THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

A Model for Integrating Rubrical Gestures
While Praying the Eucharistic Prayer in Sign Language

A TREATISE

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In 1966 Pope Paul VI gave formal approval for priests to use sign language while celebrating Mass with Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Catholics. Since then, countless priests have been signing the Mass in numerous sign languages around the world. Many prayers in the *Roman Missal* also contain rubrics that require the priest to perform manual gestures while pronouncing words (e.g., extending hands over the paten and chalice during the epiclesis). Whichever version of sign language he uses, the priest will encounter a difficulty: no Church document has instructed how he should simultaneously both perform the gestures, and sign the words.

This project proposes a model for integrating rubrical gestures while praying the Eucharistic Prayer in sign language. Eucharistic Prayer II is chosen as the base text, focusing especially on its rubrics. American Sign Language (ASL) is the language used. Deciding what a signing priest should do requires familiarity with both the meaning of the Prayer’s gestures, and with Deaf culture, especially the importance of ASL for Deaf Catholics.
A signing priest has several options: he could perform the gesture and relegate signing to another (e.g., an interpreter); he could sign the words and relegate the gesture to another (e.g., a deacon); he could sign the words and omit the gesture; he could sign some of the words, stop to insert the gesture, then continue signing the words; he could sign all the words of a particular section, then perform the gesture; and he could modify both the gesture and the signing, doing each one-handed. Each of these options is considered every time a gesture-vs.-sign conflict is encountered in Eucharistic Prayer II. Based upon the relative importance of the gesture and knowledge of ASL grammar, recommendations are made for solving each conflict. These solutions are presented to both Deaf and hearing persons involved in Deaf Catholic ministry around the country and a survey collects their impressions. Their responses are studied and used to evaluate this project’s success. The project finally identifies additional issues meriting further study regarding liturgical inculturation and pastoral care with Deaf Catholics so they can participate in liturgy more fully, consciously, and actively.
This treatise by Thomas S. Margevičius fulfills the treatise requirement for the doctoral degree in Ministry approved by Margaret Mary Schreiber, OP, D.Min, STD, as Director, and by Raymond Studzinski, O.S.B., Ph.D. as Reader.

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Introduction

Why This Topic

The Second Vatican Council’s constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* stated:

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people” (1 Pet. 2:9, 4–5) have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism. … Therefore, in all their apostolic activity, pastors of souls should energetically set about achieving it through the requisite pedagogy.¹

As an indispensable part of that pedagogy pastors were enjoined to “promote the liturgical instruction of the faithful” (*SC* 19). A half-century later liturgical catechesis is as important as ever, and resources—print and electronic—abound. This thesis project contributes to liturgical catechesis: it aims to enrich the liturgical participation of a group of the faithful—Deaf² Catholics—by integrating an aspect of their culture with which they are familiar—sign language—with the rubrical gestures of the Church’s liturgy.

At the outset, an ambiguity presents itself: liturgical theologians and sign language linguists define the terms “gesture” and “sign” in ways particular to their respective disciplines. This project will use “gesture” primarily in its liturgical sense and will refer to hand and body


² I will follow the “Woodward Convention” of capitalization described by Carol Padden and Tom Humphries: “We use the lowercase deaf when referring to the audiological condition of not hearing, and the uppercase Deaf when referring to a particular group of deaf people who share a language—American Sign Language (ASL)—and a culture. The members of this group have inherited their sign language, use it as a primary means of communication among themselves, and hold a set of beliefs about themselves and their connection to the larger society. We distinguish them from, for example, those who find themselves losing their hearing because of illness, trauma or age; although these people share the condition of not hearing, they do not have access to the knowledge, beliefs, and practices that make up the culture of Deaf people.” Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1988), 1.
movement and position, particularly those that liturgical texts (the rubrics, usually printed in red) prescribe for the enactment of the liturgy. “Sign” will usually refer to the way sign language conveys a lexical concept.

The Council emphasized the importance of gestures: “To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes” (SC 30). Indeed, bodily gestures are essential for full and active liturgical participation. “The language of gesture,” writes Jeremy Haselock, “and the signals sent out by bodily posture—body language—are both significant elements in the repertoire of means of communication at the disposal of liturgical worship… Gestures affirm the incarnation, confirming the sanctity of our bodies, involving them in prayer and declaring them to be our primary instrument for worship.”

Pope Benedict XVI in Sacramentum Caritatis affirmed catechizing the faithful on the importance of gestures:

The faithful [ought to] be helped to make their interior dispositions correspond to their gestures and words. Otherwise, however carefully planned and executed our liturgies may be, they would risk falling into a certain ritualism. Hence the need to provide an education in eucharistic faith capable of enabling the faithful to live personally what they celebrate. Given the vital importance of this personal and conscious participatio, what methods of formation are needed? The Synod Fathers unanimously indicated, in this regard, a mystagogical approach to catechesis, which would lead the faithful to understand more deeply the mysteries being celebrated.

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Historically, “‘Mystagogy’ or ‘mystagogical catechesis’ (i.e. ‘explanation of the mysteries’) focused on the unfolding of the meaning of the ‘mysteries’ or sacraments of Christian initiation and eucharist which the neophytes had just received and experienced at the Easter vigil.”

Mystagogy often focuses on the rite’s externals—words, gestures, ritual objects, and movement. Pope Benedict went further, insisting that in addition to describing liturgy’s externals, mystagogical catechesis must also be concerned with presenting the meaning of the signs contained in the rites. This is particularly important in a highly technological age like our own, which risks losing the ability to appreciate signs and symbols. More than simply conveying information, a mystagogical catechesis should be capable of making the faithful more sensitive to the language of signs and gestures which, together with the word, make up the rite.

Notice that the Holy Father writes of the language of “signs and gestures” as though they were synonymous, and other Church documents often use these words interchangeably, but this project will reserve the word “sign” in the way used by sign language linguists, to refers to a lexeme, a locus of lexical meaning that exists regardless of inflections. It is a basic unit of meaning.

In addition, liturgical texts often use the terms “sign” and “symbol” interchangeably. The field of liturgical semiotics typically distinguishes between the two: “A chief function of a sign is to provide information, accumulate facts, and assemble accurate data. Signs thus stand for

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6 Sacramentum Caritatis, 64b, emphasis original.
or point to specific objects, events, persons, conditions, or circumstances.” In contrast, “a symbol is neither information (sign) nor triggering surplus/stimulus (signal); it is an action that discloses new and unexpected relationships. More precisely, a symbol is a transaction in which the apparent ‘actors’ become the ‘acted upon;’ the apparent ‘initiators’ become the ‘initiated;’ the ‘possessors’ become the ‘possessed.’” By its nature, a symbol can “mean” several things simultaneously. “A symbol is open-ended action rather than closed-off object. By initiating movement from ‘known’ to ‘unknown’, symbols open a new way of life, the meanings of which cannot be exhausted and the potentialities of which are ever new. For this reason symbols are innately pliant, supple, flexible, ambiguous, multilayered.”

Because symbols are culturally conditioned, the more divergent people’s cultures, the more likely they will interpret symbols differently. As we shall see, Deaf culture frequently diverges from mainstream (hearing) culture, and Deaf people do not always interpret liturgies’ bodily movements and rubrical gestures the same way hearing people do. Hearing people are accustomed to “hearing words” and “seeing gestures.” For most of us, words chiefly occupy the oral/aural domains while gestures function in the manual/visual domains. In contrast, for the Deaf words and gestures share the same domain. Does the brain process concepts differently when they are seen instead of heard? How does conveying a text in the manual/visual domain affect its meaning? Likewise, might rubrical gestures mean something different for Deaf people

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9 Ibid., 440.

10 Ibid.
than they do for hearing people? What do the Deaf experience when a priest communicates both text and gestures in the same domain? What might such an integration look like?

In attempting to integrate sign language and rubrical gestures this project will encounter many complications. First, liturgy developed historically with no thought for how it might be enacted by Deaf signers. For example, the Roman Liturgy’s rubrics frequently expect the priest to use his hands in various gestures—e.g., an *orans* posture, or the Sign of the Cross—while proclaiming an accompanying text. But if hands are signing the text they cannot simultaneously perform the manual gestures. Liturgy by nature is not created *ex nihilo* but is received from one’s forebears, and passed on to successive generations. If the priest omits historically received gestures, the liturgy loses continuity with the received tradition that resulted in its current shape.

A second complication is the nature of American Deaf culture itself. Pope Benedict wrote that our technological age needs mystagogical catechesis on the meaning of rites’ signs and gestures. This need is all the more acute among Deaf members of the faithful because most culturally Deaf people are not active members of any faith community. A 2009 survey in the Archdiocese of Baltimore found that about three percent of the area’s Deaf Catholics attend Mass, and those that do attend are frequently poorly catechized. Deaf and hard-of-hearing

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11 Accurate statistics are difficult to obtain due to differences in research methods, terminology, and criteria. Arvilla Rank, Director of the National Catholic Office for the Deaf (NCOD), puts the figure for Catholics at about 4 – 5%. A Missouri Synod Lutheran website observes, “In 1994 it was estimated that approximately ninety percent of Deaf people in the United States did not attend church. This was, in part, due to the limited number of indigenous deaf churches. In 2009 the estimate has risen to ninety-eight percent.” [http://www.deafjesus.org/html/about.html](http://www.deafjesus.org/html/about.html) (Accessed 15 January 2015). The Evangelical journal *Christianity Today* estimated active Deaf Christians closer to 1% (issue 30 March 2010); [http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/march/30.46.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/march/30.46.html) (15 January 2015).

12 Hard-of-hearing is a term the Deaf community itself prefers. The National Association for the Deaf explains, “‘Hearing-impaired’ was a well-meaning term that is not accepted or used by many deaf and hard of hearing people. For many [Deaf] people, the words ‘deaf’ and ‘hard of hearing’ are not negative. Instead, the term ‘hearing-impaired’ is viewed as negative. The [latter] term focuses on what people can’t do. It establishes the standard as ‘hearing’ and anything different as ‘impaired,’ or substandard, hindered, or damaged. It implies that something is
people contend that members of the “hearing church” cannot communicate with the Deaf in their own language and thus do not know the issues faced by the Deaf community. “[T]he United States Catholic bishops show a care for Deaf people,” admits Fr. Min Seo Park, a Deaf priest who studied in the United States and is now ministering in Seoul, South Korea. “However, the bishops continuously refer to the Deaf in the context of ‘people with disabilities.’ This failure to appreciate a Deaf cultural sense of self-understanding and self-reference raises questions and can be an obstacle to efforts to encourage Deaf pastoral leadership.”¹³ Deaf priest Fr. Christopher Klusman of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee explains: “[A] challenging part of my work is the misunderstanding of others on deafness (whether consciously, unconsciously or both). It requires a lot of time, patience, prayer and education. It helps when people are open and receptive, but sometimes prejudices, obstacles, misunderstandings and other factors make it a more difficult process.”¹⁴

A third complication emerges if a rubrical gesture already “means” something in American Sign Language (ASL).¹⁵ Like spoken languages, an ASL sign can have different

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meanings (analogous to homonyms), in which case its ambiguous meaning is determined by context. This is no less a problem for ASL than it is for English: no one expects frozen rain to storm down when one “hails” a taxi. But what if a required Roman liturgical gesture means something ridiculous or nonsensical in ASL? The epicletic gesture, for example—hands extended forward with palms facing down over the objects upon which the invocation is pronounced—resembles an existing ASL term: the closing of horizontal doors (such as a trap door to the cellar). Should the traditional epicletic gesture be retained and the Deaf be allowed to decipher its meaning from context (no trap door on the altar!), or should the gesture be modified, or omitted, or something else?

A fourth complication is this: Do sign languages use non-lexical “gestures” in communication analogously to how hearing liturgies use non-verbal sounds? A hearing person mulling over an idea might voice “Hmmm.” She is not using a word per se, but is communicating using sound. Liturgy too uses sounds without words: instrumental music, the ringing of bells, and even the clinking of censor chains can be enacted for the sake of the sounds themselves.

Correlatively, a hearing liturgy sometimes performs gestures (such as genuflecting) without voicing a text; the gesture itself “speaks.” Do these dynamics also operate among populations using sign language, i.e., are there gestures without assigned lexemes, performed for the sign-value of the gestures themselves? We will have to explore whether ASL permits the insertion of non-lexical gestures in its communication.

A final complication is anticipated insofar as what this project proposes may encounter resistance both from advocates of Deaf culture and of Roman liturgy. Many Deaf resent hearing
people telling them how to do things. “Deaf liturgy should be left to Deaf communities to create and only involve hearing people when Deaf people invite them to make a contribution,” concludes one Deaf writer.\textsuperscript{16} The Deaf have coined the term “audism” to describe the prejudice that one is superior based upon ability to hear, and that life without hearing is futile and miserable. Such thinking results in a negative stigma toward anyone who does not hear. As Harlan Lane put it, “audism is the hearing way of dominating, restructuring, and exercising authority over the deaf community.”\textsuperscript{17}

Likewise, liturgy advocates may be suspicious or even hostile toward attempts to modify liturgy in ways not foreseen by the rubrics (as this project attempts). Despite solicitude to safeguard the liturgy, this may betray pastoral insensitivity, if not prejudice, and can do more harm than good. Publishers of one liturgy newspaper opined that:

real improvements … cannot be gained by deaf Catholics by declaring American Sign Language an official language of the Church. Furthermore, unless the doctrinal and liturgical problems involved are resolved, and unless clear and decisive instructions for the use of sign language at Mass are assured, the intended benefit to hearing-impaired [sic] Catholics will be lost in confusion.\textsuperscript{18}

The Author’s Background

Unlike many other specialized populations who can eventually mainstream with dominant culture, the Deaf do so only with difficulty. The primary barrier is communication: no

\textsuperscript{16} Wayne Morris, \textit{Theology without Words: Theology in the Deaf Community} (Hampshire, Eng: Ashgate Publ, 2008), 135.

\textsuperscript{17} Harlan Lane, \textit{The Mask of Benevolence: Disabling the Deaf Community}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (San Diego: Dawn Sign, 1999): 43.

matter how hard they study, many Deaf people will never become fluent in an oral/aural language. “Most hearing people believe that deaf people communicate by some combination of speechreading (or “lipreading”), the ease and effectiveness of which hearing people often overestimate, and sign language, which hearing people routinely underestimate since they lack experience with its power and richness.”19 Contrary to popular opinion, lipreading is a skill not easily mastered, and even when mastered, only about 30% of what is spoken can be grasped. Further, few hearing people attempt to learn the language of the Deaf. Consequently, the Deaf have historically formed an isolated community with its own language, values, struggles, and worldview. There is no parallel culture for blind persons or other populations who can, with more or less facility, integrate into the larger culture and eventually share the same language as those around them. Most large cities in America have not only regional Deaf clubs but also Deaf churches in various denominations: Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, non-denominational. Our Lady of Mt. Carmel is the Catholic Deaf parish in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area.

This author first became involved with the Catholic Deaf community while a seminarian in the late 1990s. The author was assigned to the largely Deaf parish Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Minneapolis as a “teaching parish,” a community wherein over the course of four years of theologate he interacted with the faithful and was mentored by the pastor. The author was assigned to the parish not because he had prior experience with Deaf ministry but because the parish’s pastor was a venerable mentor. As a seminarian, the author began to learn ASL and

became involved in Deaf culture. By the time he was ordained a priest he was able to celebrate Mass and preach in sign language, and continued to celebrate Mass with the Deaf monthly during the first six years of priesthood. He obtained a Sacred Theology Licentiate in Liturgical Studies from Catholic University of America in 2006, and is now an instructor at the St. Paul Seminary and School of Divinity in St. Paul, Minnesota in the fields of liturgy, sacraments, and homiletics. He instructs men preparing to be priests how to preside at the Eucharist, including how to understand and implement the rubrics the liturgical texts indicate.

While teaching full-time at the seminary he was appointed Sacramental Minister for the Deaf parish, celebrating Mass and other sacraments and attending events for both Deaf and hearing parishioners. In 2010, he was appointed its Pastor even as he continued as a seminary teacher. The author thus has the necessary background in both liturgy and Deaf ministry.

This thesis examines how gestural rubrics might have to be adjusted by a priest signing the text. Because Eucharistic Prayer II is the shortest of the currently used Eucharistic Prayers in the Roman liturgy and is frequently used in liturgy among the Deaf, this doctorate will be limited to that text. The history of the prayer, particularly the role of rubrical gestures therein, will be examined, as will deafness, Deaf culture, Deaf spirituality and prayer, ministry among the Deaf, and the role of gestures in Deaf communication. Thereafter a method can be proposed whereby Eucharistic Prayer II might integrate sign language and the Prayer’s gestures.

This method will be tested among Deaf Catholics by inviting them to participate in a survey, asking those involved in liturgy among Deaf Catholics to observe two videos: the first shows the overlap of (spoken) words and rubrical manual gestures; the second proposes how to
overcome the conflict. Responses will be collected and analyzed, and the method evaluated for its effectiveness. The final section makes suggestions for improvement.

The author hope this thesis helps Deaf Catholics understand, and thereby participate more fully in, the liturgy, respecting both the Church’s liturgical tradition and the pastoral needs of the Deaf. This project may also assist other priests who attempt to be faithful to the rubrical gestures while signing the Eucharistic prayer. In the end, may all persons, hearing and Deaf, ordained and lay, be encouraged to give fitting praise and glory to God.
The Liturgical Background

Liturgical Participation: Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi

Pope St. Pius X in his 1903 instruction *Tra le Sollecitudini*\(^1\) introduced and promoted the term “active participation” when discussing celebration of the liturgy, and this term became a guiding principle of liturgical renewal in the twentieth century. Sixty years later the Second Vatican Council Fathers, in their first document decreed, “In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy the full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* [SC] 14).\(^2\) Josef Lamberts observed, “The term [active participation] occurs no less than twenty-five times in the text [of SC] … It may be seen as the recognition and the ratification of the struggle of the Liturgical Movement, which had made active participation its goal.”\(^3\) The term “active participation” has received abundant attention following the Second Vatican Council as well.\(^4\)

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Pope Benedict XVI in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* observed:

The Second Vatican Council rightly emphasized the active, full and fruitful participation of the entire People of God in the Eucharistic celebration. Certainly, the renewal carried out in these past decades has made considerable progress towards fulfilling the wishes of the Council Fathers (*Sac Car 52*).

Nevertheless, some of what happened in the liturgy since Vatican II under the guise of “active participation” seems to Pope Benedict to be liturgical activism—getting as many people doing as many things as possible. Pope Benedict continues:

Yet we must not overlook the fact that some misunderstanding has occasionally arisen concerning the precise meaning of this participation. It should be made clear that the word “participation” does not refer to mere external activity during the celebration. In fact, the active participation called for by the Council must be understood in more substantial terms, on the basis of a greater awareness of the mystery being celebrated and its relationship to daily life (*Ibid.*).

Inspired by Pope Benedict, liturgists such as Stuflesser advocates for a “new interiority” that emphasizes participants’ internal disposition, sometimes to the exclusion of external enactment. This can be problematic if it trivializes the embodied nature of liturgy. A balanced methodology keeps ceremonial exteriority and informed interiority in healthy dialogue.

In the end, liturgy must be concerned with more than aiming for a proper balance of interiority and exteriority within the celebration; a third criterion is essential: one’s manner of life beyond the liturgy discloses whether liturgy is being done “right.” The faithful must evince a

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lively “lex vivendi” to complement the familiar lex orandi/lex credenda dyad. This added term insists that liturgy must have an effect on how one behaves as a Christian in the world.\footnote{This three-fold structure—liturgy believed, liturgy celebrated, liturgy lived—was developed in Jean Corbon, \textit{The Wellspring of Worship} (reprint: San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005) and adopted by Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict in his numerous liturgical writings. See the three-fold structure of his Apostolic Exhortation \textit{Sacramentum Caritatis} (op. cit.): “The Eucharist: A Mystery to be Believed; A Mystery to be Celebrated; A Mystery to be Lived” and the same structure in the Apostolic Exhortation \textit{Verbum Domini}, on the Word of God: \textit{Verbum Dei; Verbum in Ecclesia; Verbum Mundi}.}

Deaf Catholics must live their faith just as hearing Catholics do, but as mentioned, the Deaf are not very active in practicing the faith. What can be done to strengthen their faith life? Is there something ministers among the Deaf can do better to engage Deaf culture? Can liturgical adaptation be justified to this end? If so, what can change? By whom? Following what principles?

**Liturgical Change and Vatican II**

A full history of liturgical changes over 2000 years is well beyond this study,\footnote{For a one-volume summary of liturgical history see \textit{The Oxford History of Christian Worship}, G. Wainwright and K. Tucker, eds. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006). Still important is the four-volume \textit{The Church at Prayer}, A.G. Martimort, ed. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992).} but even a cursory survey attests to the fact that from the Church’s beginning its worship was diverse, and even in the West liturgical variations continued well into the 1500s. When Protestant reformers in the sixteenth century challenged Church unity, the Council of Trent responded by standardizing the liturgy to a degree that the Church had never previously known. For the next 400 years, rubrical change in the Latin Eucharistic liturgy was infrequent and minor. By the time of Vatican II “liturgy had become an inflexible clerical activity; the rubrics appointing what the clerics had to do and say were strictly fixed in the Tridentine liturgical books, and the
Congregation of Rites (established in 1588) looked after a punctual, even scrupulous observance."

