

The Catholic Church recently introduced a few small changes into our celebration of the mass. In your pews you'll find a list of what to do at church; some things are old and some are new.

New on the list are numbers 8 and 10. After the priest washes his hands, he invites the people to pray; everyone responds, "May the Lord accept this sacrifice." In the past, you have stood after saying those words. Now you are asked to stand before you say them, right after the priest washes his hands. Generally we stand at mass whenever we have something significant to say.

At communion, our bishops are asking people to bow their heads before receiving the Body of Christ and again before receiving the Blood of Christ. Many Catholics make a sign of the cross *after* communion. But for uniformity, the bishops are asking for a bow of the head before communion as a sign of reverence. Not a bow from the waist – only a nod of the head. No other sign is necessary.

That's what's new, but I wanted to remind you of some things that are old. Notice at number 5, several times during the mass we observe silence. Whenever that happens, it doesn't mean we've lost our place up here. It means we are all to pray silently.

In number 6, I would like to encourage you to put the missalettes down during the scripture readings and to give your full attention to the lector. In the liturgy of the word, God is speaking to the church; when you hear the lector's voice, you are hearing God's word alive now in the church. At mass we sing together, we speak together, we keep silent together, and we also listen together. Only one is supposed to be reading, and that is the lector. I encourage you to pray over the readings at home before coming to church. You'll find it much easier to listen when the scriptures are proclaimed.

I'd also like to encourage you to partake of communion under both forms. Jesus said, "Take and eat" and "Take and drink."

Some Catholics leave mass early in almost every parish. They even leave mass early at the prison, and I still can't figure out where they go. The conclusion of mass is important. After communion, we owe God some moments of thanksgiving. At the end of the service, we go forth as the body of Christ into the world together.

I commend you all for your participation. These few points, I hope, will enhance our celebration of the eucharist.