



CONGREGATIO DE CULTU DIVINO
ET DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM

Prot. n. 414/14

Vatican City, July 12, 2014

Your Eminence/Excellence, Most Reverend,

During the debates of the Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist (2005, *propositio 23*) a question concerning the “sign of peace” emerged regarding the appropriateness of maintaining it in its present form and at the place where it is found in the Ordinary of the Mass. The Holy Father Benedict XVI, during the post-Synod Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (February 22, 2007), n. 49 (footnote 150) invited the pertinent Congregations to study this question.

The Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of Sacraments began immediately to study this question, asking the viewpoints of the Episcopal Conferences around the world. A great majority of them pronounced favorably in maintaining the “rite” and the “sign” of peace in its present form and time, as it is presently found in the Ordinary of the Mass, considering it as a characteristic of the Roman rite and therefore not convenient for the faithful, at this time, to introduce structural changes during the Eucharistic celebration.

The results of this work in various Ordinary meetings of our Dicastery and the consultations with both Supreme Pontiffs, Benedict XVI and Francis, is the present Circular Letter, that is transmitted here in attachment. It is our hope that this may become an occasion for a new and more intense Eucharistic catechesis between the priests and the communities, in order to help the people of God to grow in a more profound understanding of this important moment of the celebration, that is clearly oriented to communicate the sentiments and the attitudes of Christ, the Prince of Peace, the Risen One, Giver of Peace for the Church and for the world, and that, through the Sacramental Communion with his Body and his Blood, makes us become one with Him and in Him.

We propose therefore that this will become an opportunity for all the Episcopal Conferences to reflect on this question and to present and study the proposed adaptations for the “sign of peace” in respect of the different cultures and sensibilities of the different peoples around the world. This Circular Letter also proposes that there be an adjustment of the different abuses that are in need to be corrected for the good of the faithful and the love for the Sacramental Jesus.

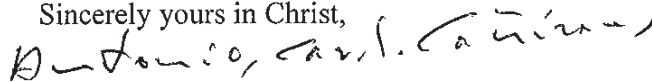
In order to facilitate this very important catechetical action, we have included an attachment of didactic instructions that will help further the understanding of the rite for the “Sign of peace”.

His Eminence / His Excellency
President of the Conference of Bishops

We are glad to recognize the effort and the hard work of each in his own nation helping to understand and realize that the Liturgy, and in particular, the Eucharist is the center and the heart of the life of the faithful. We want to remind you that this Congregation, according to its proper competencies, is available and desires to collaborate in the promotion of all initiatives in the local churches.

With every good wish and kind regard, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,



(Antonio Card. Cañizares Llovera)
Prefect



(+ Arthur Roche)
Archbishop Secretary

CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP
AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

CIRCULAR LETTER

THE RITUAL EXPRESSION OF THE GIFT OF PEACE AT MASS

1. «Peace I leave you; my peace I give you».¹ As they gathered in the cenacle, these are the words with which Jesus promises the gift of peace to his disciples before going to face his passion, in order to implant in them the joyful certainty of his steadfast presence. After his resurrection, the Lord fulfills his promise by appearing among them in the place where they had gathered for fear of the Jews saying, «Peace be with you!».² Christ's peace is the fruit of the redemption that he brought into the world by his death and resurrection - the gift that the Risen Lord continues to give even today to his Church as she gathers for the celebration of the Eucharist in order to bear witness to this in everyday life.

2. In the Roman liturgical tradition, the exchange of peace is placed before Holy Communion with its own specific theological significance. Its point of reference is found in the Eucharistic contemplation of the Paschal mystery as the «Paschal kiss» of the Risen Christ present on the altar³ as in contradistinction to that done by other liturgical traditions which are inspired by the Gospel passage from St. Matthew (cf. *Mt* 5: 23). The rites which prepare for Communion constitute a well expressed unity in which each ritual element has its own significance and which contributes to the overall ritual sequence of sacramental participation in the mystery being celebrated. The sign of peace, therefore, is placed between the Lord's Prayer, to which is joined the embolism which prepares for the gesture of peace, and the breaking of the bread, in the course of which the Lamb of God is implored to give us his peace. With this gesture, whose «function is to manifest peace, communion and charity»,⁴ the Church «implores peace and unity for herself and for the whole human family, and the faithful express to each other their ecclesial communion and mutual charity before communicating in the Sacrament»,⁵ that is, the Body of Christ the Lord.

