



# NewsLetter

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### Volume LII

March-April 2016

### Guide for Large-Scale Celebrations

With the Eucharist as its overall theme, a concern that emerged from the 2005 Synod of Bishops was that large-scale Eucharistic celebrations should always be carried out properly and in accord with current liturgical law, especially when there are large numbers of concelebrating priests. Subsequently, in 2014 the Congregation for Divine Worship issued (in Italian and Spanish) a *Guide* for these circumstances.

As large-scale Eucharistic celebrations are not rare in this country, the Secretariat of Divine Worship has commissioned an unofficial English translation of this *Guide*, for the benefit of those responsible for organizing these celebrations.

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

Prot. n. 371/14

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, in the wake of the 2005 Synod of Bishops, began a reflection on the attention that needed to be given to particular liturgical celebrations in which, in addition to a large number of faithful, there are present also many concelebrating priests. This theme was subsequently taken up again in no. 61 of Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*.

After hearing the opinions of consultors and experts, as well as those of other institutions of the Apostolic See concerned in the matter, a first contribution on this subject, entitled *Le grandi celebrazioni: una riflessione in corso (Large-Scale Celebrations: A Reflection Underway)*, was presented in *Notitiae* 43 (2007), pgs. 535-542.

This theme has continued to receive attention, leading to the drawing up of this present *Guide for Large-Scale Celebrations*, now published in the pages of *Notitiae*. The text, placed on various occasions for examination before the Eminent members of the Dicastery, met with a positive evaluation from the Fathers in the Ordinary Meeting of November 22, 2013 and received the approbation of the Holy Father Pope Francis in the audience granted to the Cardinal Prefect on June 7, 2014.

This Congregation hopes that the *Guide*, in which are called to mind criteria, instructions, and suggestions found among the current norms, may contribute in an effective manner to the careful preparation and to the fruitful celebration of the holy mysteries in particular circumstances where there are considerable numbers of priests and of participating lay faithful.

From the offices of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, June 13, 2014, the Memorial of St Anthony, Priest and Doctor of the Church.

Antonio Card. Cañizares Llovera  
Prefect

✠ Arthur Roche  
Archbishop Secretary

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#### **Introduction**

##### *Importance, Problem, Responsibility*

1. When we look at the reality that surrounds us today, with its lights and its shadows, we note “the need to rediscover the journey of faith so as to shed ever clearer light on the joy and renewed enthusiasm of the encounter with Christ.”<sup>1</sup> And it is the liturgy which is the privileged place for the encounter with Christ, living in the Church. According to this understanding, large-scale celebrations, too, have a particular role to play.

2. The Synod of Bishops that took place in October 2005 raised the question of large-scale celebrations, where many priests and great numbers of faithful come together.<sup>2</sup> Benedict XVI’s Post-Synodal Apostolic

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, *Motu Proprio Porta Fidei* (Nov. 11, 2011), no. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Synod of Bishops, XI Ordinary General Assembly, *The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission*

Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* of February 22, 2007 returned to the point, indicating the importance and the limits of these celebrations.<sup>3</sup>

The present *Guide* offers indications and suggestions for helping the Bishops to prepare for large-scale celebrations and to regulate them in their dioceses in such a way that they constitute moments of evangelization, missionary witness, and experience of the Church.

#### **1. Ensuring Participation**

3. The Second Vatican Council laid special emphasis on the active, full, and fruitful participation in the liturgy of the whole People of God.<sup>4</sup> As is natural, even for large-scale celebrations, consideration should be given to the quality of participation, starting with a greater awareness of the mystery being celebrated and of its relation to everyday life.<sup>5</sup>

From the need for participation that is active “it does not follow that everyone must necessarily have something concrete to do beyond the specified actions and gestures, as if a certain specific liturgical ministry must necessarily be given to each individual to be carried out by them.”<sup>6</sup> The aim is that all those participating “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.”<sup>7</sup> This aim is more difficult to achieve in the case of a mixed assembly of faithful who are not accustomed to praying together, and who are gathered in a space not directly designed for a liturgical celebration. Being gathered in a number so large does not always encourage a direct relation to the altar, to the ambo, and to the priest presiding, nor

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*of the Church. Elenchus finalis propositum, Editiones latina et italica* (Vatican City, 2005), proposition 37: “The Synod Fathers acknowledge the high merit of concelebrations, especially those presided over by the Bishop with his presbyterate, and the deacons and faithful. However, they request the competent institutions to study better the practice of concelebration when the number of celebrants is very high.”

