

The Celebration of the Eucharist for School Communities

The mission of the Church, and that of Catholic Education, is to announce Christ to the world, particularly to the students and their families. It is to teach our young people to know and love Christ, and lead them to act in imitation of Christ.

The Eucharist is the sacramental expression of this mission. As the source and summit of all the Sacraments, Christ makes himself present in our midst, in our very hearts, so that as our food, he may dwell within us. It is the gift from God of his very self so that we may share in his eternal life.

Therefore, it is fitting that the Eucharist should have a central place in the Catholic Education of children, particularly within the Catholic School context, where Catechesis and Evangelization must be central in all activities. There can be no greater proclamation of the Gospel to our young people than the very Paschal mystery itself: Jesus, giving his flesh and blood to be our nourishment.

The celebration of the Mass, especially within the school context, must preserve the appropriate reverence and solemnity befitting such a great event. As such, due attention must be paid to appropriateness in disposition of those participating, adequate preparation, appropriateness of music, and so forth, so that full, active and conscious participation may be fostered, and full awareness of the Glory of God, made present in the Eucharist, may be appreciated and honored.

Liturgies of the Word

Within this Liturgy emphasis is placed on the evangelical character of the Scripture, with its own proper dignity.

Since we, as Catholics, share our scripture with all Christians, there may be times when the Celebration of a Liturgy of the Word outside of Communion can serve to foster a sense of inclusivity. Also, Liturgies of the Word outside of Communion allow for flexibility in terms of number of readings and additional symbolic actions that might not be appropriate during a celebration of the Eucharist.

Graduation Ceremonies

Since faith is the central and most important characteristic of Catholic Education, it is crucial that the graduation ceremony give attention to the elements of our faith. Otherwise it would not be an authentic expression of the faith journey that the graduation is intended to represent within the Catholic school context. High schools should always ensure a significant religious component be included in their graduation exercises, for all graduating students.



Policy Statement:

The celebration of the Mass, especially within the school context, must preserve the appropriate reverence and solemnity befitting such a great event, which is Christ among us.

As such, due attention must be paid to appropriateness in disposition of those participating, adequate preparation, appropriateness of music, and so forth.

Intent of Policy:

- To uphold the Eucharist as a central place within the Catholic education of children, particularly within the Catholic School context, where catechesis and evangelization must be central in all activities
- To foster full, active and conscious participation
- To raise awareness, appreciation and honour of the Glory of God, made present in the Eucharist.

Procedure:

Mass for Schools Communities

In order that the Eucharist and the Word of God both be readily available to our children and appropriately honoured, the following norms are to be followed for Mass for schools communities:

- a. **When possible, Mass should be celebrated in a church.** A parish church is the meeting place of the community of faith, the People of God, and therefore by celebrating Mass there, the school demonstrates its connection to its respective parish.
- b. **When it is not feasible, Mass may be celebrated within a school,** in an appropriate place to accommodate the size of the congregation, such as a school chapel, or an auditorium or gymnasium in the case of larger congregations. However, when this takes place, the new character of the worship space must be clearly articulated and emphasized to the students, both verbally and symbolically through art and environment. Students and staff must behave as they would in a church: students must remove headwear; electronic devices are to be put away; gum, beverages and food are not to be present at all; and all present should behave reverently, as they would within a parish church.
- c. **Active participation should be the norm.** There should not be a spectator mentality among students or staff. They must be encouraged to engage actively in the hymns and the responses throughout the Mass.



