



DIOCESE OF LITTLE ROCK

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Office of Divine Worship

29 November 2009

First Sunday of Advent

Dear Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Little Rock,

This letter serves as the official announcement of the revision of the Guidelines for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest in the Diocese of Little Rock, which takes effect today. This revision has come about to bring our diocesan policy into line with the teachings of the Church as found in the 2004 document from the Congregation for Divine Worship, *Redemptionis Sacramentum*.

The key point of the revision is that the practice of holding a Word & Communion service on days other than a Sunday or Holy Day of Obligation is to be discontinued. The reasoning behind this change comes from the following ideas:

- Receiving the Eucharist on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation is of utmost importance.
- The ordinary and primary form of receiving the Eucharist is within the Sacrifice of the Mass.
- Sacrifice and Communion cannot be theologically separated, and therefore should not be practically separated except in extraordinary circumstances.
- Since the faithful are required to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, these are considered extraordinary circumstances.
- Although daily attendance at Mass and reception of communion is virtuous practice, it is not a requirement.
- When a priest is absent, meaning that celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is not possible, the faithful should realize that something is not right.
- This should foster an even greater hunger for the Eucharist, and a greater effort to attend the Sacrifice of the Mass, and even to pray and work more devoutly to develop vocations to the priesthood, which would be the ultimate and appropriate remedy for the lack of Mass to attend.

In parishes where weekday Word and Communion services have been a common practice, it would be most appropriate that the faithful still gather to pray together, as a community, at the times when the Mass would have been offered. The most appropriate prayer for these gatherings would be the Liturgy of the Hours. In the next few weeks, user friendly versions of the Liturgy of the Hours will be made available for your priests to provide for your use at these times, encouraging you especially to pray for vocations.

I know that this change will be difficult for some of us to accept, but it is ultimately our responsibility as Catholics to put forth every effort to understand and be faithful to the teachings of the Church. It is a wonderful and holy thing to love the Eucharist, and to desire to receive it as often as possible. Neither the Church nor any of her priests desire to take that opportunity away from you, but it is of utmost importance that we receive the Eucharist, as God intends and is most beneficial to us, within the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Shaun C. Wesley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Shaun C. Wesley
Director
Office of Divine Worship