In a homily for the Conversion of St. Paul given 25 January 1959 in the Basilica di San Paolo fuori le Mura, Pope John XXIII called for an ecclesial aggiornamento and announced that he would convoke a Second Vatican Council.\(^9\) In its first document, the Council fathers disclosed their goals in the Council: “to impart an ever increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faithful, to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions which are subject to change, to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ, [and] to strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of mankind into the household of the Church” (SC 1). One of the first areas the Fathers decided to adapt was the liturgy: \(^11\) How well does it advance the reign of God in this generation? In a rapidly-changing world, the Church was even “more urgently called upon to save and renew every creature, that all things may be restored in Christ and all men may constitute one family in Him and one people of God” (Ad gentes 1).\(^12\) How could liturgical change help the Church better fulfill her mission?

The Constitution on the Liturgy was cautious regarding this change: “There must be no innovation unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them, and care must

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9 Lamberts, “Active Participation”: 235.


be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing” (SC 23). Council Fathers were concerned with more than the words, structures, and rubrics of the liturgy; a renewed attitude was necessary. “Pastors of souls must therefore realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated, something more is required than the mere observation of the laws governing valid and licit celebration; it is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite” (SC 11). In order to facilitate active engagement, liturgical uniformity could—indeed sometimes should—yield to diverse cultural expressions, which manifest the richness of humanity. “Even in the liturgy, the Church has no wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not implicate the faith or the good of the whole community; rather does she respect and foster the genius and talents of the various races and peoples” (SC 37). Minor liturgical variations are rarely problematic, yet the Council acknowledged that some situations warrant more substantial changes. “In some places and circumstances, however, an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy is needed” (SC 37). What principles would govern such adaptations?

A first principle is that not everything is up for change. According to SC 21, liturgy is “made up of immutable elements divinely instituted, and of elements subject to change. These [latter] not only may but ought to be changed with the passage of time if they have suffered from

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13 The meaning of “organic development” is disputed. Alcuin Reid, The Organic Development of the Liturgy: The Principles of Liturgical Reform and Their Relation to the Twentieth-century Liturgical Movement Prior to the Second Vatican Council, (Farnborough: St. Michael’s Abbey Press, 2004) argues that liturgy changes only slowly, and in minor ways. John Baldwin disagrees: “There are, to be sure, relatively stable elements like the Roman Canon, but the liturgy has changed significantly since the fifth century—especially when one factors in not only texts but music, architecture, art and the like (not to mention the vicissitudes of popular participation). The argument that there is only an organic (code word for insignificant) development in the liturgy rests on rather slim grounds.” See his editorial “Changing Rite, Unchanging Truth,” The Tablet (3 Oct. 2009): 15 – 16.
the intrusion of anything out of harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy or have become unsuited to it.” Unfortunately, SC did not delineate exactly what in the liturgy is immutable, what may change, and what criteria govern the changes. History alone is not a sufficient principle, for a survey of liturgical texts through time testifies that virtually none of liturgy’s words, actions, or theological explanations have never changed. It becomes difficult to argue that such elements, at least historically, are unchangeable. While some historians have detected the existence of a stable ordo—recurring patterns, elements, and verbal formulas—that has remained relatively unchanged through history, they caution against making absolute assertions. Does that mean the liturgical historian should despair of finding anything normative? “No, not all is merely ‘relative’ in questions of liturgical practice and theology today. The articulation of what is to be ‘normative,’ however, is a much more difficult task than the fathers of Vatican II or other contemporary liturgical reformers have assumed it to be.”

Are the words of the Eucharistic Prayer one such unchangeable text? The apostle Paul, writing about the Eucharist for the Corinthian church, used verbs in the first person plural to indicate that from the start celebrating the Eucharist was a communal activity, but he does not give a Eucharistic Prayer as such. What the Eucharistic Prayer of the apostolic era might have


15 Paul Bradshaw, The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship, 2nd ed. (Oxford: University Press, 2002), underscores how tentative absolute claims must be. John Baldovin, S.J. acknowledges this, maintains that cautious progress is possible: “The New Testament is too rich to be confined to a single pattern or theology of the Eucharist. Although we need to look for common patterns, it is important not to homogenize them too quickly,” Bread of Life, Cup of Salvation: Understanding the Mass (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2003), 32.


17 See 1Cor 10:16: “The cup of blessing that we bless (eulogoumen/benedicimus) … the bread that we break (klomen/frangimus).”
been remains speculative. Within the next generation, however, the early church order Didache, usually dated around 90 A.D., contains a prayer text that seems to be intended to be heard and understood by the assembly. “Regarding the Eucharist, give thanks as follows. First for the cup: We give you thanks, our Father … Then for the broken bread: We give you thanks, our Father …” But it is not clear from this, or any other source, that there was a fixed Eucharistic Prayer in the East or the West during the first three hundred years of Church history.

The Eucharistic Prayer seems to have been recited aloud throughout the first several centuries. “In Rome in the time of Ordo I [early 700s] the Eucharistic Prayer could still be heard by the congregation.” But this changed in the Middle Ages.

From the late eighth century onward in Gaul [these prayers] began to be said in a low voice, so that only ministers standing close by could hear them. Within a hundred years, they were recited in complete silence everywhere. The prayer over the offerings even became known as the secreta. Thus, laypeople would neither see what was happening on the altar, because it was against the east wall with the priest standing on its west side, nor hear the central part of the rite, and because the whole Mass, including the readings, was in Latin, they would not be able to understand even the parts they did hear.

The Liturgical Movement of the 19th and 20th centuries encouraged a historical ressourcement, a return to patristic sources that could inform contemporary liturgical practice. Even before Vatican II worshippers were witnessing some changes such as the dialogue Mass and Scriptures

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19 Didache IX.1,2,3. Lawrence Johnson, Anthology, 37.


being proclaimed in the vernacular. But before the Council, priests still prayed the Roman Canon quietly in Latin, facing *ad orientem* (with his back to the faithful). These two factors made it difficult for the faithful to understand the Eucharistic Prayer. For the Deaf the difficulty was accentuated: neither the words the priest proclaims nor his manual gestures are visible (and thus intelligible) to the Deaf. Face-to-face engagement is necessary for Deaf communication.

Regarding orientation, the widespread adoption after Vatican II of priests celebrating Mass *versus populum* greatly enhanced the full, conscious, and active participation of the Deaf in the liturgy. They are better able to see and understand the priest’s signs and gestures. This orientation communicates to the Deaf that liturgy, offered *to* the glory of God, is also offered *for* their benefit, and facilitated the possibility of ordaining Deaf men to the priesthood, who could communicate directly with their fellow Deaf faithful *versus populum*.

Another major change occurred after the Council, when “there began, under the care of the Supreme Pontiffs, the great work of renewal of the liturgical books of the Roman Rite, a work which included their translation into vernacular languages.” While a wholesale elimination of Latin in the liturgy was not intended by the Council (“The use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites,” *SC* 36), many benefited from Mass celebrated in

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24 The literature on the priest-celebrant’s altar positions *ad orientem* and *versus populum* is extensive; for the *status quaestionis* see Uwe Lang, *Turning Towards the Lord: The Direction of Liturgical Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004); and John F. Baldovin, *Reforming the Liturgy: A Response to the Critics* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2008), 105 – 132.

25 Formerly most canonists interpreted the 1917 *Code of Canon Law* can. 984.2 to exclude Deaf men from orders. The 1983 *Code of Canon Law* relaxed these impediments and subsequently several fully Deaf men have been ordained. For more on this, see Edward Peters, “The Ordination of Men Bereft of Speech and the Celebration of Sacraments in Sign Language,” *Studia canonica* 42 (2008): 331 – 345.

the vernacular. Paradoxically, however, this accentuated a difference between how hearing and Deaf believers experienced the liturgy. Before the Council, when neither hearing nor Deaf Catholics commonly communicated in Latin, the Mass in Latin left both groups similarly distant from the texts. After the Council, a spoken vernacular Mass benefited the hearing more than the Deaf. In 1972 George Crouter observed, “The deaf often feel excluded from the new Catholic Mass for the very reason that the majority of Catholics are drawn to it, he [Fr. David Walsh] says. It calls for participation, for congregational singing … the deaf really feel left out. He feels that not enough is being done to make the Mass real for those who cannot hear it.”

Even before the Second Vatican Council the option existed of providing an ancillary sign language interpreter for what the priest and other ministers said in the liturgy. It was difficult to translate Latin into sign language, so when all the priest’s prayers could be done in the vernacular this greatly aided the Deaf. This was better than Mass without an interpreter, but better still would be allowing a Deaf priest to use sign as his vernacular. Mandy Erickson writes:

> The difference between sitting through an interpreted Mass and worshiping in deaf church is akin to the difference between watching a video of a Mass and attending it in person… Before Vatican II, of course, nearly all Catholics sat through Masses in a language they didn’t understand. But the decision to have Mass in the [oral] language of the parishioners failed to help the deaf in the pews.

As seen, SC foresaw that “in some places and circumstances… an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy is needed” (SC 40). Inasmuch as English (an oral language) is not the native

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language of Deaf culture in the United States, might praying the liturgy in ASL be one such
“more radical adaptation?”

**Sign Language as a Liturgical Adaptation**

Less than two years after the publication of *SC*, Detroit Archbishop John F. Dearden of the United States Bishops’ Commission on the Liturgical Apostolate requested of the Holy See broader permission to use sign language in liturgy. The Consilium presented the request to Pope Paul VI, who responded favorably, and the Consilium sent this official reply:

On July 8 this year [1965], the question of Mass for congregations of Deaf persons was submitted to the Consilium by the American Bishops’ Commission on the Liturgical Apostolate.

In November, suggestions concerning the question were approved by the Bishops of the Consilium and the matter was put before the Holy Father [Paul VI] on December 2. The question revolved around the use of sign language. It was asked whether it were fitting: 1. that the readings should be communicated to these people by means of signs; 2. that the deaf people should reply, in those parts pertaining to the congregation, by means of signs.

It was asked in general whether sign language could be used in all those parts of the Mass that were in the vernacular, and more specifically: (a) whether texts proffered by the celebrant could be at the same time spoken *and* signified with his hands; (b) if in those texts that were said together by the celebrant and the people, the people could follow the sign language of the celebrant, they themselves also using sign language.

With great willingness and kindness the Holy Father has given full approval to these suggestions, and said moreover that sign language could be used with and by deaf people through the Liturgy, whenever it was judged to be pastorally desirable.²⁹

This reply ushered in a new era for Deaf Catholics, but with a new era come new challenges.

Notice that it does not envision proclaiming the texts exclusively in sign language but merely permits a priest’s signing the text while he *simultaneously* speaks the words. As a hearing priest

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attempts to do both simultaneously, this occasions precisely the problem this project addresses.
Further, the text does not indicate how he should integrate sign language with existing rubrical
gestures.

Having received this response, the International Catholic Deaf Association (ICDA) prepared its own “adaptations” for using sign language in Mass. The United States Bishops Conference Commission on the Liturgical Apostolate printed these in its Newsletter immediately after printing the Consilium’s letter of approval. The ICDA leaders collaborated with the Bishops Conference and published their recommendations:

The International Catholic Deaf Association (118 Prospect Park West, Brooklyn, New
York 11215) collaborated in the preparation of the following adaptations made necessary in the celebration of Mass when the manual signs are used for and by a congregation of deaf persons:
1. The signs are used only for those parts of Mass for which the vernacular is permitted.
2. The entrance hymn is led by the leader (a deaf person). If, however, there is no entrance hymn and the prayers at the foot of the altar are said in English, the priest should face the people and should omit the customary bow during the Confiteor. If feasible, he should stand behind the altar facing the people in this case.
3. If possible the lector who reads the Epistle in signs should use his voice also. If his handicap renders this impossible, some other person should read the Epistle in voice while the deaf lector translates it into signs.
4. Because of the difficulty in rendering into signs the language of the Nicene Creed and of giving exact meaning to many of its concepts, the leader signs the Apostles Creed with the congregation while the priest recites the Nicene Creed aloud.
5. Before signing the introduction to the Lord’s Prayer and signing the Lord’s Prayer with the people, the priest purifies his fingers on the corporal.
6. The priest recites the conclusion (“Through Jesus Christ…”) of the embolism of the Lord’s Prayer without signs. Then he makes the crosses over the chalice and places the particle in the chalice, saying nothing. He immediately purifies his fingers on the corporal and signs: “May the peace of the Lord be always with you.”

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30 ICDA is an association which includes members from dozens of countries, though it does not have canonical standing. The United States branch, ICDA-US, “is an organization of Catholic deaf people and hearing people in the church working with the deaf in the United States of America.” It was founded in 1949 and includes over 100 US chapters. See http://www.icda-us.org/ (Accessed 15 January 2015).

7. The priest leaves the ciborium on the corporal while he signs: “Behold the Lamb of God …” before the Communion of the faithful. Then he holds the Host above the ciborium as usual while the leader leads the deaf in signing the three invocations: “Lord, I am not worthy …”

8. It is strongly recommended that when the celebrant and the people sign together, these parts should be sung in a simple and rhythmic melody to enhance the movement and grace of the signs.

Though the ICDA does not have authority to promulgate liturgical legislation, these recommendations were translated into Latin and published in Volume III of *Leges Ecclesiae*, a useful private work, but unofficial in character and not enjoying the force of law. These adaptations were composed before the Mass was revised after Vatican II and reflect the liturgy as celebrated in 1966. Several details are noteworthy. First, the ICDA recommended sign language only for those parts of the Mass done in the vernacular. This did not include the Eucharistic Prayer, which was still being prayed in Latin; English translations would not be approved for two more years. Second, inasmuch as signing the Nicene Creed was foreseen to be difficult, it allowed the priest to speak the Nicene Creed aloud while a signing lector led the Deaf congregants in signing the Apostles’ Creed. Third (and germane to this doctoral project) the rubrics of the *Missal* then in use required the priest to keep his thumb and index finger together after handling the consecrated host, wiping them on the corporal before transitioning to a different manual gesture. This explains why the ICDA adaptations directed a signing priest to wipe his fingers on the corporal before using his hands to sign the Lord’s Prayer. Similarly, the priest offered the Peace of the Lord to the assembly after placing the fractured piece of the host

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in the chalice, so the adaptations again direct the priest to wipe his fingers on the corporal before the offering the Peace.

These unofficial adaptations were a primitive first attempt to adapt the liturgy for the Deaf after Vatican II. Inasmuch as the Eucharistic Prayer and rubrics for the Mass would change in the Missal of Paul VI, these guidelines would soon be outdated. Yet they give more guidelines about the use of rubrical gestures and sign language in the Eucharistic Prayer than any subsequent statement coming from any Roman dicastery, even those specifically tasked with pastoral care of Deaf Catholics.33 No rubrics or instructions in the Missal of Paul VI address this issue, and there exist no approved translations of any Eucharistic Prayer into any sign language (ASL, BSL, etc.).34

This is not to say that before Vatican II Catholics never used sign language in Mass. Pioneers in Deaf ministry advocated for treating the Deaf with dignity and were instrumental in the early study of sign language and employed signing in catechetical sessions. It is known that the French Abbé de l’Épée used sign language in Mass with the Deaf already in the eighteenth

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34 The Eucharistic Prayer for the Deaf in England and Wales was approved in 1992 but is not a sign language translation; it is a simplified English-language translation to facilitate easier signing. This and similar texts will be examined in the next chapter.
To use sign language for the Eucharistic Prayer in Masses for the Deaf appears to have been virtually unknown before Vatican II.  

Gestures as Well as Language Reflect Cultural Change

In addition to changed language, the gestures accompanying the Eucharistic Prayer have changed throughout history. As cultures change, the meanings of gestures do too, and new cultures beget new gestures. According to Gerard Lukken,

gestures and actions are on the one hand expressions of oneself, and on the other symbols of the mysterious world of the divine. They stem from Christian tradition, but must be taken up into our culture, there receiving a new, authentic shape. Old actions from Christian liturgy must be reconceived on the basis of contemporary anthropology, and thus embedded in our culture.

Inasmuch as liturgy among the Deaf occurs in a cultural context very different from those under which gestures attained their present form, might not pastoral solicitude suggest adapting those gestures for the benefit of the faithful? This project will suggest some solutions.

When proposing these solutions it must be kept in mind that “no … person, even if he be a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority” (SC 22). Yet when Pope Paul VI permitted sign language in the liturgy he did not provide guidelines for how to proceed. As soon as a signing priest attempts to integrate elements of Deaf culture and liturgy

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36 A priest ministering with the Deaf in Weston, MA early in the 20th Century advocated establishing diocesan centers wherein the Deaf would congregate for catechesis employing sign language, but when it came to celebrating the Mass he was more conservative: “The deaf, of course, attend their own parish church for Mass and other ordinary religious duties.” Paul A. Neuland, SJ, “The Parish Clergy and Our Catholic Deaf-Mutes,” *The American Ecclesiastical Review* 90 (1934): 382 – 393; at 388.

it raises questions: Which gestures may be adapted, and are there any which may not? Who may adapt them, under what conditions, according to what principles? To answer such questions, the concept of inculturation, the nature of liturgical prayer, the role of gestures in liturgy, the background of Eucharistic Prayer II, and gestures’ role in that prayer must be examined.

**Liturgical Inculturation**

Pope John Paul II in his 1979 Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* explained why, instead of using SC’s terminology of “liturgical adaptation,” he preferred another: “The term … ‘inculturation’ may be a neologism, but it expresses very well one factor: the great mystery of the Incarnation.”38 John Paul incorporated the new word into several subsequent public messages, and liturgical theologians soon followed suit.39 The Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments also adopted the term in its Instruction *Varietates Legitimae*, 40 which was promulgated to direct the right application of the principles in SC 37 – 40:

> [I]f, in certain cultures, pastoral need requires that form of adaptation of the Liturgy which the Constitution calls “more profound” and at the same time considers “more difficult,” [this Congregation wishes to assist bishops and episcopal conferences] to make arrangements for putting it into effect in accordance with the law (VL 3).

The Congregation defended its own shifting terminology by citing Pope John Paul II:

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The expression “adaptation,” taken from missionary terminology, could lead one to think of modifications of a somewhat transitory and external nature. The term “inculturation” is a better expression to designate a double movement: “by inculturation, the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures, and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community” [see John Paul II, Redem. Miss. n. 52] (VL 4).

Anscar Chupungo, O.S.B., has studied the issue of inculturation extensively. “One may define liturgical inculturation as the process whereby pertinent elements of a local culture are integrated into the texts, rites, symbols, and institutions employed by a local church for its worship.” Like Pope John Paul, Chupungo believes the Incarnation provides the theological justification for liturgical inculturation, but “the theology of inculturation is not premised on the incarnation as such, that is, as the initial event of the New Testament history of salvation. Rather, it is based on the incarnation as a mystery that continues to be realized in the life and mission of the Church.”

In the name of inculturation, some liturgical experimentation has resulted in liturgical changes that have been targeted as liturgical “abuses.” Among the “shadows” that Pope John Paul mentioned as having clouded the liturgy were “initiatives which, albeit well-intentioned, indulge in Eucharistic practices contrary to the discipline by which the Church expresses her faith.” Liturgical traditionalists argue that many current reforms have gone too far, and what is


42 Ibid., 343.

43 The Latin word abusus (abuse) and its cognates appear 34 times in the 2004 Instruction Redemptionis Sacramentum.

needed is a “reform of the reform.” Whatever the issues in that debate, this project is not concerned with liturgical reform in general but rather focuses on Mass with the Deaf, a special population for whom the pre-Vatican II liturgy allowed very few concessions.

The process of liturgical inculturation has always occurred and may be taken for granted today, but “at certain periods [of history] a desire for liturgical uniformity obscured that fact” (VL 17). Inculturation is necessary if the Church is to obey Christ’s mandate to preach the Gospel to all nations, making disciples of all, and not only allows the Deaf to participate more fully in the Church’s liturgy but also benefits hearing members of the Church in helping them become more aware of, inclusive of, and responsive to the giftedness and needs of the Deaf.

*Varietates Legitimae* offers the following principles which are to be respected in the work of more profound inculturation:

1. The liturgy is at once the action of Christ the priest and the action of his body the church for the purpose of glorifying God and sanctifying humankind (n. 21);
2. The liturgy is universal in nature … thus, the Church is called to gather all peoples, to speak all languages, to penetrate all cultures (n. 22);
3. The Church is nourished on the Word of God written in the Old and New Testament … That is why sacred scriptures must not be replaced by any other text, no matter how venerable it may be (n. 23);
4. Since the Church is the fruit of Christ’s sacrifice, the liturgy is always the celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ (n. 24);
5. The liturgical life of the community gravitates around the Eucharist and the other sacraments (n. 25);
6. The liturgical assembly signifies and makes present the Church of Christ in a given place and in a given time (n. 26); and
7. In the liturgy the Church expresses its life of faith in a symbolic and communitarian form. Hence the need for laws which respect the ordering of its universal worship, the


composition of texts, and the work of completing the rites. The reason for this type of juridical legislation is that throughout the centuries and even today the orthodoxy of worship is to be assured, not only to avoid errors, but also to pass on the faith in its integrity so that the rule of praying may correspond to the rule of believing (n. 27; emphasis original).

These principles are important to the study of an integration of sign language and the rubrics of the Eucharistic Prayer. To be clear, this project is not an attempt to produce Deaf liturgy; this would require more profound inculturation. A truly Deaf liturgy would differ not only in gestures but also translations, new prayer texts, architecture, and numerous other elements.\(^47\) Nor is this an attempt to produce an ASL translation of the liturgy; this is being examined elsewhere and must cope with additional challenges, not least of which is that sign languages lack liturgical vocabulary.\(^48\) This project limits itself to examining the role of gestures in liturgical prayer in general and in the Eucharistic Prayer in particular.


