



DIocese OF TYLER

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Instruction for the Clergy, Religious and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Tyler on the SIGN OF PEACE DURING HOLY MASS

The Holy See's Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has recently concluded a review of the Sign of Peace in the Mass.¹ While there will be no change in the ritual, this is a good opportunity for us to discuss the reason for the Sign of Peace in the Liturgy and the manner in which the exchange of peace should be conducted.

Christ is our peace, (Cf. Eph 2:14) that divine peace, announced by the prophets and by the angels, and which he brought to the world by means of his paschal mystery. In our Latin Rite, the rite of peace has its own profound meaning connected to the Eucharistic contemplation of the Paschal mystery as the "Paschal kiss" of the Risen Christ present on the altar. This peace of the Risen Lord is invoked, preached and spread in the celebration, even by means of a human gesture lifted up to the realm of the sacred. Our exchange of peace in this context invites us to express reverently the profound mystery we encounter in the Peace that this world cannot give. Reverently carried out among the participants at Mass, the gesture of exchanging the sign of peace "in a sober manner...only to those who are nearest" (GIRM 82) enriches the meaning of the rite itself and gives fuller expression to it.

The Roman Missal does not specify the gesture to be used for the exchange of peace. In our culture this is generally well done with a handshake. Within families or very close friends a brief hug might be appropriate. But as in other situations, one needs to be sensitive to the preference of the other person. Some people may prefer not to have any physical contact. In such a case a nod of the head can be a respectful gesture. People may have various reasons for refraining from direct contact and they should not be put in a spot of having to defend their desire to avoid physical contact. Particularly when sharing the reality of the Peace which Jesus brings, we should never force someone into undesired physical contact. Whether it is for health reasons, psychological reasons, or other personal reasons, our community wants to respect them and their right to privacy.

While the Sign of Peace is being given, it is permissible to say, "The peace of the Lord be with you always," to which the reply is, "Amen." (GIRM 154)

The rubrics for the Mass state that the exchange of the particular sign of peace is to be done "if appropriate." (Roman Missal, Order of the Mass, n. 128.) If there is only one person at Mass, or there is severe danger of spreading disease) or if it is not considered pedagogically wise to carry it out on certain occasions, it can be omitted, and sometimes probably ought to be omitted. The decision about the appropriateness of the pastoral situation is generally left to the priest. In very special cases the Bishop may direct the omission of the exchange of peace, such as was done in response to the H1N1 influenza outbreak.

Based upon some specific points raised by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, the following directives will be observed in the Diocese of Tyler (See "Circular Letter on The Ritual Expression of the Gift of Peace at Mass"- Pentecost, 2014.):

¹ The text of the Circular Letter from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments on the Sign of Peace of 12 July 2014 can be found online by searching for "circular letter sign of peace"



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- a) – there should be no song or music during the exchange of peace, and the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) is to begin when the Priest begins the fraction rite.
- b) – the exchange of peace should be with those nearby, refraining from excessive movement.
- c) - the priest should not leave the sanctuary during the exchange of peace (see also GIRM 154).
- d) - the exchange of peace is not a time for expressing congratulations, best wishes or condolences among those present as can happen in certain circumstances, such as at the Solemnity of Easter or of Christmas, or during ritual celebrations such as baptism, first communion, confirmation, matrimony, sacred ordinations, religious professions, and funerals.

I order this instruction to be made known to all the Faithful in the Diocese of Tyler and that it be observed in all parishes, missions, chapels and other institutions of the Diocese as of February 1, 2015.

Given on this day, January 13, 2015, the Feast of St. Hilary.

/s/

Most Rev. Joseph E. Strickland
Bishop of Tyler

Very Rev. Hank Lanik
Chancellor



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Instrucción para el clero, religiosos y fieles laicos de la Diócesis de Tyler sobre el DON DE LA PAZ EN LA SANTA MISA

La Santa Sede congregación para el culto divino y la disciplina de los sacramentos ha concluido recientemente una revisión del saludo de la paz en la Misa.² Si bien no habrá ningún cambio en el ritual, esta es una buena oportunidad para nosotros hablar sobre la razón del saludo de la paz en la liturgia y la forma en que debe llevarse a cabo el intercambio de la paz.

