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— *From the Director of the Archdiocesan Office of Worship & Spiritual Life* —

Newly elected Pope Leo XIV addresses the crowd from the central loggia overlooking St. Peter's Square on May 08, 2025

A New Lion Roars: Leo XIV and the Liturgical Spirit of Renewal

THERE are moments in the life of the Church when the Holy Spirit breathes something quiet yet unmistakable into our common worship—a subtle but steady invitation to remember who we are and what we hold most dear. Since the white smoke rose and Pope Leo XIV stepped out onto the balcony, those who watch the Church with the eyes of faith have begun to sense it: a new lion has roared, not with noise or novelty, but with a profound reverence for the liturgical heart of Catholic life.

If one wishes to know a pope's soul, watch how he prays. In these first months, Leo XIV's liturgical bearing has spoken with a clarity that words alone cannot reach. He does not innovate for innovation's sake or reduce the sacred mysteries to mere symbols or social commentary. Instead, he leans on what the Church has always known: that the liturgy is the wellspring of her life, and its beauty—carefully guarded and generously offered—can renew even the most weary heart.

Watch just one of his Masses and you will see what so many have already noted. His gestures at the altar are deliberate yet unforced, precise yet never theatrical. He chants when the rite asks him to chant, not as a performer but as a servant giving voice to the prayer of the whole Church. There is no rush in his voice, no restlessness in his posture—only a patient confidence that Christ is here, and that the Church's first task is to stand before Him in humble adoration.

What does this mean for us, clergy and lay faithful alike? It means everything. For Pope Leo XIV, the liturgy is not a battleground of tastes or trends. It is not a blank canvas for self-expression. It is, quite simply, the living sacrifice of Christ, offered anew in every parish, chapel, cathedral, and basilica around the world. When celebrated well—faithful to the rubrics, adorned with fitting music and reverent silence—it becomes the quiet engine that sets the tone for all our works of mercy, catechesis, and evangelization.

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Some have remarked on his prudence, others on his pastoral warmth. But watch closely, and you will see that both virtues find their source in his reverence for the liturgy. His recent words to parish priests, thanking them for their hidden labors—the sacristans who arrive before dawn, the choirs who practice late into the evening, the servers who learn every gesture by heart—reveal a pastor who understands that the renewal of the Church begins not in grand declarations but in the careful tending of the vineyard entrusted to each of us.

He knows that beauty evangelizes. He knows that when the Mass is celebrated with dignity and care, hearts soften, distractions fade, and the faithful are drawn into a deeper encounter with the mystery of Christ. In this way, his pontificate is already setting a tone: patient but clear, sensitive but rooted, humble but firm. He invites us to become, in the words of the Lord Himself, "new wineskins" ready to receive the new wine of grace.

The lesson is not complicated, but it is demanding. If the Holy Father stands before the altar with deliberate care, so should we. If he lifts his voice in chant where the Church asks for chant, so should we. If he thanks those who labor behind the scenes so that the liturgy may shine in its rightful splendor, so should we. Whether we are pastors arranging the sanctuary, cantors practicing a psalm, or families preparing to enter the pews on Sunday, we play a part in this quiet roar of renewal.

Measuring a pontificate in policies, headlines, or controversies would be easy. But the deeper measure is quieter: it is found in the hush before the Eucharistic Prayer, the delicate care for vestments and vessels, the reverence for gestures handed down through centuries. Pope Leo XIV reminds us that when the liturgy is loved, everything else can be healed and transformed by the same love.

So listen carefully. A new lion roars—but not with noise or fury. His roar is the stillness of a well-kept sanctuary, the quiet strength of a priest who knows he is but a steward of mysteries greater than himself, the gentle song of a faithful people drawn together before the altar of the Lamb. May we have ears to hear it—and hearts humble enough to let it renew us.

– *Fr. Vigoa*

Who May Carry the Book of the Gospels?

A PRACTICAL question arises in many parishes: *When there is no deacon, who carries this Book? May a lay lector bring it forward in procession?*

The Church, in her wisdom, has given us clear guidance. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* makes the answer plain. In paragraph 194, it states: *"In the absence of a deacon, the instituted lector may carry the Book of the Gospels in the entrance procession."* Where an instituted lector is lacking — as is the case in most parishes — the role typically falls to a lay reader who has been properly prepared and commissioned for this ministry.

