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Cardinal Nichols discourages priests from celebrating Mass *ad orientem*

by **Madeleine Teahan** posted Monday, 11 Jul 2016



Cardinal Nichols celebrating Mass (Mazur/catholicnews.org.uk)

The Archbishop of Westminster has told clergy Mass is 'not the time for priests to exercise personal preference or taste'

Cardinal Vincent Nichols has written to priests in Westminster diocese discouraging them from celebrating Mass facing east.

He issued the message to clergy days after the Vatican's liturgy chief Cardinal Robert Sarah invited priests to **celebrate Mass *ad orientem* from Advent onwards.**

Cardinal Sarah was speaking at a liturgical conference in London.

Following Cardinal Robert Sarah's appeal at the Sacra Liturgia conference in London, Cardinal Nichols wrote to priests reminding them that, "the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, approved by the highest authority in the Church, states in paragraph 299 that 'The altar should be built apart from the wall, in such a way that it is possible to walk around it easily and that Mass can be celebrated at it facing the people, which is desirable wherever possible. The altar should, moreover, be so placed as to be truly the centre toward which the attention of the whole congregation of the faithful naturally turns. The altar is usually fixed and is dedicated.'"

While he noted that the Congregation for Divine Worship had confirmed in 2009 that this instruction still allows for Mass to be celebrated facing east, the cardinal wrote: “But it also ‘reaffirms that the position towards the assembly seems more convenient inasmuch as it makes communication easier’. Thus the expectations expressed in GIRM 299 remain in force whenever the Ordinary Form of Mass is celebrated.”

Cardinal Nichols said that Mass was not the time for priests to “exercise personal preference or taste”, and “as the last paragraph of the GIRM states so clearly, ‘The Roman Missal, though in a diversity of languages and with some variety of customs, must in the future be safeguarded as an instrument and an outstanding sign of the integrity and unity of the Roman Rite’ (399).”

After the Sacra Liturgia Conference last week, Cardinal Sarah paid a personal visit to Cardinal Vincent Nichols.



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After leaving Sacra Liturgia UK Cardinal Sarah paid a visit to Cardinal Vincent Nichols before returning to Rome.

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Meanwhile, Fr Antonio Spadaro, a papal adviser and editor of the influential journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*, has shown his support for Mass facing the people on Twitter.

Following Cardinal Sarah's widely reported comments, Fr Spadaro tweeted quotes from the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, such as: "The altar should be built apart from the wall in such a way that Mass can be celebrated at it facing the people" and "the priest, facing the people and extending and then joining his hands, invites the people to pray."



Antonio Spadaro

@antoniospadaro

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The priest, FACING THE PEOPLE and extending and then joining his hands, invites the people to pray -INSTITUTIO GENERALIS MISSALIS ROMANI 146

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