

# The Catholic Moment

Serving the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana | Est. January 21, 1945

August 21, 2016

## A message from Bishop Doherty on priest posture during Mass

*(Editor’s note: Bishop Timothy Doherty shares that part of his July 14 memorandum to priests and deacons in the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana that addresses priest posture during Mass.)*

You are probably aware of Cardinal Robert Sarah’s July 7 talk in London where he addressed the subject of Mass *ad orientem*, generally understood as a Mass where the celebrant’s back is to the assembly. In a July 12, 2016, letter to the bishops of the United States, Bishop Arthur Serratelli, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Divine Worship, says that “no changes to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* are expected at this time, nor is there a new mandate for the celebrant to face away from the assembly.”

“... n. 299 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* does show a preference for the celebrant’s facing the people ‘whenever possible’ in the placement and orientation of the altar.”

Bishop Serratelli’s letter ends with this: “Although permitted, the decision whether or not to preside *ad orientem* should take into consideration the physical configuration of the altar and sanctuary space, and, most especially, the pastoral welfare of the faith community being served. Such an important decision should always be made with the supervision and guidance of the local bishop.”

Since the faith community that we serve is the whole diocese, I foresee no circumstance where the Ordinary Form isn’t observed in our scheduled Sat.-Sun. parish Masses. While I hope I am not tiring you by writing about this, I want you to know that I care about this matter. It is important that we demonstrate our unity in the basic forms of Eucharistic Liturgy.