So yes — when there is no deacon, a lector may carry the Book of the Gospels — but only the Book of the Gospels, never the Lectionary. The same instruction is equally clear: a lay person may never proclaim the Gospel itself; that sacred duty belongs to the deacon or, in his absence, to the priest celebrant himself. When a lector carries the Book, it is held visibly but not held aloft as a deacon would; rather, it is carried slightly elevated, as a mark of reverence without presuming the liturgical gesture proper to the ordained minister. The lector's role is to bear the Book as a sign of Christ's living Word among His people — then to place it with care upon the altar, where the proclamation will unfold in the liturgy.

Why does this matter? Because the Church never assigns roles or gestures at random. In the Mass, every action means something deeper. The Gospel book is not merely a prop; it is a powerful symbol of Christ present and speaking now. Carrying it is an act of honor, but proclaiming it is an act of apostolic authority — a visible reminder that the Gospel comes to us through the ministry entrusted to the Apostles and their successors.

When the liturgy is done well — when a lector carries the Book of the Gospels with dignity, when the priest proclaims it with reverence — the faithful are quietly catechized by gesture as well as by word. These moments teach us who we are: a people gathered around the Word, each with a part to play, none substituting for the other, all united in worship that is orderly, beautiful, and true.

Reminder: I invite all current lectors, as well as anyone interested in becoming a lector, to a Lector Workshop on Saturday, August 16th at 10:00 a.m. at St. Augustine Church. Whether your lectors have served for years or are just beginning, this workshop will provide formation, refresh their liturgical skills, and ground them in the responsibility of this ministry. -RJV

Communion and Children with Profound Disabilities: A Pastoral Reflection

EVERY so often, the Church is asked to stand with families in circumstances stretching our pastoral imagination's usual boundaries. One such situation, recently, a pastor wrote me with an extraordinary question: a parent wished for their child—non-verbal and dependent on a feeding tube—to receive First Holy Communion.

To their credit, these parents were not demanding something impossible or insisting on bending the Church's teaching to fit a wish. Rather, they came seeking guidance. They wanted to know what is possible, what is faithful, and how the Church, in her wisdom, welcomes their child to the table of the Lord.

When we speak of the Eucharist for children with profound disabilities, we must hold two truths together: the dignity of every baptized person, and the sacramental integrity of what it means to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. The Church does not set impossible standards; she does not require intellectual explanations or fluent speech. What she looks for is a simple, clear sign that the child recognizes—at least in some way—who it is they are receiving.

In this particular case, my counsel was straightforward: if the child can demonstrate in any clear way that he knows this is Jesus—perhaps by showing reverence, reaching out, or responding with a gesture when the Host is presented—then he is presumed to have the proper disposition. The Church

trusts that the Holy Spirit can communicate in ways that words cannot. For many children with significant cognitive or verbal limitations, these small signs are enough to open the door to the sacrament.

Yet there is also the physical reality to consider. The Eucharist must be received. If a child is fed solely through a feeding tube and cannot swallow by mouth—solid or liquid—the Church does not permit the Eucharist to be administered directly into the tube. This is not merely a legal technicality; it is because the nature of Communion requires that the Body or Blood of Christ be taken by the communicant per os—by the mouth. A feeding tube bypasses this fundamental sign of reception and does not fulfill what the sacrament demands.

However, if the child is able to swallow, even in a limited way, it is possible—and pastorally beautiful—to consider receiving the Precious Blood from the chalice alone, provided it is reverent and safe for the child. The key is discernment: parents, catechists, and the pastor must work together to determine what is truly possible and what is not.

Too often, families caring for children with special needs feel they are standing at the margins of parish life. They worry that their child will be seen only for what they cannot do, rather than the unique, unrepeatable way they bear Christ's image. When we accompany these families with patience, when we find creative but faithful solutions, we preach a powerful Gospel: no one is forgotten at the Lord's table.