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (Sac Car) (Feb. 22, 2007), no. 61.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC), nos. 14, 30-32, 48.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 10; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), no. 1142.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (CDWDS), Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (RS), no. 40.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), no. 96.

does it easily facilitate the usual ritual postures (sitting down, kneeling, moving in procession).

Appropriate admonitions can help, if aimed at promoting the interior and exterior participation of all and at the correct carrying out of the rites.<sup>8</sup> Particular mention is made in this present *Guide* of an admonition before the Communion of the faithful.

a) *Remote and Proximate Preparation*

4. Large-scale celebrations bear greater spiritual and pastoral fruit if arranged as the crowning moment of a program of several preparatory encounters of a spiritual and catechetical nature. For this preparation undertaken well in advance is very effective, for example at the parish level, and not just in the days immediately beforehand. The preparation immediately prior to the celebration is crucial; it can include rehearsal of the singing, listening to readings from suitable texts, periods of silence and periods of prayer, including litanies, the Rosary, or other pious devotions.

b) *A Praying Community*

5. The first requirement for a good celebration is that both the ordained ministers and the faithful enter into it in a way that overcomes the temptation to give way to the sense of anonymity and a sense of separateness more likely to occur in large-scale gatherings.

The presence of the faithful in great numbers is a gift from God, and is rightly to be appreciated. However, it should not be reduced simply to the level of a massive crowd-event, defined merely by exterior characteristics: the liturgy is concerned with involving the whole People of God and with achieving spiritual recollection, and it requires attitudes of body and spirit which are in harmony with the great dignity of the mysteries being celebrated. In fact, every “sacramental celebration is a meeting of God’s children with their Father, in Christ and the Holy Spirit; this meeting takes the form of a dialogue, through actions and words.”<sup>9</sup>

c) *A Spirit of Conversion*

6. Among conditions affecting the individual that facilitate fruitful participation in the holy mysteries is a spirit of continuous conversion that applies to all, both priests and lay people: “A heart reconciled to God makes genuine participation possible.”<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, in preparation for large-scale celebrations, the local Ordinaries (and as part of their specific task, the event’s organizers) should ensure that people have as much as possible and as easily as possible the opportunity to go to sacramental confession. It is

recommended that the people actually be able to see priests hearing confessions and that the priests be available for this ministry both in the days leading up to the event and as part of the immediate preparation. In so far as the site permits, there should be the possibility of going to confession even during the Mass, in suitable locations worthy of the sacrament.<sup>11</sup>

d) *Means of Communication*

7. If the celebration takes place in a sizeable area, it is helpful to have large video screens so as to allow even those far away to see what is happening. Those in charge of video transmission should be well informed about the phases of the celebration so that attention is directed at the various moments to the liturgical actions and to those who are carrying them out, as also to the locations concerned, namely the ambo for the Liturgy of the Word and the altar for the Eucharistic Liturgy. Care should be taken to avoid distracting the faithful from the celebration taking place by showing unsuitable images of the people present or of things extraneous to the celebration.

## 2. Prior Considerations and Context

a) *The Choice of a Suitable Type of Celebration*

8. The celebration of the Mass presupposes and requires that those gathered in the Lord’s name are able to feel that they are part of a praying assembly here and now, and that the concelebrating priests can manifest their essential connection to the altar.

For this reason, it is well on occasion to consider whether it is opportune to have Mass or whether it might not be preferable, given the circumstances, to opt for another type of liturgical celebration or prayer service. Gatherings of national or international importance may additionally find a suitable vehicle for prayer also in the Liturgy of the Hours, or in a celebration of the Word of God, or in a solemn procession of the Blessed Sacrament with exposition and benediction, or in a prayer vigil such as those held at major shrines, especially when no day of obligation is involved.

The decision rests with the Diocesan Bishop, after consultation with the Bishops’ Conference for national gatherings and with the competent organism in the case of gatherings of an international character.

b) *Eucharistic Concelebration*

9. If Mass is chosen, objective consideration has to be given to which priests will be allowed to concelebrate. The high value of concelebration, especially when

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 31.

