



BISHOP OF SAN JOSE

Renewed at the Table of the Lord:

Beginning Our Journey of Liturgical Renewal

April 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Let me share something with you that I rarely say aloud: even for me, after years of celebrating Mass, there are days when I arrive at the altar and realize I have let the mystery of God's love slip past me. The words are familiar. The gestures are routine. And yet, somewhere between arrival and the final blessing, distracted by the issues of life, I have gone through the motions rather than reflecting consciously on the sacred mysteries celebrated. I suspect I am not alone in this. While the sacrament is still effective in these cases, we do not spiritually profit from the encounter as if we were attentive.

I think that is the greatest risk with anything sacred: that because it is always there, it becomes white noise and we stop seeing it for what it is. The Mass is the source and summit of our entire life as Catholics. Yet it is possible to be present at the most extraordinary mystery in the universe and come away without having duly appreciated it, simply because we were not paying attention or not aware of what we just experienced.

The reality is: what takes place every time Mass is celebrated is breathtaking, and nothing less than God's saving action in the world. The Paschal Mystery, the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is not a mere recollection of past events at Mass. Those sacred actions of the past become present to us. Now. At this altar. In this church. With this community. Jesus is here, offering himself and rising from the dead, today, for you, for me, each one of us! If we are mindful of this, we would be in awe every single time we walked through the church doors.

This is why I am writing to you today: to invite everyone in our diocese into a two-year journey of liturgical renewal we are calling *Renewed at the Table of the Lord*. This is not a program. It is an invitation to see again and rediscover the wonder that is already waiting for us every time we come to the Lord's Table for Mass.

It helps to remember even something as sacred as our liturgy can get lost in the busyness of our lives. Unlike our daily activities, the Mass is not something we initiate. Christ is the one who convokes us to gather for Liturgy. He calls his people together; he invites us into the mystery of his redeeming love. In the Liturgy, we are actively responding to something he has already initiated.

Thus, the Second Vatican Council calls us to participate in the liturgy fully, consciously, and actively. Not doing more things: not that everyone needs to be a lector or a choir member. It means responding with our whole selves — with all we are — our grief, our distraction, our gratitude, our doubt. All of it. And letting Christ transform our hearts and our lives through His Word and His Body and Blood. This is what stops the Mass from being just another familiar event while we think about our shopping list or the afternoon game.

There is a moment at Mass I find myself returning to when I think about this: the presentation of the bread and wine at the Preparation of the Gifts. This simple ritual has rich significance. A first century Christian text says this about the bread offered at Mass: "As this piece [of bread] was scattered over the hills and then was brought together and made one, so let your Church be brought together from the ends of the earth into you Kingdom" (Didache 9:4). The bread and wine represent us, gathered from our individual homes and lives — with our ordinary daily pains and joys and failures and hopes — brought to the altar and offered to God to be transformed. We are not passive observers at Mass. We are there because God called us. And that transformation is meant to happen to you and to me, personally, every single time.

And so, this spring, we begin our diocesan Liturgical Renewal with the Introductory Rites: those opening moments of the Mass when we gather as one body, acknowledge our need for God's mercy, and then lift our voices in praise before we hear His word. In the weeks ahead, your parish will offer reflections, bulletin articles, and resources to help you discover the rich meanings those familiar moments hold. And over the next two years, we will walk through each part of the Mass, season by season, together.

Here are some ideas I recommend to help us prepare in the coming weeks:

Arrive a few minutes early. We do this to quiet our heart. Look at the faces around you and remember this is the Body of Christ.

Bring what is real. We do not come to Mass as blank slates or as fully achieved saints. Come with whatever is true for you this week: joy, exhaustion, anger, grief. Bring it to the Lord in gratitude and petition. The liturgy has room for all of it. Christ is waiting precisely for that.

Lift your voice. God does not ask for professional singers. He asks for prayerful ones. Your voice, however humble, belongs in the song of the Church.

Read the liturgical materials your parish shares. The parish bulletin articles on various parts of the Mass, the diocesan website, and the teachings after Mass, these are your companions on this journey. Let them open the liturgy for you in new ways.

My deepest prayer is that through this renewal, each of you will experience what has sustained me through all the challenges of own life and ministry: that the Mass is not simply a ritual we observe, but an encounter we participate in. I hope that you will depart Mass each time deeply convinced that you have just been met, and continue to be accompanied, by the living God who knows you personally, who knows what you carry in your heart, and who loves you more than you can imagine.

Let us walk this road to be Renewed at the Table of the Lord Together.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Oscar Cantú
Bishop of San José



Renewed at the Table of the Lord

Liturgical Renewal Phase 1

Introductory Rites: Welcoming & Participation

Week 1: Beginning Our Journey

In this Easter season of new life and resurrection, our diocese begins a journey of liturgical renewal called *Renewed at the Table of the Lord*. Over the next two years, we will walk together through the parts of the Mass, deepening our understanding and participation in the source and summit of our Catholic life: the Holy Eucharist.

This renewal is an invitation to experience more fully what we already have: the incredible gift of encountering the mystery of Christ's sacrifice made manifest in the Mass, and God's tremendous love for each of us. The Second Vatican Council called all members of the Church to participate fully, consciously, and actively in the liturgy. This means bringing our whole selves to Mass: our hearts, our voices, our attention, and our lives.

This spring, we are focusing on the Introductory Rites: those opening moments when we gather as the Body of Christ, ask for God's mercy, and prepare to hear His word. In the fall, we will explore the Liturgy of the Word. Next Lent brings the Liturgy of the Eucharist. And in fall 2027, we will reflect on being sent forth as missionary disciples in the Concluding Rites.

This journey is part of our diocesan Pastoral Plan, which culminates in 2031 under the patronage of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Just as our Blessed Mother leads us to her Son, this renewal helps us discover how the Mass forms us, nourishes us, and sends us forth to love and serve. Your parish liturgical leaders have been trained and are ready to guide us in this renewal.

In the weeks ahead, watch for articles in our bulletin, resources on our parish website, diocesan social media posts, and other opportunities to learn more. Most importantly, come to Mass with open hearts and bring all that you are before the Lord, who promises to be with us always. Let us walk this journey together, allowing the Mass to transform us into the people God calls us to be. May Our Lady of Guadalupe guide us closer to her Son, that we may be **Renewed at the Table of the Lord**.