In the end, these questions are not only about sacramental theology but about the heart of a parish. Do we see Christ in every person? Do we accompany families in their joys and their challenges? Do we take the time to discern, with both compassion and fidelity, how best to draw each soul into the mystery of the Eucharist? In this particular case, the child is not able to swallow at all, and so the parents, fully understanding the Church's teaching on the nature of Communion, accepted this reality with grace and faith. These are the moments that test our pastoral charity—and, when answered well, renew the whole Church. -RJV

Sanctuary Statues and What the Church Really Says

Every now and then, a pastor or building committee faces a question that sounds simple but carries far more weight than it seems: *Where should the statues go?* A priest wrote me recently as he and his parish begin dreaming about a sanctuary renovation. Like many, he wanted to do things right, to respect both tradition and the Church's guidelines. His question was direct: *Is there an official rule for which side of the sanctuary the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary should stand, and which side for St. Joseph?*

It's a fair question — and it opens up a broader truth about how the Church understands sacred art and devotional images. The short answer is that the Church does not prescribe exact placement for statues of Mary and Joseph in the sanctuary. There is no universal rubric or binding instruction that says Mary *must* stand to the left or Joseph *must* stand to the right. What the Church *does* say, however, is often more profound than a simple diagram.

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* reminds us that images of the saints, and above all the Blessed Virgin Mary, "should be displayed in a way that they lead the faithful to the mysteries celebrated at the altar." The *Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar* adds that sacred images should be placed "according to custom," always in a manner that supports prayer and does not distract from the primary symbols of the altar, ambo, and chair.

In other words, statues are not architectural decoration. They are windows into heaven, silent companions who draw our hearts more deeply into the liturgy unfolding before us. Their placement should always honor that purpose.

Because there is no strict universal directive, local custom and devotional culture often guide the arrangement. In many places — especially in churches of European or Latin heritage — you will find the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary traditionally placed on the gospel side (the left when facing the altar), while St. Joseph is set on the epistle side (the right). This echoes centuries of devotional custom: Mary, as Queen of Heaven and Mother of the Church, often stands closest to the Word proclaimed; Joseph, as Patron of the Universal Church and guardian of the Holy Family, stands protectively at her side.

But again, this is custom — not law. If a parish's architecture, devotional life, or cultural heritage invites another arrangement, it is perfectly acceptable, provided the images are placed with dignity, fitting to the design of the sanctuary, and do not clutter or overshadow the altar itself.

It is worth noting that the *Ceremonial of Bishops* (1984) emphasizes that any images in the sanctuary should be "limited in number" so that the central focus remains the altar and the celebration of the Eucharist. Statues that are too large, too many, or too visually dominating risk shifting the assembly's attention away from the sacrifice of the Mass and toward private devotion at a time meant for communal worship.

So when pastors or committees face these decisions, the real question is not so much *Which side?* but *Does this arrangement help the people pray?* Does it lead their eyes and hearts to Christ present on the altar? Does it lift up the mysteries we celebrate in word and sacrament?

If the answer is yes, then the placement honors the spirit of the Church's guidance — even if no official blueprint dictates which side Our Lady must stand on.

In the end, our statues of Mary and Joseph do not compete for the center; they point us to the One who stands at the center of every liturgy: Christ Himself. They remind us that He was born into a family, raised in humility, and that they, in their silence, stand forever at His side — and ours. -RJV

A Season of Transitions: Pastors, Priests, and the Care of Sacred Space

Summer is often a season of quiet shifting in parish life. While families pack away school uniforms and plan for vacations, pastors unpack boxes in new rectories, and parochial vicars newly assigned are moving into unfamiliar sacristies and new sanctuaries. With these annual changes come countless small adjustments — and sometimes, silent misunderstandings — about how the liturgy should be celebrated in each local church.

It is one thing to assume that every priest knows how to celebrate Mass according to the Church's universal norms. It is quite another to assume that every priest stepping into a new parish knows *how this parish does it* — where the sacred vessels are kept, how the altar is prepared, which traditions shape the flow of Sunday worship, how the choir coordinates with the presider, or where the tabernacle key is actually hidden.

Too often, these details are left unspoken until something awkward happens: a visiting priest improvises something that jars the community; a well-meaning deacon sets the altar differently than the new pastor expects; a newly assigned associate unwittingly ignores a beloved local custom because no one thought to mention it. These are not matters of doctrine but of pastoral care — and good pastoral care begins with good communication.

So, pastors: take the time to sit down with your new priests and deacons. Walk them through the sacred space they now share responsibility for. Open the sacristy cabinets and show them how you prefer the vessels to be arranged. Explain local customs that shape the community's sense of reverence. Review the flow of the Sunday liturgies, the weekday Masses, the sacraments. Don't assume that the newly arrived priest will "figure it out." Hospitality for clergy is not only about having a spare room ready — it is about handing on the unseen ways your community prays and worships.

