

Clarification and Explanation of Intended Liturgical Reforms
August 2025

*Note: the abbreviation “GIRM” in the following document refers to the General Instruction to the Roman Missal, as promulgated by the Holy See in the Second Vatican Council

I. The Proposed Changes

A. Acolytes/Altar Servers

1. *Spiritus Domini* (“The Spirit of the Lord”)
 - a) This *Motu Proprio* promulgated by Pope Francis was released in 2021
 - b) It officially states, categorically, that the Instituted offices of both Lector and Acolyte (altar server) are open to both men and women. This is the law of the Church as it currently stands. I intend to adhere to it to the best of my ability.
2. My PERSONAL desire (for what it’s worth)
 - a) Until very recently in the history of the Church, the office of Acolyte was considered a “Minor Order”, or a formal step taken by a young man discerning a vocation to the Priesthood.
 - b) This is a very important thing to consider and, as such, should factor in to our prudential decision-making as leaders and caregivers of our children.
 - c) Service at the Altar of Sacrifice during the Mass is meant to engender in the young person a desire to continue serving their fellow man in such a capacity. It is also meant to be a close encounter with the miracle of the Transubstantiation in the hopes that it will help with clarifying the desire in one’s heart to submit to the vocation of the Ordained.
 - d) With all this in mind, it is my wish that we make an effort to emphasize these points to our young people, and encourage the young men of our parish ***in a particular and pointed way*** that they ought to consider giving of their time and talents to this noble effort.
 - e) This is not in any way, shape or form meant to be a means of absolute exclusion of the young ladies who are already serving well at our Liturgies; rather, it should provide for us one way in which we might highlight the reality of our binary gendering, as established by God Himself...that while men and women are absolutely equal in dignity in the eyes of our Heavenly Father, there are inherent differences in the sexes that predispose them for service in different ways. Since this fundamental truth is under such constant attack in our culture, it would be a good thing for us to reinforce it every chance we’re afforded.

B. Extraordinary Ministers

1. The office of Extraordinary Minister is an incredibly important one that, per *Spiritus Domini*, has been and shall remain open to both men and women,

without prejudice. I have NO desire to remove women from this beautiful and sacred ministry.

2. It is my desire to help our community come to a fuller understanding of what such an office should look like, according to the norms set forth by the Church.
3. The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion is primarily tasked with taking the Blessed Sacrament to sick and shut-ins.
4. Within the context of Mass, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion should be just that; *Extra-ordinary*. This means that the Extraordinary Minister's role is to support the *Ordinary Ministers* (Priest and Deacon) in distribution of the Sacrament **only** when the size of the crowd makes this task onerous or even impossible for the ordinary ministers to accomplish alone, or when the Ordinary Minister is prevented from distributing communion through infirmity, old-age, or absence. (GIRM pp.162)(See also *Immensae Caritatis* §1)
5. In obedience to this very clear definition, it is my intent to phase out regular use of all Extraordinary Ministers (both men and women) AT MASS. They will still be most welcome to facilitate the care of those who cannot attend Mass by bringing them the Most Blessed Sacrament.
6. The use of the auxiliary chalices at Mass also presents a unique risk of profanation of the Blessed Sacrament insofar as it is much easier to spill the Precious Blood than the Sacred Host. While this would conceivably never be done intentionally within the context of Mass, even the thought of an accidental spill should be cause for concern. (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*, pp. 92, 101)
7. There is also the legitimate concern regarding the loss of the theological and traditional import of the *reception* of Holy Communion over the *taking* of Holy Communion. (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*, pp. 94)

C. Latin Hymns/Mass Setting

1. Let me begin by making one thing superabundantly clear - FR. DEERING HAS **NO** INTENTION WHATSOEVER OF SAYING MASS IN LATIN AT ST. JOSEPH! The TLM (Traditional Latin Mass) is a beautiful and exceedingly reverent liturgy; however, it requires a level of proficiency with Latin that I do not possess. Furthermore, per the edict laid out in Pope Francis' *Traditionis Custodes*, I cannot celebrate the TLM without direct permission from the Holy See, as I was not ordained before the issuance of the aforementioned *Motu Proprio*.
2. Having said this, I recognize fully the importance of Latin in our Sacred Liturgy. Latin is still the one language of the Church. Its use signifies and makes practical the unity we uphold as one of the Four Marks of the true Church (One, Holy, Catholic or universal, and Apostolic). Every single document issued by the Church is always first issued in Latin. As a "dead language", Latin is frozen in time; it does not undergo the changes that spoken languages naturally undergo, hence its vocabulary and syntax are firmly and definitively established. The use of Latin in the Liturgy is meant to make the public prayer of the Church familiar to all people, no matter their country of origin or native language. (GIRM pp. 41)

3. The Latin we would like to introduce to the Liturgy is almost exclusively confined to the sung parts of the Mass. This means that, while not preferable, those who are resolutely opposed to it can simply refrain from singing audibly, and allow their hearts and minds to be lifted up to the Lord by listening to our Cantor and Schola as they give praise to God in this way. No parts of the Mass to be delivered in the vernacular will be in Latin. The Presidential Prayers at the beginning and end of Mass, the Readings, the Homily, the General Intercessions, and the Eucharistic Prayer will always be offered in English (or Spanish) during my tenure as your Pastor, unless otherwise commanded by our Bishop.

