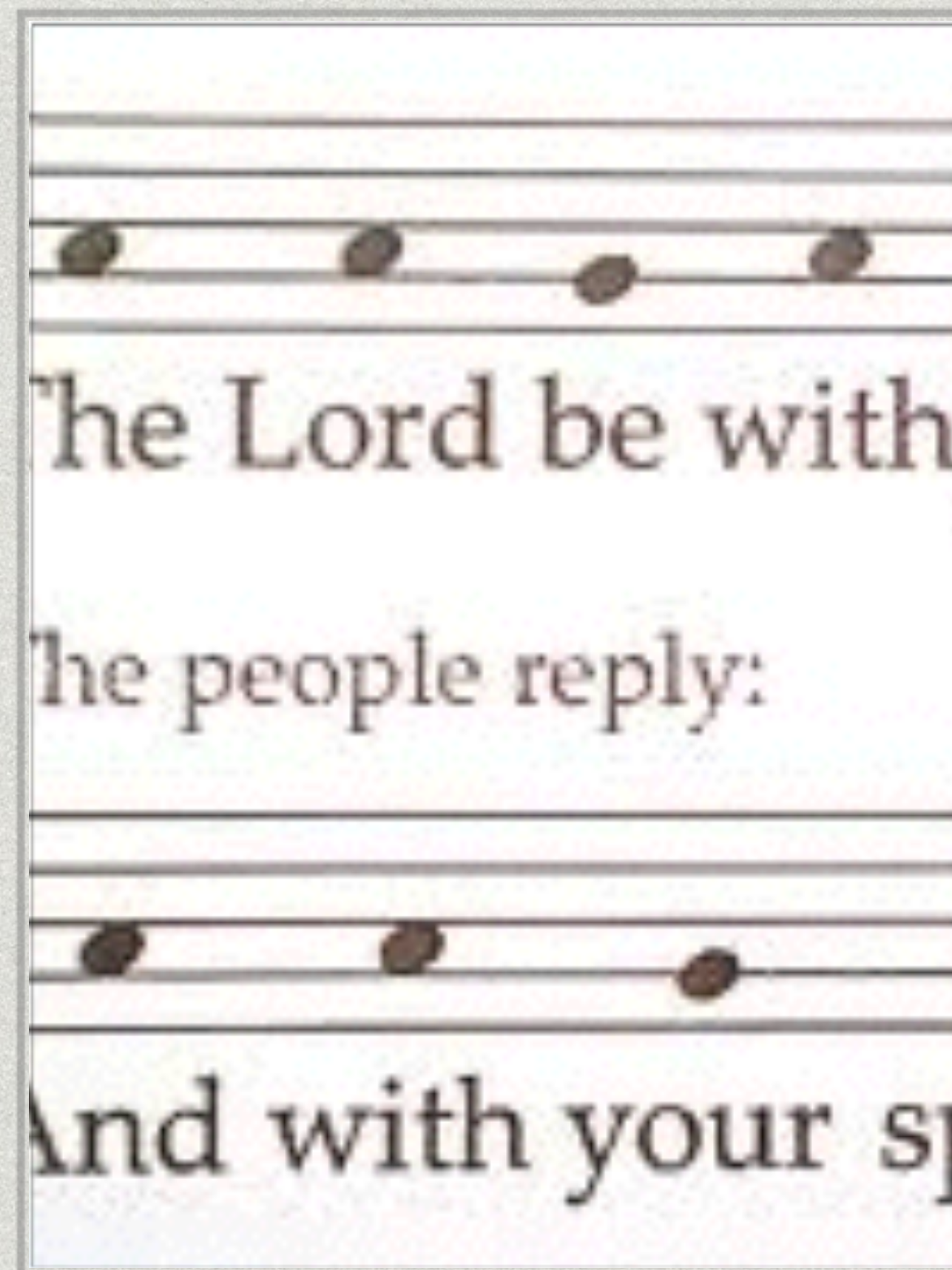
Candlesticks

If people cannot see the altar and what is on it, they may not feel that they are participating at the altar.