¹ *Jn* 14, 27.

² Cf. *Jn* 20, 19-23.

³ Cf. *MISSALE ROMANUM ex decreto SS. Concilii Tridentini restitutum summorum pontificum cura recognitum, Editio typica, 1962, Ritus servandus, X, 3.*

⁴ CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, Istr., *Redemptionis sacramentum*, March 25, 2004, n. 71: *AAS* 96 (2004) 571.

⁵ *MISSALE ROMANUM, ex decreto sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum, auctoritate Pauli Pp. VI promulgatum, Ioannis Pauli Pp. II cura recognitum, editio typica tertia, diei 20 aprilis 2000, Typis Vaticanis, reimpressio emendata 2008, General Instruction of the Roman Missal, n. 82. Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Post-synod. Apost. Exhort., *Sacramentum caritatis*, February 22, 2007, n. 49: *AAS* 99 (2007) 143.*

3. In the Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, Pope Benedict XVI entrusted to this Congregation the competence of considering questions about the exchange of peace,⁶ in order to safeguard the sacred sense of the Eucharistic celebration and the sense of mystery at the moment of receiving Holy Communion: «By its nature the Eucharist is the sacrament of peace. At Mass this dimension of the Eucharistic mystery finds specific expression in the sign of peace. Certainly this sign has great value (cf. *Jn* 14:27). In our times, fraught with fear and conflict, this gesture has become particularly eloquent, as the Church has become increasingly conscious of her responsibility to pray insistently for the gift of peace and unity for herself and for the whole human family. [. . .] We can thus understand the emotion so often felt during the sign of peace at a liturgical celebration. Even so, during the Synod of Bishops there was discussion about the appropriateness of greater restraint in this gesture, which can be exaggerated and cause a certain distraction in the assembly just before the reception of Communion. It should be kept in mind that nothing is lost when the sign of peace is marked by a sobriety which preserves the proper spirit of the celebration, as, for example, when it is restricted to one's immediate neighbours».⁷

4. Pope Benedict XVI, further than shedding light on the true sense of the rite and of the exchange of peace, emphasized its great significance as a contribution of Christians, with their prayer and witness to allay the most profound and disturbing anxieties of contemporary humanity. In light of all this he renewed his call that this rite be protected and that this liturgical gesture be done with religious sensibility and sobriety.

5. This Dicastery, at the request of Pope Benedict XVI, had already approached the Conferences of Bishops in May of 2008 to seek their opinion about whether to maintain the exchange of peace before Communion, where it is presently found, or whether to move it to another place, with a view to improving the understanding and carrying out of this gesture. After further reflection, it was considered appropriate to retain the rite of peace in its traditional place in the Roman liturgy and not to introduce structural changes in the Roman Missal. Some practical guidelines are offered below to better explain the content of the exchange of peace and to moderate excessive expressions that give rise to disarray in the liturgical assembly before Communion.

6. Consideration of this theme is important. If the faithful through their ritual gestures do not appreciate and do not show themselves to be living the authentic meaning of the rite of peace, the Christian concept of peace is weakened and their fruitful participation at the Eucharist is impaired. Therefore, along with the previous reflections that could form the basis for a suitable catechesis by providing some guidelines, some practical suggestions are offered to the Conferences of Bishops for their prudent consideration:

⁶ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Esort. Apost., *Sacramentum caritatis*, February 22, 2007, n. 49, footnote n. 150: *AAS* 99 (2007) 143.