\(^48\) In 2003 the National Catholic Office for the Deaf assembled an RST (Religious Signing Team) of Deaf and hearing Catholics—experts in ASL linguistics, Latin, liturgy, and Church law—to translate the assembly’s prayers in the Mass from Latin into ASL. This author was part of this decade-long project, and the results are now available as a DVD from Our Sunday Visitor: https://www.osvparish.com/Shop/Product?ProductCode=X1564 (Accessed 15 January 2015). On the difficulty of sign language translation of liturgical texts, see Peter McDonough, “Ministry amongst Deaf People,” The Gospel Preached by the Deaf: Proceedings of a Conference on Deaf Liberation Theology held at the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium) May 19\(^{th}\), 2003. Marcel Broesterhuizen, ed. (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 53 – 68. “There is a scarcity of comprehensive liturgical signs. We are constantly developing new liturgical signs but hearing chaplains and pastoral workers have an awareness that sign language belongs to the Deaf community and have generally steered clear of inventing new liturgical signs for them. Whilst there are many Deaf people who really know their language linguistically, there are not enough of them who have a good understanding of theology, liturgy and Scriptures.” Here at 59.
Liturgical Prayer is Embodied

“Liturgy” means “the people’s work,” which can be understood two ways: work done for the people as recipients (a downward movement) and work done by the people as active agents (an upward movement). Christian liturgy is embodied not only because physical creatures pray that way, but more fundamentally because (as Pope John Paul and Anscar Chupungo argued) the Christian faith depends on the incarnation. As work done by God for the people liturgy is embodied because Jesus himself took flesh in time and space. As work done by the people it cannot but be embodied because humans are not pure spirits.

As a being at once body and spirit, man expresses and perceives spiritual realities through physical signs and symbols. As a social being, man needs signs and symbols to communicate with others, through language, gestures, and actions. The same holds true for his relationship with God (CCC 1146).

Liturgy adopts the gestures of a culture, which makes its human character evident. The Instruction on Inculturation states, “During the course of the centuries, the Roman Rite has known how to integrate texts, chants, gestures, and rites from various sources and to adapt itself to local cultures in mission territories” (VL 17). To understand Christian liturgical gestures one must study cultural antecedents. The field of ritual studies has significantly helped in understanding the origins of ritual in the Church.49 Louis Bouyer observes:

The Christian mystery will find in its turn a ritual expression. It will take up again and recast the ancient material of the natural rites that Judaism had already purified and transfigured. It will do this by bringing to fulfillment their “historcization.” It means that

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49 For an introduction to ritual studies, see Paul Bradshaw and John Melloh, eds., Foundations in Ritual Studies: A Reader for Students of Christian Worship (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007); also the foundational work of Catherine Bell, e.g., Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997).
their primitive, cosmic meaning will have been absorbed into the final meaning of sacred history.\(^{50}\)

Human life outside of liturgy—the broader context—affects liturgy’s meaning as well. The dynamic between liturgy and life is reciprocal: the context itself becomes a “text,” a bearer of meaning which affects how liturgy is understood. Reciprocally, text shapes context: liturgy changes other elements within the Church life (and society at large).\(^ {51}\) Church documents—liturgical euchology, papal statements, conciliar pronouncements—in themselves give an incomplete picture of the meaning of ritual gestures. One must attend to other factors in the study of liturgical performance. “By its very nature,” writes Margaret Kelleher, “liturgy is performative. We have many liturgical books, ancient and new, that are rich resources for liturgical studies; but liturgical texts do not become liturgy until they are performed by concrete local assemblies.”\(^ {52}\) To fully understand liturgy’s gestures one must attend to many accompanying factors. Elsewhere Kelleher advises:

Pay close attention to the diverse elements in the ritual performance, to the complexity of the ritual field, to the ambiguity of participant observation, to the social and religious history of the assembly, to the tradition within which it stands, to your fieldnotes, to additional sources of data, to other interpretations, to those who disagree with you, and to yourself operating throughout the interpretive process … one achieves objectivity to the degree that one is attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible.\(^ {53}\)

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\(^{51}\) An important work in this regard is Kevin Irwin, *Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville: Pueblo Press, 1994).


Studying liturgy’s embodied nature is nothing new. “Every part of the body is an expressive instrument of the soul,” Romano Guardini wrote already back in 1927. How human bodies behave in liturgy is receiving recent attention, studying not just what the gestures are but how they are performed—and how they are perceived. “The human body,” observes Kavanagh, “communicates much without words. The physical deportment of liturgical ministers is therefore of great importance: it should be relaxed and natural without suggesting informality, gracefully formal without being stiff or rigid. The problem with many liturgical ministers is not that their bodies say too little but that they say too much and say it badly.”

Appreciation of the body in worship, however, must go beyond matters of style. Nathan Mitchell calls for a renewed “poetics of gesture,” a way of situating gestures within a consideration of how humans come to know reality.

Our human cognition is a complex, richly layered reality. We “know” not only with our intellects, but also with our imaginations, our bodies, our hearts and souls, our feelings and emotions, our dreams and fantasies. A poetics deals with the myriad ways our artful, embodied imaginations “know.” Similarly, a poetics of gesture deals with the limitlessly

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imaginative ways our bodily movements, positions, and postures (e.g., the lifting of a hand to take, break, give) read reality, read the world.  

How a minister stands, speaks and sings, holds his hands, moves, and dresses affects how the faithful perceive and participate in the celebration. “Bodily gestures are thus not merely educative or instrumental;” write Leonard and Mitchell. “They are ‘doors to the transcendent’ that actually open us to the presence and impact of Mystery. Bodily gestures do not merely describe an attitude; they enact the relationship described in that attitude.” Liturgical poetics is an emerging field of study, and how the liturgy has enacted and interpreted posture is informative but cannot be further detailed here.

Gestures in the Eucharist after Vatican II

Ever since the work of Dom Gregory Dix (1901 – 1952) liturgists have paid attention to four verbs that frequently accompany the gospel accounts of Jesus at meals: he took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples. Liturgies that have been reformed within the past 50 years—Catholic and otherwise—have incorporated these four actions into their

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60 See e.g. McCall, *Do This: Liturgy as Performance* (op cit.), which evaluates the eighth-century Ordo Romanus Primus using contemporary performance theory.


62 John 6:11; Mk 6:41; Matt 26:26; Luke 24:30; et al. Some postulate that the language used in narrating e.g. the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves was intentionally similar to that used to describe what Jesus did on the night he was betrayed, reinforcing these four action verbs. For a measured response to this postulation see Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: An Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 331 – 332.

celebrations. Current Roman Catholic Eucharistic Prayers, products at once of both historical ressourcement and innovation, give attention to these actions, though some critics argue that these texts need further reform. “Of all the liturgical reforms that have taken place in the last twenty years, the integral celebration of the Eucharistic Prayer is still one of the most underdeveloped. It is a ritual that calls for serious attention, not only to the text of the prayer, but also to the musical setting of the text and the accompanying visual and motor rhythms of both the presider and the assembly.”

Dissatisfaction with post-conciliar Eucharistic Prayers led some Catholics in the Diocese of Birmingham to assert that the Roman liturgy should use only the Roman Canon; the Holy See replied that it did not agree. Since the Church has approved Eucharistic Prayer II, it has to be regarded as normative.

The focus of this project is not on the actual words of the Prayer (much less the translations of the editio typica) but on its rubrical gestures. Such gestures contribute to how the faithful appreciate the Prayer. “It is easily seen that the meaning of the Eucharist cannot be identified simply with the meaning of the text of the prayer. In fact, the meaning of the text

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65 The Congregation for Divine Worship issued a “Response to Two Questions Posed about Orthodoxy in the Celebration of the Eucharist.” To the assertion that “the other Eucharistic prayers are heterodox or at least of dubious theological, liturgical and ecclesial value” the Congregation replied, “It must be said firmly that such a view is in direct conflict with the position of the Holy See… The [other] three Eucharistic prayers in question are each to be considered lawful, and the liturgical law of the church establishes no gradation with respect to their orthodoxy. There is therefore no question of the first Eucharistic prayer or Roman Canon being ‘more orthodox’ than the others, and such an idea is without any foundation.” Origins 29, 37 (March 3, 2000), 598.

stands in some tension with the meanings generated by these other signifying acts” such as the rubrics surrounding the institution narratives.67

**Constitutive Parts of a Eucharistic Prayer**

Around the year 155 AD St. Justin Martyr, in one of the oldest extant accounts of the Eucharistic liturgy, indicated that the presider takes the gifts of bread and wine “and offers praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and for a considerable time he gives thanks that we have been judged worthy of these gifts. When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all present give voice to an acclamation by saying: ‘Amen.’”68 Other early sources confirm that during the first few centuries of the Church the prayer was not bound to exact words, yet nevertheless assumed a structure of regular elements in a particular order.69 An in-depth review of the history, theology, and enactment of the Eucharistic Prayer is beyond the scope of this project.70 For the purpose of this project, it is sufficient to observe that all the prayers currently in use in the Roman Catholic Church contain

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substantially the same elements, though not always in the same order in each prayer. These elements are summarized in *GIRM* 79: ⁷¹

The main elements of which the Eucharistic Prayer consists may be distinguished from one another in this way:

a) The *thanksgiving* (expressed especially in the Preface), in which the Priest, in the name of the whole of the holy people, glorifies God the Father and gives thanks to him for the whole work of salvation or for some particular aspect of it, according to the varying day, festivity, or time of year.

b) The *acclamation*, by which the whole congregation, joining with the heavenly powers, sings the *Sanctus* (*Holy, Holy, Holy*). This acclamation, which constitutes part of the Eucharistic Prayer itself, is pronounced by all the people with the Priest.

c) The *epiclesis*, in which, by means of particular invocations, the Church implores the power of the Holy Spirit that the gifts offered by human hands be consecrated, that is, become Christ’s Body and Blood, and that the unblemished sacrificial Victim to be consumed in Communion may be for the salvation of those who will partake of it.

d) The *institution narrative and Consecration*, by which, by means of the words and actions of Christ, that Sacrifice is effected which Christ himself instituted during the Last Supper, when he offered his Body and Blood under the species of bread and wine, gave them to the Apostles to eat and drink, and leaving with the latter the command to perpetuate this same mystery.

e) The *anamnesis*, by which the Church, fulfilling the command that she received from Christ the Lord through the Apostles, celebrates the memorial of Christ, recalling especially his blessed Passion, glorious Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven.

f) The *oblation*, by which, in this very memorial, the Church, in particular that gathered here and now, offers the unblemished sacrificial Victim in the Holy Spirit to the Father. The Church’s intention, indeed, is that the faithful not only offer this unblemished sacrificial Victim but also learn to offer their very selves, and so day by day to be brought, through the mediation of Christ, into unity with God and with each other, so that God may at last be all in all.

g) The *intercessions*, by which expression is given to the fact that the Eucharist is celebrated in communion with the whole Church, of both heaven and of earth, and that the oblation is made for her and for all her members, living and dead, who are called to participate in the redemption and salvation purchased by the Body and Blood of Christ.

h) The *concluding doxology*, by which the glorification of God is expressed and which is affirmed and concluded by the people’s acclamation *Amen*.

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Standing, the Original Posture of the Eucharistic Prayer

In a nuanced way, *Lumen Gentium* 10 indicated that it is not just the Eucharist as a general concept but actually “taking part in [*participantes*] the Eucharistic sacrifice [which] is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life.” As seen, this participation entails bodily engagement. Inasmuch as the Eucharistic Prayer is central in the entire Eucharistic celebration, capacity to participate in that prayer assumes singular importance. Thus it is only natural that this prayer be expressed not only in words but gestures as well—and this goes for the assembly as well as the presider. But liturgists have not studied these gestures very much. In 1987 Kevin Seasoltz wrote:

> In the last twenty years little attention has been given to the postures and gestures of either the liturgical presider or the celebrating community, especially with the goal of discerning whether these postures reinforce the text proclaimed or whether they contradict the basic claim that the Eucharistic prayer is in fact the liturgical action of the whole assembly rather than the prayer of the presider simply exercising a mediatorial role on behalf of the larger assembly.

Ten years later, John Baldovin indicated the situation had not changed significantly: “While much has been written on the history of the texts of the Eucharistic Prayer, scholars have tended to pay little attention to this enactment. From a liturgical point of view this lacuna is unsatisfactory since liturgy, as embodied worship, is a physical activity in the context of which

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words are spoken.”  

Today the literature is still scant and liturgical postures and gestures are still poorly documented.

Should the gestures in the Eucharistic Prayer be regarded differently from those of other liturgical prayers? Perhaps, if that prayer is different in kind from other liturgical prayers. But early Church texts indicate no significant difference regarding posture for Eucharistic Prayers compared to other prayers. In fact, the earliest sources for the Eucharistic Prayer mention only one posture: standing.

In its origin, the great Eucharistic prayer was not distinguished from other presidential prayers by any special signs of veneration or by any special gestures … When the Roman Canon became more or less fixed in the sixth century, the ancient posture for prayer was still assumed by the entire assembly—the circumadstantes who are mentioned in the text of the prayer.

Originally, the entire assembly stood during the Eucharistic Prayer, and some liturgists favor restoring that posture for the assembly today. In any event, many Deaf congregations like to stand because kneeling causes their hands to bump into the seats in front of them when signing the memorial acclamation and great Amen.

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74 Baldovin, “Accepit Panem,” 123.

75 For an exception, see J. C. Schmitt’s study of gestures in the medieval West: *La Raison des Gestes dans l’Occident Médiéval* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990). Schmitt notes a methodological problem: one cannot, strictly speaking, study firsthand gestures of the past, but only *accounts* of those gestures: “D’entrée de jeu, il souligne un problème crucial: l’historien, à l’inverse de l’ethnologue ou du sociologue, n’atteint pas directement les gestes du passé, mais toujours, dans des écrits ou des images, des *représentations* des gestes qui en sont aussi des *interprétations* données par la culture du temps.”

76 Leonard and Mitchell, *Postures*, 64.

 Obviously, *circumadstantes* (or, in the current Roman Canon, * omnium circumstantium*, “all standing around”<sup>78</sup>) includes the priest leading the prayer. His standing poses no problem for this project; in fact, Deaf congregations prefer priests to stand to make his signing more visible. But the rubrics call for additional priestly gestures; these will be addressed below.

**Origins of Eucharistic Prayer II**

As Mazza demonstrates, except for a few differences Eucharistic Prayer II of the Roman Missal of Pope Paul VI “is identical with the anaphora in the *Apostolic Tradition* that was composed around 215 – 220 and is attributed to Hippolytus.”<sup>79</sup> Matthieu Smyth has recently argued that its origin is West Syrian, not Roman. If this is true, it may explain why the Roman liturgy shows virtually no usage of this prayer after the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>80</sup> The *Apostolic Tradition* displays most elements of a typical anaphora, though the present Eucharistic Prayer II differs from the *Apostolic Tradition* by inserting a *Sanctus*, substituting the institution narrative from the Roman Canon, and adding intercessions before the doxology.

In the early third century, the anaphora was still not fixed. Though the *Apostolic Tradition* does not explicitly say that this Eucharistic Prayer is intended to be flexible, other early

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<sup>78</sup> Unexpectedly translated “all gathered here” in the English third edition of the *Roman Missal*.


Church texts do say as much.\textsuperscript{81} Bouley argued that “for Hippolytus the model prayers he provides, including the Eucharistic prayer, are not to be repeated slavishly, but the celebrant should pray according to his own ability,”\textsuperscript{82} and Baldovin agrees: “Clearly the document makes no pretense whatsoever that this is the Eucharistic prayer of the Church. It is an example of a prayer given in a specific situation (the ordination of a bishop); later in the document (no. 9) it is clear that the prayers proposed are models and that the bishop gives thanks according to his ability.”\textsuperscript{83}

It should not be surprising to find a diversity of patterns of anaphoras in the evidence of early Christianity, originally formed more often by the combination of small pre-existent units as the situation required than by the creation of unitary compositions. While some of these may well have their roots in Jewish meal-prayers, others are likely to have arisen out of quite different contexts, both Jewish and Christian.\textsuperscript{84}

Inasmuch as prior to Vatican II only the Roman Canon was used in the Roman Catholic Church, the incremental development of its words and gestures in the West has been well documented. By contrast, the anaphora of the Apostolic Tradition did not develop the rich assemblage of gestures that the Roman Canon gradually assumed. The present gestures in Eucharistic Prayer II appear in the text in places parallel to those of the Roman Canon: when the Roman Canon prescribes a certain gesture during a particular section of its Canon, the drafters of Eucharistic Prayer II also inserted the same gesture in the analogous section of that Prayer.


\textsuperscript{82} Bouley, Freedom to Formula, 151.

\textsuperscript{83} Baldovin, “Hippolytus:” 538, emphasis original.

\textsuperscript{84} Bradshaw, Search for Origins, 132.
Postulating that its gestures were inserted anachronistically does not imply its gestures should be regarded inimportant, but it does relativize them.  

Eucharistic Prayer II is chosen for this project because of its brevity and simplicity, and because in practice it is the easiest to sign (e.g., it avoids proper names such as Melchisedech). At its introduction following the Second Vatican Council the commission Consilium summarized, “Anaphora II is intentionally short, made up of simple ideas. The anaphora of Hippolytus (from the beginning of the 3rd century) is the inspiration of its style and much of its phrasing.” It also forms the basis of two Eucharistic Prayers approved by the Holy See for use with the Deaf, one for the episcopal conference in England, the other in Germany. These texts will be reviewed later.

**Gestures of Eucharistic Prayer II**

Since Eucharistic Prayers begin with the Preface Dialogue (*GIRM* 78), this examination of gestures will begin after the priest celebrant has concluded the Prayer over the Gifts and the assembly responded with *Amen*. Here are the rubrics of Eucharistic Prayer II as they appear in the *Missale Romanum* (*editio typica tertia*) side-by-side with the current English translation.

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85 Smyth deplores the “abrupt introduction in a hierarchical manner of a Eucharistic Prayer foreign to the Latin tradition in the midst of Western euchology” and concludes, “The *Prex Eucharistica II* is in reality an original composition, painted in bright colors, the creative fruit of experts of the *Consilium* who took the anaphora of the *Diataxeis* as their point of departure. Its features, stamped by their West Syrian structure and by their archaisms, are henceforth almost unrecognizable, but faithfully reflect the concerns of a small group of liturgists in the middle of the twentieth century.” Smyth, “The Anaphora,” 97.


88 ICEL English translation of *The Roman Missal* (third typical edition).
The numbers are as they appear in the *Order of Mass* (or the *GIRM*) and serves to delineate distinct ritual units and/or sections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ordo Missae Missale Romanum</th>
<th>The Order of Mass of the Roman Missal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Populus respondet: R/. Et cum spiritu tuo.</td>
<td>The people reply: And with your spirit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacerdos, manus elevans, prosequitur: V/. Sursum corda.</td>
<td>The Priest, raising his hands, continues: Lift up your hearts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populus: R/. Habemus ad Dominum.</td>
<td>The people: We lift them up to the Lord.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacerdos, manibus extensis, subdit: V/. Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro.</td>
<td>The Priest, with hands extended, adds: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populus: R/. Dignum et iustum est.</td>
<td>The people: It is right and just.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacerdos prosequitur praefationem, manibus extensis. Vere dignum […] In fine autem praefationis iungit manus et, una cum populo, ipsam praefationem concludit, cantans vel clara voce dicens: Sanctus, Sanctus […]</td>
<td>The Priest, with hands extended, continues the Preface. It is truly right […] At the end of the Preface he joins his hands and concludes the Preface with the people, singing or saying aloud: Holy, Holy, Holy […]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100. Sacerdos, manibus extensis, dicit: Vere Sanctus es, Domine, fons omnis sanctitatis.</td>
<td>100. The Priest, with hands extended, says: You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101. Iungit manus, easque expansa super oblata tenens, dicit: Haec ergo dona, quaesumus, Spiritus tui rore sanctifica,</td>
<td>101. He joins his hands and, holding them extended over the offerings, says: Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iungit manus et signat semel super panem et calicem simul, dicens: ut nobis Corpus et <em>Sanguis</em> fiant Domini nostri Iesu Christi.</td>
<td>He joins his hands and makes the Sign of the Cross once over the bread and the chalice together, saying: so that they may become for us the Body and <em>Blood</em> of our Lord, Jesus Christ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iungit manus.</td>
<td>He joins his hands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102. In formulis quae sequuntur, verba Domini proferantur distincte et aperte, proulti natura eorumdem verborum requirit. Qui cum Passioni voluntarie tradetur,</td>
<td>102. In the formulas that follow, the words of the Lord should be pronounced clearly and distinctly, as the nature of these words requires. At the time he was betrayed and entered willingly into his Passion,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accipit panem, eumque parum elevatum super altare tenens, prosequitur: accepit panem et gratias agens fregit, deditque disci pulis suis, dicens:</td>
<td>He takes the bread and, holding it slightly raised above the altar, continues: he took bread and, giving thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ordo Missae Missale Romanum</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Order of Mass of the Roman Missal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parum se inclinat ACCIPITE ET MANDUCATE … TRADETUR.</td>
<td>He bows slightly. TAKE THIS … FOR YOU.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostiam consecratam ostendit populo, reponit super patenam, et genuflexus adorat.</td>
<td>He shows the consecrated host to the people, places it again on the paten, and genuflects in adoration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103. Postea prossequitur: Simili modo, postquam cenatum est,</td>
<td>103. After this, he continues: In a similar way, when supper was ended,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accipit calicem, eumque parum elevatum super altare tenens, prossequitur: accipiens et calicem, iterum tibi gratias agens dedit discipulis suis, dicens:</td>
<td>He takes the chalice and, holding it slightly raised above the altar, continues: he took the chalice and, once more giving thanks, he gave it to his disciples, saying:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parum se inclinat ACCIPITE ET BIBITE EX EO OMNES …</td>
<td>He bows slightly. TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU … MEMORY OF ME.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calicem ostendit populo, deponit super corporale, et genuflexus adorat.</td>
<td>He shows the chalice to the people, places it on the corporal, and genuflects in adoration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104. Deinde dicit. Mysterium fidei. Et populus prossequitur, acclamans: Mortem tuam …</td>
<td>104. Then he says: The mystery of faith. And the people continue, acclaiming: We proclaim your Death …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105. Deinde sacerdos, extensis manibus, dicit: Memores igitur …</td>
<td>Then the Priest, with hands extended, says: Therefore, as we celebrate …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… et te laudemus et glorificemus iungit manus per Filium tuum Iesum Christum.</td>
<td>… praise and glorify you He joins his hands through your Son, Jesus Christ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106. Accipit patenam cum hostia et calicem, et utrumque elevans, dicit: Per ipsum, […] saecula saeculorum. Populus acclamat: Amen. [IGMR180. Ad doxologiam finalem Precis Eucharisticae, [diaconus] stans ad latus sacerdotis, calicem elevatum tenet, dum sacerdos patenam cum hostia elevat, usquedum populus Amen acclamaverit.]</td>
<td>106. He takes the chalice and the paten with the host and, elevating both, he says: Through him […] for ever and ever. The people acclaim: Amen. [GIRM 180. At the concluding doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer, the Deacon stands next to the Priest, and holds the chalice elevated while the Priest elevates the paten with the host, until the people have acclaimed, Amen.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124. Calice et patena depositis, sacerdos, iunctis manibus, dicit: Praeceptis salutaribus moniti …</td>
<td>124. After the chalice and paten have been set down, the Priest, with hands joined, says: At the Savior’s command …</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In sum, Eucharistic Prayer II directs the priest to enact these gestures while praying words aloud:§

1. Extending his hands when saying “The Lord be with you”
2. Raising his hands when saying, “Lift up your hearts”
3. Assuming the extended orans posture when saying “Let us give thanks” and resumed multiple times throughout the prayer
4. Joining his hands (multiple times)
5. Extending his hands over the offerings at the (first) epiclesis
6. Making the sign of the cross over the offerings
7. Taking the bread/wine and holding them slightly above the altar
8. Bowing slightly during the words of institution
9. Showing the consecrated bread/wine to the people
10. Returning the consecrated bread/wine to the corporal on the altar
11. Genuflecting after the words over the bread/wine
12. Elevating the chalice and paten at the doxology.