<sup>9</sup> CCC, no. 1153.

<sup>10</sup> Sac Car, no. 55.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. St. John Paul II, *Motu Proprio Misericordia Dei* (Apr. 7, 2002), no. 2; cf. CDWDS, *Responsa ad dubia proposita: Notitiae* 37 (2001), 259-260.

presided over by the Bishop, surrounded by his priests and deacons,<sup>12</sup> needs to take account of the fact that “it is not always easy in such cases to give clear expression to the unity of the presbyterate, especially during the Eucharistic Prayer.”<sup>13</sup> Often the large number of concelebrants does not allow giving them a place near the altar, and puts them so far away as to give rise to concerns about their relation to the altar.<sup>14</sup>

By law, it is up to the Bishop to regulate the discipline of concelebration in his diocese.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, after careful evaluation, so as not to undermine the sign-value of Eucharistic concelebration, it is appropriate that the number of concelebrants be proportionate to the capacity of the sanctuary or equivalent area. One criterion would seem to be that of having a group of concelebrants that is representative.<sup>16</sup> For the remaining priests a suggestion would be to arrange for concelebrations at suitable times during that day in other churches and locations.<sup>17</sup>

#### c) *Liturgy and Beauty*

10. In order that signs may shine forth with noble simplicity,<sup>18</sup> care must be taken with the layout of space and with the decoration of different areas. Simplicity must not degenerate into an impoverishment of signs.<sup>19</sup>

In order that the attention of the faithful may not be distracted by the surroundings but focused on the mysteries of faith which, celebrated in time, give us a foretaste of the liturgy of eternity, holy images are of considerable help, and among them especially depictions of the *Pantocrator* or the Lord in glory. Use should also be made of the sacred images venerated locally and which are dear to popular piety.<sup>20</sup>

Care should be taken over the beauty of the vestments and furnishings, so that they foster awe for the

mystery of God.<sup>21</sup> In the case of vestments and sacred vessels that are made especially for the occasion, the general norms as to material and form are to be taken into account.<sup>22</sup>

#### d) *The Sense of the Mystery of God*

11. Even in a large-scale celebration the meaning of divine worship has to be evident. Expressions of adoration and of awareness of the presence and the action of God have to receive careful attention.

The carrying out of the ritual must take account of the truth and authenticity of signs, gestures and movements, and of their meaning and the impact they have for a very large gathering. One and the same action takes on different particular overtones as a communication according to whether it takes place in a parish church or in a cathedral or in an area where a great crowd of people is gathered.

#### e) *Singing and Language*

12. If singing, as a sign of a joyous heart, serves to increase the unity of the gathered faithful, this is particularly true in large-scale celebrations, where it is more difficult to give expression to the common, united nature of the faith, of prayer, and of inner feelings.<sup>23</sup>

While attention should be given to different praiseworthy approaches and traditions, Gregorian chant, proper to the Roman Liturgy, retains its constant value.<sup>24</sup> Other types of singing are not to be excluded, provided they correspond to the spirit of the liturgical action and foster the participation of all.<sup>25</sup>

The preparation of the assembly for the singing, the choirs that sustain the singing, a cantor to guide the singing, and the use of responses all have an important role to play, as has the choir director. The latter needs to know the norms laid down by liturgical discipline.<sup>26</sup> It can be useful to consult the collection entitled *Jubilare Deo*, and also duly approved national and diocesan repertoires.<sup>27</sup>

Experience suggests that it is also best for everyone to have a booklet that allows them to follow the singing.

In a celebration of international character, so as better to express the unity and universality of the Church, a more ample place can be given to the Latin language, and different languages can be adopted for the singing, the biblical readings, and the intentions of the

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, SC, no. 57, and Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 7; GIRM, nos. 199 and 203.

<sup>13</sup> Sac Car, no. 61.

<sup>14</sup> “The number of concelebrants in individual cases is determined bearing in mind both the church and the altar at which the concelebration takes place, in such a way that the concelebrants are able to stand around the altar, even if not all are immediately touching the mensa of the altar”: Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Ritus servandus in concelebratione Missae et Ritus communionis sub utraque specie, editio typica*, Vatican Press, 1966, no. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. SC, no. 57 §2, 1; GIRM, no. 202.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Ceremonial of Bishops* (CB), no. 274: “To signify the unity of the presbyterate, the Priests who concelebrate with the Bishop should be from different regions of the diocese.”