⁷ BENEDICT XVI, Esort. Apost., *Sacramentum caritatis*, February 22, 2007, n. 49: *AAS* 99 (2007) 143.

a) It should be made clear once and for all that the rite of peace already has its own profound meaning of prayer and offering of peace in the context of the Eucharist. An exchange of peace appropriately carried out among the participants at Mass enriches the meaning of the rite itself and gives fuller expression to it. It is entirely correct, therefore, to say that this does not involve inviting the faithful to exchange the sign of peace “mechanically”. If it is foreseen that it will not take place properly due to specific circumstances or if it is not considered pedagogically wise to carry it out on certain occasions, it can be omitted, and sometimes ought to be omitted. It is worth recalling that the rubric from the Missal states: “*Then, if appropriate, the Deacon or the Priest, adds: “Let us offer each other the sign of peace”*” (emphasis added).⁸

b) On the basis of these observations, it may be advisable that, on the occasion of the publication of the translation of the third typical edition of the Roman Missal in their own country, or when new editions of the same Missal are undertaken in the future, Conferences of Bishops should consider whether it might not be fitting to change the manner of giving peace which had been established earlier. For example, following these years of experience, in those places where familiar and profane gestures of greeting were previously chosen, they could be replaced with other more appropriate gestures.

c) In any case, it will be necessary, at the time of the exchange of peace, to definitively avoid abuses such as:

- the introduction of a “song for peace”, which is non-existent in the Roman Rite.⁹
- the movement of the faithful from their places to exchange the sign of peace amongst themselves.
- the departure of the priest from the altar in order to give the sign of peace to some of the faithful.
- that in certain circumstances, such as at the Solemnity of Easter or of Christmas, or during ritual celebrations such as Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, Matrimony, Sacred Ordinations, Religious Professions, and Funerals, the exchange of peace being the occasion for expressing congratulations, best wishes or condolences among those present.¹⁰

d) Conferences of Bishops are likewise invited to prepare liturgical catecheses on the meaning of the rite of peace in the Roman liturgy and its proper realization in the celebration of the Holy Mass. In this regard, the Congregation for Divine

⁸ MISSALE ROMANUM, *Ordo Missae*, n. 128.

⁹ In the Roman Rite, a song for peace is not foreseen by tradition because only the briefest of time is envisaged for the exchange of peace to those who are nearest. The chant for peace presumes, however, a much longer time for the exchange of peace.

¹⁰ Cf. General Instruction on the Roman Missal, n. 82: «It is appropriate that each person, in a sober manner, offer the sign of peace only to those who are nearest»; n. 154: «The priest may give the Sign of Peace to the ministers but always remains within the sanctuary, so that the celebration is not disrupted. He may do the same if, for a reasonable cause, he wishes to offer the Sign of Peace to a small number of the faithful»; CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, *Istr., Redemptionis sacramentum*, March 25, 2004, n. 72: *AAS* 96 (2004) 572.

Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments attaches to this Circular Letter, some helpful guidelines.

7. The intimate relationship between the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi* must obviously be extended to the *lex vivendi*. Today, a serious obligation for Catholics in building a more just and peaceful world is accompanied by a deeper understanding of the Christian meaning of peace and this depends largely on the seriousness with which our particular Churches welcome and invoke the gift of peace and express it in the liturgical celebration. Productive steps forward on this matter must be insisted upon and urged because the quality of our Eucharistic participation depends upon it, as well as the efficacy of our being joined with those who are ambassadors and builders of peace, as expressed in the Beatitudes.¹¹

8. In conclusion, the Bishops and, under their guidance, the priests are urged, therefore, to give careful consideration to these observations and to deepen the spiritual significance of the rite of peace in the celebration of the Holy Mass, in their spiritual and liturgical formation and in appropriate catechesis for the faithful. Christ is our peace,¹² that divine peace, announced by the prophets and by the angels, and which he brought to the world by means of his paschal mystery. This peace of the Risen Lord is invoked, preached and spread in the celebration, even by means of a human gesture lifted up to the realm of the sacred.

The Holy Father Pope Francis, on 7 June, 2014 approved and confirmed the contents of which is contained in this Circular Letter, prepared by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, and ordered its publication.

From the offices of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Rome, 8 June, 2014, the Solemnity of Pentecost.