The Ordo Missae n. 23 directs the priest to stand at the altar from the beginning of the preparation of the gifts, and to remain standing there (except when he genuflects) until distributing communion. As already discussed, his standing versus populum is the signing posture practically required in order for the signing to be visible to the Deaf. Similarly, the priest’s bowing slightly will not significantly impede visibility for the Deaf and thus does not create a problem for this project. Since no text is being proclaimed (signed) when the priest is genuflecting, neither does that gesture pose difficulties for a signing priest.

Most of the rubrics governing the Prayer’s posture and movement are directed to the priest’s hands. Evidently, the Roman liturgy regards hands as important. “The hand in its vitality expresses a person’s heat and energy, his or her state of soul and expectations. The hand is never

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§ Eucharistic Prayer I (the Roman Canon) prescribes three additional gestures that could be problematic for a signing priest. He: raises his eyes to heaven (as will be seen, where the signer directs his gaze has grammatical value in ASL), makes a profound bow when asking the angel to take the sacrifice to the altar in heaven (the more profound, the less visible his signing), and strikes his breast when praying, “Though we are sinners …” Since these do not occur in Eucharistic Prayer II, they will not be examined in this project.
only a little expressive. It expresses the heart of the human being as it says to another, ‘You are not alone; I am here with you.’”\textsuperscript{90} The importance of hands becomes accentuated among a population such as the Deaf for whom communication is \textit{principally} through hands, though (as will be examined in the next chapter) sign languages use much more than hand shape to communicate meaning. Even among hearing people hands can be understood in a certain sense as symbols through which persons encounter one another. Romano Guardini observed: “The soul’s chief instruments and clearest mirrors are the face and hands. … you will notice how instantly every slightest feeling—pleasure, surprise, suspense—shows in the hand.”\textsuperscript{91}

\textbf{A Note on Typeface Usage for ASL}

In the discussion on the ten manual gestures that follows, it must be recalled that ASL is a manual/visual language, and as such does not always translate well into a written/oral/auditory language such as English. Throughout the remainder of this treatise, small caps, for example \textsc{Mercy}, will be used to indicate an approximate English translation of an ASL word or phrase. Some lexemes are signed in fluid succession and will be joined with hyphens, e.g., \textsc{be-with-you}.

\textit{1. Extending his hands when saying “The Lord be with you.”}

With the greeting \textit{Dominus vobiscum} during the preface dialogue (and elsewhere in the liturgy) the priest extends his hands. This gesture was meticulously described and, compared to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[90] Antonio Donghi, \textit{Words and Gestures in the Liturgy}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. McDonough and Serra, trans. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009), 49.
\item[91] Guardini, \textit{Sacred Signs}, 15.
\end{footnotes}
earlier usage, more restricted in the Missal of Pius V.\textsuperscript{92} In the revised liturgy following the Second Vatican Council “no such restrictions now apply.”\textsuperscript{93} The current \textit{GIRM} 124, when describing a parallel greeting at the beginning of the liturgy, indicates, “[F]acing the people and extending his hands \textit{manus extendens}, the Priest greets the people.”\textsuperscript{94} When this gesture is done \textit{versus populum} it seems natural that the hands move \textit{in the direction of the assembly} whom the priest is addressing. This supposition is historically corroborated by Jungmann, who favored restoring the gesture to its original “great vivacity and natural pleasure in bodily expression:”

The starting-point of this gesture was not originally the folded hands, which arise only from the Germanic sacral culture. The motion of both hands naturally expresses an intense gravitation towards the one or ones greeting, but the natural movement has been regulated by the rules of the schools of oratory, which dictated a certain artistry, and again by the rubrics of worship, which dictated a certain modesty and reserve.\textsuperscript{95}

During the preface dialogue, the priest is not instructed to face the people, but otherwise the rubric at \textit{GIRM} 148 is worded identically to the earlier greeting: “As he begins the Eucharistic Prayer, the Priest extends his hands \textit{manus extendens} and sings or says, \textit{The Lord be with you}.” Insofar as both the words of the two greetings and the rubrics for the hands are identical, it seems reasonable to posit that hand movement at the beginning of the preface

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{92}“The hands must not be raised too high nor extended too widely, nor must the palms be turned upwards or outwards, but held \textit{strictly parallel} to one another, with the fingers pointing slightly upwards in a natural and comfortable position. In extending the hands \textit{the elbows should be kept close to the sides}: this will make it impossible to hold the hands too far apart and to raise them too high.” J.B. O’Connell, \textit{The Celebration of the Mass: A Study of the Rubrics of the Roman Missal} (Milwaukee: Bruce Publ. Co., 1964), 188, emphasis original. O’Connell indicates that the rubric had actually been modified in “the new \textit{Ritus} (1962)”, which evidently considered the pre-1962 rubric “too rigid and mechanical, and greater latitude is allowed by the new rubric.” Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{94}The direction to face the people is superfluous unless the presider celebrates \textit{ad orientem}.
\item \textsuperscript{95}\textit{Missarum Sollemnia.} 1:364-365, fn. 26.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
dialogue would be identical, i.e. extended in the direction of the assembly. Fortuitously this gesture is already contained within the signed version of the text. ASL grammar expects the hands to move in the direction of the assembly as the priest signs BE-WITH-YOU, thus producing something very close to what the rubrics already indicate. Thus, it will not be a problem.

2. *Raising his hands when saying, “Lift up your hearts”*

The direction for the gesture in *GIRM* 148 is succinct: “As he continues, saying, *Lift up your hearts*, he raises his hands [*manus elevat*].” Jungmann noted that “the precise origin of the preliminary *Sursum corda* is not known,” but the dialogue indicated to him that this (and not the post-*Sanctus*) is the beginning of the prayer, and that it formerly involved the entire assembly, not just ministers around the altar. “This ancient sense is also suggested in the accompanying gestures: the summons to lift up the heart is accompanied by the priest’s lifting his hands, and they then remain outstretched in the attitude of the *orantes*, the prayer–attitude of the ancient Church.” This is the only place in the liturgy that directs the hands in this way, and the rubrics do not indicate how high the hands are raised, what shape they take, nor in what position they are

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96 Turner, *Let Us Pray*, adds: “Priests generally use a more natural gesture here: arms extended forward, palms up, raising their hands in a gesture of acclamation, welcome, and good will. A good presider will make eye contact with the assembly while saying this text” (47).

97 In ASL the relationship between the noun/subject—e.g., “The Lord…”—and the predicate—“[may he] be with you”—is described by the grammatical rules for classifier predicates. “A classifier in ASL is a handshape that is combined with location, orientation, movement, and nonmanual signals to form a predicate.” Among those predicates governing process/movement, “the hand moves, and the movement does mean that the object being described is moving or appears to move.” Clayton Valli et al., “Classifier Predicates,” in *Linguistics of American Sign Language: An Introduction* (Washington: Gallaudet University Press, 2005), 91, 92.

98 Jungmann, *Missarum Sollemnia* 2:111. St. Augustine, in *De Vera Religione*, 3,5 (PL 34,125) praised how “daily throughout the entire world with almost one voice the human race makes response: Lift up your hearts to the Lord.”

maintained while the assembly responds. However the hands are positioned, this gesture conceivably might pose a problem, but as is the case with BE-WITH-YOU, here also the hands rise during LIFT-UP in a manner that approximates the gesture the rubrics indicate.

3. Assuming the orans posture

The orans (or orantes) hand posture “is the oldest and most persistent Christian gesture at prayer. It is an attitude inherited from the Greeks and Romans who normally prayed standing with arms lifted up and the palms facing heaven.”

Standing with uplifted hands and with eyes fixed in the direction of the rising sun was the ordinary posture of prayer among most ancient peoples, just as reclining was the ordinary posture for festive meals. This posture of prayer was continued by all Christians, in common and in private, with this variant: they saw in the rising sun an image of the Risen Christ.

Prior to Vatican II, the rubrics specified that the hands remained before the breast, palms parallel to and facing one another, fingers fully extended but not spread out, and the hands not raised higher or wider than the shoulders. In fact, “prior to the Council,” observes Turner, “a priest used the same gesture for the prayer as he did for the greeting.” Commentator O’Connell

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100 Turner, *Let Us Pray*, 110-1, suggests, “There is no other gesture in the Mass quite like this. It needs to be higher than the gesture used for the greeting, yet different from the one used for prayer.”


102 John K. Leonard and Nathan D. Mitchell, *The Postures of the Assembly During the Eucharistic Prayer* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 64. This is not to imply that the early Church did not also pray at evening. Already in the beginning of the third century Tertullian mentions praying three times a day, including the evening hour that corresponds to the time Christ was laid in the tomb (*tempus dominicae sepulturae*); see *De ieiunio* 10: CCL 2, p. 1268.

103 See O’Connell, *The Celebration*, 187 – 188. It may be added that the pre-Vatican II Missal’s meticulous descriptions of hand gestures in some ways anticipated what ASL grammarians have come to appreciate in detail: even apparently straightforward gestures are in fact complex actions with numerous parameters such as handshape, hand orientation, movement, direction and speed, etc. This will be examined in the next chapter.

admitted that the Tridentine posture was by then only “somewhat in the ancient manner of the orantes,” which in the early Church was also more natural and expansive. The present *GIRM* 148 does not direct how a priest should position his hands for the *orans*. The rubrics for the preface dialogue say simply, “Next, the Priest, with hands extended *[manibus extensis]*, continues the Preface.” Turner opines, “Most priests now distinguish these two gestures [the greeting—*manus extendens*—and the prayer posture—*manibus extensis*], choosing for the prayer a gesture traditionally called the *orans*.” The preface dialogue words *manibus extensis* are identical to those used for the other times the priest assumes the *orans* posture: the opening collect (*GIRM* 127), concluding the Prayer of the Faithful (*GIRM* 138), the *super oblata* (*GIRM* 146), the post-*sanctus* and most of the Eucharistic Prayer, during the Lord’s Prayer and its embolism (*GIRM* 152 – 154), and the post-communion prayer (*GIRM* 165).

The post-Vatican II *Ceremonial of Bishops* (*CB*) describes the posture thus: “A bishop or presbyter addresses prayers to God while standing and with hands slightly raised and outstretched.” Exactly what “hands slightly raised and outstretched” looks like is not elaborated. Nor is it clear to what degree presbyters are obliged to observe this. The *CB* indicates that the “norms in this *ceremonial* have as their objective a liturgy of bishops that is simple, dignified, and as pastorally effective as possible, in order that the liturgy celebrated by a bishop may stand as a model for all other celebrations” (*CB* Preface, II). But the *CB* is not widely available to the majority of presbyters, who cannot be expected to observe norms of which they

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are unaware. This project will be limited to the rubrics in Roman Missal and the GIRM, neither of which indicates what *manibus extensis* looks like.\textsuperscript{108} Regardless of the hands’ exact posture, assuming the *orans* posture makes it impossible for the priest celebrant to sign the words.

4. Joining the hands

As the Preface concludes (as at other times within the Eucharistic Prayer) the priest joins his hands. There is little evidence what “joined hands” looked like in the earliest sources; this fact alone argues for regarding it less important than the *orans*.\textsuperscript{109} As with other gestures, the post-Tridentine liturgy’s directions for *manibus iunctis* was minutely prescripted,\textsuperscript{110} and again the liturgy as revised following Vatican II has simplified the rubrics. The current GIRM simply says the priest “joins his hands [*manibus iunctis*], and together with everyone present, sings or says aloud the *Sanctus*” (GIRM 148), and other rubrics give no more detail than this.\textsuperscript{111}

For the purposes of this project, what shape joined hands should assume is peripheral to what a signing priest should do when he encounters this rubric. His joining his hands *after* he has finished signing a text is not a problem. However, sometimes he is expected to have his hands joined *while praying* words, sometimes with the assembly (as during the *Sanctus*) and other

\textsuperscript{108} Turner, *Let Us Pray*, 58, opines, “The liturgical documents today do not specify what this gesture looks like, and perhaps this is good. It frees the priest to establish a posture he finds prayerful.”

\textsuperscript{109} Jungmann notes that the Roman usage favored hands praying in the *orans* position, and folded hands, “with its symbolism expressive of submissiveness, of the resignation of one’s own power to a higher one, is traced back to Teutonic culture. It is akin to the custom by which a vassal or liegeman vowed homage and fealty by placing his hand in that of his lord.” *Missarum Sollemnia*, 1:78, n. 17.

\textsuperscript{110} See O’Connell, *The Celebration*, 186: “The hands thus held are to be joined palm to palm, not merely fingers to fingers. The fingers are to be fully extended and *held together*, the right thumb over the left in the form of a cross;” emphasis original.

\textsuperscript{111} Curiously, a footnote in the current CB references the 1886 *Cæremoniale Episcoporum* I, XIX to supply specificity regarding what the posture of “hands joined” should look like: “Holding the palms sideward and together before the breast, with the right thumb crossed over the left.” CB, p. 43 n. 80. Again, it must not be assumed that presbyters are bound to follow the current CB.
times during certain phrases within Eucharistic Prayer II (e.g., “At the time he was betrayed …”).

5. Extending hands in an epiclesis

Scripture frequently mentions the laying on of hands (Gen 48:14; Ex 14:21; Eze 20:33; Mark 6:5; Luke 24:50; Acts 8:19; 1Tim 4:14), and this gesture is common in many religious and cultural contexts. Biblically, it signifies “the activity of exerting force or doing physical violence. Because of this concrete usage, the placing of one’s hands on someone or something becomes a natural symbol of the transfer of physical force, i.e., as a symbol of a person’s past deeds and the effects of those deeds on the beast to have them annihilated and/or transformed with the destruction of the animal.”

Inasmuch as “to lay hands upon” is sometimes idiomatic for “to seize” (see Matt 26:50), the Eucharistic Prayer may intend a scriptural play on words by connecting Jesus’ being “handed over” (Qui cum Passioni voluntarie traderetur) to his “handing over” the Eucharist to his disciples (quod pro vobis tradetur).

When “to lay hands upon” is used in the sense of “to bless,” the gesture invites a certain deferential predisposition: “Unquestionably, a lesser person is blessed by a greater” (Heb 7:7). Since God is the source of blessing, the gesture indicates divine condescension and evokes a humble response. Even when performed by humans, the gesture “underlines the action of

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113 In Greek and Latin etymology, bless—eu + logia / bene + dictio—means “good word,” and vis-à-vis humans’ relationship with God, could refer to either a good word God gives humans, or one humans give God. Asking God to bless humans rarely encounters objections. But scripture is also comfortable enjoining believers to “bless the Lord” (Ps 68:27), meaning praise God. For those who assume “bless” means only “benefit,” this implies condescension; since humans are not above God, they object that humans cannot bless God. The ASL sign for BLESS can reflect this confusion, and some ASL translators, upon encountering benedictus qui venit, prefer to sign PRAISE to avoid ambiguity.
divine benevolence that descends,” reminds Donghi. Thus it would seem that the gesture should be performed with a reverent humility, aware of the intimate interchange in the gesture. “Imposing hands on the head of a person … communicates divine life and establishes the communion between God and the one who receives it.”

Edward Foley observes that “the reformed Eucharistic rites [now] place the Holy Spirit at the center of the Eucharistic action,” and Eucharistic Prayer II invokes the Spirit in both text and gesture. As is well known, the Roman Canon lacks an explicit epiclesis, and the Latin Church’s exclusive use of this Eucharistic Prayer over several centuries help explain why the gesture has received scant attention, even in scholarly studies of the epiclesis. The Apostolic Tradition included very few rubrics, including during the epiclesis, though during ordinations Apostolic Tradition 4 does indicate that the newly ordained bishop “lays hands on the offering with all the presbytery, giving thanks.” But Apostolic Tradition does not indicate what this posture looks like. Neither do the current GIRM and Roman Missal describe the precise hand

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114 Donghi, Words and Gestures, 49.
115 Ibid.
117 Jungmann demonstrated that the hands extended over the gifts at the Hanc igitur in the Roman Canon did not originally even assume an “epicletic shape;” rather, the hands merely pointed toward the gifts (hanc oblationem) as an indicator. See Missarum Sollemnia 2:186.
118 See John McKenna, The Eucharistic Epiclesis: A Detailed History from the Patristic to the Modern Era, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Liturgy Training Pub, 2008), examines euchological texts and their concomitant theological explanations, overlooking how hand position may also be theoretically significant.
position for an epiclesis. Customarily hands are extended side-by-side in front of the body, palms down above that upon which the Spirit is being invoked. To maintain this posture while signing the invocation words poses a significant difficulty.

6. Tracing the Sign of the Cross over the gifts

The first evidence for this gesture appears in the eighth century; until then “an imposition of hands was the general form used for blessing, but it was superseded more and more by the sign of the cross, especially in Gallican territories,” comments Seasoltz. He observes that eventually “in the Roman canon almost every time the gifts were mentioned a sign of the cross was indicated. … [By the Middle Ages the priest] was directed to make numerous signs of the cross over the gifts.” The cross evokes Jesus’ sacrifice, a theme that became prominent in medieval Europe. According to Jungmann, “the significance of these signs of the cross in the canon since the tenth century formed one of the main themes in the medieval commentaries on the Mass” and this gesture became even more prominent following the Council of Trent’s Canons (CT VI, 350.27 – 30) on the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist. David Power describes how the theme of sacrifice affected the celebration of the Eucharist after Trent:

Only those parts of the mass which responded to the concept of offering or sacrifice, such as the consecration and the oblation that followed it, were taken into account. The conjunction of the rhetoric of sacrifice, with practices such as the silent canon, the use of

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120 The Ceremonial of Bishops 105 says, “The bishop holds his hands outstretched over the people when he blesses them solemnly and wherever the liturgical books call for such a gesture in the celebration of the sacraments or sacramentals.”

121 As an aside, GIRM 150 indicates that at this point within the prayer “if appropriate, a server rings a small bell as a signal to the faithful. The minster also rings the small bell at each elevation by the Priest according to local custom.” Obviously, these audible signals are useless when celebrating the Eucharist with the Deaf.

122 Seasoltz, “Non-verbal symbols,” 222.

123 Jungmann, Missarum Sollemnia 2:143.
Latin, the private mass, and the acceptance by the priest of mass-offerings, allowed for the understanding of the mass in very narrow terms.\textsuperscript{124}

Rubrics governing the enactment of the Roman Canon called for multiple Signs of the Cross to be performed during the course of the prayer. O'Connell’s commentary on the Tridentine rubrics fills multiple pages as he describe in minute detail how the Sign is traced over the gifts, including a numbered chart diagramming the motion.\textsuperscript{125}

The liturgical rites revised after Vatican II “should be distinguished by a noble simplicity. They should be short, clear, and free from useless repetitions” (SC 34). This likely was the rationale behind reducing the number of Signs of the Cross performed over the gifts: now all post-Vatican II Eucharistic Prayers prescribe only one. Interestingly, neither the GIRM nor the Roman Missal indicate exactly how this is to be done and even fail to indicate that during the Eucharistic Prayer the sign of the cross is to be traced \textit{by the hand} (though this is a reasonable assumption), much less indicating which hand is to sign the gifts.\textsuperscript{126} When describing the Sign of the Cross at the end of Mass, GIRM 167 directs, “Then the Priest, extending his hands, greets the people, saying, \textit{The Lord be with you}. They reply, \textit{And with your spirit}. The Priest, joining his hands again and then immediately placing his left hand on his breast, raises his right hand and


\textsuperscript{125} O’Connell, \textit{The Celebration}, 193 – 194.

