

Diocese of Saskatoon
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January 26, 2005

Dear Faithful of the Diocese of Saskatoon:

With the capable assistance of the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission over the past three and a half years, we have developed policy and guidelines outlining Pastoral Directives for Sacramental Sharing in Particular Circumstances Between Catholics and Baptized Christians of other Denominations.

After extended discussion with the Council of Priests and a half day with the pastoral leadership of the diocese and having consulted others in Canada knowledgeable in the area of ecumenism, I now wish to move forward with the promulgation and enactment of a diocesan general decree setting out these pastoral directives.

The intent is to set out the particular conditions and circumstances under which Anglicans and Protestants may share in communion at a celebration of the Eucharist in our Church as well as share in the sacraments of Reconciliation and of Anointing of the Sick. This is to be in response to a grave spiritual need experienced by an individual believer.

In setting out the pastoral directives I am proceeding in accordance with the teaching of the Church and specifically of Pope John Paul II (cf. his Encyclical on Ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint*, 1995 #46 and more recently his Encyclical on the Eucharist, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 2003 #45 which refers to the Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism and to the Code of Canon Law).

As these Pastoral Directives are set forth there are two points that are most important to make:

1. Our Catholic faith holds that the Eucharist is an expression of the bond of communion that constitutes the Church in both its invisible and visible dimensions, a unity we both receive and seal in faith. The invisible dimension is the unity, which in Christ and through the Holy Spirit unites us to the Father and with each other. The visible dimension is our unity in the teaching of the apostles, in the sacraments, and in the visible bonds of unity to the Pope and all the bishops of the world.

It is for this reason that the Catholic faith holds that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sacramental sign of the oneness of faith, teaching, life, discipline and worship of the entire Church. Receiving communion within the Eucharist presupposes this unity and reflects our assent to this oneness. It is for this reason then that members of other churches and ecclesial

communities with whom we are not fully united are ordinarily not admitted to Holy Communion.

2. The Church also teaches that wishing to respond with pastoral solicitude to the grave spiritual need of baptized Christians of other denominations in particular circumstances “Catholic priests are able, in certain particular cases, to administer the sacraments of Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the Sick to Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church but who greatly desire to receive these sacraments, freely request them and manifest the faith which the Catholic Church professes with regard to these sacraments “. (*Ut Unum Sint* #46)

We recognize that there are significant events in the lives of individual Christians and their families when requests to receive these sacraments from a Catholic priest will be made. The Pastoral Directives that are being promulgated are an attempt to give direction and bring clarity to the response we give to these requests. They set out particular circumstances seen as appropriate for such a sacramental sharing including Communion, and they set out the particular conditions that are asked of the individual.

I invite you to carefully read this policy and its guidelines as set out in the brochure entitled “Pastoral Directives for Sacramental Sharing in Particular Circumstances Between Catholics and Baptized Christians of other Denominations”. For further and more in depth study of this question please read the accompanying document. “Pastoral Notes for Sacramental Sharing with other Christians in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon” which is available in your parish. In addition there will be study sessions across the diocese to help people understand more fully. I also invite you to discuss it with your pastor or parish life director if you have further questions.

I wish you all of God’s blessings as we continue in our spiritual journey as a Church. Let us all earnestly pray for the day when through dialogue, prayer and active Christian love we will arrive at that communion between all Christians whereby we can at last join in celebrating the one Eucharist of the Lord.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Rev. Albert LeGatt
Bishop of Saskatoon