Antonio Card. Cañizares Llovera
Pref.

Antonio Card. CAÑIZARES LLOVERA

Prefect

Arthur Roche
+
Arthur ROCHE
Archbishop Secretary

¹¹ Cf. Mt 5: 9f.

¹² Cf. Eph 2: 14.

CONGREGATIO DE CULTU DIVINO ET DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM

CIRCULARES LITTERAE SIGNIFICATIO RITUALIS DONI PACIS IN MISSA

1. «Pacem relinquo vobis, pacem meam do vobis»,¹ verba sunt quibus Iesus discipulis suis in cenaculo congregatis promittit, antequam passionem obiret, donum pacis ut in eos laetam certitudinem infunderet sui ipsius perennis praesentiae. Suam post resurrectionem, Dominus suam dedit promissionem in medio eorum stans in loco ubi propter metum Iudaeorum erant, dicens: «Pax vobis!».² Fructus redemptionis quem Christus in mundum sua morte resurrectioneque attulit, pax, est donum quod Christus resuscitatus continenter etiam hodie offerre suae Ecclesiae pergit ad celebrandam congregatae Eucharistiam ut testificationem reddat in vita omnium dierum.

2. In traditione liturgica Romana signum pacis ante Communionem collocatur sua cum peculiari notione theologica. Quod invenit comparationis locum in contemplatione eucharistica mysterii paschalis – aliter atque in aliis familiis liturgicis fit quae textu inspirantur Evangelii Matthaei (cfr *Mt* 5, 23) – se praebens veluti “osculum paschale” Christi resuscitati in altari adstantis.³ Ritus qui ad Communionem praeparant, unitatem constituunt solidae structurae in qua quodque elementum suum habet pondus et sensui tribuit universali sequentiae ritualis quae ad participationem sacramentalem dirigit mysterii celebrati. Signum pacis igitur suum invenit locum inter orationem *Pater noster* – quacum per embolismum coniungitur qui ad signum pacis praeparat – et fractionem panis – in qua Agnus Dei imploratur ut nobis suam det pacem –. Hoc signo, quod «notam habet pacis, communionis et caritatis significandae»,⁴ Ecclesia «pacem et unitatem pro se ipsa et universa hominum familia implorat et fideles ecclesiam communionem mutuamque caritatem sibi exprimunt, priusquam Sacramento communicent»,⁵ Corpori videlicet Christi Domini.

¹ *Io* 14, 27.

² Cf. *Io* 20, 19-23.

³ Cf. MISSALE ROMANUM ex decreto SS. Concilii Tridentini restitutum summorum pontificum cura recognitum, Editio typica, 1962, Ritus servandus, X, 3.

⁴ CONGREGATIO DE CULTU DIVINO ET DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM, Instructio *Redemptionis sacramentum*, 25 martii 2004, n. 71: *AAS* 96 (2004) 571.

⁵ MISSALE ROMANUM, ex decreto sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum, auctoritate Pauli Pp. VI promulgatum, Ioannis Pauli Pp. II cura recognitum, editio typica tertia, diei 20 aprilis 2000, Typis Vaticanis, reimpressio emendata 2008, Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani, n. 82. Cf. BENEDICTUS PP. XVI, Adhortatio Apostolica Postsynodalis *Sacramentum caritatis*, 22 februarii 2007, n. 49: *AAS* 99 (2007) 143.

