

## p ARISH ETIQUETTE A T MASS (Part 1 )

Last month I wrote a column on *Sacred Space and Silence* to remind all of us that our churches are consecrated for prayer and Christian worship. Thus, reflective silence and reverence are the appropriate response when one is present in such a sacred space. As a follow-up to that column, I want to address other related matters that are often neglected.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph #1327, reminds us that "the Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith ." When we come to celebrate the Eucharist, we join together as a community to worship, and in order that our common worship becomes full, rich, and prayerful for everyone, there are several matters of etiquette we all should observe. Clergy, ministers, altar servers, choir members, honor guards, ushers, and others directly involved with the liturgy should model for everyone a reverent silence and also these following matters of etiquette.

### PREPARING FOR LITURGY

*.Plan ahead* as you would for any important occasion, and allow enough time to arrive at church and be seated, with some time to recollect yourself for the liturgy.

*.Dress appropriately.* Liturgy is the Lord's inclusive banquet, but it is neither a presidential dinner nor a backyard picnic. Choose clothing that will not be distracting to others. Suggestive attire, athletic clothing, shorts, T-shirts and other similar casual attire do not present an appropriate appearance. Err on the side of dressing UP, not down; presume that most people will wear their best, most appropriate clothing and do likewise, liturgical ministers, choir members, ushers, etc. should model appropriate dress to the assembly.

*.Observe the one-hour fast* from food and drink (except water & medicine) that is required by Church law. Frequently, people will come to church with chewing gum in their mouths. Not only does this break the fast, but it also exhibits a lack of respect for the sacred place and the liturgy.

*.Leave your cell phone and pager in the car!* The whole idea of prayer, whether communal or private, is that we put other things aside to lift our hearts and minds to God. Some things are more important than your phone call, and Church is one of them. Of course, individuals who are on call, such as doctors, emergency medical personnel, and police should put the phone/pager on "vibrate" mode and go outside to answer when summoned. The rest of us should pay attention to the Mass. The Vatican II document on the Liturgy (§.Q, 14) calls us to "full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations." We need to be fully present to God and to each other and free from the distractions of cell phones and pagers, and even watch alarms.

### ARRIVING & LEAVING

At theater productions and concerts, latecomers are asked to remain in the lobby, waiting until an intermission in order to be seated. Some parishes ask latecomers to remain in the vestibule or in the back of the church if they arrive during the readings, psalm, or homily so that they do not distract or interrupt others during the Liturgy of the Word.

*If Mass has already begun. . .*

*.Use the church entrance that will be least disturbing to others who have already gathered.*

*.Choose an appropriate time to join the assembly, such as during a song, but NOT during the readings or homily. Wait for the right moment to enter, and do so silently.*

*.Know that it is better to be present, even if late, than to be absent from the assembly altogether .*

In my next column, I will continue this topic and focus on leaving church early, drinking from the cup, and children at Mass.

Bishop Guillory's 7-22-05 E.T.C. column

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