Likewise, priests moving into new assignments: bring an open mind and a patient spirit. Every parish has its own personality. Learn its rhythms before you try to adjust them. Ask thoughtful questions. Show respect for what was done before your arrival. And if you notice something that should be improved for the sake of the liturgy's integrity, raise it gently, pastorally, and with your pastor's blessing.

Parishes thrive on clear communication. Sacred spaces flourish when the people entrusted to care for them are truly working together. Good liturgy does not happen by accident; it happens when the presiders, ministers, and faithful know what they are doing — and why.

At its heart, this is not about micro-managing. It is about loving the people you serve enough to tend carefully to the places and actions that nourish their faith. When a parish team is united liturgically — when the priests, deacons, sacristans, and servers are on the same page — the people see it and feel it. The worship of God is smoother, deeper, freer of distractions. And the quiet unity at the altar spills over into the unity of the wider parish life.

So in these weeks of summer transition, take the time. Walk through the sanctuary. Talk through the practical details. Check that everyone knows how the parish's sacramental life flows. A few honest conversations today can prevent countless headaches tomorrow. And more importantly, they honor the sacred trust every parish holds: to offer Christ the best, together. -RJV

A Parish that Prays for Vocations Bears Fruit

If you want to know the pulse of a parish's future, listen for its prayers — especially its prayers for vocations. A parish that prays for priestly and religious vocations is not simply asking God for more priests; it is planting seeds in the hearts of its sons and daughters to be attentive to the quiet voice of the Good Shepherd calling them by name.

One simple but powerful way to keep that prayer alive is the tradition of the *Vocation Cup*. Some parishes entrust a chalice or a special cross to a different family each week, asking them to take it home and pray daily that the Lord will raise up generous hearts from their own community. I have seen this practice bear much fruit here at St. Augustine — families gather around the Vocation Cup, children ask questions, and new conversations begin about what it means to say yes to God's call.

But prayer alone is not enough if it never finds a voice in personal invitation. So often, when you ask a priest about his own vocation story, you will hear a familiar line: *"A priest once asked me if I had ever thought about it."* That single question — spoken at the right time, with genuine care — has inspired countless men to listen more closely for the call that was already stirring in their hearts. Encourage young men to serve at the altar. Invite them to take on responsibilities in the liturgy. Draw them into the life of the parish so they see the joy and the sacrifice that priesthood involves. A simple word of encouragement can open a door that a young man did not even know was there.

And to every parishioner reading this: keep praying. Keep asking the Lord to bless your parish with men and women generous enough to say yes. Make it normal in your community to speak about priesthood and religious life as real, joyful possibilities — not rare exceptions.

If you know a young man who might be listening for that quiet voice — or if you are that young man — I warmly invite you to take a step forward. The next *Vocation Awareness Weekend* for the Archdiocese of Miami will be held November 14–16, 2025, at St. John Vianney College Seminary. This free retreat weekend is open to men ages 17–35 who are curious about the priesthood. It includes time for prayer, fraternity, and honest discernment, and offers a chance to speak one-on-one with seminarians and priests who have walked this road. If you or someone you know might be interested, reach out to Fr. Milton J. Martínez at vocations@theadom.org.

Here's how the Vocation Cup works:

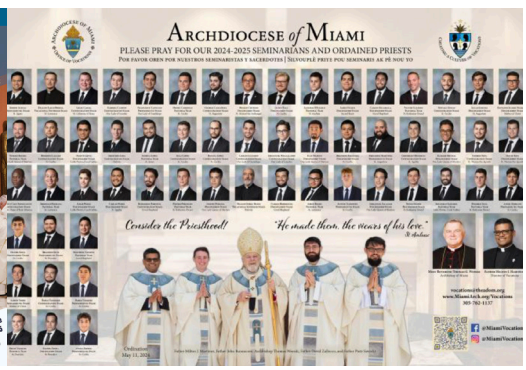
1. Sign Up: Families or individuals sign up to participate, indicating their willingness to host the *Vocation Cup*. The parish office or a designated coordinator manages the schedule, ensuring each participant has a turn.

2. Receiving the Cup: At Mass, the designated family or individual is called forward by the priest or deacon. They receive the Vocation Cup — which may be a chalice, a special vessel, or even a small box containing a chalice and a prayer card — and receive a blessing.

