

2. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*

This is the document that precedes the Order of Mass and describes the celebration and its meaning, both as a whole and in its several parts. The treatment is at once doctrinal, pastoral, and rubrical. Its eight chapters are the product of assiduous labor by a study group headed by Father Braga.⁵³ I shall survey it briefly.

1) *Importance and dignity of the Eucharistic celebration*

The Eucharistic celebration is the center of Christian life and the high point both of the work by which God sanctifies the world and of the worship which human beings offer to the Father. It is necessary, therefore, that the celebration of Mass be so arranged that ministers and faithful, each playing their proper part, may participate in it in a more fruitful way. This goal will be reached if the faithful are enabled to participate consciously, actively, and fully.

Finally, since the Eucharistic celebration, like the liturgy as a whole, involves the use of sensible signs, it is necessary to select carefully and

so courteous and understanding, even though it is a mannered phrase that does not fit the style of the document. The apostolic constitution is in *DOL* 202 nos. 1357-66; citation from no. 1365.

53. See *Not* 5 (1969) 148-58; G. Fontaine, "Institutionis generalis Missalis romani concordantia verbalis," *ibid.*, 304-22. The General Instruction underwent some revisions after its first publication. The first number to be revised was no. 7, because of the attacks by conservative groups after publication of the Order of Mass; they thought that this number gave an incomplete and defective definition of the Mass, and they objected to the term "Lord's Supper." The Congregation for Divine Worship felt obliged to issue a declaration on November 18, 1969, in which it explained the character of the General Instruction and of no. 7 in particular (*DOL* 204 nos. 1368-70). For the moment, no. 7 was expanded in order to facilitate acceptance of it; see *Not* 5 (1969) 417-18.

When the Missal was published in 1970, further clarifications were made of some expressions, even though the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith found the text to be doctrinally accurate; see "Variationes in 'Institutionem generalem Missalis romani' inductae," *Not* 6 (1970) 177-90. When the Missal was reprinted, and again when the second edition was published, further revisions were made which were required in order to harmonize the text with the liturgical books and other documents published after the General Instruction; see "Variationes in 'Institutionem generalem Missalis romani' inductae," *Not* 9 (1973) 34-38; 11 (1975) 298-308.

For completeness' sake I must add that while the Order of Mass had been sent to the prefects of the curial agencies, the General Instruction had not. The Consilium presented the fruit of its various labors to the Holy Father, and he decided on each occasion what further steps were to be taken, as we have seen. In the case of the General Instruction, he did not ask that it be studied by the other curial agencies. After its publication and the protests it elicited, especially from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Secretary of State ordered that all the schemas be examined by that Congregation; this was regularly done. (See also below, p. 601, n. 7.)