

## PORTLAND ARCHDIOCESE ISSUES LITURGICAL HANDBOOK

Archbishop Sample Emphasizes Reverence of the Eucharist at Mass

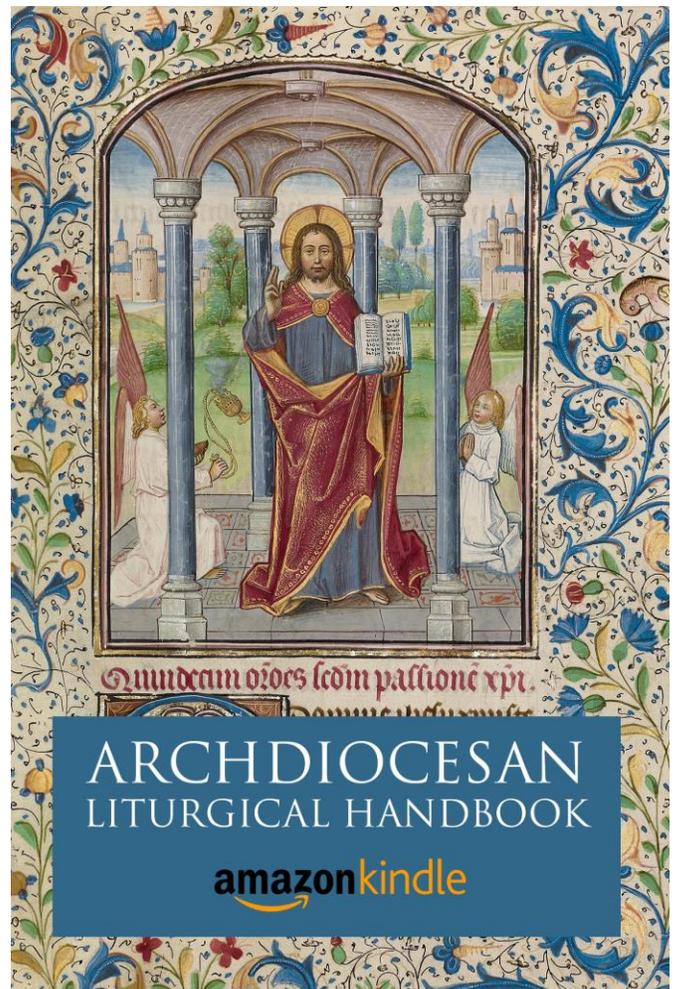
By Joseph Pronechen, Staff Writer

PORTLAND, Ore. – the feast of Corpus Christi June 3 marked a special event in the Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon, with the release of the new “Archdiocesan Liturgical Handbook”.

The 375-page handbook, which was disseminated in print to all 120 parishes and chapels of the archdiocese, deals with all things liturgical, outlining the proper celebration of the Eucharist, from what the priest does to how the congregations is to participate.

In his introduction, Archbishop Alexander Sample, explained the handbook is intended as a guide to many aspects of life in the archdiocese and parishes “that concern the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy and the understanding of the faith it expresses.”

“My desire and motivation is to call the community in the Archdiocese of Portland to a more reverent, beautiful celebration of the liturgy, according to the Church’s norms,” the archbishop, who has shepherded the Portland flock since 2013, told the Register. “That is my emphasis – we celebrate the liturgy according to the mind and heart of the Church.”



To develop the handbook, Msgr. Gerard O’Connor came on board 10 months ago as the director of the Office of Divine Worship. He holds a doctorate in sacred liturgy from the

Pontifical Liturgical Institute (*San Anselmo*) in Rome.

“Basically, Archbishop Sample is very interested in liturgy,” Msgr. O’Connor said. “He sees the Eucharist as the source and summit. He realizes if you have Eucharistic environment and a Eucharistic diocese, things will obviously change. We want a more reverent, more beautiful, more sacred liturgy for the people in the archdiocese.” The handbook will now be a major guide to that end.

### **Essential Foundation**

The foundation for the handbook is the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1324), which quotes *Lumen Gentium*, Blessed Paul VI’s 1964 Dogmatic constitution on the Church, that identifies the Eucharist as “the source and summit of the Christian life.”

Msgr. O’Connor pointed out that beyond the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), the handbook’s preamble is based on Pope Benedict XVI’s 2007 post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum, Caritatis* (The Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church’s Life and Mission). This document makes clear the Eucharist is “the center and goal of all sacramental life” and that all the Church’s sacraments, ministries and works of apostolate “are bound up” with the Eucharist and are directed towards it.”

“That sets the picture,” Msgr. O’Connor said. “Our Church is based around the celebration of the Eucharist. All the works, ministries and apostolates of the Church flow from the Eucharist.”

Drawing from that teaching, Archbishop Sample outlined his desire to have a celebration of the Mass that is prayerful, reverent and beautiful.

He noted that in the years since the reform of the sacred liturgy after Vatican II, “There has been a lot of experimentation, a lot of aberrations in the celebration of liturgy, and in some more severe cases, liturgical abuses.”

