

Diocese of Prince George  
**Notes on the Liturgy**

*On Posture at Mass*

The English translation of the 2002 “typical edition” of the Roman Missal was introduced in Canada in October 2011. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* is the section of the Missal that provides detailed directions concerning how Mass is celebrated.

Number 43 of the directives addresses “gestures and bodily postures”. In some places this section of the norms has been understood to mean that the congregation should remain standing until everyone has received Holy Communion. However, already in 2003, this interpretation provoked requests for clarification to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. The following is a translation of the question and the response.

**Question:**

*In several places the faithful have the habit of kneeling or sitting in private prayer when they return to their place after receiving the Holy Eucharist during Mass. Do the provisions of the Third Typical Edition of the Missal prohibit this practice?*

**Answer:**

*No, according to the spirit (of the law). The rationale is that by the prescripts of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, n. 43 is intended to give, on the one hand, within broad limits some uniformity of posture in the congregation for the various parts of the celebration of the Holy Mass, and at the same time, on the other hand, not to regulate posture so rigidly that those who wish to remain kneeling or to sit would no longer be free to do so.”*

(The Latin text is in the October 2003 edition of the periodical *Notitiae*, published by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.)

This authoritative interpretation of the Missal’s norms reflects n. 42 in the *General Instruction*: “Attention must therefore be paid to what is determined by this General Instruction and by the traditional practice of the Roman Rite.”

On a practical level, standing for a prolonged period is difficult for many and often not conducive to prayer. The custom of kneeling or sitting after receiving Holy Communion is part of the liturgical heritage that has nourished the faith and devotion of countless generations. In the light of these considerations and the clarification provided by the Church, the faithful who have received Holy Communion should feel free to kneel or sit when they return to their places in prayerful thanksgiving to the Lord Who gives Himself so completely.

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