3. Hosting the Cup: The family or individual takes the Vocation Cup home and places it in a prominent place in the home as a daily reminder to pray for vocations. They are encouraged to pray daily for vocations to the priesthood and religious life throughout the week.

4. Returning the Cup: The family returns the Vocation Cup to the parish office or designated location before the next Mass or as instructed. The process repeats with the next family on the schedule.

Week by week, family by family, a simple cup passed from hand to hand becomes a quiet current of grace flowing through the parish. May we never tire of asking the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into His vineyard — and may we do our part to help them hear His call. -RJV



Is It Time to Turn Off the Camera? Rethinking Parish Livestreaming After COVID

There was a time not so long ago when parish livestreams were an act of sheer survival. Doors were locked, pews were empty, and a single camera on a tripod in front of the altar became a lifeline connecting isolated homes to the living mystery of the Eucharist. Pastors scrambled to learn new technology, volunteers ran extension cords through empty aisles, and suddenly, parishes with no media budget were reaching people half a world away.

But now, years after the height of the pandemic, that same camera sits quietly in sanctuaries where the faithful have returned in person. And with it comes a question more and more pastors are asking: *Is it worth the effort to keep livestreaming the Mass?*

It is not a trivial question. Many parishioners have grown grateful for the comfort and connection a livestream provides, especially elderly parishioners or those caring for sick loved ones at home. For some families, the ability to gather around a screen and watch their own parish's Mass — to see their pastor, their lectors, their choir — has been a real source of consolation. It reminds the sick and the shut-in that they still belong.

And yet, there is an unease too. Priests and parish staff notice the subtle temptation that livestreams can present. When the Sunday alarm goes off, the pull of staying home in pajamas with a cup of coffee and the Mass on a tablet can be stronger than the call to step out the front door, get in the car, and come sit shoulder to shoulder at Mass.

Some wonder if livestreams, once a bridge, now risk becoming a crutch. The Church is clear: watching Mass online is a worthy spiritual practice for those who *cannot* attend in person — but it does not fulfill the Sunday obligation for those who *can*. Worship is not merely about hearing the readings or watching the consecration; it is about *being there:* standing, kneeling, responding in a living assembly, receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, and sharing in the physical sign of communion with the Church.

For many parishes, this is now the pastoral tension. On one hand, the camera has become a gentle outreach to the homebound, the sick, the elderly, and those who care for them. It keeps parish ties alive when people cannot come to the parish themselves. On the other hand, it risks enabling a slow drift away from the vital truth that the Church's life is not virtual but incarnate — a gathering, not a broadcast.

Some pastors have found a middle path: maintaining a simple, dignified livestream mainly for daily Mass or special occasions, while gently reminding the healthy and able-bodied that they belong in the pews, not just on a screen. Some have scaled back multiple streams to focus on Sunday alone. Others have turned the camera off altogether, trusting that the right thing for their community is to call people back fully to Mass, no substitutes.

The camera, in the end, is just a tool. It can help or it can hinder. It can keep people connected or let them drift. It all depends on how wisely we use it, how honestly we speak about it, and how deeply we remember what the Church has always known: that Christ gave us the Mass not as a screen to watch but as a table where we gather, body and soul, to become His Body for the life of the world. -RJV

When Renewal Misses the Mark: Catechetical Movements and the Heart of Catholic Worship

In parish halls and diocesan conferences across the country, one can feel it: an unmistakable hunger for renewal. Over the last few decades, programs like *Christ Renews His Parish,* Fr. Michael White and Tom Corcoran's *Rebuilt,* and Fr. James Mallon's *Divine Renovation* have found their way onto the desks of countless pastors, parish councils, and eager lay leaders. These movements promise to breathe new life into sleepy pews, reinvigorate parish culture, and bring back the warmth of belonging that so many communities fear they have lost.

It would be dishonest to deny the genuine good these models have brought. Many parishes that once felt stagnant have found fresh energy in small-group witness, lay testimony, and creative outreach. *Christ Renews His Parish* has helped thousands of people tell their faith stories for the first time. *Divine Renovation* has given pastors concrete strategies for missionary discipleship and parish leadership. *Rebuilt* has challenged parishes to look honestly at what drives people away — and what might bring them home.