Cristo es nuestra paz (cf. Ef 2:14) la paz divina, anunciado por los profetas y por los ángeles, y traído al mundo por medio de su misterio pascual. En nuestro rito latino, el rito de la paz tiene su propio significado profundo conectado a la contemplación eucarística del misterio pascual como el "beso pascual" de Cristo resucitado presente en el altar. Esta paz del Señor resucitado se invoca, predicó y se extendió en la celebración, incluso por medio de un gesto humano levantado a la esfera de lo sagrado. Nuestro intercambio de la paz en este contexto nos invita a expresar reverentemente el profundo misterio que encontramos en la paz que este mundo no puede dar. Reverentemente realizado entre los participantes en la Misa, el gesto de intercambiar el signo de la paz «sobriamente sólo a los más cercanos » (IGMR 82) enriquece el significado del rito mismo y da expresión más plena a la misma.

El misal romano no especifica el gesto que se utilizará para el intercambio de la paz. En nuestra cultura esto es generalmente bien hecho con un apretón de manos. Dentro las familias o amigos muy cercanos, un breve abrazo puede ser apropiado. Pero al igual que en otras situaciones, hay que ser sensible a la preferencia de la otra persona. Algunas personas pueden preferir no tener ningún contacto físico. En ese caso, cuando una persona inclina la cabeza, se puede ser un gesto respetuoso. La gente puede tener varias razones para abstenerse del contacto directo y no debe tener que defender su deseo de evitar el contacto físico. Particularmente cuando comparten la realidad de la paz que Jesús trae, no deberíamos nunca forzar a alguien en contacto físico no deseado. Ya sea por motivos sanitarios, psicológicos, u otros motivos personales, nuestra comunidad quiere respetarlos y su derecho a la privacidad.

Mientras se da la paz, se puede decir: La paz del Señor esté siempre contigo, a lo cual se responde: Amén. (IGMR 154)

Las rúbricas para la misa afirman que el intercambio del signo particular de la paz se puede hacer «si es apropiado» (misal romano, orden de la misa, n. 128). Si sólo hay una persona en la misa, o existe grave peligro de propagación de la enfermedad o si no se considera pedagógicamente aconsejable llevarla a cabo en ciertas ocasiones, puede ser omitido, y a veces, probablemente debería ser omitido. La decisión sobre la conveniencia de la situación pastoral generalmente se deja al sacerdote. En casos muy especiales, el obispo puede dirigir la omisión del intercambio de la paz, tal como se hizo en respuesta al brote de gripe porcina del 2009.

² El texto de la carta circular de la congregación para el culto divino y la disciplina de los sacramentos en el don de la paz de 12 julio 2014 se puede encontrar en línea por búsqueda "carta circular el significado ritual del don de la paz en la Misa"



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Con base en algunos puntos específicos planteados por la congregación para el culto divino y la disciplina de los sacramentos, se observarán las siguientes directivas en la diócesis de Tyler (Ver «carta circular sobre la expresión ritual del don de la paz en la misa» pentecostés 2014):

- a) – no debe haber ninguna canción o música durante el intercambio de la paz, y el agnus dei (cordero de Dios) debe comenzar cuando el sacerdote comienza la fracción rito.
- b) – el intercambio de la paz debe ser con las personas cercanas, absteniéndose de movimiento excesivo.
- c) - el sacerdote no debe abandonar el santuario durante el intercambio de la paz (véase también IGMR 154).
- d) - el intercambio de la paz no es un momento para expresar felicitaciones, los mejores deseos o condolencias entre los presentes como puede suceder en ciertas circunstancias, como en la solemnidad de pascua o de la navidad, o durante las celebraciones rituales como el bautismo, la primera comunión, confirmación, el matrimonio, las ordenaciones sagradas, profesiones religiosas y funerales.

Ordeno esta instrucción para ser dado a conocer a todos los fieles de la diócesis de Tyler y que ser observado en todas las parroquias, misiones, capillas y otras instituciones de la diócesis a partir de 1 de febrero de 2015.

Impartido en este día, 13 de enero de 2015, la fiesta de San Hilary.

