

Recognizing Non-Communicants

Rationale

At times when we celebrate the Holy Mass we know that there may be a number of individuals in the assembly who are not Catholic or not practicing Catholics. In order to eliminate confusion, it can be helpful to state in advance our expectations about the reception of Holy Communion.

In North America there has been a practice of inviting individuals who are not receiving Communion to come forward for a “blessing”. The terminology and action of “blessing” at this moment is not part of the liturgy. After extensive study, consultation, and discussion, the presbyteral council has voted upon a policy regarding this practice in the Diocese of Calgary. The policy includes instructions for responding to those who are not receiving but come forward in the communion procession, wording for communicating the expectations, and suggested timing for making the announcement.

- People are still welcome to come forward in the communion procession even if they will not be receiving Holy Communion. At the same time, nobody is required to come forward in the procession.
- The word “prayer” should replace what was formerly referred to as “blessing” in the recognition shown by the minister of communion.

Policy

Diocesan Policy

Although it has been a common pastoral practice in the Diocese of Calgary for Ministers of Communion to impart a blessing to those who come forward with hands crossed in the communion procession and who are not receiving Holy Communion, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are commissioned only to distribute the Body and Blood of Christ to the faithful. The Extraordinary Minister may offer a brief prayer for those in the Assembly who come forward in the communion procession and who are not receiving Holy Communion, such as “May God bless you” or “May God continue the good work in you.” This prayer is to be offered audibly and may not be accompanied by the gesture associated with a blessing, e.g., the raising of the hand or the sign of the cross.

Wording for Announcement

On certain occasions, pastoral judgement may recommend communicating what non-Catholics or Catholics not receiving communion should do during the communion rite. This is the text to be used in the Diocese of Calgary:

We are reminded that the Holy Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. If you are a Catholic not properly disposed to receive Holy Communion or are not a member of the Catholic Church, you are welcome to remain in your place and unite yourself in prayer or join the procession with your arms folded over your chest indicating that you wish to receive a prayer.

This announcement may be printed in the worship aid, shown on a projection screen, or made verbally. In the case of the verbal announcement, it would fall most naturally after the Sign of Peace and before the singing of the Lamb of God. If the musician begins the Lamb of God before the announcement is made one could also make the announcement after the Lamb of God before the priestly prayer and genuflection (Roman Missal no. 131-132) or at another time determined by the presider.

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