But the very popularity of these resources raises a question worth asking: *When does all this talk of "renewal" risk missing the deeper source of the Church's life?*

For some pastors, the concern is not theoretical. In parish after parish, there is an understandable temptation to borrow the energy, language, and style of non-Catholic models that appear vibrant and growing. Small-group dynamics, high-energy praise music, testimony nights — these can all serve a purpose. Yet when the methods overshadow the heart of our tradition, when the style begins to look more like a Sunday show than the solemn worship of the Church gathered at Calvary, we have drifted into dangerous territory.

Part of the challenge is cultural. Many of these programs draw heavily from Protestant models that emphasize personal witness, casual settings, and a "come as you are" hospitality that can be disarming and appealing. There is wisdom here — the Catholic parish does not exist to be cold or unapproachable. But the Church also holds a sacred trust: our worship is not about performance or atmosphere. It is not crafted to be entertaining or "spiced up" for restless crowds. The Mass is the supreme act of Christ Himself — something we receive and reverence, not something we redesign to hold attention.

This is why the Church's great liturgical tradition insists on certain safeguards. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal, Sacrosanctum Concilium,* and every major liturgical reform remind us that the liturgy is the "source and summit" of our life, not a tool for marketing or a stage for creative branding. It is not meant to be updated like a parish website or a social media feed. It is meant to lift us — generation after generation — beyond ourselves into the eternal sacrifice of Christ.

At the same time, we cannot forget what these renewal models get right — and what we have seen proved true again and again here in our own parish: any new program, retreat, or formation series only bears lasting fruit when it is rooted deeply in authentic community building. What works is never just the slick presentation or catchy slogans — it is the relationships that grow around it. When parishioners feel seen, welcomed, and known, they stay. When small groups become real spiritual families, faith deepens. When new ministries weave people into the life of the parish rather than leaving them orbiting on the fringes, true renewal happens.

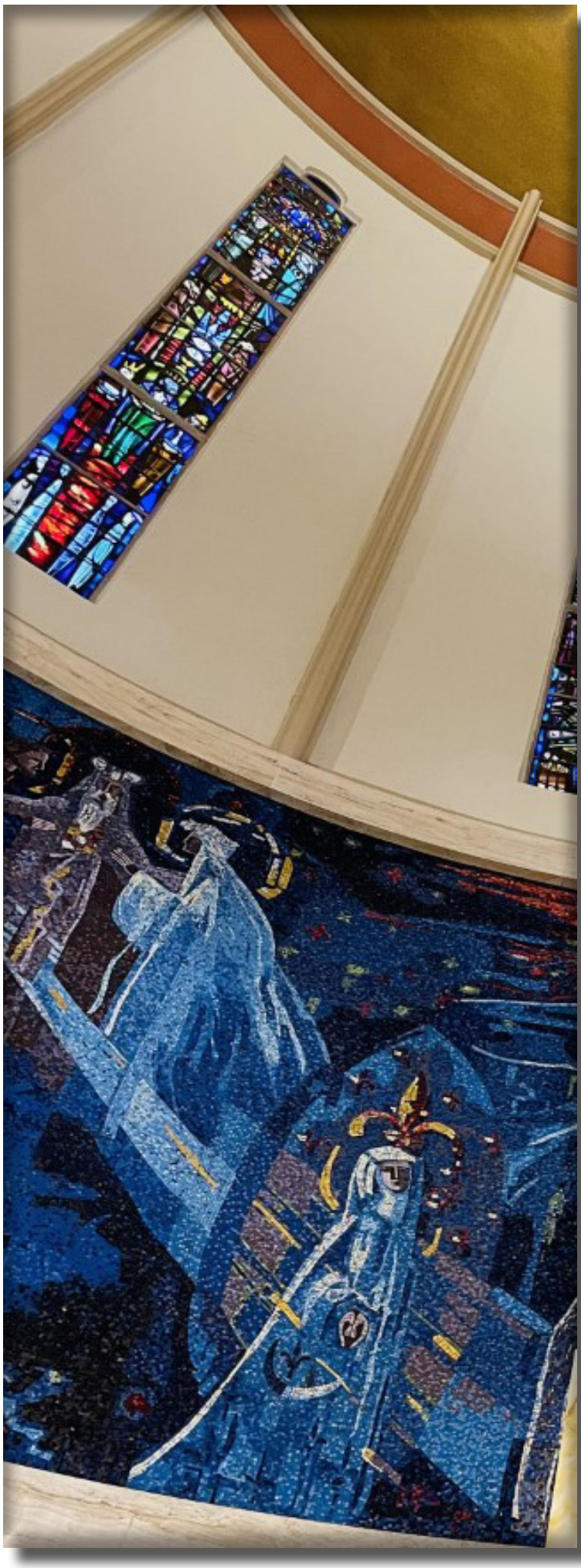
This is where the best of these movements find their rightful place. They remind us that catechesis is not just information but invitation — a personal call to belong to something living, to be part of a people gathered by Christ Himself. The challenge for parish leaders is to make sure that invitation always brings people *through* the door and to the altar, rather than leaving them simply entertained or loosely connected.

