



# NewsLetter

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**USCCB Secretariat of  
Divine Worship**  
**3211 Fourth Street, NE**  
**Washington, DC 20017**  
**Tel: (202) 541-3060**  
**Fax: (202) 541-3088**  
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Volume LII

January 2016

## **Pope Francis Expands Participation in Washing of Feet Ritual**

At the instruction of Pope Francis, the rite of the washing of feet on Holy Thursday has been modified to lawfully permit a wider representation of the People of God to take part in the ceremony. The Holy Father's decision has been made effective by a decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, dated January 6, 2016 (Prot. n. 87/15).

Up to now, the relevant rubric in the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper in the *Roman Missal* indicated that "*The men who have been chosen* are led by the ministers to seats prepared in a suitable place." Henceforth that text will read "*Those who are chosen from among the people of God* are led by the ministers to seats prepared in a suitable place" (no. 11, emphasis added). In the *Ceremonial of Bishops*, this same text is also modified (at no. 301), as well as a rubric describing the items necessary for the Holy Thursday Mass: "seats for *the men* chosen" is changed to "seats for *those* chosen" (no. 299b, emphasis added).

The Holy Father formally communicated his decision to Robert Cardinal Sarah, Prefect of the Congregation, in a letter dated December 20, 2015. In that short letter, Pope Francis explained that he had been reflecting on the foot-washing ritual for some time, and determined that it needed to better reflect "the significance of the gesture Jesus performed in the Upper Room, giving himself 'to the very end' for the salvation of the world, his boundless charity." To that end, he ordered that the rubrics be modified to permit participants for the rite to be chosen "from among all members of the People of God," and likewise insisted that those who are chosen receive an explanation of the meaning of the ceremony.

Carrying out the instruction of the Holy Father, the Congregation's decree provides specific suggestions as to the nature of this representative group: men and women, young and old, healthy and sick, clergy, religious, and laity. The decree echoes the Holy Father's letter by reminding pastors of their duty to help the faithful have a conscious, active, and fruitful participation in the ritual. This change takes effect immediately, and should be taken into consideration in the planning of this year's Easter Triduum. The modification does not, however, change the fact that the rite is not an obligatory part of that Mass, but rather is something to be carried out "where a pastoral reason suggests it" (*Roman Missal*, Mass of the Lord's Supper, no. 10).

Together with the text of the decree, the Congregation released a commentary on the rite prepared by its Secretary, Archbishop Arthur Roche. He observed that the liturgical recollection of this moving aspect of the Last Supper has seen a variety of

forms in the history of the Roman Rite. It has been part of the liturgy since at least the seventh century, though it tended to be emphasized most in monastic settings. There, it would have naturally been reserved to clerics, and different communities had varying customs regarding the time of day and the location of the ceremony. However, at least from the seventeenth century, there were also customs in some places of washing the feet of the poor on Holy Thursday, and with the Holy Week reforms of Pope Pius XII, it took on a more public role in the evening Mass of that day.

Archbishop Roche's commentary noted that the rite is often referred to as the *Mandatum*, from Jesus' words at the Last Supper (Jn 13:14) and also the first word of one of the antiphons that can be chanted during the ceremony: "Mandatum novum do vobis..." (I give you a new commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you, says the Lord). Pope Francis clearly desires that this rite signify, in a powerful way, the love we are called to have for one another. For the benefit of our readers, the Congregation's decree is published below:

## CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

Prot. n. 87/15

### DECREE

The restoration of Holy Week, with the decree *Maxima Redemptionis nostrae mysteria* (November 30, 1955), granted the faculty for the washing of feet of twelve men during the Mass of the Lord's Supper after the reading of the Gospel according to John, where a pastoral reason recommended it, in order to demonstrate in an almost representative way the humility and charity of Christ towards his disciples. In the Roman Liturgy this rite was handed down with the name of the *Mandatum* of the Lord concerning fraternal charity from the words of Jesus (cf. Jn 13:34), which are sung in an Antiphon during the celebration.

In performing this rite Bishops and priests are invited to intimately conform themselves to Christ who "came not to be served but to serve" (Mt 20:28) and, compelled by charity "to the end" (Jn 13:1), to give his life for the salvation of the whole human race.

In order that the full meaning of this rite might be expressed to those who participate it seemed good to the Supreme Pontiff Pope Francis to vary the norm which is found in the rubrics of the *Missale Romanum* (p. 300 n. 11): "The men who have been chosen are led by the ministers..." which therefore must be changed as follows: "Those who are chosen from amongst the people of God are led by the ministers..." (and consequently in the *Cæremoniale Episcoporum* n. 301 and n. 299b: "seats for those chosen"), so that pastors may select a small group of the faithful to represent the variety and the unity of each part of the people of God. Such small groups can be made up of men and women, and it is appropriate that they consist of people young and old, healthy and sick, clerics, consecrated men and women and laity.

This Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, in virtue of the faculties granted by the Supreme Pontiff, introduces this innovation into the liturgical books of the Roman Rite, reminding pastors of their responsibility to adequately instruct both the chosen faithful as well as all others so that they may participate consciously, actively and fruitfully in the rite.

Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

From the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, January 6, 2016, Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.

