



JEFFREY J. WALSH

Bishop of Gaylord
By the Grace of God and the Apostolic See

DECREE OF PROMULGATION

PARTICULAR LAW REGULATING DECORUM IN THE CELEBRATION OF HOLY MASS IN THE DIOCESE OF GAYLORD

PREAMBLE

The Sacred Liturgy is "the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed" and "the fount from which all her power flows" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10). The Holy Mass, as the source and summit of the Christian life, deserves to be celebrated with the fullest possible fidelity to the rites and texts approved by the Church, and with a dignity, beauty, joy, and reverence befitting the Mystery it makes present.

Canon 846 §1 of the Code of Canon Law states that "the liturgical books approved by the competent authority are to be faithfully observed in the celebration of the sacraments; therefore, no one on personal authority may add, remove, or change anything in them." Canon 838 §4 entrusts to the diocesan Bishop the regulation of the Sacred Liturgy within his diocese, and the competence to issue liturgical norms binding upon all within the territory committed to his care, in accordance with the law of the universal Church.

Mindful of this responsibility and desiring that the Faithful of this Diocese continue to encounter the Sacred Mysteries in fruitful ways, I hereby promulgate the following particular law, binding upon all parishes, missions, chapels, oratories, religious communities, and other places of worship within the territory of the Diocese of Gaylord where the Holy Mass is celebrated according to the Roman Rite.

TITLE I — GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Art. 1 — Fidelity to the Rubrics

1. All sacred ministers, whether diocesan or religious, secular or regular, and all other liturgical ministers, are bound to celebrate the Holy Mass in conformity with the rubrics and norms of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, Third Typical Edition (GIRM), as approved for use in this Diocese, together with the Order of Mass as promulgated in the current typical edition of the Roman Missal.
2. No priest, deacon, or other minister may add, omit, or alter any element of the Mass on his own authority (cf. c. 846 §1; GIRM, 24). This applies to the sacred texts, the prescribed gestures and postures, the liturgical vestments, and the sacred vessels.
3. Private inventions, unapproved texts and unauthorized musical substitutions for required liturgical texts, are prohibited. Where the Missal grants an option or permits diversity (e.g., choice among approved Eucharistic Prayers, alternative opening rites, options for the dismissal), the option chosen must be one genuinely provided for in the liturgical books.
4. Pastors and rectors of churches are responsible for ensuring that servers, readers, cantors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, and other liturgical personnel are properly formed in these norms.

Art. 2 — The Principle of Progressive Solemnity

1. In accordance with GIRM, 111 and 115, the principle of progressive solemnity is to govern the manner of celebrating the Mass, according to the rank of the liturgical day, the nature of the assembly, and the pastoral circumstances of the celebration.
2. Progressive solemnity means that the various elements capable of solemnization — singing versus recitation, the use of incense, the number of sacred ministers, the extent of processions, the use of additional candles and sacred vessels of greater ornamentation — are to be employed in a manner proportionate to the rank of the celebration: Solemnities, Feasts, Sundays, weekdays, and Memorials of Saints.
3. It is not permitted either to celebrate a weekday Mass with a solemnity disproportionate to its rank, nor to celebrate a Solemnity or major Feast with a minimalism unworthy of its dignity. Pastors are to plan the manner of celebration deliberately, in consultation with musicians and other liturgical ministers, so that the outward form of the celebration corresponds to the liturgical calendar.

4. As a general guide within this Diocese:

- *Solemnities and major Feasts of the Lord*: full solemnity is encouraged, including the singing of the Entrance, Responsorial Psalm, Gospel Acclamation, Sanctus, Memorial Acclamation, and Great Amen; the use of incense as provided in Art. 5 a fuller complement of servers; and appropriate use of festive vesture and sacred vessels.

- *Sundays and Feasts*: at least the principal sung parts of the Mass (Acclamations, Sanctus) are encouraged; the use of bells as in Art. 4; incense may be used at the discretion of the celebrant.

- *Weekdays and Memorials*: a simpler form of celebration is appropriate, without thereby permitting carelessness, haste, or disregard for the rubrics.

Art. 3 — Sacred Silence

In keeping with GIRM, 45, sacred silence is to be observed at the designated moments of the Mass: — the Penitential Act, after the invitation to pray, after the readings and homily, and after Communion as a genuine element of the celebration, not merely as an absence of activity.

TITLE II — THE USE OF BELLS

Art. 4 — Encouragement of the Use of Bells

1. The use of a bell is warmly encouraged at every Mass, in accordance with the long-standing custom of the Roman Rite and the provision of GIRM, 150, as a sign that alerts the Faithful and heightens attentiveness at the most sacred moments of the Eucharistic Prayer.