Parish leaders who lean too far into the "program mentality" often find themselves exhausted a few years later. A big launch, a surge of new sign-ups, a rebranded foyer or café space — and yet, if the sanctuary has not become a place of deeper silence, more attentive reverence, more faithful celebration of the rites as the Church gives them, then the noise fades. The novelty dulls. And people slip away, still hungry for something that looks less like a pep rally and more like an encounter with the living God — and a community that knows them by name.

In the end, the question for any parish or diocese is simple: *Does our energy for renewal begin and end with the liturgy? And does every new initiative draw people into genuine community, not just activity?* Are we forming intentional disciples who know that their small group, outreach ministry, bible study — all of it must flow from the altar and return to it? Are we building communities that gather first and foremost as worshippers, who find friendship and accountability in one another as they grow closer to Christ?

Authentic Catholic renewal will always include moments of fresh zeal and creative outreach. But it never forgets that our deepest renewal is ancient. It happens when we gather, week after week, around the altar of sacrifice — and when that worship shapes relationships strong enough to hold the weight of people's lives. Central to this is our preaching. If we want true renewal, we as priests must do the hard work of preparing our homilies well, giving them the prayer, study, and time they deserve. A carefully prepared homily opens hearts, feeds minds, and stirs souls to live the Gospel beyond Sunday attendance. There at the altar — through the mystery we adore and the Word we proclaim — we meet Christ as He truly is: not a product we brand, but the living Lord who draws us together and sends us out renewed.

If we remember this, then our programs will bear fruit — not because they are flashy, but because they remind people where their true home is found, both in the liturgy and in a parish community that knows how to love them well. And if you, as pastor or parish leader, are discerning new resources for the work of the New Evangelization, remember that you are not alone. We in the Office of Worship stand ready to help you navigate what's out there, discern what truly fits your people, and ensure that every new effort stays rooted in what always works: community built on Christ, sustained by the liturgy, and open to all who long to come home. -RJV



Unity in the Elevation: A Note for Priests and Deacons

I've often written about how gestures, when done well, speak of reverence and unity. Occasionally, however, we discover that certain small actions are not so clearly detailed in the rubrics, which leaves room for varied local practice and, sometimes, confusion.

Recently, a deacon wrote to me asking for clarification on the elevation of the chalice and paten during the Doxology — that beautiful culmination when priest and deacon lift the Body and Blood of Christ before the final *Amen*.

Here's the question in his own words:

> *"When my brother deacons and I were formed, we were taught to hold the chalice by the node or the stem so that the rim of the chalice is even with the paten the priest is holding. But some priests want the paten raised higher, even with the top of the chalice, which causes an awkward second 'lift' if not discussed ahead of time. We wonder: what do the rubrics actually say? Is there a 'correct' height or is this left to custom?"*