II. Reasons Behind the Proposed Changes

A. Unity

1. As mentioned above, the Four Marks of the Church (One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic) are essential elements of our faith; elements that ought to pervade everything we do in terms of worship. The Catechism speaks of this unity as having its origin in the unity that exists between the Persons of the Holy Trinity (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pp. 815). In this way the bride reflects the countenance of the Bridegroom, facilitating in a deeply meaningful way the efforts of the Church to carry out Her mission of evangelization. People are drawn to Christ - ergo, the more we resemble Him, the more our brothers and sisters outside the Church will be inclined to consider uniting themselves with us, that they too may reap the rewards proper to those who make of themselves temples of the Holy Spirit.
2. Unity occupies the first place among the Marks for a reason - it is of preeminent importance. It represents the fulfillment of Christ's mission on earth, as He describes it Himself while praying to His Father in Heaven; ***"I am not asking on behalf of these alone [the disciples], but also for those who believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one; just as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me."*** (John 17:20-21) Here, Jesus is telling us that it is our unity with one another that signals to the world our belonging to God. It is the visible sign of the invisible grace that binds us to each other, and to our Heavenly Father.
3. We understand well the benefit of establishing unity through outward signs in many ordinary aspects of life. Our sports teams, police officers, clerics - even fast food workers - wear uniforms as a visible sign of their belonging to a singular team. We have *Alma Maters*, slogans, taglines, and catchphrases used by various organizations to promote unity within their ranks. We rally behind logos and symbols of all kinds to advertise our participation in a larger group (see the many St. Joseph School magnets and stickers affixed to the vehicles that pass through our campus daily). Our efforts to add in these minor changes to our Liturgy aim at the same effect - creating a single, unified group out of many individuals, that we may present to the world the clearest possible image of Christ Himself in all we do. This is very much in keeping with the desire of the Magisterium when it set forth the documents of the Second Vatican Council. In speaking of the function of the People of God - specifically in the context of

Mass - the bishops have the following to say: ***“They [the faithful] are consequently to avoid any appearance of singularity or division, keeping in mind that they have only one Father in heaven and that hence are all brothers or sisters one to the other. Moreover, they are to form one body, whether in hearing the Word of God, or in taking part in the prayers and in the singing, or above all by the common offering of the Sacrifice and by participating together at the Lord’s table. This unity is beautifully apparent from the gestures and bodily postures observed together by the faithful.*** (GIRM, pp.95-96)

4. Thus, adhering as closely as possible to the instructions given to us for the Sacred Liturgy helps us to develop and maintain the unity God expects from His faithful. Our use of Latin (the official language of the Church), our bodily postures (kneeling, sitting, standing, sign of the cross), singing and praying aloud as one people, our common orientation during Mass, *et cetera*, all further our goal of uniting as one people locally and globally, both in the present moment and across all time (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pp. 1367-69).

B. Obedience

1. Nadab, Abihu and Uzzah

- a) Aaron’s Sons...Levitical Priests in his line...the firstfruits of the priests of Israel. These men were struck dead immediately by God because they were careless with the performance of their duties. They didn’t follow God’s very clear instructions as they applied to the use of incense in His holy temple; “And fire came forth from the presence of the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.” (Lev. 10:1-2)
- b) Uzzah was simply a man who happened to be traveling alongside the Ark of the Covenant as it was being moved on an ox cart. When the cart hit uneven ground, the Ark began to teeter, so Uzzah put out his hand to steady it. “And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there because he put forth his hand to the ark;[e] and he died there beside the ark of God.” (2 Samuel 6:7)
- c) Both of these occurrences help us to understand how important obedience is to God - especially when it comes to worship. We cannot afford to disregard these lessons. It is my job to give you the very best Mass I can; I do this, in part, by being as obedient as possible to the commands of Holy Mother Church. What Fr. Deering wants for the Mass is OF NO ACCOUNT...we should only be concerned with what God wants for ***HIS*** MASS.
- d) The Program for Priestly Formation is the document released by the Vatican to govern the formation and education of Seminarians preparing for ordination. Paragraphs 341 and 341 state the following: (341) ***“In liturgy, the core should include studies in the theological, historical, spiritual, pastoral, and juridical aspects of liturgy. (342) Seminarians must learn to celebrate the Church’s sacred rites according to the mind of the Church, without addition or subtraction. Liturgical practica should include the celebration of the Eucharist and the other***

sacraments, with particular attention given to the practicum for the Sacrament of Penance. Seminarians should be introduced to the official liturgical books used by the clergy and to the Church's directives for music, art, and architecture. Knowledge of sacred art and music should be integrated into liturgical formations so that it "will contribute to the overall formation of seminarians, and provide them with another resource in view of evangelization and pastoral endeavor." With all this in mind, I was taught to make every effort to guide the Liturgy in accord with the precepts of the Church, so that is what I intend to do, to the best of my ability.

