

## Holding Hands During Our Father Prayer

*Not to oppose error is to approve it, and not to defend the truth is to suppress it" - Pope St. Felix III*

NOTE: Occasionally I will use bold print and/or word underlining for emphasis. This is my personal emphasis and not the emphasis of the source that I am quoting.

**Q.** Do you have any information about people holding each other's hands during the recitation of the Our Father prayer at Mass? Sadie Jaramillo

**A.** One would normally look to three documents for direction in this matter; The Sacramentary, Instruction on the Eucharist – Redemptionis Sacramentum or General Instruction of the Roman Missal. However, none of the aforementioned books give instruction on posture (handholding) during The Lord's Prayer during Holy Mass. This question has been asked of me many times over the past several years so I have had ample opportunity to research it.

The Congregation for Divine Worship at the Vatican speaks with the authority of the pope on questions submitted to them regarding the liturgy. They record their answers for us in their ongoing publication, Notitiae. They said, "Holding hands during the Our Father has become common place, but it is an illicit addition to the Liturgy. Holding hands is a sign of intimacy and not reconciliation, and as such disrupts the flow of the Sacramental signs in the Mass which leads to the Sacramental sign of intimacy with Christ and our neighbor, Holy Communion."<sup>1</sup>

"The U.S. Bishops have also spoken. It (holding hands during the Our Father) is unjustifiable. It is by no means the greatest abuse possible, but it does tend to introduce clamor immediately before one of the most solemn moments of the Mass (Holy Communion)."<sup>2</sup>

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal is located at the beginning of The Sacramentary<sup>3</sup>. It gives all of the binding rules, or rubrics, to be followed during Holy Mass. The style of writing of The Sacramentary is called the positive-affirmative. Translated, this means what must be done or what may be done. So, if it isn't specifically stated in the rubrics that handholding during the Our Father is permitted, then it is not permitted! For example: the rubrics do not say that the celebrant cannot ride a unicycle during the entry procession so since the rubrics are silent on this matter does this mean that he can? Of course not!

"The one gesture that is probably not appropriate (during the Our Father prayer of Mass) is 'holding hands'. When The Lord's Prayer is prayed at Mass, such an action (handholding) may not be as appropriate. Given that the source of our unity is the Body and Blood of the Lord; given that we express our forgiving love of one another at the Sign of Peace, the gesture of holding hands may be redundant. As good and appropriate this gesture may be outside Mass for stressing our unity and hospitality, such gesture during Mass does not seem to express the totality of the Lord's Prayer in preparation for Holy Communion, the prayer directed to God in surrender and petition of our daily bread."<sup>4</sup>

I hope that this report satisfactorily answers your question.

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<sup>1</sup> Notitiae, (1975), Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, The Vatican, Vol. XI, P. 226

<sup>2</sup> Eternal Word Television Network Website Questions & Answers, (January 22, 2004), Question Title: Instructed to Hold Hands answered by EWTN expert Colin B. Donovan, STL

<sup>3</sup> The Sacramentary, (1985), Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, NY.

<sup>4</sup> The Communion Rite, October 18, 2003), Mrs. Joanne Tadych & Rev. Fr. Michael G. Woost, Bulletin Insert of the Diocese of Cleveland, OH., P. 2

This report prepared on July 22, 2006 by Ronald Smith, 11701 Maplewood Road, Chardon, Ohio 44024-8482, E-mail: [hfministry@juno.com](mailto:hfministry@juno.com). Readers may copy and distribute this report as desired to anyone as long as the content is not altered and it is copied in its entirety. In this little ministry I do free Catholic and occult related research and answer your questions. Questions are answered in this format with detailed footnotes on all quotes. If you have a question(s), please submit it to this landmail or e-mail address. Answers are usually forthcoming within one week.

⊕ Let us recover by penance what we have lost by sin ⊕