Reverendísimo Joseph E. Strickland
Obispo de Tyler

Rev. Padre Hank Lanik
Canciller

Deeper Reflection on the Sign of Peace *Diocese of Tyler Liturgical Commission*

“Peace I leave you; my peace I give you.” (John 14:27) In our Roman liturgical tradition, the exchange of peace is placed before Holy Communion with its own specific theological significance. Its point of reference is found in the Eucharistic contemplation of the Paschal mystery as the "Paschal kiss" of the Risen Christ present on the altar³ as in contradistinction to that done by other liturgical traditions which are inspired by the Gospel passage from St. Matthew (cf. *Mt* 5: 23). The rites which prepare for Communion constitute a well expressed unity in which each ritual element has its own significance and which contributes to the overall ritual sequence of sacramental participation in the mystery being celebrated. The sign of peace, therefore, is placed between the Lord's Prayer, to which is joined the embolism which prepares for the gesture of peace, and the breaking of the bread, in the course of which the Lamb of God is implored to give us his peace. With this gesture, whose «function is to manifest peace, communion and charity»,⁴ the Church «implores peace and unity for herself and for the whole human family, and the faithful express to each other their ecclesial communion and mutual charity before communicating in the Sacrament»,⁵ that is, the Body of Christ the Lord.

In the Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, Pope Benedict XVI observes that in order to safeguard the sacred sense of the Eucharistic celebration and the sense of mystery at the moment of receiving Holy Communion:

«By its nature the Eucharist is the sacrament of peace. At Mass this dimension of the Eucharistic mystery finds specific expression in the sign of peace. Certainly this sign has great value (cf. *Jn* 14:27). In our times, fraught with fear and conflict, this gesture has become particularly eloquent, as the Church has become increasingly conscious of her responsibility to pray insistently for the gift of peace and unity for herself and for the whole human family. [...] We can thus understand the emotion so often felt during the sign of peace at a liturgical celebration. Even so, during the Synod of Bishops there was discussion about the appropriateness of greater restraint in this gesture, which can be exaggerated and cause a certain distraction in the assembly just before the reception of Communion. It should be kept in mind that nothing is lost when the sign of peace is marked by a sobriety which preserves the proper spirit of the celebration, as, for example, when it is restricted to one's immediate neighbours». (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, n. 49)

³ Cf. *Missale Romanum ex decreto SS. Concilii Tridentini restitutum summorum pontificum cura reconitum, Editio typical, 1962, Ritus servandus, X, 3.*

⁴ CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, Istr., *Redemptionis sacramentum*, March 25, 2004, n. 71: AAS 96 (2004) 571.

⁵ MISSALE ROMANUM, *ex decreto sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani fl ins/aura/um, auctoritate Pauli Pp. VI promulgatum, Ioannis Pauli Pp. fl cura recognitum*, editio typica tertia, diei 20 aprilis 2000, Typis Vaticanis, reimpressio emendata 2008, General Instruction of the Roman Missal, n. 82. Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Post-synod. Apost. Exhort., *Sacramentum caritatis*, February 22, 2007, n. 49: AAS 99 (2007) 143.

Pope Benedict XVI, further than shedding light on the true sense of the rite and of the exchange of peace, emphasized its great significance as a contribution of Christians, with their prayer and witness to allay the most profound and disturbing anxieties of contemporary humanity. In light of all this he renewed his call that this rite be protected and that this liturgical gesture be done with religious sensibility and sobriety.

The circular letter on “The Ritual Expression of the Gift of Peace at Mass” states: “Consideration of this theme is important. If the faithful through their ritual gestures do not appreciate and do not show themselves to be living the authentic meaning of the rite of peace, the Christian concept of peace is weakened and their fruitful participation at the Eucharist is impaired.) (n.6)

The current Missal reflects a significant change in the rubrics in regards the Sign of Peace. The current language of 'Then, if appropriate...' is much stronger than the former Missal which said 'may'. For the priest (or deacon) to determine that the offering of the sign of peace is 'not appropriate', there would seem to have to be some particular reason as to why it was not appropriate. Such reason would not be required under the former rubrics. The priest is not at liberty to omit without reason, the sign of peace. Also, it should be noted that the Episcopal conference, not the individual priest is empowered to approve specific gestures for the sign of peace.

In conclusion, the Congregations state: “The intimate relationship between the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi* must obviously be extended to the *lex vivendi*. Today, a serious obligation for Catholics in building a more just and peaceful world is accompanied by a deeper understanding of the Christian meaning of peace and this depends largely on the seriousness with which our particular Churches welcome and invoke the gift of peace and express it in the liturgical celebration. Productive steps forward on this matter must be insisted upon and urged because the quality of our Eucharistic participation depends upon it, as well as the efficacy of our being joined with those who are ambassadors and builders of peace, as expressed in the Beatitudes. (Cf. Mt 5:9f)” (circular letter, n.7)