He regretted that too frequently the way the new order of the Mass is celebrated obscures the reality of the real presence of the Lord in the Eucharist, and there is a loss of a sense of transcendence and the mystery of the holy Mass – “mystery” in the sense we’re encountering and touching the divine in the Blessed Sacrament.

The handbook is meant to restore that sacred sense.

“I think we need to re-establish the Church has a liturgy that comes to us across the centuries and has been developed and reformed numerous times, the most recent during Vatican II,” he said. “We don’t invent our own way to celebrate the liturgy, but are to be faithful to what the Church asks us in the celebration of Mass.”



Archbishop Sample Celebrates Holy Mass. “We are called to the Sacred Liturgy not according to our own preferences but to the way the Church asks us to celebrate the liturgy in continuity with the long Tradition of the Church.”

“We are called to celebrate the sacred liturgy not according to our own preferences, but to the way the Church asks us to celebrate the liturgy in continuity with the long Tradition of

the Church,” he added. “The Church in regard to the sacred liturgy did not hit a ‘reset button’ at Vatican II.”

### **Friendly Format**

Msgr. O’Connor clarified the handbook was meant to be a theological explanation of the Mass, not only saying how the liturgy should be executed, but giving source documentation and the reasons behind the practices.

Included in more than 100 major sources used throughout the document are the GIRM, documents of the Second Vatican Council, papal documents and those from the Holy See’s sacred congregations.

“It’s extremely comprehensive,” he said. “People can find what they are looking for.” People can learn everything from what a deacon does to the rite for anniversary blessings and other blessings – such as Quinceañera blessings and practically all other possibilities.

The handbook, which was published in a searchable, digital format for ease in searching for topics, can be purchased on [Amazon Kindle](#) or accessed free on the archdiocesan website ([archdpdx.org/divine-worship](http://archdpdx.org/divine-worship)) for all the faithful to access and read.

The five chapters of Part One, which account from more than 30% of the book, clearly spell out the details of what the Church asks for in the celebration of Mass and all areas pertaining to the Eucharist, including reception of Holy Communion, adoration and reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, treatment of sacred vessels, music and singing, and the proper responses of the faithful.

Additional chapters treat other liturgical celebrations, the sacraments, including procedures for first Communions,

sacramental, the extraordinary form of the Roman Rite, blessings, the liturgical year, feasts, popular piety and various devotions.

Portland’s liturgical handbook appears to be a first of its kind in the United States. A full list of dioceses that might have such an extensive liturgical handbook was unavailable, but several dioceses that do have liturgical material on their websites mainly offer explanations for different liturgical celebrations or duties, such as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and lectors, or links to the GIRM and various documents on liturgy. None seem to be as comprehensive as what Archbishop Sample has published.

For Archbishop Sample, “It is not just a to-do handbook. There is so much theology and spirituality infused into the handbook that gives the foundation – why we do the things in the way we do.”

Msgr. O’Connor said, “It’s meant to be a living document.” In the PDF format, the handbook can be instantly updated for liturgical additions that come along.



Archbishop Sample: “We need to recapture a sense of reverence for the Blessed Sacrament and for the most Holy Eucharist.”

“We’re happy for other people to use it,” he added. “While some things are specific to our diocese, you can take the word ‘Portland’ out and put in any other diocese.”

Father Mark Benz, the pastor of St. Alice parish in Springfield, Oregon, welcomed the new handbook, recognizing it as an invaluable resource that “really is a great service to priests, sacristans and those in ministry.”

He pointed out when there are different practices from parish to parish “people begin to wonder if [the Mass] is about the individual priest.”

He clarified, “No, it’s not about the priest; it’s about the Church, what the Church approves for us in the instruction of the Roman Missal. When we experience that, we experience the oneness of the faith.”

### **Positive Reception**

In his experience, parishioners are receptive to better understanding the meaning behind the Mass and Eucharistic practices.

He highlighted the sign of peace as an example. The explanations of the handbook clarify that the sign of peace at Mass is not about extending your own peace, but the peace of Christ you’re offering, he said. “It’s a symbolic gesture. Remember, Jesus is on the altar.” The handbook “spells out pretty thoroughly” what we do “and also tells the reason why—that is the most helpful about it. It makes sense.”

“What we believe determines what we do,” added Father Bentz. “If we have a deeper understanding of what the Mass is and sacraments are, it changes our behavior around them.”

Although the handbook is still very new, Father Bentz has already been putting excerpts from it in each bulletin.

The people’s reactions? They tell him, “Oh, I get that!”

The same responses have made their way to Msgr. O’Connor: “From what I heard, people welcome this handbook.”

After the summer, various courses will be offered on the handbook in the archdiocese, and priests will be introducing it in their parishes on various levels.

### **High Hopes**

Archbishop Sample hopes the new handbook will help priests and other in liturgical ministry “to bring about beauty and to celebrate the Holy Mass, to make it spectacular. When we step into the sacred space, we’re stepping out of the secular, mundane life we live in the world today, and we step into another realm, into the divine.”

Msgr. O’Connor concurs that “our aim is to increase sacredness – greater reverence.”

For Archbishop Sample, the purpose is clear: “We need to recapture a sense of reverence for the Blessed Sacrament and for the most Holy Eucharist.”

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