TITLE III — THE USE OF INCENSE

Art. 5 — Incense on Solemnities

1. In accordance with GIRM, 276, incense may be used at any form of Mass. However, so that its use retains its proper significance and does not become either an empty formality or a rarity that goes unnoticed, the following norm is established for this Diocese:

2. *On all Solemnities*— including the Solemnities of the Lord, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of the parish's Patronal feast, and other days ranked as Solemnities in the General Roman Calendar or the Proper Calendar of the Diocese — the use of incense is encouraged and may be used at:

- a. The entrance procession;
- b. The proclamation of the Gospel;
- c. The preparation of the gifts, incensing the offerings, the cross (or Pascal Candle during the Easter Season), the altar, the priest, and the people (GIRM, 75, 178);

3. On Feasts and Sundays, the use of incense remains optional and is left to the prudent judgment of the celebrant and pastor, again guided by the principle of progressive solemnity (Art. 2). In addition, a Pastor may designate one Mass per weekend/Solemnity that does not use incense and make such known for the benefit of those with smoke sensitivity.

4. Concern for the health of the Faithful (e.g., respiratory sensitivities) does not warrant abandoning incense altogether but calls for prudent moderation in quantity and adequate ventilation of the sacred space. (See point #3 above for pastoral consideration).

TITLE IV — SACRED VESSELS AND VESTMENTS

Art. 6. Sacred vessels are to conform to GIRM, 327–333: materials that do not easily break or deteriorate, reserved for sacred use alone, and, where precious metal is not used, at least gold-plated on interior surfaces that touch the Sacred Species.

Art. 7. Sacred vestments proper to the rank and season are to be worn according to GIRM, 335–347. The use of the chasuble by the priest celebrant is obligatory except in the cases foreseen by law; deacons are to wear the dalmatic on Solemnities and Feasts where it is available.

TITLE V — SACRED MUSIC

Art. 8. In keeping with GIRM, 39–41, the singing of the Mass, not merely singing during the Mass, is preferred, following the hierarchy of liturgical texts: the dialogues and acclamations of the Priest and people take precedence over hymns added at the Entrance, Offertory, and Communion.

Art. 9. Music and texts not found in, or approved for use with, the Roman Missal or the Lectionary for Mass may not replace texts that the rubrics require to be said or sung (e.g., the Responsorial Psalm may not simply be replaced by a hymn without at least fulfilling the conditions foreseen in liturgical law).

TITLE VI — FORMATION, OVERSIGHT, AND SANCTIONS

Art. 10 — Diocesan Office of Liturgy and Worship

The Director of Liturgy and Worship is charged with providing ongoing formation for clergy, deacons, seminarians, liturgical musicians, servers, and other ministers regarding these norms. In addition, the Diocese of Gaylord Worship Commission supports the diocesan bishop with the goal of “full, active and conscious participation of the assembly” at all liturgies.

Art. 11 — Visitation and Correction

1. The Vicar for Clergy, Vicar Forane, or other delegate of the Bishop may, in the course of pastoral or canonical visitation, verify observance of this particular law.
2. Persistent or willful disregard of the rubrics of the Roman Missal, or of this particular law, is to be addressed first by fraternal correction and formation; where this proves insufficient, the matter is to be referred to the Bishop for such further action as the law provides (cf. c. 1364 §2 and related canons, as applicable).
3. Any proposed changes to the sanctuary must be submitted to the diocesan bishop for approval.

Art. 12 — Recourse

Nothing in this particular law derogates from the right of the Christian Faithful to have recourse to the Diocesan Bishop, and ultimately to the Apostolic See, regarding matters of the Sacred Liturgy (cf. c. 214; *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 183–184).

TITLE VII — FINAL PROVISIONS

Art. 13. This particular law derogates from any contrary particular custom or diocesan norm previously in force.

Art. 14. This particular law shall be reviewed every three to five years by the Office of Liturgy and Worship, which shall report to the Bishop on its implementation.

Art. 15. This particular law does not affect the designated churches or monastery where permission is granted for the celebration of the Traditional Latin Mass.

I direct that this Decree be published and take effect on the Feast of St. Teresa of Avila (October 15, 2026), anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Pastoral Center of the Diocese of Gaylord on this 2nd day of October 2026.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeffrey J. Walsh', with a cross symbol at the beginning.

The Most Reverend Jeffrey J. Walsh
Bishop of Gaylord

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christina H. Ihlenfeldt'.

Christina Ihlenfeldt
Chancellor