\textsuperscript{126} The revised \textit{Ceremonial of Bishops}, again in a footnote (n. 108 fn. 81), cites the 1962 Missale Romanum when describing how a bishop makes the sign of the cross over people or objects to be blessed: “When making the sign of the cross … [i]f he blesses others or some object, he points the little finger at the person or thing to be blessed and in blessing extends the whole right hand with all the fingers joined and fully extended.”
adds, *May almighty God bless you* and, as he makes the Sign of the Cross over the people, he continues, *the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All reply, Amen.*"  

Continuity suggests adopting a similar posture during the Eucharistic Prayer: Sign of the Cross by the right hand, left hand upon the breast. Regardless of exactly which hand does what, this gesture will create the same difficulty seen with other gestures: if the Sign of the Cross is performed without the accompanying text being proclaimed, it will not create a conflict with sign language. But in Eucharistic Prayer II the priest must speak words as the cross is being traced, and the next chapter will suggest a solution.

7. **Picking up the bread (and later, chalice) and holding it slightly above the altar**

The first evidence of the priest handling the Sacred Species during the Eucharistic Prayer comes from Amalar of Metz in the ninth century who “states quite clearly that the priest takes bread into his hands after the example of Christ … and the same way with the chalice.” Other than this source, there is no other indication of the priest touching the vessels during the

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127 For the final blessing Turner, *Let Us Pray* p. 157, unexpectedly suggests, “Logically, a left-handed presider would reverse hands.”

128 The *Ceremonial of Bishop* n. 108, however, directs: “When blessing something with his right hand the bishop places his left hand on his breast unless he is standing at the altar, in which case he may place his left hand on the altar” (emphasis mine). This exception probably envisions when the presider traces the Sign of the Cross over the gifts during the Eucharistic Prayer, though it may include the final blessing if the bishop standing at the altar rather than at the chair prays the post-communion prayer, gives the blessing, and dismisses the assembly (cf. *GIRM* 165).

129 In the *Rite of Baptism* for children n. 79 the Sign of the Cross is traced on the infant’s forehead in silence, and the post-baptismal application of chrism on the infant’s crown is also done in silence (ibid. n. 98) though the Sign of the Cross is not specified here. Otherwise Roman liturgies rarely indicate a Sign of the Cross being done without accompanying words. The General Introduction to the *Book of Blessings* n. 27 explicitly directs otherwise: “The outward signs of blessing, and particularly the sign of the cross, are in themselves forms of preaching the Gospel and of expressing faith … it is ordinarily not permissible to impart the blessing of any article or place merely through a sign of blessing without either the word of God or any sort of prayer being spoken.”

Eucharistic Prayer in the first millennium. Even *Ordo Romanus Primus* (ca. 750 AD), often rubrically quite detailed, makes no mention of it. But by the eleventh and twelfth centuries the practice becomes more common: “As the priest mentioned the Lord’s actions at the Last Supper, he adapted his own actions to the words in a dramatic fashion; in fact he more or less mimed the gestures that Christ presumably performed. He took the bread into his hands and lifted up his eyes toward heaven … He repeated the same gestures with the cup in his hand.”

Picking up the elements and holding them slightly above the altar directs the priest’s words toward the bread and wine, but eventually the gesture took on a different focus.

Before the end of the twelfth century, the custom of the priest holding the host aloft at the words “On the night he was betrayed…” was well established. This custom … was more an imitative gesture recalling Jesus’ actions than a testimony to the moment of consecration. But at the same time [it] led to a change in the manner and meaning of elevating the host.

The prominence of the priest in the Eucharistic Prayer expanded in the medieval era. No longer was he simply voicing the assembly’s prayer thanking the Father for Jesus Christ; he also increasingly began to represent Jesus Christ as he dramatically reenacted the Last Supper. This mentality became commonplace in the post-Tridentine liturgy, and even into the twentieth century Jungmann testifies: “As the priest mentions the Lord’s actions, one after the other, he suits his own actions to the words in dramatic fashion.”

Jungmann notes that by the twelfth century people were so eager to see the consecrated host that they began reverencing it as soon

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133 See Baldovin, “Accepit Panem,” 128.
as the priest made the Sign of the Cross over it, before the words of institution were completed.

“To forestall this impropriety, the bishop of Paris in 1210 ordered that the priests should hold the host breast-high, before the consecration, and only after the consecration should they lift it high enough to be seen by all.”

After the Council of Trent, the rubrics governing the gestures for pronouncing the words of institution were complex. These were simplified in the post-Vatican II rubrics, which according to Herman Wegman are “shorter, more transparent and sophisticated: they maybe mitigate the isolation of the consecration-rite within the Eucharistic prayer … [nevertheless they still] make out of the institution-narrative a mimesis-ritual: the representative of the Lord re-enacts Jesus’ actions during the Last Supper” and “isolate the consecration from the whole of the Eucharistic prayer, a prayer of thanksgiving and commemoration.”

This critique notwithstanding, this project discusses the rubrics as they presently stand. As is obvious, it is impossible to pick up the host or chalice with both hands while signing the words of institution.

8. Showing the consecrated bread (and chalice) to the assembly

According to Jungmann, the 1210 text in Paris “is the first authentic instance of that elevation of the Host which is so familiar to us.” Mitchell summarizes, “While the custom of

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135 Missarum Sollemnia 2:206 – 207; emphasis original.
136 The description of the posture and mindset the priest assumes during the words of institution in the Tridentine liturgy fills several pages in O’Connell’s The Celebration (1964).
138 For this reason Baldovin (“Accepit Panem,” 138) prefers the priest to “hold his hands in the orans position throughout the prayer (perhaps with the exception of the epiclesis), lifting up the gifts in a true gesture of offering only at the doxology.”
139 Missarum Sollemnia 2:207.
elevating the host at Mass did not originate as a consecrating action, it developed in that direction after the early years of the thirteenth century, partly because of popular desire to see the host, and partly because of official intervention by synods like the one held at Paris.”

Though elevating the host was in place by 1210, “that does not mean there was a similar elevation of the chalice. The elevation of the chalice is found, indeed, even as early as the thirteenth century, but the usage was rare and exceptional. … Not till the Missal of Pius V was the second elevation made to correspond with that of the Host.” Other Eucharistic customs were introduced in the thirteenth century, including ringing of bells, incensing the elevated species, requiring the faithful to kneel and (by the 1300s) the priest and other clergy to genuflect.

After the thirteenth century holding the consecrated species aloft spread rapidly through Europe. The practice was reinforced by popular miracles such as seeing the host become the baby Jesus or begin to bleed, which “resonated with a Germanized imagination that was prone toward the physical and had a penchant for what Russell called a ‘magico-religious’ interpretation of the sacraments. Furthermore, these miracles would be more easily accepted in a religious climate, like the late Middle Ages, where seeing was becoming more important than hearing in the confirmation of one’s faith.” Such phenomena were reported not only in

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142. See Jungmann, Missarum Sollemnia 2:208 – 213.
Germany but Italy, France, England, Wales, and other places. Some popularly-believed fruits of seeing the elevated species included that one would not age during Mass, would not suffer sudden death on that day, one’s house or barn would not be struck by lightning, one would be cured of disease, mothers in labor could secure safe delivery, travelers given safe arrival, and eaters and drinkers were promised good digestion.

Superstitious beliefs notwithstanding, the Church officially continued to prescribe this elevation of the consecrated host and chalice. It was given additional impetus in the twentieth century:

To encourage this practice, there is an indulgence of seven years each time, for looking on the Host, with faith, piety, and love, while saying the words “My Lord and my God;” and a plenary indulgence once a week to those who do this daily for a week provided they go to confession, receive Holy Communion (once), and pray for the intentions of the Holy Father.

Understandably, it became a common practice for the priest to hold the species aloft longer, allowing the faithful to see and adore the Lord and offer prayers (in silence). Their adoration became all the more important as the laity’s reception of communion was infrequent. By the fourteenth century “the elevation was directed toward contemplative adoration—‘ocular communion’ with the Lord. It would seem logical that elevation led to exposition of the sacrament for prolonged periods of time.”

Interestingly, the Tridentine rubrics called this not

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145 As cited in Foley, From Age to Age, 234.

146 O’Connell, The Celebration, 266 – 267 n. 51. Pope Paul VI significantly modified how indulgences are to be understood, including the removal of quantifying their effects into days/years. See Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution Indultgentiarum doctrina, 1 January 1967, AAS 59 (1967): 5 – 24.

147 Mitchell, Cult and Controversy, 178.
an “elevation” but a showing (*ostendit populo*). Yet insofar as the priest was usually praying the Mass *ad orientem* he was compelled to lift the species high enough so the people could see them, i.e. above his head. Thus O’Connell indicated that the priest should slowly raise the host “in a vertical line higher than his head so that it may be clearly seen and adored by the people” and likewise the chalice, at least high enough that its cup (above the node) be seen without difficulty by the congregation.\(^{148}\)

The Eucharistic liturgy today retains the showing of the host and chalice to the people, but since the priest is usually celebrating the Mass *versus populum* he is no longer instructed to raise them higher than his head.\(^{149}\) Whenever the current *GIRM* refers to how the vessels are displayed during the words of consecration (*GIRM* 84, 150, 161, 179), it uses language (*ostendit* and cognates) distinct from that describing the gesture used during the doxology as indicated in *GIRM* 151. “At the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, the Priest takes the paten with the host and the chalice and elevates them both [*hostia et calicem et utrumque elevans*] while pronouncing alone the doxology *Through him.*” The doxology thus may be considered the rubrical “high point” of the prayer. Because during the “showing” no one prays anything aloud, neither people nor priest,\(^{150}\) this showing poses no problem for a priest signing the Mass.

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\(^{149}\) Turner, *Let Us Pray*, 116, says “Today the bread need not be lifted so high. By choosing a medium position for the elements, the priest reserves their elevation for the conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer.” Turner suggests the chalice should be raised to the same height (*ibid.* 117).

\(^{150}\) The Sacred Congregation of Rites in 1925, when asked whether the celebrant should in a low voice pray the ejaculation “My Lord and my God,” replied: “No, in accordance with canon 818 of the [1917] Code of Canon Law [which forbids the addition of private prayers to the rite of the Mass] and the rubrics of the *Roman Missal.*” Cited in O’Connell, *The Celebration*, 267, n. 52.
9. Placing the bread (and chalice) back on the corporal

The priest returns the consecrated host to the paten, places it on the corporal (he will do the same for the chalice), genuflects, and then continues praying the Eucharistic Prayer in the orans posture. Placing the Sacred Species back on the altar frees the priest’s hands, and this rubric is to the benefit of a signing priest.

The pre-Vatican II Missal required the priest, after having handled the consecrated host, to keep his thumbs and forefingers of both hands joined together until they have been purified after receiving (and distributing) holy communion. The first mention of this rubric dates from a Cluniac Customary around 1068, and by the time of William Durandus in the thirteenth century, it had become a general rule.151 The liturgy following Vatican II, however, no longer requires this, and continuing the practice among the Deaf would make signing illegible.152

10. Lifting the paten (and chalice) high during the doxology

Early in the history of the Roman Canon “the elevation of the gifts marked the very climax of the doxology,” noted Jungmann, but as the words of institution assumed greater prominence this final “elevation was once more overshadowed.”153 By the time of Trent this gesture became known simply as “the little elevation.” Further, the nature of the Eucharistic Prayer as praise had given way to emphasizing sacrifice, a shift that resulted in the multiplication of signs of the cross throughout the prayer, including five during the doxology. “In the later

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151 See Jungmann, Missarum Sollemnia 2: 205.
152 Similarly, the rubrics of the pre-Vatican II Roman Canon directed the priest to wipe his fingers on the corporal before and after they touch the sacred host. Insofar as this rubric does not exist for the current Eucharistic Prayer II, it need not be discussed here.
Middle Ages the old rite which accompanied the closing doxology, a simple rite indeed, had been overwhelmed by this luxuriant growth of crosses.” In light of this, Jungmann emphasized the doxology’s earlier importance, saying that elevation would still be called little “not because it is of less importance or because it is the remnant of a larger [elevation], but because it does not, like its younger sister, the ‘big elevation,’ consist in showing the holy gifts to the people, but only in raising them up to God as an oblation.” Since the medieval Eucharistic Prayer increasingly emphasized sacrifice over offering, it was only natural that another part of the liturgy gradually took up this “offering” motif, and the preparation of the gifts increasingly became called the Offertory.

The revision of the liturgy following Vatican II sought to restore to both the “showing” and “elevation” their respective earlier meanings, while downplaying the gestures associated with the preparation of the gifts. The current rubrics call for lifting up the paten and chalice during the doxology (eliminating multiple Signs of the Cross at this point), thereby recapturing the sober elegance of the earlier practice.

When the rubrics mention the vessels being picked up, three descriptors are used: the first time that they are handled during the Eucharistic Prayer they are held slightly raised above the altar (parum elevatum super altare tenens); second, they are showed (ostendit) after the words of institution; and lastly, they are elevated (elevans) during the doxology. Neither the current GIRM

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154 Jungmann, Missarum Sollemnia 2:271.
155 Jungmann, Missarum Sollemnia 2:266. It is not clear why Jungmann considered raising the gifts “only” to God (and not for showing species to the people) justified calling this elevation “little.”
156 See Jungmann, Missarum Sollemnia 2:41 – 100.
nor the *Order for Mass* specifies how high the vessels are to be held. Baldovin interprets the rubrics to mean three different heights are intended:

In the contemporary Roman Rite, there are three levels at which the gifts are held: 1) slightly above the altar in a gesture of placing—at the preparation of the gifts and during the recitation of the words of the Lord at the institution narrative; 2) the showing to the people, usually at chest-height—at the end of each section of the institution narrative and at the invitation to Communion; and 3) elevating the gifts at the doxology and Amen—concluding the Eucharistic prayer.

As noted in this project, the doxological elevation is singular among the Eucharistic Prayer’s gestures for a couple reasons. First, holding vessels higher than the signer’s chest introduces a visual obstacle for Deaf persons who need to see the signer’s face for grammatical data. “Many signs in ASL require a nonmanual signal in order to be produced correctly. Nonmanual signals are the facial expressions that accompany certain signs … Without these nonmanual signals, the signs are not correct.”

Second, this doxological elevation is the only time someone other than the principal priest-celebrant is instructed to perform a gesture during the Eucharistic Prayer. Since the patristic era, deacons have been particularly associated with handling the chalice during the

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157 Turner, *Let Us Pray*, 121, suggests, “Compared with the other occasions when the bread and wine are held up, this lifting of the vessels should have the greatest height.”

158 Baldovin, “*Accepit Panem,*” 125.


160 There are a few minor exceptions: concelebrating priests have their own manual gestures; a deacon or Master of Ceremonies can assist the priest-celebrant in the turning of Missal pages; and if a bishop is the principle celebrant someone may assist him at the altar in other ways such as removing his zucchetto. Additionally, if a priest covers the chalice with a pall (stiff cardboard square) during the Prayer, the deacon may remove (and later replace) the pall at the words of consecration. The present *GIRM* (118, 139, 142, 190, 306) mentions the pall when describing the Preparation of the Altar, but neither the *GIRM* nor the rubrics of the *Ordo Missae* indicate how the pall is employed during the Eucharistic Prayer. The pre-Vatican II Mass had more rubrics regarding the pall, some of which arguably may be continued today.
Eucharist. At post-Vatican Eucharistic liturgies wherein a deacon assists, *GIRM* 180 directs him to elevate the chalice alongside the priest, who elevates the paten and prays “Through him, with him, in him …”\(^{161}\) This rubric introduces another possible solution to the dilemma: perhaps someone else (i.e. the deacon) may perform at least this gesture that the present rubrics prescribe for the priest. Since a deacon may elevate the chalice during the doxology, the next chapter will suggest that he may elevate both chalice and paten while the priest signs “Through him …”

**Chapter Summary**

Of the current rubrics in Eucharistic Prayer II of the Roman Rite, the first two—extending hands toward the assembly, and raising them up at *sursum corda*—are not a problem for the signing priest; nor is briefly joining the hands in silence, genuflecting, and returning each Species to the altar. There remain a total of seven rubrical gestures done with hands that pose a problem for the signing priest: the *orans* posture, praying with hands joined, extending hands over the chalice and paten while praying an epiclesis, making the sign of the cross over the gifts, picking up and holding the bread during the words of institution, picking up and holding the chalice during the words of institution, and elevating the paten and chalice during the doxology.

Knowing the gestures’ background gives a context for evaluating their relative importance; still to be addressed is how they might be modified when praying in sign language. Before proposing solutions, it will be helpful to say more about Deaf communication. The next

\(^{161}\) *GIRM* 208 indicates that in a concelebrated Mass, “If a Deacon is not present, the functions proper to him are to be carried out by some of the concelebrants.” This would include elevating the chalice at the doxology, though this is not always practiced. It continues, “If other ministers are also absent, their proper parts may be entrusted to other suitable faithful laypeople; otherwise, they are carried out by some of the concelebrants.” This will come into play later when discussing how to solve the problem of gesturing while signing this part of the prayer.
chapter will examine the importance of sign language in Deaf culture and the history of the use of sign language in the Church.
The Deaf Background

Culture, Sign Language, and Gesture in Signed Communication

From November 19 – 21, 2009, 500 people convened in Vatican City for a three-day international conference on Catholic Deaf ministry, sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care. Its title was “Ephphatha!: The Deaf Person in the Life of the Church.” During the conference, Pope Benedict XVI called for “an in-depth analysis of the situation and … the formulation of proposals and guidelines for an ever more specialized attention to these brothers and sisters of ours.”¹ He reminded the Deaf that they too, in their own contexts, are to be agents of the Church’s mission: “Brothers and sisters, you are not only recipients of the Gospel message but also legitimately heralds of it, by virtue of your Baptism. Thus you live every day as witnesses of the Lord in your living contexts, making Christ and his Gospel known.” Conference organizers issued twelve “Final Recommendations” for ministry among the Deaf and hard-of-hearing. These insisted that the Deaf should not indiscriminately be included with other “people with disabilities;” doing so misunderstands the nature of deafness and undervalues the unique roll the Deaf can play in the Church. “[H]andicap at the level of hearing which is purely sensorial should necessarily be treated separately from other physical disabilities when one speaks about faith and religious practice.”² To understand this point, the term “Deaf” must be more thoroughly explained.


What it Means to Be Deaf

In the United States there is no legal definition of deafness comparable to the legal definition of blindness, and thus estimating how many Americans are deaf, or how deaf they are, is difficult. The website of the world’s first (and only) liberal arts college established specifically for educating the Deaf, Gallaudet University in Washington D.C., summarizes the difficulty:

“Although data collection has improved in recent years, several aspects of general hearing loss in the United States continue to be problematic to quantify. One tendency feeding this problem is the frequent lack of distinction between types, onsets, and severity levels of hearing loss; one often sees either ‘individuals with hearing loss’ with a single line of percentages or totals, or, if one is lucky, one may see two lines: ‘severe’ and ‘not severe.’ Such is the state of deaf statistics within the federal government.”

In addition, statistics on deafness are susceptible to bias and the NAD suggests a critical evaluation of any reported figures:

- How was “deaf” defined for this purpose?
- How are the figures expressed: numerical quantity, percentage, or prevalence?
- Who is doing the counting?
- Might this source want to distort the numbers? (A Deaf organization might want to elevate numbers to make its population appear more important; so too a governmental agency might want to lower numbers to make its population seem to be in good health.)
- How reliable and scientifically rigorous is this source?

Gallaudet’s own Research Institute has analyzed numerous demographic surveys and reports that in 1994 about 13% of Americans self-report having some “hearing problems;” for those over 65 years old that figure jumps to 29%. But the percentage of those who describe themselves as

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“deaf in both ears” is much lower, 0.18%; those who say they may be able to hear some loud or low-pitched sounds but “cannot hear and understand any speech” is 0.23%; those who can “at best, hear and understand words shouted into the better ear” is 0.49%. In addition, some patterns emerge demographically: hearing loss escalates with age, males are more likely to be deaf than females, whites more than blacks and Hispanics, and those from lower economic strata more than wealthy persons. This latter statistic may be due to the fact that those financially more secure can afford medical care that not only treats hearing loss but also provides better treatment for illnesses which if untreated may result in hearing loss.

These statistics regard deafness as a “medical problem.” For many culturally Deaf people this raises flags. The unarticulated assumption is that something is “wrong” with Deaf people and medicine’s role is to “fix” what is broken. True enough, objectively considered, hearing loss is a privation of human faculties which science can sometimes remedy. But many Deaf feel that hearing people act superior simply because they can hear and the Deaf cannot. “When hearing people think about Deaf people,” writes Harlan Lane, “they project their concerns and subtractive perspective [i.e. the Deaf have less ability than hearing people] onto Deaf people. The result is an inevitable collision with the values of the DEAF-WORLD, whose goal it is to promote the unique heritage of a Deaf language and culture. The disparity in decision-making power between the hearing world and the DEAF-WORLD renders this collision frightening for Deaf people.”

Answering “What does it mean to be deaf?” solely by recourse to science—a medical model—can perpetuate a societal prejudice. Hannah Lewis writes, “The medical model

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5 Harlan Lane, Robert Hoffmeister, and Ben Bahan, A Journey into the DEAF-WORLD (San Diego: Dawn Sign Press, 1996), 371.
disempowers d/Deaf people by placing the focus on the inability of d/Deaf people to hear and making hearing a necessary factor in both what it means to be human and what is required to make any decisions about your own life.”

