

AN EMPHASIS ON SILENT PAUSES FOR PRAYER

Sunday November 6, 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The changes that the English translation of the Roman Missal will introduce on Sunday November 27, 2011 are about more than externals. The changes are introduced to help us deepen our prayer life and energize our commitment as Catholics in the community.

An emphasis on *silence* is an example of one change in the New Missal that aims at deepening our prayer life and commitment to love and serve God and neighbour.

Before the **OPENING PRAYER** the priest says "*Let us pray.*" He will then pause. The Assembly of the Faithful stand together in *silence*, "***so that they may be aware of being in God's presence and may call to mind their intentions***" (#56 of the General Instruction on the Roman Missal). As well, we would do well to remember that everyone else in the Church is bringing their personal intentions to the Lord as well.

During the **Liturgy of the Word**, after each Reading, there is to be a pause and a period of *silence*. We are urged during these moments of silence to reflect on the meaning of what was read. Since it is God's Word we hear, we are given quiet time to ask ourselves, "What is God saying? How does the lesson of this reading reflect what is or what is not going on in my life?"

It has been said that God's Word afflicts the comfortable and comforts the afflicted. After hearing God's Word we need the silence to recognize the comforting or the discomfiting effect of the divine message in our hearts.

The General Instruction on the Roman Missal also exhorts us to avoid haste during the Liturgy of the Word as it hinders recollection (#65.)

After the **Homily** we again enter the *silence* as the priest pauses so that all may reflect on the Priest's exposition of the Word of God (#65).

After Holy Communion, when the Communion Hymn has ended, the Assembly of the Faithful sits in *silence* (#56 and #58). During this silent period the General Instruction on the Roman Missal encourages us to recognize the blessing of the Holy Eucharist; the heavenly food that feeds us; the unity in Christ it gives the Church and the promise of everlasting life it offers us.

According to the new Roman Missal these **Five Periods of Silence** at Mass invite us: to offer intentions; to reflect on the Word of God and its meaning for us today and finally to offer thanksgiving for God's blessing in the Eucharist.

I welcome this change with all my heart and I exhort every priest, all liturgical ministers and every Catholic in the Diocese to do the same. Please, enter the silence reflectively during Mass and let the Spirit of Prayer enhance the contemplative dimension of our communal prayer.

*Sincerely yours in Christ,
Bishop Richard Grecco
Diocese of Charlottetown*