<sup>17</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 201.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. SC, no. 34.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. St. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus Quintus Annus* (Dec. 4, 1988), no. 10.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 318.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Sac Car, no. 41.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. GIRM, nos. 325-347; RS, no. 117.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. GIRM, nos. 39 and 47; CDWDS, Instruction *Liturgiam Authenticam* (LA), no. 108.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. SC, no. 116; GIRM, no. 41.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 41.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. CB, no. 39; GIRM, no. 104.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. LA, no. 108.

Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful);<sup>28</sup> in this case the booklets should provide appropriate translations.

f) *Silence*

13. At the specified times, sacred silence, which is part of the liturgy itself, should be observed. Its significance varies according to where it occurs in the course of the individual celebrations.<sup>29</sup> Liturgical tradition bears witness to the effectiveness and profound character of this form of participation. It is precisely with large assemblies that silence makes its mark.

Before the celebration starts, the importance of silence can be recalled and people should be asked not to applaud, not to take photographs, and not to wave banners or flags.

g) *Liturgical Vesture*

14. Unless persons and functions are clearly distinguishable by means of vesture, it is easy to create confusion of liturgical roles. For this reason it is necessary that every ordained minister wear the vesture proper to him.<sup>30</sup>

Even when the concelebrants are numerous it is praiseworthy to do everything possible so that each of them can wear a chasuble, bearing in mind that the chasuble can always be white in color.<sup>31</sup> The other ministers, as regards liturgical vesture, should keep to legitimate local custom.

### 3. Spaces and Ministers

a) *Celebrations in the Open or in Non-Sacred Places*

15. The sacred character of the liturgical action means that a particularly important aspect is the handling of the space in which it takes place; this must be planned with reference to the general norms.<sup>32</sup>

If the celebration takes place in the open air, it is opportune for the assembly to gather, insofar as possible, in a clearly delineated space. In this way emphasis is laid on the sacral dimension and on the visible aspect of the community united in prayer.

The location is to be chosen with care, bearing in mind that an open space or one normally used for other purposes does not by its very nature lend itself to a sacred function, and that it is not easy to create a setting for prayer. A place habitually used for other specific types of encounter or meeting, such as sporting events, is not perhaps the most suitable given the distractions that

it may cause for the faithful, even without their being aware of this.

The choice, after appropriate evaluations, is the responsibility of the local Bishop.

16. In such a space, places “for the faithful should be arranged with appropriate care so that they are able to participate in the sacred celebrations, duly following them with their eyes and their attention.”<sup>33</sup> Places should be arranged in such a way that it is easy to come forward to receive Holy Communion. Care should also be taken to ensure that the faithful can not only see but also hear with ease.<sup>34</sup> For this reason, in order to facilitate participation, an audio amplification system should be set up with expert help.

17. If necessary, suitable places (chapels) will need to be arranged for keeping the Blessed Sacrament, with a view to the distribution of Communion and for reservation of consecrated hosts remaining. An adequate proportion should be calculated between the number of faithful present and the places for keeping, distributing, and reserving the consecrated hosts (a guide might be one Eucharistic chapel for every three thousand faithful).

b) *The Altar*

18. Given its inherent importance as the place of sacrifice and as the Lord’s table, the altar with its cross<sup>35</sup> should “occupy a place where it is truly the center toward which the attention of the whole congregation of the faithful naturally turns.”<sup>36</sup> As such, the direction the assembly faces is assured, something which in large-scale celebrations can easily be lost.

For this reason, the dimensions of the altar are to be carefully pondered, along with the height at which it is positioned and the quality of its lighting. To draw attention to it even when seen at a distance, it is useful if there is a covering or canopy over the altar, which can also offer protection from the rain and sunshine; this, however, should not by its size block the view and the range of television coverage.

There must be only one altar. Therefore, a multiplication of altars or surfaces around which concelebrants are grouped is to be absolutely avoided. Likewise to be avoided is an unduly long altar mensa with the idea of arranging a large number of concelebrants all around the altar, but in reality blocking the view of the faithful.