Deaf priest Fr. Christopher Klusman observes, “‘Physical limitations’ are only limitations if you allow the limitations to control your life. Physical limitations teach us that God is the center and guide of our lives. When we allow God to work through our physical limitations, the sky is the limit. If you let God, he will help you become stronger, dedicated and perseverant.”

Deaf writers Padden and Humphries summarize:

The medical community’s narrow focus on deaf people as patients to be alleviated of their affliction has always been a source of anxiety within the community. The idea of “culture” outlines the terms of a counterargument. It demands considerations of equal treatment, justice, and political voice for a group of people who find themselves in a highly politicized environment such as medicine and disability.

Another approach that does not make audiology its primary determiner for what it means to be Deaf may be preferable to the medical model. Well-intending people of faith have proposed alternatives. Lewis summarizes four of these:

(1) *Take pity on the Deaf; do everything for them because they cannot do for themselves.* Civilization has long employed this approach, but many Deaf regard it as condescending. “Because of ignorance, oppression and discrimination,” writes British Deaf priest Fr. Peter McDonough, “Deaf people have been treated as objects of charity rather than citizens who play a full part in the Church and society; they have often been forgotten and left out. There is a common view that specialist ministry among Deaf people is a luxury, an option that can be cut when resources are short.”


(2) *Teach the Deaf to care for themselves.* This solution appears to be charitable and less offensive than pitying the Deaf, but many also find this unsatisfactory because it perpetuates a differential of power. Those with knowledge—the hearing—still control what kind, and how much, knowledge they give. Many Deaf do not want others to tell them how to be more like hearing people.

(3) *Leave the Deaf to fend for themselves.* Expecting the Deaf to “pull themselves up by their own bootstraps,” while superficially encouraging virtue, also seems callous and falls short of the gospel ideal of solidarity.

(4) *Empower the Deaf to obtain their own solutions.* Many in Deaf culture assert the right to define themselves and not be manipulated by more powerful groups in society. Hannah Lewis considers this the best approach. “I argue that Deaf people have been equally oppressed by ‘traditional’ theology and that we too need a theology that is not only contextual (in that it speaks to and of our own specific context) but is also a theology of liberation; a theology that is not only relevant, but which is actively working against all that restricts life and for that which is life-giving.”

Stephen Webb agrees that approaching deafness as a culture is the best ministerial model.

“Advocates for the deaf argue that they represent a distinct cultural identity, so that the Deaf are more like a Spanish-speaking minority within an English-speaking country than a group with physical impairment that sets them apart from ‘normal’ people.”

**Characteristics of Deaf Culture**

A word as common as “culture” is difficult to define except with broad strokes.

According to Roger Lohmann’s entry “culture” in the *Encyclopedia of Religion,*

In its most basic sense, culture is that portion or aspect of thought and behavior that is learned and capable of being taught to others. Culture includes customs and worldviews that provide a mental model of reality and a guide for appropriate and moral action. Languages are cultural in that they are learned symbolic information sets and are one of the most important means of encoding ideas and knowledge for memory and communication.

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10 Lewis, 11.


That the Deaf have a distinct culture of their own seems self-evident, but surprisingly this was articulated only recently, even among the Deaf. Padden and Humphries explain:

The term had long been used to describe the practices of hearing communities around the world, but it had never been widely used to describe Deaf people. In 1980, as the idea was beginning to circulate among Deaf people, we took on the task of explaining how a group of people who did not have any distinctive religion, clothing, or diet—or even inhabit a particular geographical space they called their own—could be called “cultural.”\(^\text{13}\)

Padden and Humphries and other pioneers in the field have succeeded in establishing that there is something distinctive about Deaf culture. Lane, Hoffmeister, and Bahan\(^\text{14}\) identify several factors important in Deaf culture that are germane to this project.

1. *Shared history.* History is sacred to a community, and Deaf students take pride in the pioneers of Deaf culture and language. Grade school children learn that the first efforts to codify sign language occurred in France in the 1700s; the first schools for the Deaf were established in the 1800s; some educators in the early the 20\(^{th}\) century forced the Deaf (with little success) to attempt speech and forbade the use of sign language (an educational approach known as “oralism”\(^\text{15}\)); and recent movements have allowed the Deaf to empower themselves.\(^\text{16}\) Such schools for the Deaf around the country became loci of Deaf identity, and when many Deaf

\(^{13}\) Padden and Humphries, *Inside Deaf Culture*, 1.


persons meet one another they are more apt to identify themselves not by ethnicity or geography but by which school they attended.17

2. **Deaf clubs.** Most major cities have established Deaf clubs with numerous social events such as card games, drama, and social outings.18 Relatedly, sports are powerful bonding forces in Deaf culture. The Akron Deaf Club sponsored its first national Deaf basketball tournament in 1945, from which the American Athletic Association of the Deaf (AAAD) was born, later to be renamed the USA Deaf Sports Federation.19 In addition to supporting and participating in Deaf athletics, many follow professional sports teams avidly. Other unifying clubs and organizations in Deaf culture include those promoting Deaf visual arts, literature, and the performing arts, especially Deaf theater.20

3. **Political organizations.** Advocating for Deaf people’s rights in society has been the concern of several organizations and helps unify Deaf culture. Foremost among these is the National Association for the Deaf (NAD), America’s premier civil rights organization of, by, and for Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

Established in 1880, the NAD was shaped by deaf leaders who believed in the right of the American deaf community to use sign language, to congregate on issues important to them, and to have its interests represented at the national level. These beliefs remain true to this day, with American Sign Language as a core value. The advocacy scope of the NAD is broad, covering a lifetime and impacting future generations in the areas of early intervention, education, employment, health care, technology, telecommunications, youth leadership, and more – improving the lives of millions of deaf and hard of hearing Americans. The NAD also carries out its federal advocacy work through coalition efforts

20 For a summary of these, see Lane et al., A Journey into the Deaf-World, 138 – 158.
with specialized national deaf and hard of hearing organizations, as well as coalitions representing national cross-disability organizations.\(^{21}\)

Relatedly, shared experiences of being *oppressed* also unifies the Deaf community:

In some ways like the members of other language minorities that have been colonized, members of the Deaf-world frequently find themselves subjected to the wishes of outsiders pursuing an alien agenda that enhances the outsiders’ economic and social standing. The Deaf person is cast in the subservient role of pupil, patient, client and employee, while the outsider, from the majority culture, takes the dominant role.\(^{22}\)

Experiencing injustice can galvanize a community, and the Deaf often overlook other differences in order to vanquish a perceived common foe. In 1988, for example, Dr. Jerry C. Lee retired from his position as President of Gallaudet University. The board of directors, considering several candidates to replace him, chose the *only* hearing applicant, Elizabeth Zinsner. Students were outraged and began a protest known as DPN—Deaf President Now!—that shut down the campus until Zinsner resigned. The Board replaced her with I. King Jordan, Gallaudet’s first Deaf President.\(^{23}\) This event is recognized as a watershed moment that continues to inspire Deaf cultural identity.

4. *Religious affiliations.* Most persons of faith desire a place to worship in an idiom they understand where they can strengthen their community cohesion. “Religious organizations have had an important role in the bonding of the American Deaf-world. [The Baptist Rev.] Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet was a clergyman, as were so many other founders of Deaf education, beginning with the Abbé de l’Epée in mid-eighteenth century.”\(^{24}\) For centuries most Deaf have


\(^{22}\) Lane et al., *A Journey into the Deaf-World*, 159.


\(^{24}\) Lane et al., *A Journey into the Deaf-World*, 136.
worshipped by adapting hearing persons’ liturgy, but recently Deaf theologians have proposed that traditional Christian ritual (including its scriptures) is hopelessly mired in a hearing-world bias. Deaf theologian Hannah Lewis advocates a radical overhaul to create truly Deaf worship:

The reconstruction must be done by Deaf people themselves. No hearing person, no matter how sympathetic or experienced in sign, can do it for us. The reconstruction of the liturgy as transformative is a process, not an end product. If we, as a group, are not involved in the creation of liturgy then we will not be transformed by it and it will not contribute to the ultimate aim of the liberation of Deaf people, body, mind, and soul.25

Lewis is Protestant, and Roman Catholics who value continuity with the received tradition regard untenable some of her claims about liturgy—such as the freedom believers have to “reconstruct” liturgy themselves, or liturgy’s supposed purpose of liberation. While liturgy will inevitably—and laudably—be inculturated, Catholics are bound by SC 22: “No other person, even if he be a priest [we may include: or Deaf person] may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority.” In any event, creating a truly Deaf liturgy is not the scope of this project, as laudable as such an endeavor may be.

American Sign Language

Among the factors that unite the Deaf and comprise their culture, sign language is the most important. Padden and Humphries express the consensus of Deaf scholars who insist that sign language is crucial for determining culture:

We used a definition of culture that focused on beliefs and practices, particularly the central role of sign language in the everyday lives of the community. This characteristic, among others, distinguished Deaf people from hearing people and from other deaf and

hard-of hearing people (such as those who lost their hearing late in life) who do not use
sign language but rely on different communicative adaptations.26

While a full history of signed languages among the Deaf is beyond this project, some
background here will prove helpful. In 1760 the Catholic priest Abbé Charles-Michel de l’Epée,
walking through the streets of Paris, observed two Deaf sisters talking to each other by means of
signs; apparently French Deaf persons had been communicating that way for years.27 Father
l’Epée concluded that if these Deaf could communicate among themselves using signs, so could
Church ministers: Deaf ministry was a potentially fruitful missionary field. Soon he established a
school for the Deaf. As he studied their manner of communication, l’Epée attempted with
faltering success to map it onto the French language.

[H]e was misled by the great differences between its [LSF: langue des signes française] grammar and the grammar of his own language. Because French grammar relies heavily on word endings and word order, unlike signed language, which relies more on systematically modifying the movements of the signs themselves, he thought LSF lacked rules. … He undertook to choose or invent signs … until virtually every French sentence had its counterpoint in manual French. … He then sought to have his Deaf pupils use this manual French rather than LSF.28

The manually-coded system l’Epée devised did not share the same grammar as LSF, even if it used some of the same vocabulary. In short, it was an artificial language. In contrast, LSF was not externally imposed but developed organically, as other languages usually do. “Human beings have a biological capacity for language that involves an internal set of norms. Children construct the grammar of the language they are acquiring on the basis of these internal norms. This is

26 Padden and Humphries, Inside Deaf Culture, 1.
27 For this and the material in this paragraph, see Harlan Lane et al., “The Language of the DEAF-WORLD,” in A Journey into the DEAF-WORLD (San Diego: Dawn Sign, 1996), 42 – 77.
28 Ibid., 52.
called the nativization hypothesis because the children are using their native ability to construct grammars, to nativize.”

American Sign Language is a nativized language that developed organically in North America among Deaf persons who were not reliant on spoken/written English. This surprises many who assume ASL is merely visual English. “In the past few decades,” write Lane et al., “linguists have uncovered a wealth of information about ASL and other signed languages. … Perhaps the most astonishing and fundamental discovery of that research is that ASL is a language—a complete natural language, quite independent of English. … [E]ven though ASL has a form different from that of spoken languages, it is fundamentally like spoken languages in the purposes it serves and in the way in which it is acquired.”

Much as Fr. l’Epée did, American hearing people have developed a system of manually-coded English called SEE (Signed Exact English) which does use some of the same vocabulary as ASL and can be understood by many Deaf. But SEE follows English word order and grammar and is not the native language of most culturally Deaf Americans. The Deaf tolerate SEE (if that is the only way a hearing person can communicate), but do not prefer SEE and often refer to it using the derogatory term “pidgin-sign.” In contrast, ASL “developed as a fully autonomous grammar not derived from English. Like spoken languages, ASL has rules for constructing words from a small set of elements, and rules for binding its words together in sentences and discourses.” It will be useful here to explore more about how ASL grammar works.

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29 Ibid., 49.
30 Ibid., 42 – 43, emphasis original.
31 Ibid., 45.
Words of spoken languages are constructed by combining certain sounds in a certain order. Changing the order of the sounds changes the word. The words “god” and “dog” have fundamentally the same three sounds—a voiced velar plosive (g), a voiced alveolar plosive (d), and a vowel between them that, depending on accent, might sound similar in both words. But because in “god” and “dog” the plosives occur in different sequence, the words do not mean the same thing.

Every sign in American Sign Language similarly is composed of multiple parts that, depending on presence/absence, sequence, and even emphasis, can change the meaning of a term. “ASL signs have five basic parts—hand shape, movement, location, orientation, and nonmanual signals (facial expression).” Just as the spoken words “dog” and “god” share the same elements, but the elements appear in a different order in each word, signs also can share parameters. But these parameters can be used in different ways, which changes the meaning of the ASL term. For example, the signs for SUMMER and DRY share an identical hand shape (a “pointing” index finger), orientation (palm down), and movement (pulled horizontally from left to right—or the reverse for left-handed signers), but they differ in the location where the sign is formed (SUMMER is traced across the forehead, DRY across the chin). For some words, nonmanual signals such as facial expressions often are inconsequential. DRY does not usually require nonmanual signals. Nevertheless, one can intensify DRY to mean PARCHED by adding facial expressions; similarly, nonmanual signals can change HUNGRY into STARVING.

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Just as English forms sentences by combining words according to the rules of its language, ASL also follows its own complex set of grammatical rules—which usually do not coincide with English rules. Producing signs without following these rules can cause confusion. Just as introducing the reflexive “r” sound into either word “god” or “dog” changes its meaning (perhaps rendering the word nonsensical), inserting an unexpected manual marker into ASL can also change its meaning or render it nonsensical. If a priest while praying the Eucharistic Prayer in sign language inserts into the ASL narrative a hand gesture the Missal prescribes, this can confuse the Deaf: something which is not an ASL term has “interrupted” the expected grammatical structure. For example, the epicletic gesture—hands extended over the gifts, palms downward—accompanies the text, “Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them.” If the priest signs these words, inserting the rubric’s epicletic gesture may affect the ASL meaning of the sentence.

**The Use of Non-Lexical Gestures in Deaf Communication**

“When linguists began their epic analysis of ASL as a language in the 1960s,” write David McNeill and Susan D. Duncan, “the prevailing folk view could be summed up by the expression ‘sign is gesture’. ”33 Deaf advocates have thoroughly dismantled this myth and today the linguistic credentials of ASL are beyond doubt: it is not a coded form of English (such as SEE), nor pantomime, nor iconography: its gestures do not invariably represent mimesis. But isolating ASL from evocative gestures “was not a scientific distinction. It was a rhetorical-political one, meant to disarm the old, dismissive view. Now, thirty to forty years later, it is

increasingly possible to consider the *scientific* question of how and where gesture appears in the context of natural sign language use and how much gesturing relates to the linguistic code.”\(^{34}\) In fact, ethnomethodologists propose that both written *and* signed languages share a common form of originating: from gesture.

>[E]vidence of the emergence of visible languages, whether written or signed, supports the idea that the first linguistic units are iconic representations of objects and events in the world and that these initially iconic gestures are then analyzed and recombined … the development of this signed language by deaf people follows the same sort of course.\(^{35}\)

The universality of gestures in communication is being examined not only by users of American Sign Language. A pastoral worker from Poland observing Deaf interaction in his country corroborates this: “Deaf people, in fact, communicate through the use of various codes and not through sign language alone. Not all groups of gestures can be called a language in the true sense of the term.”\(^{36}\)

Much like language itself, the use of gestures may also be hard-wired into the human brain. We have come “to expect gestures in *all* occurrences of natural language use, including sign language. In examining spoken language, one notices a large output of accompanying manual gestures.”\(^{37}\) As ASL linguist Scott Liddell observes,

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>G]estures are an integral part of language as much as are words, phrases, and sentences—gestures and language are one system … speech expresses the conventional,

\(^{34}\) Ibid., emphasis original.


\(^{37}\) McNeill and Duncan, 512 (emphasis original).
grammatical, sequential rule-governed part of the message while gesture expresses the imagistic, instantaneous, and holistic part.\textsuperscript{38}

Gestures occupy a more prominent role in signed communication than has been heretofore acknowledged. McNeil and Duncan have begun to analyze this:

Speech and gesture, at the moment of their synchronization, are \textit{coexpressive}. They are not redundant … speech and gesture symbolizations package this information [being communicated] quite differently. The gestures cannot be said to fill a gap left by the spoken morphemes. Neither is supplemental … This kind of simultaneous and dynamic combination of opposites fuels thinking and speaking in this instance and in many others. We suppose this source of dynamic structuring is also part of sign discourse.\textsuperscript{39}

Deaf persons insert non-lexical gestures into sign language because it communicates more than words alone can. Non-lexical gestures do not violate sign language grammar, even if their function needs more study. “It is important to explore sign language discourse for evidence of dimensions of gesture other than deixis and mimesis.”\textsuperscript{40} This is germane for this project, which proposes to interject non-lexical gestures (e.g., the epiclesis) into signed ASL communication. Both hearing and Deaf people seem to regard the existence of non-lexical gestures to be natural. If gestures truly are universal, the Deaf may respond not much differently from how hearing people do when encountering an epiclesis in an ASL sentence.

Further, \textit{how} gestures are done also affects meaning. When a priest signs or speaks the epiclesis, he enhances the meaning of the text—without changing the words—merely by doing the gesture more or less deliberately, gracefully, transparently, without affectation, etc. His


\textsuperscript{39} McNeill and Duncan, (Book Review), 514, emphasis original.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 515.
mannerisms need not intrude; they express normal humanness. In fact, GIRM 38 directs the
priest to adapt his vocal style deliberately to suit both the nature of the text and the assembly:

In texts that are to be pronounced in a loud and clear voice, whether by the Priest or the
Deacon, or by a reader, or by everyone, the voice should correspond to the genre of the
text itself, that is, depending upon whether it is a reading, a prayer, an explanatory
comment, an acclamation, or a sung text; it should also be suited to the form of
celebration and to the solemnity of the gathering. Consideration should also be given to
the characteristics of different languages and of the culture of different peoples.

The same applies to the rubrical gestures: a priest should perform them both as the nature of the
text and of the assembly demands. By investing himself deliberately in the rubrical gestures, the
priest need not fear this implies he is coopting the liturgy for his personal agenda. On the
contrary, the Church expects him to attend to the needs of the faithful in the liturgy. As the
Italian theologian Angelo Lameri observed:

[W]e must not in fact forget that the concept of “fidelity”—especially in the case of
liturgical celebrations and the books that govern them—must find the right balance
between two cultural worlds: that of the written text, and that of the recipients. In our
specific case, then, [a German Eucharistic Prayer for the deaf] the cultural universe of the
recipients is not that of a given region, nor one consisting of a set of customs or popular
traditions, but that of a certain way of comprehending, a modality of realization, the inner
life of persons with a significant handicap [sic] that results in the valorization of a
language, expressions, and the gestures they need to respond to their particular
situation.41

41 “Non si può, infatti, dimenticare che il concetto di “fedeltà” specie nel caso della celebrazione liturgica e dei
libri che la regolano, deve trovare il giusto equilibrio tra due universi culturali: quello del testo scritto è quello de
destinatari. Nel nostro specifico caso poi l’universo culturale dei destinatari non è quello di una determinata regione,
no e’ quello costituito da una insieme di usi e costumi o di tradizioni popolari, ma la capacità di comprensione, la
modilità di realizzazione, il vissuto interiore di persone che un pesante handicap [sic] condotta a valorizzare linguaggi,
espressioni, gesti che devono rispondere a particolari esigenze.” Angelo Lameri, “La Preghiera Eucharistica della
Chiesa Tedesca per I non Udenti,” Rivista Liturgica 90/1 (2003), 135 – 141, at 141. Translation by the present
author. The German Prayer is Gottesdienst mit Gehörlosen. Studienausgabe für die katholischen Bistümer des
deutschen Sprachgebietes (Einsiedeln-Zurich-Freiburg-Wien: Benziger-Herder, 1980). This text will be further
explored in the next chapter.
The fact that many gestures are not accompanied by words—whether in a spoken or signed language—makes clear that human communication is not reducible to words and often operates in a mysterious way. For people of faith this is a “religious space” wherein God works. True, liturgical gestures are “the work of human hands” (and bodies), but liturgy is more than what humans do. Liturgy is “an action of the whole Christ (Christus totus), head and members” (CCC 1136). A non-lexical liturgical gesture is a dynamic gesture, operating in both directions: the assembly communicates something to God, and God communicates through the same gesture. After SC 7 states, “it is [God] Himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church,” it adds (following Augustine), “When a man baptizes it is really Christ Himself who baptizes.” Focusing on what God is doing through gestures moves beyond the rhetorical-political debate regarding the role of gestures in Deaf communication. All believers, Deaf and hearing, pray using both lexical and non-lexical gestures, and God communicates to all according to each one’s capacity to receive. This two-fold movement is the very essence of liturgy.

The next chapter will examine the seven manual gestures in Eucharistic Prayer II which pose a problem for a signing priest: the orans posture, praying with hands joined, making the sign of the cross over the gifts, extending hands while praying an epiclesis, picking up and holding the bread and chalice during the words of institution, and elevating the paten (and chalice) during the doxology.
Proposed Solutions

Others’ Attempts at a Solution

The Eucharistic Prayer for the Deaf in England and Wales was approved by the Roman Catholic Episcopal Conference of England and Wales in 1992. This prayer is not a sign language translation but an English-language prayer that a priest uses as the base text from which he signs the prayer. This text employs simplified terms and grammar—a “dumbing down” which some Deaf find offensive. An introduction directs, “The Eucharistic Prayer for the Deaf is authorized for use in England and Wales and is only for use in an assembly of the deaf and is to be signed by the celebrant himself. This prayer may never be used without it being signed.”