Robert Card. Sarah  
*Prefect*

✠ Arthur Roche  
*Archbishop Secretary*

## Penitential Resources for Lent

The Church encourages frequent recourse to the Sacrament of Penance, and does so with particular urgency during the holy season of Lent. This invitation to find forgiveness takes on a heightened emphasis during the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, so dioceses, parishes, and other institutions are encouraged to make special effort to organize penance services and other expanded opportunities to approach the “sacrament of divine mercy.” Two resources in this regard that might be helpful are the “24 Hours for the Lord” initiative of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization and the “The Light is On for You” campaign that has its origins in this country.

As it did earlier with the rituals for the opening and the closing of the Holy Year, the Pontifical Council has collaborated with Our Sunday Visitor to make resources for “24 Hours for the Lord” available as a free PDF download, available at [www.OSV.com/24HoursForTheLord](http://www.OSV.com/24HoursForTheLord). This *Pastoral Guide* “is meant to offer some suggestions for parishes and Christian communities that would like to prepare themselves for the observance of ‘24 Hours for the Lord.’” While March 4-5, 2016 has been designated as the suggested observance for this event, local communities could certainly do so on a day more convenient to their circumstances.

A similar initiative that has proven to be popular in many U.S. dioceses is a campaign called “The Light is On for You.” This program aims to make confession readily available at convenient times (for example, every Wednesday evening in Lent at every parish in the diocese), and to make special efforts to publicize these opportunities. With the helpful collaboration of the Archdiocese of Washington and the Diocese of Arlington, the USCCB has a number of resources available on its website, including logos and graphics that can be used at no cost: [www.USCCB.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/penance/sacrament-of-penance-diocesan-resources.cfm](http://www.USCCB.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/penance/sacrament-of-penance-diocesan-resources.cfm).

## Congregation for Divine Worship Announces Wider Accessibility to *Notitiae* Journal

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments recently announced changes in the publication and distribution of its official journal, *Notitiae*. The journal has been publicly available since January 1965, the same year that this *Newsletter* began publication. (In fact, the first page of the *Newsletter*’s first issue in September 1965 included an advertisement for *Notitiae*: a yearly subscription offer for \$5.00.)

Until 2014, the journal was typically distributed as a printed edition every other month, with each yearly volume usually totaling over 500 pages. The Congregation has announced that the 2015 volume is being published online in two biannual issues, and beginning in 2016, *Notitiae* will become a free, online-only review, with one large volume presented per year. In addition, the Congregation has announced that it plans to make past issues available online as well, though no date has been set for the completion of that project. The website for the journal is: [www.Vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccdds\\_notitiae\\_index\\_en.html](http://www.Vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_notitiae_index_en.html).

*Notitiae* has been one of the Congregation’s most important means for communicating news and scholarly resources pertaining to the Sacred Liturgy. This includes regular listings of the decrees issued by the Congregation, along with notices of new liturgical texts and changes to existing texts. The journal also features studies that are of interest to liturgical scholars. Much of the material is presented in Italian or Latin, but English plays a prominent role, and other modern languages also make an appearance. In the first biannual issue of 2015, English-language articles include a commentary on the *Homiletic Directory*, a reflection on the theme of mercy in the Liturgy of the Hours, and an article by Archbishop Arthur Roche, Secretary of the Congregation, on the meaning of “Sonship” in Christ Jesus. The second issue includes an extended reflection on the Rite of Penance.

The journal is a particularly important witness to the development of the post-Conciliar liturgical books. Especially in the first half of its existence, many of *Notitiae*’s articles and studies were written by the people who were actually involved in the liturgical renewal. While authorship of texts in the Latin Rite liturgical books is

generally considered to be anonymous, and while they are promulgated by the Congregation in the name of the Holy Father, we do know the names of the members of the committees who worked on preparing the various liturgical books, and even the various parts of those books. To give just one example, Msgr. Pierre Journel was prominent in the group that worked on texts for the Proper of Saints in the revised *Roman Missal*, and he published in *Notitiae* (and elsewhere) several related articles about the sources, approaches, and content of the revised orations of saints and angels. This sort of first-hand information is invaluable for those who are interested in the post-Conciliar development of the Roman liturgy.

## Transfer of the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord in 2016

Due to the relatively early date of Easter in 2016 (an occurrence that will not occur again for a number of years), the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord on March 25 is impeded by Good Friday this year. According to the *Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*, no. 60, the Annunciation is therefore transferred to Monday of the Second Week of Easter, in this case, April 4, 2016.

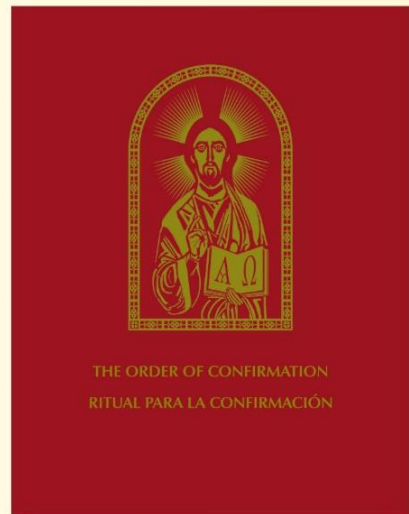
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The bilingual text includes rites for the following: Confirmation within Mass, Confirmation outside Mass, and Confirmation for a Person in Danger of Death. It also has Confirmation prayers from the *Roman Missal* and lists the lectionary readings that can be used.

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