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Sac Car, no. 62.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. GIRM, nos. 45, 56, 88.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. GIRM, nos. 337-338; CB, nos. 56-62.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 209; RS, no. 124.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. GIRM, nos. 295-310.

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<sup>33</sup> GIRM, no. 311.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 296.

<sup>36</sup> GIRM, no. 299.

c) *The Sanctuary*

19. In the case of large-scale celebrations it is often necessary to “create” a sanctuary that must be considered and set up as foreseen by the norms.<sup>37</sup> It is important to have in mind the proportions of the sanctuary in relation to other areas occupied by the *schola* and the faithful, since the overall arrangement must reflect how the “People of God which is gathered for Mass is coherently and hierarchically ordered.”<sup>38</sup>

In the sanctuary are to be placed seats for the concelebrating priests.<sup>39</sup> If the celebration takes place in the open, as for example on the forecourt of a church or in a public square, an area should be marked out in which the priests can be accommodated with ease, so as to make visible the unity between them. In this space, if possible, places should be foreseen also for priests not concelebrating, but present in choir dress.<sup>40</sup> It is not appropriate that they participate at Mass, as to external aspects, in the same manner as the lay faithful.<sup>41</sup>

d) *The Ambo*

20. Connected with the sanctuary, and in relation both visually and decoratively with the altar and the chair, the ambo is the place where, by means of the sacred Scriptures, there resounds the Word that God addresses to the gathered assembly, so as to lead it toward Eucharistic Communion.

For that reason, especially in these large-scale celebrations, the ambo should be at an elevated height and clearly visible, having proportions suited to the extent of the wide space, of sufficiently ample size that it can serve for the solemn proclamation of the Gospel. It should be so arranged that during the Liturgy of the Word the attention of the assembly is spontaneously directed toward it and that the ordained ministers and the readers can easily be seen and heard by all.<sup>42</sup>

It is indispensable that admonitions, commentaries, and announcements be made and the singing be directed from somewhere other than the ambo, a location easily seen but discreet, and which does not encroach on the sanctuary.<sup>43</sup>

e) *The Chair*

21. Since it is the place where the presiding priest performs important functions throughout the celebration, the chair has a defined place within the sanctuary. Clearly visible to the faithful, and in a certain relation to

the concelebrants, it should be linked by its form and decoration to the altar and to the ambo.

Near the chair, to ensure assistance to the presiding celebrant, seats should be arranged for the deacons. In a more discreet fashion there should be places for the other ministers.<sup>44</sup>

f) *The Schola*

22. Bearing in mind the space in which the celebration takes place, the *schola* “should be so positioned with respect to the arrangement of each church that its nature may be clearly evident, namely as part of the assembled community of the faithful undertaking a specific function.”<sup>45</sup> It should not, therefore, occupy a place in the sanctuary, nor be in competition with it, and it is appropriate that the members of the *schola* be looking toward the altar and not at the other faithful. This “should also help the choir to exercise [its] function more easily” and make full participation in the Mass easier for everyone.<sup>46</sup>

#### 4. The Different Moments in the Celebration

a) *Before the Celebration*

23. As part of the immediate preparation for the celebration, the recollection of faithful and priests is recommended.<sup>47</sup> To ensure this, even when the concelebrants are numerous, it is appropriate to make available suitable areas where the principal celebrant, concelebrating Bishops, and priests can vest, helped by deacons and servers.

b) *The Introductory Rites*

24. Since in large-scale celebrations the entrance of the concelebrants takes time, the greater part of them should occupy their places in an orderly and discreet fashion before the moment the celebration starts.

The entrance procession should always be led by the thurifer, the ministers with the cross and the lighted candles, and the deacon with the Book of the Gospels.<sup>48</sup>

The incensation of the altar and the cross at the beginning of the celebration<sup>49</sup> should not be overlooked since, along with the singing, it helps in these large-scale celebrations to prompt an atmosphere of prayer in common. In open spaces, there is even greater necessity to give attention to the truth and authenticity of signs.

After the liturgical greeting, the local Bishop or his delegate may say some brief words of welcome, after

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. GIRM, nos. 295-310.

<sup>38</sup> GIRM, no. 294.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 310.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. GIRM, nos. 114 and 310.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. RS, nos. 113 and 128.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 309.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 310.