3. In Adhortatione Apostolica post-synodali *Sacramentum caritatis* Summus Pontifex Benedictus XVI huic Congregationi officium concredidit considerandi argumentum quod signum spectaret pacis,⁶ ut indoles sacra Celebrationis eucharisticae serveretur et mysterii notio in Communionem sacramentali: «Eucharistia suapte natura pacis est Sacramentum. Hic aspectus Mysterii eucharistici in liturgica Celebratione peculiarem invenit expressionem in ritu pacis vicissim tradendae. Procul dubio agitur de signo magni momenti (cfr *Io* 14,27). Nostra aetate, quae tam horrendis conflictibus vexatur, hic actus acquirit, etiam pro communi sensu, peculiarem eminentiam, quoniam Ecclesia magis magisque veluti proprium advertit munus efflagitandi a Domino donum pacis et unitatis pro se ipsa et pro universa humana familia. [...] Unde liquide intellegitur fervor quo saepe ritus pacis vivitur in Celebratione liturgica. Attamen, procedente Synodo Episcoporum, opportunitas est considerata moderandi hunc gestum, qui nimium pondus assumere potest, quandam confusionem gignens inter fideles et quidem ante ipsam Communionem. Probe est asseverandum quemadmodum huius actus praestantiae nihil detrahat sobrietas, necessaria ad servandum idoneum celebrationis spiritum, exempli gratia, cum efficitur ut mutuum signum pacis detur solummodo personae proximae».⁷

4. Papa Benedictus XVI non solum in luce posuit veram ritus significationem et signi pacis, sed etiam eorum magnum pondus illustravit veluti christianorum opus, qui orationibus et testimoniis altissimas et tumultuosas anxietates extenuarent hominum nostrae aetatis. Erga haec omnia Ipse suam renovabat invitationem ad curam de hoc ritu agendam adque hunc actum liturgicum sensu religioso et cum sobrietate patrandum.

5. Dicasterium, ad praescripta Summi Pontificis Benedicti XVI, ab Episcoporum Conferentiis iam a mense Maio anno MMVIII rogavit sententiam utrum servaretur signum pacis ante Communionem, sicut nunc fit, an transferretur in aliud tempus, ut aptiore ratione intellegeretur et ageretur? Solidam post considerationem, opportunum visum est in liturgia Romana signum pacis suo in loco traditionali servare sine mutationibus structuralibus in Missali Romano. Praebentur nunc quaedam certae normae ut melius argumentum signi pacis significetur et eius excessivae expressiones temperentur quae confusionem gignunt in congregatione liturgica quidem ante Communionem.

6. Argumentum tractatum magni est momenti. Si fideles non intellegunt neque demonstrant se vivere, cum gestibus ritualibus, rectam notionem ritus pacis, christiana notio pacis deminuitur et eorum fructuosa participatio Eucharistiae praeiudicatur. Quam ob rem, praeter ante dictas considerationes, quae fundamentum possunt constituere ad congruam de hac re catechesim agendam, cui quaedam praebentur praecipua lineamenta, sapienti considerationi Episcoporum Conferentiarum datur quoddam certum consilium:

a) Clare definiteque explanandum est ritum pacis suam iam habere altissimam vim orationis et oblationis pacis in contextu Eucharistiae. Signum pacis mutuo redditum

⁶ Cf. BENEDICTUS PP. XVI, Adhortatio Apostolica Postsynodalis *Sacramentum caritatis*, 22 februarii 2007, n. 49, nota n. 150: *AAS* 99 (2007) 143.

⁷ BENEDICTUS PP. XVI, Adhortatio Apostolica Postsynodalis *Sacramentum caritatis*, 22 februarii 2007, n. 49: *AAS* 99 (2007) 143.

inter Missam participantes altiore addit notionem et ritui ipsi significationem tribuit. Omnino igitur legitimum est adfirmare non agi de invitatione «mechanica» ad pacis signum in invicem dandum. Cum praevidetur illud, ob concretas circumstantias, recte actum iri non posse, vel cum, definitis in rerum adiunctis, intellegitur paedagogice et rationali modo illud dari non posse, potest omitti et interdum omitti debet. Memorandum est rubricam Missalis recitare: “*Deinde, pro opportunitate, diaconus, vel sacerdos, subiungit: Offerte vobis pacem*”.⁸

b) Consideratis his sententiis, suadere possumus ut in occasione, exempli gratia, publicationis tertiae editionis typicae Missalis Romani singulis in Nationibus vel futuro tempore cum novae editiones ipsius Missalis paratae erunt, Conferentiae Episcoporum considerent an sit mutandus modus donandi pacem suo tempore constitutus. Exempli gratia, illis in locis ubi adhibiti sunt familiares gestus et profani salutationis, post experientiam horum annorum, subsitui aliis gestibus melius definitis poterunt.