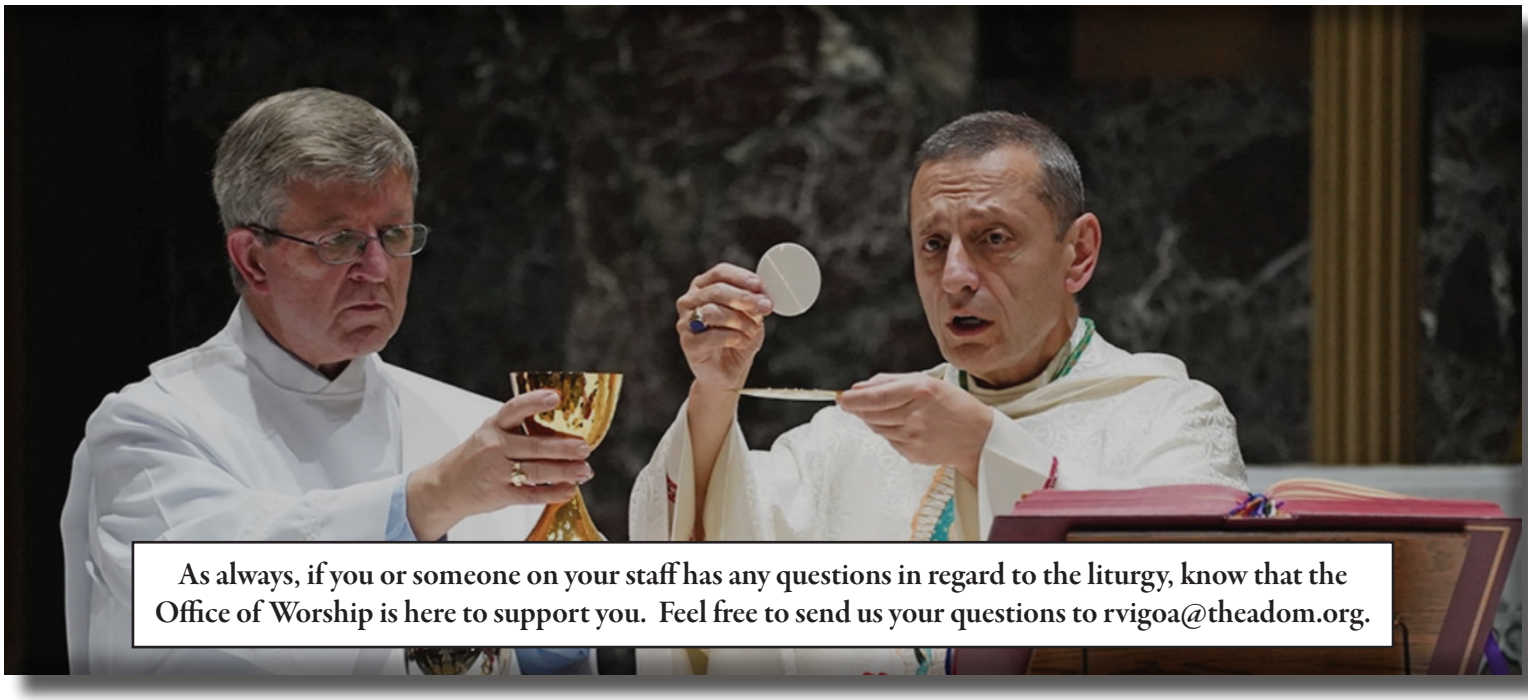
This is a very practical and thoughtful question, revealing something worth clarifying for everyone who serves at the altar. If we look at the *GIRM* — specifically paragraphs 72 and 147–150 — we see that the Missal is explicit about *what* is elevated and *when*, but it does not prescribe exactly *how high* the vessels should be raised or how they should be aligned relative to each other. The relevant instruction is this:

> *"The Priest takes the chalice and the paten with the host and, raising both, he says: Through him, and with him, and in him..."* (*GIRM,* no. 151)

No additional detail is given about the exact placement or matching of heights. This means that the precise positioning is left to local custom or pastoral instruction, as long as the action visibly shows that the bread and wine, now consecrated, are lifted in praise to the Father through Christ.

Historically, the custom has been that the priest holds the paten slightly above the chalice or roughly at the same level. Deacons are taught to align the middle of the chalice's stem with the paten's disk. Practically speaking, this creates a single, unified elevation.
Because the Missal gives no precise instruction, priests and deacons must agree on a common approach that best expresses this unity. What matters is that the gesture is done with care and in sync, avoiding any awkward staggered lifting or distracting adjustments at the altar.

Perhaps it would serve us well here in the Archdiocese to adopt a simple guideline: during the Doxology, the deacon holds the chalice slightly above the paten, forming a single, dignified gesture.
Again, details like this may seem small, but they are not trivial. They express the care we bring to our worship and our desire to serve the Lord — and each other — well. -RJV



As always, if you or someone on your staff has any questions in regard to the liturgy, know that the Office of Worship is here to support you. Feel free to send us your questions to rvigoa@theadom.org.