<sup>45</sup> GIRM, no. 312.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 45.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. CB, no. 128.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 276; CB, no. 131.

which there follows the Penitential Act. The introductory rites are not the time for speeches by the civil authorities; these can take place before or after the celebration.

c) *The Liturgy of the Word*

25. Since the “Liturgy of the Word is to be celebrated in such a way as to favor meditation,”<sup>50</sup> the readings should be proclaimed in an unhurried manner so that all can listen and understand the Word of the Lord. It should be kept in mind that in large-scale assemblies sound takes time to reach the more distant places. Brief moments of silence are very effective since they allow participants to meditate on what they have heard.<sup>51</sup> For this reason readers should be chosen with great care.

The procession with the Book of the Gospels should take place with great solemnity,<sup>52</sup> manifesting in this way the particular reverence which is reserved to the Gospel<sup>53</sup> and showing how hearing the Gospel is the culminating point of the Liturgy of the Word.<sup>54</sup> It is appropriate to underscore the importance of the proclamation of the Gospel by means of singing.<sup>55</sup>

Large-scale celebrations are a case in which the chair would seem to be the most suitable place for holding the homily.<sup>56</sup> At the conclusion of the homily, it is useful to observe a moment in silence.<sup>57</sup>

d) *The Presentation of the Gifts*

26. As to the presentation of the gifts on the part of the faithful,<sup>58</sup> the “authentic meaning of this gesture can be clearly expressed without the need for undue emphasis or complexity.”<sup>59</sup> In large-scale celebrations only those gifts which constitute the matter of sacrifice should be presented, along with those intended for charitable purposes. It should be borne in mind that adding explanations at the time of the presentation of the gifts does not foster the liturgical significance of this moment.

Care should be taken that the amount of bread and wine to be consecrated correspond to the number of participants and of concelebrants.

The gifts for the Eucharist should be placed on the altar. If, given their large quantity, this is not possible, prior to the presentation of the gifts some non-concelebrating priests, deacons or instituted acolytes, carrying a ciborium in their hands, should position

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<sup>50</sup> GIRM, no. 56.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 45.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 175.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 134.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *Lectionary for Mass*, Introduction, no. 13.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, no. 67.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 136.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. GIRM, nos. 56, 66, 136.

<sup>58</sup> GIRM, no. 73.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Sac Car, no. 47.

themselves near the altar, without however getting in the way of the concelebrants and without blocking the view of the altar by the faithful.

e) *The Eucharistic Prayer*

27. In order to facilitate the personal participation of all the concelebrants, it is appropriate that each have a booklet for the Eucharistic Prayer. The parts recited together by the concelebrants, “especially the words of Consecration, which all are obliged to say, are to be recited in such a manner that the concelebrants speak them in a low voice and that the principal celebrant’s voice is heard clearly.”<sup>60</sup> In large-scale celebrations it is good for these parts to be sung,<sup>61</sup> since in addition to highlighting the sacred character of the Prayer, this makes it easier to synchronize the words.

A large number of concelebrants calls for limiting movement that could distract both priests and faithful.

At the moment of the consecration the ciboria must be uncovered. Adoration on the part of the faithful is facilitated by specific gestures of reverence toward the Eucharist, such as kneeling down when possible, the incensing of the sacred species,<sup>62</sup> and the ringing of a bell.<sup>63</sup> In some places, the importance of the moment is brought out by the use of candles carried by ministers who take up position in front of the altar.

f) *The Sign of Peace*

28. It is appropriate, particularly in large-scale celebrations, that the sign of peace be a gesture controlled in such a way that “each person, in a sober manner, offer the sign of peace only to those who are nearest.”<sup>64</sup> The sober character of the gesture takes away nothing of its great value and helps to maintain a climate of prayer before Communion.

g) *The Communion of the Concelebrants*

29. It is important for the Communion of the concelebrants to be well planned, calling as it does for careful preparation and attention. It “should proceed according to the norms prescribed in the liturgical books, always using hosts consecrated at the same Mass and always with Communion under both kinds being received by all of the concelebrants.”<sup>65</sup> The concelebrants must receive Communion before going to distribute Communion to the faithful.

If the large number of the concelebrants prevents their receiving Communion at the altar, they should

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<sup>60</sup> GIRM, no. 218.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 218.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 150.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> GIRM, no. 82.

