



## DIOCESE OF ERIE

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November 3, 2021

Dear Monsignor, Father and Deacon:

Attached is the decree revising the method to be observed during the Communion Rite for the Diocese of Erie. As was announced at the recent vicariate meetings for priests, the Diocese of Erie will soon resume the practice of kneeling after the *Agnus Dei* until after the faithful receive communion. This will put the practice of the Diocese of Erie in line with most other dioceses in the United States and help to provide consistency of posture throughout the parishes of our own diocese. For your own benefit, and to assist you in catechizing your people about this change, I offer the following background which may assist you in guiding your parishioners and others through this transition:

- The latest edition (Latin) of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) was issued in 2000 and remains unchanged. The current English translation, including adaptations for the dioceses of the United States of America was published 2002 and was updated in 2010.
- In paragraph 42 of the *GIRM* for the US, we read:

“In the Dioceses of the United States of America, they should kneel beginning after the singing or recitation of the *Sanctus* (Holy, Holy, Holy) until after the Amen of the Eucharistic Prayer, except when prevented on occasion by ill health, or for reasons of lack of space, of the large number of people present, or for another reasonable cause. However, those who do not kneel ought to make a profound bow when the Priest genuflects after the Consecration. The faithful kneel after the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) unless the Diocesan Bishop determines otherwise.”
- Thus, when the *GIRM* was first released in English in 2002, Diocesan Bishops in the US were authorized to have their respective dioceses follow some alternative custom.
- In an attempt to express in gesture the unity signified by the Eucharist itself, Bishop Trautman decided in 2003 that the congregation would stand from the Great Amen until the reception of Holy Communion was complete. Unfortunately, that unity in gesture was never fully realized and is increasingly absent.

Consistent with Bishop Trautman's intention, Bishop Persico also wishes to emphasize the unity that flows from the Eucharist. After nine years of episcopal ministry in the Diocese of Erie, observing parish customs and the practices of people, Bishop Persico has determined now is an appropriate time for all of us to return to the practice that most dioceses in the United States employ. After the Lamb of God, the people will kneel. Once the people return after receiving Holy Communion, they may kneel or be seated. This restored practice is intended to help to unify posture throughout the Diocese of Erie, place us in greater harmony with the Church throughout the United States, lessen confusion, and assist those parishioners who are unable to stand for long periods of time. In situations where the people are unable to kneel, they may sit instead.

This directive goes into effect the First Sunday of Advent, 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, November 27, 2021. Please use these next three weeks to prepare your people for this change.

Please know my gratitude for your attention to this matter. Let us keep each other in prayer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. Matthew Kujawinski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "K".

The Reverend Matthew J. Kujawinski  
Administrator  
Office of Worship



## DECREE

### REVISING THE PRACTICE OF THE FAITHFUL DURING THE COMMUNION RITE OF THE MASS

WHEREAS the current edition of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* was promulgated in Latin by the Holy See in the year 2000, and the English translation of the same was approved by the Holy See in 2003, together with adaptations approved for use in the United States of America;

Whereas among the approved adaptations for use in the United States is the following: “In the Dioceses of the United States of America, they [the faithful], should kneel ...after the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) unless the Diocesan Bishop determines otherwise,” (paragraph 42);

Whereas in 2003, the then Bishop of Erie, the Most Reverend Donald W. Trautman, determined that the faithful in the Diocese of Erie would stand instead of kneel after the *Agnus Dei* and throughout the Communion Rite;

Whereas the practice in the Diocese of Erie differs from the practice of most dioceses in the United States, and it is increasingly difficult for many parishioners to stand for long periods of time during the distribution of Holy Communion, and across the diocese countless parishioners – often the majority in many parishes - on their own accord have already returned to the practice of kneeling after the *Agnus Dei*;

Whereas in light of the above, I judge it pastorally expedient and an effective sign of our communion with our neighboring dioceses that we return to the practice approved by the Holy See for use in the United States;

THEREFORE, in accord with paragraph 42 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, I direct that the faithful in the Diocese of Erie shall kneel at Mass following the conclusion of the *Agnus Dei*. Those who receive Holy Communion may, upon returning to their place, either kneel or sit according to their choice until the beginning of the prayer after Communion, at which time all stand.

I direct that this Decree be published and take effect on the First Sunday of Advent, which begins at 4:00 p.m. on November 27, 2021, anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery  
of the Diocese of Erie  
on this 22nd day of October, 2021

*+Lawrence T. Persico*

The Most Reverend Lawrence T. Persico, JCL  
Bishop of Erie

*Christopher J. Singer*

The Reverend Christopher J. Singer, JCL  
Chancellor

