

## **SECTION 16: ECUMENISM**

The following policies shall be followed in regard to ecumenical efforts.

### **16.1 PRINCIPLES FOR ECUMENISM**

Catholics hold the firm conviction that the one church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him. They confess that the entirety of revealed truth, of sacraments and of ministry that Christ gave for the building up of his Church and the carrying out of its mission is found within the Catholic communion of the church. Certainly Catholics know that personally they have not made full use of and do not make full use of the means of grace with which the Church is endowed. For all that, Catholics never lose confidence in the Church. Their faith assures them that it remains the worthy bride of the Lord, ceaselessly renewing herself through the action of the Holy Spirit until, through the cross, she may attain to that light which knows no setting. Therefore, when Catholics use the words churches, other churches, other churches and ecclesial communities etc., to refer to those who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church, this firm conviction and confession of faith must always be kept in mind.

The ecumenical movement is a grace of God given by the Father in answer to the prayer of Jesus and the supplication of the church inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Catholics are invited to respond according to the directives of their pastors, in solidarity and gratitude with the efforts that are being made in many churches and ecclesial communities, and in the various organizations in which they cooperate, to re-establish the unity of Christians. Where ecumenical work is not being done or not being done effectively, Catholics will seek to promote it. Where it is being opposed or hampered by sectarian attitudes and activities that lead to even greater divisions among those who confess the name of Christ, they should be patient and persevering.

### **16.2 SPONSORS FOR BAPTISM**

It is the Catholic understanding that godparents, in a liturgical and canonical sense, should themselves be members of the church or ecclesial community in which the baptism is being celebrated. They do not merely undertake a responsibility for the Christian education of the person being baptized (or confirmed) as a relative or friend; they are also there as representatives of a community of faith, standing as guarantees of the candidate's faith and desire for ecclesial communion.

However, based on the common baptism and because of ties of blood or friendship, a baptized person who belongs to another ecclesial community may be admitted as a witness to the baptism, but only together with a Catholic godparent. A Catholic may do the same for a person being baptized in another ecclesial community. Because of the close communion between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches, it is permissible for a just cause for an Eastern faithful to act as godparent together with a Catholic godparent at the baptism of a Catholic infant

or adult, so long as there is provision for the Catholic education of the person being baptized and it is clear that the godparent is a suitable one.

A Catholic is not forbidden to stand as godparent in an Eastern Orthodox Church if he/she is so invited. In this case, the duty of providing for the Christian education binds in the first place the godparent who belongs to the church in which the child is baptized.

### **16.3 COMMON PRAYER**

Where appropriate, Catholics should be encouraged, in accordance with the church's norms, to join in prayer with Christians of other churches and ecclesial communities. Such prayers in common are certainly a very effective means of petitioning for the grace of unity, and they are a genuine expression of the ties which still bind Catholics to these other Christians. Shared prayer is in itself a way to spiritual reconciliation.

Care should be taken that the versions of Holy Scripture used be acceptable to all and be faithful translations of the original text.

Although a church building is a place in which a community is normally accustomed to celebrating its own liturgy, the common services mentioned above may be celebrated in the church of one or other of the communities concerned if that is acceptable to all the participants. Whatever place is used, should be agreeable to all, be capable of being properly prepared and be conducive to devotion.

Where there is a common agreement among the participants, those who have a function in a ceremony may use the dress proper to their ecclesiastical rank and to the nature of the celebration.

In liturgical celebrations taking place in other churches and ecclesial communities, Catholics are encouraged to take part in the psalms, responses, hymns and common actions of the church in which they are guests. If invited by their hosts, they may read a lesson or preach.

Regarding assistance at liturgical worship of this type, there should be a meticulous regard for the sensibilities of the clergy and people of all the Christian communities concerned, as well as for local customs which may vary according to time, place, persons and circumstances. In a Catholic liturgical celebration, ministers of other churches and ecclesial communities may have the place and liturgical honors proper to their rank and their role, if this is judged desirable. Catholic clergy invited to be present at a celebration of another church or ecclesial community may wear the appropriate dress or insignia of their ecclesiastical office if it is agreeable to their hosts.

### **16.4 FUNERALS OF NON-CATHOLICS**

In the prudent judgment of the local Ordinary, the funeral rites of the Catholic Church may be granted to members of a non-Catholic Church or ecclesial community unless it is evidently

contrary to their will and provided that their own minister is unavailable and that the general provisions of canon law do not forbid it.

## **16.5 BLESSINGS**

Blessings ordinarily given for the benefit of Catholics may also be given to other Christians who request them, according to the nature and object of the blessing. Public prayer for other Christians, living or dead, and for the needs and intentions of other churches and ecclesial communities and their spiritual heads may be offered during the litanies and other invocations of a liturgical service, but not during the Eucharistic anaphora. Ancient Christian liturgical and ecclesiological tradition permits the specific mention in the Eucharistic anaphora only of the names of persons who are in full communion with the church celebrating the Eucharist.

## **16.6 RECEIVING THE SACRAMENTS FROM PRIESTS OF THE EASTERN CHURCHES**

Whenever necessity requires or a genuine spiritual advantage suggests, and provided that the danger of error or indifferentism is avoided, it is lawful for any Catholic for whom it is physically or morally impossible to approach a Catholic minister, to receive the sacraments of penance, Eucharist and anointing of the sick from a minister of an Eastern church.