<sup>65</sup> RS, no. 98.

move to places specially arranged so that they receive Communion calmly and devoutly. In a bigger church, such places can be side chapels, while in open spaces places should be set up which can be seen and easily recognized by the concelebrants. In these places, on a large table covered with one or more corporals, one or several chalices should be set out, together with patens with the hosts. If this proves too difficult, the concelebrants should stay in their places and receive Communion from the Body and Blood of the Lord brought to them by deacons or by some concelebrants. The greatest attention should be paid to avoiding any hosts or drops of the Blood of the Lord falling on the ground.

Once the distribution of Communion to the concelebrants is concluded, care will be taken to consume immediately and in its entirety the consecrated wine left and to take the remaining consecrated hosts to the places set up for keeping and guarding the Eucharist.<sup>66</sup>

#### h) *The Communion of the Faithful*

30. Before the beginning of singing at Communion time, bearing in mind the differing situations of those present, as regards their belonging or not to the Catholic Church and as to their personal dispositions,<sup>67</sup> it is appropriate that by means of a suitable admonition a reminder be given concerning the attitudes of adoration and respect due to the Blessed Sacrament and the conditions for receiving Communion;<sup>68</sup> an announcement can also be made about details of the areas set aside for the distribution of Communion and how it will proceed.

Although it is recommended that Communion take place with hosts consecrated in that same celebration,<sup>69</sup> for understandable reasons it may be opportune in large-scale celebrations for Communion to take place also through distribution of hosts that are already consecrated; in this case the hosts will be reserved in ciboria duly kept in secure tabernacles of adequate size, located in chapels or places worthy of such a function.

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 163.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Sac Car, no. 50; CCC, no. 1385.

<sup>68</sup> RS, nos. 83-84: “[I]t sometimes happens that Christ’s faithful approach the altar as a group indiscriminately. It pertains to the Pastors prudently and firmly to correct such an abuse. Furthermore when Holy Mass is celebrated for a large crowd—for example, in large cities—care should be taken lest out of ignorance non-Catholics or even non-Christians come forward for Holy Communion, without taking into account the Church’s Magisterium in matters pertaining to doctrine and discipline. It is the duty of Pastors at an opportune moment to inform those present of the authenticity and the discipline that are strictly to be observed.”

<sup>69</sup> Cf. GIRM, no. 85.

The faithful who wish to receive Communion will go to these places, or along the aisles which mark off the sections.

The ministers who distribute Communion must be recognizable. One method, in line with tradition, is that they be accompanied by someone (an altar server or minister) carrying a suitable umbrella or other sign, as for example, a lighted candle.

It is always praiseworthy to use a communion plate, and, especially in these circumstances where distribution is more complicated,<sup>70</sup> employing when needed suitable ciborium lids. Provision should be made for specific places where persons with particular needs (e.g. celiac sufferers) can receive Communion, and these places should be clearly indicated.

The local Bishop, taking into account any likely risks foreseeable in these large-scale gatherings, can decide whether it is opportune to apply what is laid down in the Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, no. 92, in such a way that Communion is distributed only on the tongue.

The hosts which remain at the end of Communion will be taken in a dignified manner to the places where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved and the ciboria handed over. In these places there should be available whatever is necessary for the purification of the sacred vessels and of the ministers’ fingers.

## Conclusion

31. The Second Vatican Council began its labors with a discussion of the sacred liturgy. In this way, what was highlighted in an unmistakable manner was the primacy of God, the real protagonist of the Church’s liturgical celebration. When attention paid to God ceases to be the main purpose, then everything else loses its bearings. The purpose of this *Guide for Large-Scale Celebrations*, with its instructions and practical suggestions, is in fact none other than to help in preparing properly and experiencing fruitfully large-scale liturgical celebrations.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, the image of the Church at prayer, be our example. “The beauty of the heavenly liturgy, which must be reflected in our own assemblies, is faithfully mirrored in her. From Mary we must learn to become men and women of the Eucharist and of the Church, and thus to present ourselves, in the words of Saint Paul, ‘holy and blameless’ before the Lord, even as he wished us to be from the beginning (cf. Col 1:22; Eph 1:4).”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> RS, no. 93.

<sup>71</sup> Sac Car, no. 96.