c) Omni modo, necesse erit ut tempore signi pacis definitive quidam abusus vitent sicut:

- Introductio alicuius “cantus pro pace”, qui in Rito Romano non invenitur.⁹
- Motus fidelium ab eorum loco ad dandum inter se signum pacis.
- Recessio sacerdotis ab altari ad dandam pacem alicui fideli.
- Ne in quibusdam circumstantiis, veluti in sollemnitate Paschae et Nativitatis Domini, vel in celebrationibus ritualibus sicut in Baptismo, Prima Communione, Confirmatione, Matrimonio, sacris Ordinationibus, Votis religiosis nuncupandis et Exsequiis, signum pacis sit occasio ad exprimendas congratulationes, omnia vel consolationes inter adstantes.¹⁰

d) Invitantur eodem modo omnes Episcoporum Conferentiae ad parandas catecheses liturgicas de ritus pacis notione in liturgia Romana deque eius recta actione in Sancta Missa celebranda. Ad hoc propositum Congregatio de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum his Litteris circularibus quasdam addit directionis sententias.

7. Arta necessitudo inter *legem orandi* et *legem credendi* debet, ut patet, etiam *legem vivendi* amplecti. Solidum munus catholicorum hodie assequi in aedificando mundo iustiore et magis pacifico coniungitur altiore cum intellectione christianae notionis pacis: hoc potissimum pendet a soliditate qua nostrae Ecclesiae particulares sumunt et invocant donum pacis idque in celebratione liturgica manifestant. Adhortamur et invitamus ut hac de re detur opera, quoniam ab hoc pendet qualitas

⁸ MISSALE ROMANUM, *Ordo Missae*, n. 128.

⁹ In Ritu Romano ex traditione cantus pro pace non praevidetur quandoquidem tempus brevissimum ad dandam pacem statuitur tantummodo illis qui propinquiores sunt. Cantus autem pacis prae se fert tempus multo amplius ad dandam in invicem pacem.

¹⁰ Cf. Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani, n. 82: «Convenit tamen ut unusquisque solummodo sibi propinquioribus sobrie pacem significet»; n. 154: «Sacerdos pacem potest dare ministris, semper tamen intra presbyterium remanens, ne celebratio turbetur. Item faciat si e rationabili causa aliquibus paucis fidelibus pacem dare velit»; CONGREGATIO DE CULTU DIVINO ET DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM, *Instructio Redemptionis sacramentum*, 25 martii 2004, n. 72: *AAS* 96 (2004) 572.

nostrae participationis Eucharistiae et efficacitas nostrae praesentiae, sicut exprimitur in beatitudinibus inter eos qui sunt pacifici.¹¹

8. In fine harum considerationum, adhortamur igitur Episcopos et, sub eorum moderamine, presbyteros, ut considerare velint et altiore reddant notionem spirituales ritus pacis in Sancta Missa celebranda, in propria institutione liturgica et spirituali atque in opportuna catechesi fidelibus destinata. Christus est pax nostra,¹² pax quidem divina, a prophetis et angelis annuntiata, et quam Ipse, suo in mysterio Paschali, in mundum attulit. Haec pax Christi resuscitati invocatur, annuntiatur et defunditur in celebratione etiam per actum humanum ad sacrum statum elevatum.

Summus Pontifex Franciscus, die 7 mensis iunii anno 2014, approbavit et confirmavit quae in his Litteris circularibus dicuntur, a Congregatione de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum paratis, et statuit ut eae publici iuris fiant.

Ex aedibus Congregationis de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum, die 8 mensis iunii, anno 2014, in Sollemnitate Pentecostes.

Antonius, Card. Cañizares Llovera
Praef.
Antonius Card. CAÑIZARES LLOVERA
Praefectus

+ *Arturus Roche*
✠ Arturus ROCHE
Archiep. a Secretis

¹¹ Cf. Mt 5, 9ss.

¹² Cf. Eph 2,14.