Dear Bishop X,

Your Excellency, I would like to address a liturgical issue that had occurred during a Mass in the Latin Rite within your diocese. I would appreciate any time, thought, and consideration that you can provide as to your response of this situation, which is as follows;

During Mass, the celebrating priest addressed the faithful during the Liturgy of the Word to remain seated during the Gospel due to the length of the reading.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *SACROSANCTUM CONCILIUM*, Solemnly Promulgated by his Holiness Pope Paul VI on December 4, 1963, states:

*II. The Promotion of Liturgical Instruction and Active Participation*

*22:  
1. Regulation of the sacred liturgy depends solely on the authority of the Church, that is, on the Apostolic See and, as laws may determine, on the bishop.  
  
2. In virtue of power conceded by the law, the regulation of the liturgy within certain defined limits belongs also to various kinds of competent territorial bodies of bishops legitimately established.  
  
3.* ***Therefore no other person, even if he be a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority.***

Therefore, the ability to altar Mass in any way is delegated and reserved to the bishops and not the priests. I would now like to take a look at what the faithful are to do during the Gospel;

The *Roman Missal, Third Edition* for use in the Dioceses of the United States of America was confirmed by decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on March 26, 2010 (Prot. n. 1464/06/L).  Proper adaptations for the United States were confirmed on July 24, 2010 (Prot. n. 577/10/L).

*Chapter II: The Structure Of The Mass, Its Elements, And Its Parts*

*Gestures and Bodily Posture*

*43.* ***The faithful should stand*** *from the beginning of the Entrance Chant, or while the Priest approaches the altar, until the end of the Collect; for the Alleluia Chant before the Gospel;* ***while the Gospel itself is proclaimed****; during the Profession of Faith and the Universal Prayer; and from the invitation, Orate, fratres (Pray, brethren), before the Prayer over the Offerings until the end of Mass, except at the places indicated here below.*

*The faithful should sit, on the other hand, during the readings before the Gospel and the Responsorial Psalm and for the Homily and during the Preparation of the Gifts at the Offertory; and, if appropriate, they may sit or kneel during the period of sacred silence after Communion.*

***…except when prevented on occasion by ill health, or for reasons of lack of space, of the large number of people present, or for another reasonable cause.***

It appears the priest is knowingly or unknowingly taking authority that is only delegated to that of a bishop. As the General instruction states, the faithful are to remain standing, unless the provided exceptions. The ill may remain seated, but the priest addressed all of the faithful who were outside of the exceptions. The priest here is making the faithful sit and therefore acting out of his authority. We the faithful ask that this issue be clarified and would greatly appreciate a public formal response to address this issue within our diocese.

Thank you for your time,

God Bless

-X