A study of the origins, theology, or text of that prayer in detail is warranted here insofar as (1) it is not approved for use in the USA, and (2) this doctoral project is not attempting to compose a new Eucharistic Prayer (as the British text is). But how the British prayer adapts the already-existing Eucharistic Prayer II (including its rubrical gestures) in a signed Mass will be reviewed.

The British prayer acknowledges the difficulty this project attempts to address. An introduction directs, “When the celebrant signs while pronouncing the words, liturgical gestures normally indicated in the rubrics are used, or omitted, as circumstances suggest and permit.”


2 “Simplification,” observes Marcel Broesterhuizen, “means infantilization: liturgical texts made for the deaf showed to be suited also for mentally retarded people. The logical question that deaf people ask about these texts is why they [the Deaf] should not be provided with the same content as hearing people. And this content is made more accessible by means of Sign Language than by means of simplification of texts.” See his “Faith in Search of Vision: Living and Celebrating Christian Community in the Deaf World,” Questiones liturgiques 90, 1 (2009): 44 – 67, at 53.


4 Eucharistic Prayer for the Deaf in England and Wales (op cit.), p. 785.
The text does not say which gestures may be omitted, nor what factors influence the celebrant’s choices. Nor does it seem to include all the rubrics. For example, nothing is said about how to gesture the preface dialogue, nor does it address the orans posture. These omissions suggest that the editors regard rubrical gestures not to be as important as words, an assumption Broesterhuizen flags:

Modern Western religious culture does not attribute equal capacity to image and word, vision and audition in the representation of the Christian message. Images of God captioned in language and narratives are considered more elevated than visual representations, which have often been seen as auxiliary means for illiterate and poorly schooled people.⁵

For the epiclesis, the British Prayer prescribes dissociating the gesture from the accompanying words. Here the gesture precedes the words: “He holds his hands outstretched over the offerings, then continues, ‘Let your Holy Spirit come down …’ ” For the Sign of the Cross, the priest completes the words, “The priest then makes the sign of the cross over the offerings.”

The introductory rubric to the words of institution is slightly adapted from its English equivalent: “The words of the Lord in the following formulas are to be spoken and signed clearly and distinctly, as their meaning demands.” The priest then continues, ‘At the last Supper before Jesus died, Jesus took bread.’ ” The rubric then interjects: “He [the priest] takes the bread and, raising it a little, replaces it on the paten and continues: ‘He thanked you, Father … given up for you.’ ”


⁶ British Deaf signer Peter McDonough thinks the Deaf prayer’s rubric should manifest a greater unity between the text and the gesture: “Sometimes when I am teaching the Eucharistic prayer to [British] priests in sign language, I talk about the words, “Jesus took the bread.” I tell them that it is important to pick up the bread at the same time. Many times they say, “Jesus took the bread” and they pick it up later. The word and the action should match. Many
The rubric then indicates: “[The priest] shows the consecrated host to the people, places it on the paten, and genuflects in adoration. Then he continues. ‘After supper…’” The same rubrics are repeated for the words over the chalice, except that instead of replacing the host on the paten, the priest replaces the chalice on the corporal, then genuflects.

The Roman Missal directs the priest to pray while holding the bread (and later, the chalice), after which he shows it to the faithful, and does not place it back on the altar until after the showing. The British prayer’s rubrics direct the priest to pick up each species and put it down twice: once before the words of institution, and a second time after the words, in effect resulting in a second showing.

After the memorial acclamation (introduced by “Let us show our faith in Jesus here”\(^7\) to which the people respond) the rubrics simply say, “Then the priest continues, ‘Father, truly we remember Jesus’ …” The Roman Missal has only one rubric here: the priest assumes the orans until the prayer’s conclusion. It seems the British Deaf prayer assumes the orans is omitted here again so the priest can sign the words.

The Introduction explains the expanded acclamation at the Great Amen: “Although this text retains acclamations and responses, these have been adapted in order to allow a more effective participation by the deaf in the prayer.” The words of the doxology are, “Father, we

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\(^7\) The Latin introduction to the Memorial Acclamation is simply an acclamation—*Mysterium fidei*—with no verb, much less one directed to the assembly. The previous ICEL version of the text over-translated by adding the instruction: “Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.” The British Eucharistic Prayer for the Deaf adopted ICEL’s previous translation.
praise you for ever with Jesus, your Son, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,” after which the rubrics indicate, “[The priest] takes the chalice and the paten with the host and lifts them up while the people respond, ‘Father, we praise you, we thank you, we adore you for ever and ever. Amen.’”8 Here, the gesture of raising the species aloft is done after the words have been prayed, during the assembly’s response—a solution that seems reasonable.

When the Eucharistic Prayer’s signed words and gestures overlap, the British Eucharistic Prayer for the Deaf sometimes does not indicate what to do with the gesture (e.g., the orans), while at other times certain gestures (e.g., epiclesis; handling vessels at words of institution; raising them during the doxology) are dissociated from the text they normally accompany.

The German Gottesdienst mit Gehörlosen9 is a small ritual book that contains versions of the sacraments of baptism, anointing, penance, and liturgies for funerals, communion for the sick, and a modified version of Eucharistic Prayer II.10 The introduction to Gottesdienst mit Gehörlosen encourages flexibility and treats gestures more thoroughly than the British text: “In deaf worship gestures and actions are of particular significance for reinforcing meaning.”11 The introduction strongly prefers a Deaf priest to use these prayers but allows a hearing priest to use

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8 Some USA priests have been known to invite the assembly to pray the doxology aloud with the priest: “Through him, with him…” This practice was forbidden by Redemptionis Sacramentum 54. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20040423_redemptionis-sacramentum_en.html (Accessed 15 January 2015).


10 For a study (in Italian) of the Prayer’s translation, see Angelo Lameri, “La Preghiera Eucharistica della Chiesa Tedesca per I non Udenti,” Rivista Liturgica 90/1 (2003): 135 – 141.

11 “Darüber hinaus kommt bei Gottesdiensten mit Gehörlosen dem sinnerschließenden Vollzug der Zeichen und Handlungen besondere Bedeutung zu.” Translation is the present author’s own.
them if necessary. The text, however, offers no direction how to incorporate the gestures, let alone how to sign the prayers’ simpler vocabulary and grammar. The volume includes a few texts for *Messfeier mit Gehörlosen* including a simplified *Gloria, Credo,* and Eucharistic Prayer with its own preface and dialogue. But while the volume gives rubrics for the other sacraments’ gestures, it does not indicate what gestures (if any) are to be done during the Eucharistic Prayer.

An (unapproved) *American Sacramentary of the Deaf* was another attempt at producing a Eucharistic Prayer for the Deaf that found its way into some American parishes, perhaps encouraged by the National Liturgy Commission of England and Wales promulgating their *Eucharistic Prayer for the Deaf.* American Redemptorist priest Fr. Len Broniak, C.Ss.R. privately published four volumes of spiral-bound, 8½ x 11 inch *Sacramentaries: Vol. 1 for Advent/Christmas, Vol. 2 for Lent/Easter, Vol. 3 for Ordinary Time weeks 1–14; and Vol. 4 Ordinary Time weeks 15–34.* Each included the Ordinary of the Mass in an easier-to-sign English translation; each Sunday’s collect, *super oblata,* and *post communio* prayers; and about a dozen prefaces for the major solemnities and Sundays. Broniak wrote in the Foreword that the effort was from the start “an independent project which bears no official approbation, but rather

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12 “Wenn ein Gehörlosenseelsorger die Feier nicht übernehmen kann, und selbstverständlich im Notfall, kann sie auch ein anderer Priester anhand der vorliegenden Texte vollziehen.”

13 For the essential sacramental moment during Baptism, for example, the volume indicates both rubrics and spoken/signed text: “*Dann tauft der Zelebrant das Kind mit den Worten:* NN, ich taufe dich im Namen des Vaters (erstes Eintauchen oder Übergießen) und des Sohnes (zweites Eintauchen oder Übergießen) und des Heiligen Geistes (drittes Eintauchen oder Übergießen).”


15 The *Catholic International* editors offered a sidebar comment accompanying the text of the British Prayer: “This text … is offered here for study, and perhaps implementation (with due permission) by other English-speaking regions.” *Catholic International* Vol. 3 (Sept. 1992):785.
is meant to be a grass-roots project with a view to one day seek[ing] ecclesiastical approval.”

Each Sacramentary includes Eucharistic Prayer II in three versions: the ICEL’s 1985 official English translation for speaking priests wanting to vocalize that version; the transcription of an ASL translation, with arrows, symbols, and other cues suggesting how to sign the Prayer; and an intermediate text to aid interpreters signing for a speaking priest, a sort of SEE (Signed Exact English) text, yet still intelligible to the Deaf. The first text does not change any words from the 1985 ICEL Sacramentary but mentions no gestural rubrics; the intermediate SEE text also omits the priest’s gestures, since it is aimed for interpreters; the ASL version is of most interest to us.

Twenty years ago there was no universally-agreed-upon way of doing ASL transcriptions (video recording is still the best way of capturing ASL) and there still is not. It is difficult to capture on paper the numerous grammatical parameters—hand shape, orientation, movement, non-manual markers, etc.—that comprise ASL. Many Deaf today still use “glosses,” English words in SMALL CAPS with a few accompanying abbreviations directing sign formation.

Broniak’s prayer is a true attempt at an ASL text, and to a reader of English it looks almost undecipherable. Unfamiliar cues such as encircled numbers and asterisks were Broniak’s own way of transcribing ASL onto the page. Here is the text up until the Memorial Acclamation.

Lord, self true work
- different - holy.

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16 Len Broniak, C.Ss.R., “Foreword,” Deaf Sacramentary, v. In personal communication 3 August 2010 Broniak said that no such approval was ever sought, and given the reigning in of liturgical experimentation by documents such as Redemptionis Sacramentum he no longer is seeking formal recognitio.


18 These are not to be confused with added marginal comments—also called glosses—found in historical manuscripts.

19 The following, symbols included, is taken from Vol. 4 (Ordinary Time weeks 15–34), pp. 80 – 81.
You come *upon;  
touch ⁰; different ⁰; holy ⁰:  
That yours. (Nod-yes)  
We offer. Ask you send Spirit  
Come *upon; touch (host + cup); different ⁰; holy ⁰:  
Change – Christ, Your Body, Blood ✯  
(Nod-yes) Jesus, willing die;  
Before ²; Jesus call ² friends  
12 group * come, to eat:  
(12 seated around table)  
Jesus took bread  
Offer (up to God), thanks ².  
“This ² My Body: I exchange;  
You saved henceforth.”  
Then he broke*bread*up:  
(Lift-up and show)  
(Point) “This, accept this, eat”  
gave (to side), one*by*one  
(pass around)  
Finish meal,  
Jesus cup offer (up to God)  
thanks ², praise.  
“This (point) Cup – inside ²: My ²blood:  
Blood (?) means what?  
- new relationship (with individuals);  
- covenant (with God);  
- unity (with all):  
Yes * that my ² gift (to all): (Nod-yes)  
This (point cup) continues; stops never: (Shake-head)  
Blood shed/spread (forth)  
All sins forgiven can!” (Nod-yes)  
Jesus took * cup;  
(Tap, tap, tap)  
“Accept this; drink.”  
Gave * cup;  
Pass * to * all  
one * by * one.  
(cup goes around; comes back to Jesus)  
Jesus – (Tap, tap tap)  
“Thisenceforth, you gather*together;  
share, eat, drink;  
Means you connect*with*me!” (Nod-yes)  
Now, together, we believe now proclaim:
This is more than merely an attempt to produce a faithful ASL translation of Eucharistic Prayer II. Broniak inserts material foreign to the source text such as the three-fold editorializing on what the cup means (new relationship with individuals, with God, with all), and mentions that the cup goes all around the group of 12 and comes back to Jesus at the end. He overlooks rubrics such as the *orans*, the genuflections, and bending slightly over the vessels during the Institution Narrative. Nevertheless, Broniak paid closer attention to the prayer’s gestures than did either the officially-approved British or German texts. Noteworthy is the attempt to integrate words and gestures (usually italicized and in parentheses): when the words say Jesus took the cup, the gesture has the priest picking up the cup; and when Jesus offers thanks to God, the text indicates the gesture is done *up to God*.

Altering the words of the Eucharistic Prayer jeopardizes sacramental liceity and even validity, and Broniak’s bold attempt may go too far. While his prayer is problematic, his desire to make the text more intelligible for the Deaf was borne of a genuine concern for their faith. “During the Eucharistic Prayer,” he wrote some eight years later, “one of the most difficult tasks is communicating clearly the richness of the Institution Narrative. While that story can be told clearly in ASL, the signing often follows the spoken English. What is needed is another way and [another] language to allow participation.”

While producing a standardized ASL translation of the Eucharistic Prayer is beyond the scope of this project, Broniak’s attempt to integrate the

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rubrical gestures with the signed text aims at the broader goal of increased intelligibility and liturgical participation among the Deaf.

**Multiple Ways to Solve the Gesturing-While-Signing Conflict**

The problem of what to do when rubrical gestures and signing conflicts can be solved in multiple ways. (1) The gesture can be omitted. (2) The gesture can be performed either before or after the words, dissociated from the moment the text is prayed. (3) The gesture and/or signing could be modified, each done with one hand instead of two. (4) The gesture could be delegated to another to perform. Each of these possibilities will be explored in turn and recommendations made for which seems the best solution each time the text and rubrical gestures overlap.

In addition to these, there is one more possible solution: delegate signing the prayer’s words to an interpreter as the priest speaks and uses his hands for the rubrical gestures. There are several reasons not to recommend this solution. First, it adds another person to the ritual action, causing potential complications (How close may the interpreter stand?). Second, using a translator for the Eucharistic Prayer would require the Deaf to look at the interpreter, away from the priest at the altar where the principle action occurs. Third, priests speak the text in front of them, but translators who ordinarily translate what is heard may mistranslate what the priest says. Fourth, if a priest can sign, and every other time he prays he uses no interpreter, using one only for the Eucharistic Prayer sends a confusing signal: why is this prayer so different? Does it betray a misunderstanding of the nature of the words themselves, regarding them as quasi-
magical? Granted, the Church regards using approved liturgical words as specially important.\textsuperscript{21} Nevertheless, the words of the Eucharistic Prayer \textit{qua} words are not different from other words. If sign language is adequate for other liturgical texts, it should be here too. If a priest uses an interpreter only for the Eucharistic Prayer he may also unwittingly (condescendingly!) communicate to the Deaf that \textit{their} language—of supreme importance to them—is not good enough for that part of the liturgy. Finally, an interpreter signing the consecratio\textit{ary} words might unsettle persons who strictly interpret liturgical legislation\textsuperscript{22} and insist that an interpreter ought not to articulate this Prayer during Mass. If the priest can sign, it is best that he alone sign the Eucharistic Prayer.

\textbf{Proposed Solutions for Each Gesture}

1. \textit{The Orans.} As mentioned, this posture for Christian prayer is among the earliest historically scripted into the rubrics for the Eucharistic Prayer. It is ironic, therefore, that among the ways to solve the conflict of signed text and gesture, the best solution appears to be to \textit{omit the gesture}. The irony is intensified insofar as the \textit{orans} is the position that a priest is directed to assume more often than any other gesture. Given the posture’s venerable provenance, omitting it is not something to suggest lightly. But there seems to be no way to assume an \textit{orans} while signing the prayer. Virtually no Eucharistic texts can be signed from this position. Indeed,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{21} Can. 846 §1. “In celebrating the sacraments the liturgical books approved by competent authority are to be observed faithfully; accordingly, no one is to add, omit, or alter anything in them on one’s own authority.” Washington DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1998.
\item\textsuperscript{22} See \textit{Redemptionis Sacramentum} 21: “The proclamation of the Eucharistic Prayer, which by its very nature is the climax of the whole celebration, is proper to the Priest by virtue of his Ordination. It is therefore an abuse to proffer it in such a way that some parts of the Eucharistic Prayer are recited by a Deacon, a lay minister, or by an individual member of the faithful, or by all members of the faithful together. The Eucharistic Prayer, then, is to be recited by the Priest alone in full.”
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
depending on how it is performed the orans may resemble the ASL sign for SURRENDER/GIVE UP—a meaning not far from an interior disposition of humble deference when praying to God. But this may confuse the Deaf: “What’s he doing? Why is he waiting to begin praying? Why is he giving up?” Similarly, if the hands from their open orans position (palms outward) push away from the signer, it resembles the sign for DETEST/HATE—an infelicitous association. Ultimately, omitting the orans seems the only workable solution. This is the case for the words that both precede the words of institution, and those that follow the memorial acclamation up until the final doxology.

2. Joining the hands. As indicated, the rubrics do not specify what shape the hands assume when the priest joins his hands. Traditionally, the shape of Albrecht Dürer’s Praying Hands—palms together, fingertips touching, thumbs crossed—resembles the ASL terms ASK/BEG/PRAY, as well as the word AMEN. None of these meanings seems problematic in this context, and the Deaf would not be confused by such a posture.

If, however, a priest joins his hands in other ways, it might resemble other ASL words, or nothing at all. For example, if the right hand forms a closed fist against the chest, the left hand wraps around the fist, and both hands move up and down, that resembles the term WORSHIP—a fortuitous connotation. In contrast, hands clasped with all 10 fingers statically intertwined/locked with each other is not an ASL handshape, but if the fingers repeatedly join and separate, this resembles the term FOOTBALL or when they are kept straight, AMERICA; likewise, if both hands are open flat, palms downward, then the left hand grasps the right hand in front of the body, this resembles the ASL term MARRIAGE. The Eucharist’s nuptial connotations notwithstanding,
marriage is not likely to come to mind for the Deaf seeing such a gesture during the Prayer, which makes no mention of wedding, bride, or groom.

There are two ways the rubrics call for this gesture: join hands briefly when transitioning from one text (or gesture) to another; and keep them together during several lines of prayed text. A brief transitional moment with hands joined, pausing during the signing, is not cumbersome and can add appropriate deliberateness to the prayer. Even if the Deaf assume that the priest intends AMEN when he briefly joins his hands, this connotation does not seem problematic. In fact, as Dominic Serra has argued, the present text of Eucharistic Prayer I (Roman Canon) appears to result from several discreet prayers having been stitched together, the seams being indicated by, among other grammatical cues, the text’s regular insertion within the prayer of the (optional) doxologic endings (Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.). Insofar as an occasional inserted Amen in Eucharistic Prayer I is part of the Roman tradition, a posture in Eucharistic Prayer II that to the Deaf looks like AMEN does not seem problematic.

The second situation, however—keeping hands joined when praying several lines of Prayer text—is not possible while signing, and thus the only solution in those cases seems to be to omit the gesture.

3. The epiclesis posture. Although the current rubrics do not specify what this posture looks like, this project follows that which is commonly practiced: fingers extended, hands side-by-side close to each other, palms downward, located slightly above the gifts on the altar. As indicated in this project’s introductory chapter, the traditional epicletic posture resembles

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something like the ASL term for *CLOSED TRAP DOOR*. But that meaning is so rare in ASL (and unexpected in this context) that performing the gesture is unlikely to confuse the Deaf.

In Eucharistic Prayer II the priest has one phrase to proclaim during this posture: “Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall,” after which he transitions into the next posture. It does not seem possible that the priest could maintain both hands in the epiclesis posture and articulate this full phrase: some ASL words (e.g., *MAKE*) need both hands to sign or else they are unintelligible. Even if a one-handed epiclesis is justifiable,²⁴ the ASL grammar of this phrase requires both hands. Consequently, the best solution seems to be dissociate the gesture from the text, i.e., to perform first one then the other.

Which should be done first: the gesture or the text? Insofar as the epicletic hand position is not common in ASL, it seems best to sign the text first (“Make holy, therefore, these gifts”), *then* stop signing words and briefly assume the epicletic posture in silence, with the hands descending to an epicletic position in a manner evocative of dew falling.²⁵ Though meteorologists tell us that dew doesn’t “fall” but condenses onto cooler surfaces from damp ambient air, this scientific distinction is irrelevant insofar as we are expressing the text as given, not offering a science lesson. The movement thus becomes an iconic instantiation of the text being signed: *something is really happening*, the Holy Spirit is descending at this moment.

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²⁴ The rubric preceding the prayer of absolution in the *Rite for Reconciliation of Individual Penitents*, for example, directs that “the priest extends his hands over the penitent’s head (or at least extends his right hand) and says …”

²⁵ There exists no ASL for *DEWFALL*. The priest can use the sign for dampness, or fingerspell D-E-W. Perhaps he might flutter his fingers as they descend over the gifts to suggest the dynamism of the action.
Without debating “when” transubstantiation occurs, pausing the words here and performing the epicletic gesture deliberately should engender in the Deaf an appreciation for the importance of the epiclesis.

If the text and gesture are dissociated too far it may threaten sacramental validity. In baptism, for example, “The minister who pronounces the words must be the same one who pours or immerses; otherwise, the baptism is invalid.” 26 This is because “the minister of baptism must have the intention of baptizing.” 27 Otherwise, it would be difficult to guarantee that the one pouring the water has an intention identical to that of the one articulating the words. Such is a dissociation of agency: the agent articulating the text is not the one doing the action. In the case of the epiclesis, however, dissociation of temporality is needed, i.e., the same priest doing both gesture and text separated by a few moments. Is this problematic? Obviously, the closer in time the gesture occurs to the text, the clearer its meaning. In baptism, bathing a child in the morning and pronouncing the Trinitarian formula in the evening, would not be valid. In this case, however, the separation of a few moments—say, the 10 or 15 seconds it takes to sign the words—would not cause confusion.