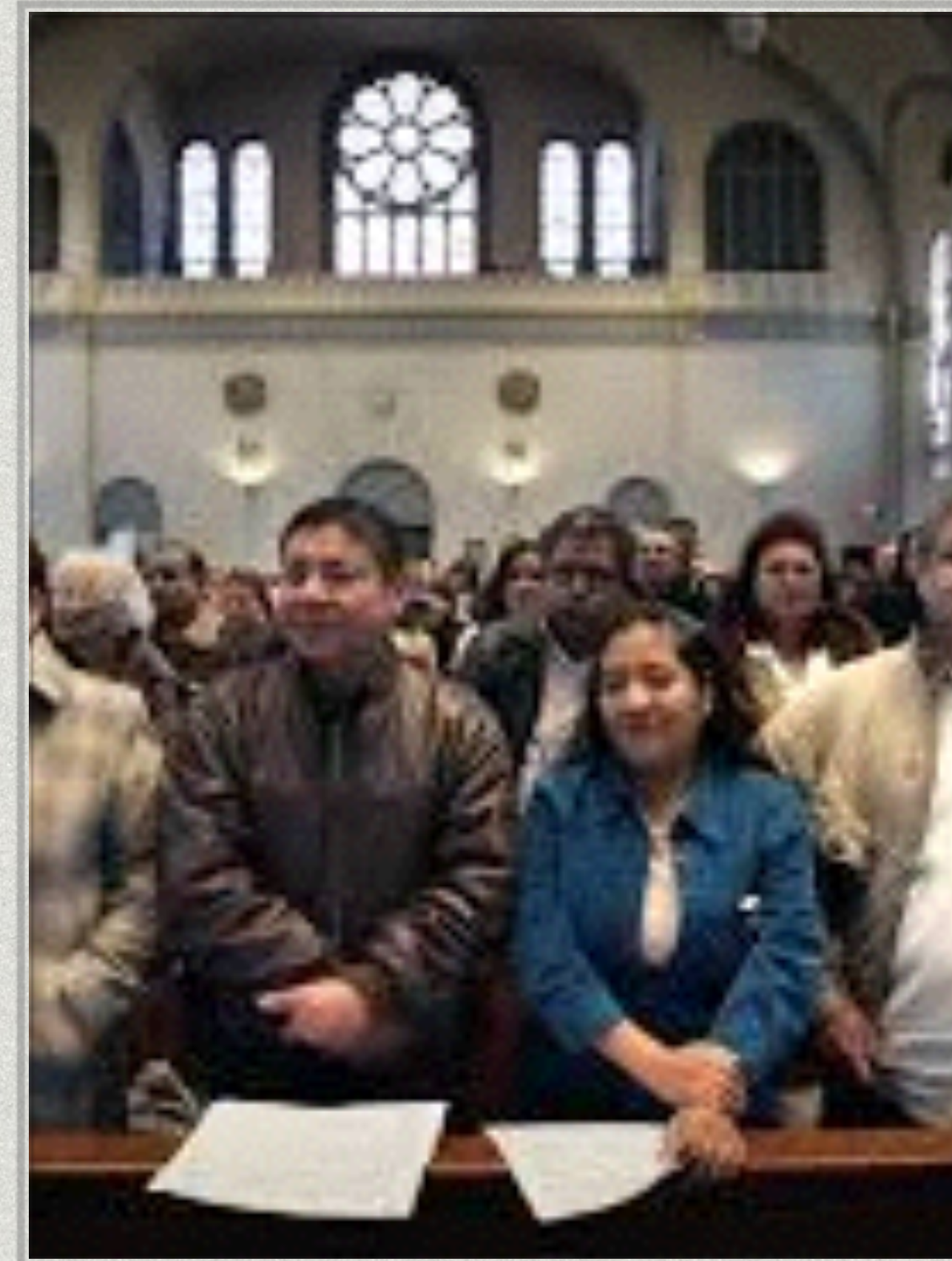
Dialogues

Singing the dialogues may enhance their significance and the interdependency of the priest with the people as participants in the eucharist.



Collect

When the priest says, “Let us pray,” the people are expected to do just that, and this exercises their priesthood.



Bows to the altar

When all the ministers refer to the altar throughout the mass and not to the tabernacle, they are drawing attention to the altar of sacrifice, rather than the place of reposition.



Universal Prayer

The prayer of the faithful should be a true expression of the priestly prayers of the local community.



Collection

What people contribute to the collection should be a symbol of their sacrifice. It's not just a question of paying the church's bills. If the second collection happens after communion, its connection is lost.



Procession of the Gifts

All objects carried forward in the procession of the gifts are intended to be given away.



Corporal

Placing the bread and wine on the corporal after “Blessed be God forever” adds precision to the people’s offering.



Eucharistic Prayer

The people should develop the habit of paying full attention to the words of the entire eucharistic prayer.



Institution narrative

The institution narrative should sustain the act of thanksgiving without an excess of devotion.



Breaking the bread

When the priest breaks the bread, he is to share parts of it with others as a sign of mutual sacrifice and communion.



Size of hosts

- If the congregation receives unbroken hosts, it is harder for participants to see how all share the same sacrifice.



Communion from the tabernacle

The distribution of communion from the tabernacle breaks the relationship between sacrifice and communion.



Communion under both forms

When communion is offered and received under both forms, it better expresses the fullness of the sacrifice of Christ and the communion of the faithful.



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Two eucharistic theologies

Discipleship or apostleship?

Adoration or evangelization?

Personal salvation or
bringing good news to the
poor?