C. Reverence/Beauty

1. Solemnity in the form of adherence to the instructions laid out for the Liturgy lends great beauty and reverence to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.
 - a) This is YOUR BIRTHRIGHT! You all deserve the very best Mass we at St. Joseph are capable of giving you (I use the royal "we" here to represent our wonderful staff, who really work very hard to put together each Mass with dignity and respect for the miracle that happens each time we gather in our sanctuary).
 - b) The human heart, made in the image and likeness of God Himself, hungers for three things at its core: Goodness, Truth, and Beauty. God is the ultimate fulfillment of all of these things. We achieve our intended end when we unite ourselves to these things through personal relationship with the Lord (to know Him in truth, to love Him in beauty, and to serve Him in goodness). The Holy Mass, when celebrated well, incorporates all of these fundamental philosophical goods, lifting our hearts and minds to God through an appeal to the bodily senses (what we might hear colloquially referred to as the "smells and bells" of Mass).
 - c) This transcendent beauty looks and feels like nothing the world has to offer. In the beauty of Mass, the divide between the Sacred and the Profane is most starkly evident. It is with distressing frequency that I minister to parents of adult children who lament the fact that their progeny no longer practices their faith...that, despite their best efforts, they cannot entice their children to come back to Mass. This tragic trend is due - at least in part - to the homogenization that has occurred between our Liturgy and the norms of the culture. No longer is it easy to discern what is Sacred (set aside for a holy purpose) and what is Profane (what is common to everyday life, or proper to the secular world). If I can't tell the difference between the music I hear at Mass, and the music I hear on the radio in my car, then the need for Mass is that much harder to discern. By embracing the beauty proper to the celebration of the Mass, we make it that much easier for our children to see the effects of God's grace present in the worship of His people, and thus help them to internalize the immeasurable worth contained in the public prayer of the Church.

III. Personal Remarks

A. Love

1. I love our community at St. Joseph. In the short time I've been here, I have been truly humbled by the outpouring of genuine affection and real joy present in each and every person who has taken the time to introduce themselves to me. You all have certainly lived up to the enormous praise Fr. Jonathan heaped upon you as he prepared me to take over for him. I couldn't be happier serving any other community. There's nowhere in the diocese I would rather be than right here.
2. My great love for you has engendered in me an eagerness to give you the best Mass I can; but perhaps I have been a bit too impulsive. In my zeal for the Liturgy, I might have moved too fast. If this is how you perceive my actions over the past few weeks, please allow me to offer you my sincere apology. It was never my intention to sow discord, confusion, or fear in our community; however, if the feedback I have received over the last week is any indication, this has been the result of my efforts. I don't want this to be the case. This is the primary motivator for my meeting with you today, for the labor I put into the compiling of this document, and for the time invested in the many meetings I have had with different ministry/service groups since my arrival. I want you to know that I care deeply about this community as a whole, and for each of you as individuals. If you still have questions or concerns of any kind, I want you to know that my door is open. I will always make time to meet with you to discuss them. You have the right to question me - I'm not infallible - I make mistakes with some frequency; I hope you will afford me the opportunity to answer you in those moments of doubt. Gossip, intentional editorialization, detraction and slander have no place in a Christian community. To my knowledge, none of these grave sins against charity have been present in those who have approached me with genuine concern. This alone makes me conscious of the great holiness present in this parish. God be praised for all the wonderful work He has accomplished with you in conforming yourselves to His image!

B. Request for Forgiveness and Patience

1. With all this in mind, I ask humbly for your forgiveness for whatever division I may have caused by my impulsivity or my lack of proper explanation before rolling out these changes. Please be patient with me. I am far from perfect. My many varied weaknesses are, I'm sure, apparent to many of you. I promise to be about the work of fixing these shortcomings as quickly and completely as I can. To that end, fraternal correction and constructive criticism will always be welcomed by me. In the future, should a situation like this arise again, please come to me directly, that I might be able to explain my reasoning and get your feedback directly. This will allow me to clarify or fix my mistakes expediently. It is my intention to be the best priest I can be for you and your families. Please pray for me, as I will be praying for you!