Since practice differs between Catholics and Eastern Christians in the matter of frequent Communion, confession before Communion and the Eucharistic fast, care must be taken to avoid scandal and suspicion among Eastern Christians through Catholics not following the Eastern usage. A Catholic who legitimately wishes to communicate with Eastern Christians must respect the Eastern discipline as much as possible and refrain from communicating if that church restricts sacramental Communion to its own members to the exclusion of others.

## **16.7 CATHOLICS ADMINISTERING THE SACRAMENTS TO MEMBERS OF THE EASTERN CHURCHES**

Catholic ministers may lawfully administer the sacraments of penance, Eucharist and the anointing of the sick to members of the Eastern churches who ask for these sacraments of their own free will and are properly disposed. In these particular cases also, due consideration should be given to the discipline of the Eastern churches for their own faithful, and any suggestion of proselytism should be avoided.

## **16.8 PARTICIPATION IN THE LITURGY OF THE EASTERN CHURCHES**

Catholics may read lessons at a sacramental liturgical celebration in the Eastern churches if they

are invited to do so. An Eastern Christian may be invited to read the lessons at similar services in Catholic churches.

## **16.9 PARTICIPATION IN WEDDINGS OF EASTERN CHURCHES**

A Catholic minister may be present and take part in the celebration of a marriage being properly celebrated between Eastern Christians or between a Catholic and an Eastern Christian in the Eastern Church if invited to do so by the Eastern Church authority and if it is in accord with the norms concerning mixed marriages, where they apply. This does not include participating in the celebration of the Eucharist.

## **16.10 CATHOLICS ADMINISTERING THE SACRAMENTS TO EPISCOPALIANS AND PROTESTANTS**

Catholic ministers may administer the sacraments of penance, Eucharist and anointing of the sick to Episcopalians and Protestants *who are in danger of death* only if they cannot approach a minister of their own community, they ask for the sacrament on their own, they manifest Catholic faith in the sacrament and they are properly disposed. *In all other situations*, the prior permission of the Archbishop must be obtained.

## **16.11 SCRIPTURE READINGS DURING THE CELEBRATION OF CATHOLIC MASS**

The reading of Scripture during a Eucharistic celebration in the Catholic Church is to be done only by members of the Catholic Church. On exceptional occasions and for a just cause, the Archbishop or the Vicar General may permit a member of another church or ecclesial community to take on the task of reader.

## **16.12 PREACHING IN A CATHOLIC CHURCH**

In the Catholic Eucharistic liturgy, the homily which forms part of the liturgy itself is reserved to the priest or deacon, since it is the presentation of the mysteries of faith and the norms of Christian living in accordance with Catholic teaching and tradition.

Only Catholics are allowed to preach or speak in a Catholic church or at a Catholic Mass or other worship service. Non-Catholics may preach or speak in a Catholic church only with the prior permission of the Archbishop or the Vicar General. Catholics are not to preach at the celebration of a non-Catholic Lord's Supper or major liturgical service without the prior permission of the Archbishop. One exception to this policy is that a non-Catholic may speak or preach at a Catholic funeral service. Likewise, a Catholic may speak or preach at a non-Catholic funeral service. The appropriate time for a non-Catholic to speak at a Catholic funeral service is immediately prior to the prayers of final commendation.

### **16.13 PARTICIPATION IN WEDDINGS**

Members of other churches or ecclesial communities may be witnesses at the celebration of marriage in a Catholic church. Catholics may also be witnesses at marriages which are celebrated in other churches or ecclesial communities unless such participation would be contrary to the norms of the Catholic Church.

With the previous authorization of the local ordinary, and if invited to do so, a Catholic priest or deacon may attend or participate in some way in the celebration of mixed marriages in situations where the dispensation from canonical form has been granted. In these cases there may be only one ceremony in which the presiding person receives the marriage vows. At the invitation of this celebrant, the Catholic priest or deacon may offer other appropriate prayers, read from the scriptures, give a brief exhortation and bless the couple.

Upon request of the couple, the local ordinary may permit the Catholic priest to invite the minister of the party of the other church or ecclesial community to participate in the celebration of the marriage, to read from the scriptures, give a brief exhortation and bless the couple.

Because of problems concerning Eucharistic sharing which may arise from the presence of non-Catholic witnesses and guests, a mixed marriage celebrated according to the Catholic form ordinarily takes place outside the Eucharistic liturgy. For a just cause, however, the Archbishop or Vicar General may permit the celebration of the Eucharist. Prior permission must be obtained through the Office of the Chancellor.

### **16.14 NON-CATHOLIC SERVICES IN CATHOLIC CHURCHES**

No non-Catholic worship service may be performed in a Catholic Church, oratory or chapel without the prior written permission of the Archbishop or the Vicar General.

### **16.15 CATHOLIC SERVICES IN NON-CATHOLIC CHURCHES**

No Catholic liturgy or worship service may be celebrated in a non-Catholic church or synagogue without the prior written permission of the Archbishop or the Vicar General.

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