- d. **Preparation.** Sufficient time should be set aside in the days prior to the celebration for students to be familiarized with behavioural expectations, particularly reverence for the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. They should review the appropriate spoken responses and prayers, so that they may participate more fully in the liturgy. They should also be taught to observe the Eucharistic fast of one hour prior to the celebration of Mass.
- e. **Adult supervisors must be actively involved in the Mass.** It is crucial that adults present set an appropriate example by their behaviour. They should space themselves throughout the worship space, rather than gathering in one location together with other staff. They should be seen actively participating in all parts of the Mass by the students, saying all the responses and singing all the hymns.
- f. **Ministers,** be they lectors, adult servers, altar servers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, should all be trained and commissioned sufficiently and appropriately for their ministry. Participation from students is to be encouraged, so long as they are adequately prepared.
- g. **Distribution of Holy Communion.** Only the Body of Christ is to be distributed to the Catholic faithful.
 - (1) **Supervisors** should observe the distribution of Holy Communion to ensure that Catholic students receive Communion [the Body of Christ] appropriately and consume it immediately.
 - (2) **Reverence for the Presence of Christ in the Eucharist** should be practiced. Instruction should be provided in advance of the celebration
- h. **Hymns** should be chosen according to the following:
 - (1) All music within the Mass should have a sacred character, and should be directed toward the praise and glory of God. Musical choices should be approved by the priest celebrant or the Office of Divine Worship. While upbeat, energetic music is permissible, an attempt should also be made to familiarize students with what they might expect at Sunday Mass, particularly by the Mass parts chosen, e.g., the *Sanctus* (Holy Holy), the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God), etc.
 - (2) The Mass parts and the hymns should be led by a music minister. If Mass parts are not familiar, they should be recited rather than sung.



- (3) The music must be participatory. The lyrics of every hymn should be made available.
- (4) The Responsorial Psalm is to be from the Lectionary. It is not appropriate to substitute it with a hymn.

Liturgies of the Word

- The pastor is always invited to participate in liturgies and celebrations held at the school.
- Every reading is introduced as in the Lectionary, e.g., A Reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans.
- There is to be only one lector (reader) for each reading.
- The Gospel is read by the priest or deacon. In the absence of a priest or deacon, the Gospel may be read by a lay person. When the Gospel is read by a lay person, the greeting “The Lord be with you” is omitted.
- To emphasize the distinction between the Gospel reading and other Scripture readings, in dignity and reverence, the people should be asked to stand for the Gospel.
- The word “Alleluia” is not used during any liturgies in Lent.
- Hymns are to be used.
- Insertion of other additional activities may be permitted, e.g., dramatic readings using more than one voice, use of stories in addition to a Scripture passage, providing these do not detract from or contradict the teachings of the Catholic faith.

Mass for Graduates

1. The Mass for graduates is to be clearly distinct from other graduation events (convocation, prom, etc.) A distinct day for the Mass would help to highlight its unique significance.
2. The Mass for graduates should take place in a Catholic church. Permission to hold a Mass with graduates in a facility other than a Catholic church must be obtained from the Office of the Archbishop, which will consult with the Dean of the appropriate deanery.
3. The priest celebrant of the Mass should be the pastor within whose parish boundaries the school is located. Permission to ask a priest other than the pastor to be the priest celebrant is to be obtained from the pastor himself. All other priests serving within the school's boundaries should be invited to concelebrate.



4. All provisions for preparation and proper reverence noted above for Mass for school communities in general are to be observed.
5. The procession of the graduates is to occur prior to the beginning of the Mass. It must not form part of the entrance procession of the Mass. The procession of the graduates may be accompanied by sacred or classical music.
6. Graduate attire must be appropriate for Mass. If graduates wear their graduation gowns and if graduation hats are worn they should be removed where possible for the consecration and remain off until after the Prayer After Communion.
7. If the Mass for graduates is scheduled on a Sunday or a Solemnity, the Scripture readings for the Sunday or Solemnity must be used. Otherwise, appropriate readings chosen to fit the graduation theme may be selected. All selected Scripture readings must be approved by the priest celebrant.
8. Hymns should come from parish musical resources. Non-liturgical music is not to be used during the Mass.
9. Symbols related to the theme of graduation are not to be used in the Mass but are best displayed in one of the other components of the graduation.
10. If the Mass and graduation ceremonies must occur on the same day and in the same venue, a break is to be scheduled between the Mass and the ceremonies. The celebration of Mass will precede the graduation ceremonies.

A break of at least 15 minutes is to be scheduled following the Mass, after the Recessional and after the priest celebrant has withdrawn from the sanctuary, and before the graduation ceremonies begin.

11. The altar is a sacred furnishing within the sanctuary of the Church and needs to be treated with reverence. If diplomas are to be handed out in a ceremony at the church, there must be a separate table on which to place the diplomas for distribution.