4. Tracing the Sign of the Cross. Next the priest “makes the Sign of the Cross once over the bread and the chalice together, saying: so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ.” 28 Omitting a symbol as potent as the Sign of the Cross seems undesirable. While only one hand is needed to trace the Cross, some of the words in this text

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27 Ibid, emphasis original.
28 Note that the Trinitarian formula that often accompanies the Sign of the Cross (“[In the name of] the Father, and [of] the Son, and [of] the Holy Spirit”) is not indicated here.
require two hands to sign; doing a one-handed Cross while using the other hand to sign the text will not work. Further, it may be mentally impossible, especially for a right-handed non-fluent signer. Consequently, *dissociating text and gesture* here too looks to be the best solution.

Unlike the epicletic posture, the Sign of the Cross is widely understood because the Deaf see it even in non-liturgical settings (such as a sporting event). Further, the gesture is highly iconic, i.e., it resembles its referent: the shape of the cross is visible in how the hand traces the gesture. Thus it needs no accompanying text. It seems best that the Sign of the Cross be gestured not in the middle of the sentence, as it is in English, but after saying “our Lord Jesus Christ.” This also will closely associate the Cross with our Lord’s holy name.

5. *Taking the bread while saying the words of institution.* The priest is instructed to pick up the host as he says: “He took bread and, giving thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples.” Then follow the words of institution. The rubrics do not require this, but traditionally both hands are used to pick up the host.

As mentioned earlier, one possible solution to each rubrical/signing conflict is to modify both the gesture and the signing (doing each with one hand), and this is possible here. If the priest is a reasonably skilled signer, his dominant hand can single-handedly do the words over the bread—“Take this, all of you, and eat of it”—while the other hand picks up the host and holds it motionless above the altar. After finishing “which will be given up for you,” both hands could then show the host to the people in silence. But some Deaf persons do not appreciate this

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29 Since the Sign of the Cross is traditionally traced with the (dominant) right hand, signing words with the non-dominant left hand would be difficult for the signer. The Deaf too, watching two independent hands signifying separate things simultaneously, may likewise be confused.
solution. Signing with one hand uses a low, informal register ill-suited to solemn prayer and is sometimes considered rude—analogous to hearing people trying to talk with full mouths.

Consequently, the best solution here once again seems to be to sign the words of institution first, leaving the host on the altar, then picking it up and showing it to the people. In addition, it would be a good practice to point to the host during the words, “Take THIS, all of you …” ASL grammar often gives immediate referents for definite pronouns. What do the disciples take? THIS particular bread (pointing to it).

6. Taking the chalice during the words of institution. After genuflecting (which will pose no problem) the priest continues praying the words, “In a similar way.” Then he “takes the chalice and, holding it slightly raised above the altar, continues: Take this, all of you …” Even more so than the words over the host, ASL grammar itself here prevents suggesting a modified one-handed-signing of the words while simultaneously holding the chalice. Many ASL signs for the words over the chalice cannot intelligibly be formed with one hand. The sign for CUP/CHALICE, for example, must be made with two hands: the dominant hand forms a C-shape, palm to the side, in imitation of a cup shape, and rests upon the non-dominant hand’s flat open palm, as a cup would rest upon a table. Forming the C-shape hand in open space, without resting it upon the non-dominant hand, looks disconcertingly like the ASL sign for MASTURBATE (MALE)—though the nonmanual signals in this context would not reinforce this connotation. Likewise, the signs for COVENANT, FROM, and FORGIVENESS are unintelligible if not performed with two hands.

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The best solution for this is to omit picking up the chalice while speaking. The priest can point to it on the altar to specify the referent of the pronoun THIS when he signs over the chalice. Once he finishes signing the words, he may then pick up the chalice which he then “shows to the people”—a gesture done without words. He then replaces it on the altar and genuflects.

After the memorial acclamation (which calls for no hand gesture and does not pose a problem) the priest continues the rest of the Eucharistic Prayer in the orans posture. The best solution here again is to omit the orans gesture and sign the text up until the Doxology.

7. Raising both chalice and paten during the doxology. This is the final gesture of Eucharistic Prayer II and is different in two distinct situations: 7a. Mass without the assistance of a deacon or concelebrant; and 7b. Mass with the assistance of a deacon or concelebrant.

7a. Mass without a deacon or concelebrant. Presumably, the priest is expected to use both hands as he holds up both vessels, though the rubrics do not say. Obviously, it is impossible to use both hands to hold vessels and simultaneously sign the words of the doxology. Nor can he hold up the vessels with one hand and articulate the signs with the other; several ASL terms in the doxology—THROUGH, WITH, and IN among them—are unintelligible if signed one-handed. Further, it would be awkward and busy to raise one vessel, put it down, then pick up the other. Consequently, again the rubrical gesture must be dissociated from the text. The priest should first sign the words, then pick up and hold aloft both vessels while the assembly acclaims Amen.

7b. Mass with a deacon or concelebrant. As indicated in the liturgical chapter above, while the rubrics direct the assembly when to stand, kneel, and bow, the doxology is virtually the only time someone other than the priest is assigned a manual gesture during the Eucharistic
Prayer.\footnote{Other
times
during the
liturgy
rubrics
assign
manual
gestures
to
the
assembly;
they
beat
their
breasts
during
the
Confiteor
and
sign
their
forehead,
lips,
and
breast
at
the
announcing
of
the
Gospel.} “At the concluding doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer, the Deacon stands next to the Priest, and holds the chalice elevated while the Priest elevates the paten with the host, until the people have acclaimed, Amen” (GIRM 180). Further, in the absence of a deacon, his service ought to be assumed by concelebrants (“If a Deacon is not present, the functions proper to him are to be carried out by some of the concelebrants,” GIRM 208), and this would include elevating the chalice during the doxology.

The deacon’s raising the chalice during the doxology suits his role as the priest’s assistant (see GIRM 171). During Mass when a signing priest uses both hands for the doxology, the priest will need even more assistance. Consequently, a deacon (or concelebrant) could assist the priest by raising both vessels, the paten and chalice, as the priest signs the word. Having someone else perform a rubrical gesture normally assigned to the priest is virtually unprecedented, and for this reason only a deacon or concelebrant, not a lay person, should assist the priest to perform this rubrical gesture.

Chapter Summary

In Eucharistic Prayer II of the Roman Rite seven manual gestures compete or conflict with a priest’s signing the words in ASL. Each suggestion below takes into consideration the meaning of that gesture and ASL grammar:

1. The orans posture, whether it occurs before or after the memorial acclamation, is to be omitted.
2. The joining of the hands. When several lines are to be prayed with hands joined, the gesture is omitted. When hands are joined briefly at the end of sentences or when transitioning from one gesture to another, the hands can be briefly joined in silence, without any text being signed, before moving on.
3. The epicletic gesture. This gesture is *temporally dissociated* from the accompanying text: first the text is signed, then in silence the gesture is performed.

4. Tracing the Sign of the Cross over the gifts. This is also *temporally dissociated* from the text: first the words are signed, then the gesture is made in silence.

5. Picking up the bread and holding it slightly above the altar during the words of institution is *omitted* while the ASL words are signed. Afterwards the consecrated host is then shown to the assembly in silence.

6. Picking up the chalice and holding it slightly above the altar. Here again the gesture is *omitted*. Once the words are signed, the chalice is raised and shown to the assembly in silence.

7. Raising both chalice and paten aloft during the doxology.
   a. If there is no deacon or concelebrant, the priest signs the doxology words and the gesture is *temporally dissociated*; the elevation then is performed without words as the assembly replies *Amen*.
   b. With a deacon or concelebrant assisting, the gesture is *assigned to him* who holds aloft *both* vessels as the principle celebrant signs the words of the doxology.
Implementing the Solution

Design of This Project

This project “A Model for Integrating Rubrical Gestures While Praying the Eucharistic Prayer in Sign Language” involves research with human subjects and was approved for implementation by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of The Catholic University of America. The National Catholic Office of the Deaf (NCOD) board of directors, after previewing the videos and written survey (See Appendix A), granted permission for a presentation at the annual Pastoral Workers’ Conference in San Diego, CA, January 16 – 20, 2015. The participants were asked to observe and comment on the proposed solutions to the problem of how to integrate the rubrical gestures while signing Eucharistic Prayer II.

The project was designed and implemented by the D.Min. candidate, a priest (presbyter) of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. He is the signing priest who appears in both videos. Ms. Sue Gudenkauf, a licensed ASL interpreter, also appears in the first video. Both videos were edited and captioned with the assistance of Ms. Linda Carrillo, a technology liaison at the University of St. Thomas. The implementation of the project was a two-part process. The first part presented to persons attending the conference a PowerPoint (See Appendix B) that described the project and included two videos, each about six minutes long. The first video showed the priest—the D.Min. candidate—speaking the words of the prayer and doing all the rubrical gestures while the interpreter signed the words. Captions at the bottom of the screen identified each rubrical-gesturing/signing conflict (e.g., hands opened in the orans, or picking up the chalice). In the next video the priest appeared alone, both signing the words and performing (most of) the rubrical gestures. In the second part of the implementation, participants completed
a written survey offering their feedback. About 100 participants attended the entire conference, and all were invited to the one-hour session featuring the implementation of the project. About 30 persons attended the actual session. A few technological glitches resulted in a late start, but the mood in the room was positive. Though the D.Min. candidate was not as fluent as the licensed interpreters, he chose to sign his own presentation.

The presentation began with an explanation of the possible solutions to the perceived conflict of signing vs. gesturing, and requested participants’ feedback by means of a survey on the proposed solutions and overall presentation. After watching the first video (embedded in the PowerPoint), paper surveys (see Appendix A) were distributed and the first side (collecting basic demographic information) filled in. The first two questions asked the participants their gender and age. This information would disclose whether the project’s success would be evaluated differently by men and women, and by younger vs. older participants. The third question asked their experience with deafness. It is presumed that the more deeply immersed in the Deaf community the respondent was, the more his/her responses would differ from those of hearing persons. The fourth asked their identity (lay, vowed religious, clergy) and involvement with the Catholic Church (Sunday worship, paid minister, volunteer). This information would test the assumption that the more frequently one attended Church, the more familiar she or he would be with the Eucharistic Prayer and think its rubrical gestures important.

The next two questions asked for respondents’ opinions. Question Five asked how important they thought it was for the priest, during Mass for the Deaf, to sign the words of the Eucharistic Prayer, and Question Six asked how important that he do the rubrical gestures the Roman Missal prescribes. Because the priest sometimes cannot do both the rubrical gesture and
sign the words, he must choose which of the two he will retain, and which to omit. These two questions taken together would disclose which the survey respondents thought more important: the rubrical gesture, or the sign language.

The second video demonstrated proposed solutions to the gesture-while-signing conflict. The whole project was designed to test whether participants thought these solutions were successful. There were three possible ways to solve the conflict each time one appeared: the priest could omit the gesture; he could pause signing to perform the gesture; and he could finish signing the text, then perform the gesture. The second video showed that each of these was employed at different times within the Prayer, depending on circumstances. After watching the second video participants answered the questions on the back of the page indicating whether they thought each of the solutions was successful. The last two questions asked overall impressions regarding their understanding of the Eucharistic Prayer, and whether this project encouraged them to participate better in liturgy. A final box invited respondents to write comments. Surveys were then collected and participants thanked for their time, ending the presentation.

**Survey Results**

Of the 30 attendees, 23 completed and returned the written surveys.

*Question 1. What is your gender?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fifteen of those who handed back surveys were female (65%) and eight were male (35%).

**Question 2. What is your age?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 - 44</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 59</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 79</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No participants were under 25 years old. Three respondents were between 25 – 44 years old (13%), eight were 45 – 59 (35%), ten were 60 – 79 (43%), and two were over 80 (9%).

**Question 3. Which of these best describes your experience with deafness?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deaf since birth</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost hearing later</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CODA (Deaf parents)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nine survey participants were Deaf since birth or childhood (39%), five lost hearing later in life (22%), two were Children of Deaf Adults (9%), and seven were hearing persons (30%). Three-fifths of respondents were members of the Deaf community, the target population this project was designed to assist.
**Question 4. Which of these best describes your involvement in the Catholic Church?**

Most survey participants reported that they are very active in their Catholic faith. None said they attend Catholic Church only a few times a year. Ten (44%) identified themselves as laypersons who attend at least monthly. Seven (30%) were laypersons employed or volunteering in Deaf Catholic Church ministry; three (13%) were hearing priests, deacons or religious; and three (13%) were Deaf priests, deacons, or religious. Notably, Deaf persons not actively practicing the faith are not represented in the survey.

**Question 5. How important do you think it is for the priest at Mass with the Deaf to sign the text of the Eucharistic prayer?**
The mean value for this question was 3.56 out of a possible 4.0, and twenty-one out of twenty-three respondents thought it “absolutely important” for the priest to sign the words himself.

_Question 6. How important do you think it is for the priest at Mass with the Deaf to attempt the hand gestures in the Roman Missal?_

Respondents overall regarded the priest’s attempting the rubrical gestures in the _Roman Missal_ to be less important. Of a possible score of 4.0, the mean value here was 3.0, eight calling it “absolutely important” and eight more “very important.” They know signing is important for communication with the Deaf but are less sure how important rubrical gestures are for Mass.

_Question 7. The signing priest omitted some gestures, such as the open-hands. What do you think of this solution?_

7. How successful was the decision to omit certain rubrical gestures?

![Graph showing responses to the question on the importance of the priest attempting the hand gestures in the Roman Missal.]

![Graph showing responses to the question on the success of omitting certain rubrical gestures.]

Not Successful | Overall Worked Well | Very Good Solution | (blank)
---|---|---|---
0 | 10 | 5 |
The signing priest in the second video omitted certain gestures: the *orans*, praying with hands joined, holding the bread/chalice during words of institution, and elevating paten/chalice during the doxology (performing these gestures while signing proved awkward or even impossible).

Respondents overall thought the solutions here good: of the twenty-three surveys, ten thought it overall “worked well” and nine thought it a “very good” solution, yielding a mean value of 3.24 out of 4.0. Some comments received (see below) expressly recommended omitting whatever gestures would conflict with signing the text.

*Question 8. The signing priest did some gestures, such as holding his palms extended over the bread and wine, without proclaiming any words. What do you think of this solution?*

For two gestures—the epicletic gesture and the Sign of the Cross—the video showed the priest pausing when signing the words to perform the rubrical gesture, then finishing signing the text. Of the twenty-three respondents, eleven thought it “worked well” and eight “very good,” yielding a mean value of 3.09 out of 4.0. The previous solution (omitting gestures) had a higher mean of 3.24, indicating that respondents were a little less convinced of the success of the paused-signing solution than they were of the omitted-gesture solution.
**Question 9.** The signing priest performed some gestures, such as picking up the chalice and paten, after he signed the words. What do you think of this solution?

For some gestures (not picking up the bread or chalice until finished with the words of institution, and not elevating the paten and chalice until finished signing the words of the doxology) the video recommended the solution of postponing the rubrical gesture until the priest had finished signing the text. Of the three possible ways to solve the conflict—omit gesture, interrupt signing, or postponing gesture—postponing the gesture was considered the most successful solution. Of the twenty-three respondents, ten said it “worked well” and nine called it a “very good solution,” yielding the highest mean value of all three proposed solutions: 3.52 out of 4.0 (compared to 3.24 for omit gesture and 3.09 for interrupt signing).

**Question 10.** Did this project help you understand the Eucharistic Prayer?
When asked whether this project helped them understand the Eucharistic Prayer better, seven of the twenty-three respondents answered that it “helped pretty well” and ten that it “helped very much,” yielding a mean value of 3.18 for question ten.

**Question 11. Would a priest signing the Eucharistic Prayer in the way suggested here help you participate in the liturgy more fully, actively, and consciously?**

![Bar Chart](image)

The final question invited respondents to rate the entire project in terms of whether it would help them participate more in the liturgy. Interestingly, of the twenty-three respondents two said it did not help, while none replied “It helped a little.” Ten of the twenty-three, ten said it “helped pretty well,” and nine that it “helped very much.” This yields a mean value of 3.35 out of 4.0, suggesting that the project overall achieved its goal of helping the Deaf participate in liturgy.

**Additional Comments**

A little more than half of the twenty-three survey respondents—thirteen—wrote additional comments at the end of the survey. They are listed here in random order, as they were written, and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

- Since I have become hearing impaired, recently, I liked the priest signing the Mass. Having another person holding the vessels while priest signs is good.
• I'm Hearing, nonfluent signer. I would suggest the priest and D/deaf community have tutorial sessions to learn the signs for the Mass part and rubric signs for the Mass so both D/deaf and Hearing know what going on.
• This gave me great insight to the rituals and ceremonies of the priests for a non-Catholic, like me. Thank you!!
• Thanks for helping me. I need help! God bless you!
• Because I am hearing, this doesn't have a direct effect on me. Perhaps the survey & video should focus on all deaf people's reactions. You are a very good signer! Congratulations on your doctorate!
• As long as gestures don't interfere with the signing … I felt more connected being able to watch the priest instead of disjointed when I watched the interpreter. I think this is essential for the Eucharistic Prayer.
• Even though not all the rubrics are used, the presider is still thinking and feeling with the Church during the liturgy if the priest's body language shows he is following the rubrics.
• Nice job. Thanks for doing this.
• Gestures are important if they are compatible with signs or can replace a sign. Try to do both words and gestures. When hands come down on gifts gesture like "snow" coming down. Very Good for new hearing priests. Look at getting a Deaf priest to do some video, but his way.
• I would like to see Deaf Priest sign the video before making decision.
• For the Deaf to really participate in the Eucharistic Celebrations the need to see a priest signing the Mass. Then it becomes Jesus signing. There is the connection and the participation; the priest is showing the Deaf they are important members of the Body of Christ. Thanks -- Great!
• Need do first offer body and blood first, then said it "Through this …" last.
• It refer sign language to make us to attention what priest to do then also Deaf people will fell heart also realize what priest to show with sign language.

Summary

The implementation of this project took place at the National Catholic Office of the Deaf annual Pastoral Workers’ Conference. It included a public presentation with PowerPoint, the showing of two videos, and the completing of a two-part survey, the data from which have been presented here. The next chapter will evaluate and interpret the data and draw conclusions gleaned from implementation of this project. It will also suggest areas for further study.
Evaluation and Conclusions

Evaluation of the Data

The larger a survey sample size, the more likely its results reflect the broader population. About 100 persons attended the entire conference, and this presentation was scheduled for “free time” when most conference-goers could participate. The Board of Directors, however, had a meeting simultaneously and could not join; further, the presentation was scheduled for 11:30 am, at the end of a full morning and the beginning of lunch break. These factors may have contributed to the fact that only one-third of the conference-goers attended this presentation. The survey results should not be considered to represent all conference-goers, much less all Deaf Catholics. Nevertheless, the data are instructive.

The presentation started 10 minutes late (due to technological difficulties) and ended in 50 minutes; it was thought best not to detain attendees more than one hour after the scheduled starting time, in case they already scheduled something for immediately following the presentation. The attendees did not seem perturbed by the late start. Further, the last section of the survey invited respondents to write additional comments, and they could take as long as they wanted. Several lingered longer than one hour writing comments and interacting personally with the presenter.

Of the 30 who participated, 23 returned written surveys. Why not all attendees submitted surveys is not easy to say. Several were local Deaf Latinos for whom written English is even more foreign than it is for non-Latino Deaf Catholics, making an English language survey difficult to complete. Perhaps others simply declined to take a written survey. A couple interpreters were also present (providing spoken translation for attendees unable to understand
sign language); as professionals, they remain disinterested while interpreting, and they too may have declined to take the survey.

This project concerns what a priest should do with the rubrical gestures when trying to sign the Eucharistic Prayer. Even though Catholic priesthood is reserved for men, female respondents still showed interest in this project. In this survey, the ratio of female respondents (65%) to male (35%) reflects demographics in many other Catholic subgroups. Naturally, priests watching the videos would probably be asking themselves interiorly how they would attempt to solve the conflict; yet lay participants were not disengaged. In fact, what the priest does at the altar concerns all participants in the Eucharist, since he is articulating the prayer of the entire Church. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it, “The ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians. The ministerial priesthood is a *means* by which Christ unceasingly builds up and leads his Church” (CCC 1547). The priest’s manner of praying the Eucharistic Prayer should serve all, men and women, ordained and lay, young and old. For this reason, this project concerns laity and clergy alike.

That no participants were younger than 25 is also not surprising, as the conference was developed explicitly for Catholics involved in Deaf ministry: most church ministers (save those in youth work) are typically more than 25 years old. Unfortunately, this means that the opinions of young Deaf Catholics are not reflected in this survey. It is generally known that youth are less religiously active than their parents and grandparents were. What young, unchurched Deaf persons would think of this project would be enlightening—and probably sobering, as they well may regard a discussion of Mass rubrics (and by a hearing person) as irrelevant for their lives.
How to reach this under-evangelized age group remains a pastoral concern, but it lies beyond the scope of this project.

That more than half the respondents were over 60 is also not surprising, as senior citizens often have more time to attend such a conference. The high percentage of elderly at this conference likewise reflects the broader trend of how membership in many American Catholic churches is ageing. Many Deaf at this conference grew up and attended Catholic Deaf schools together, forging relationships that have lasted into retirement. Today’s Deaf senior citizens and baby-boomers remain a cohesive group, and conferences such as the NCOD Pastoral Workers’ Week are often opportunities to reunite with others they see infrequently. As mentioned, those Deaf schools are disappearing, and Deaf children today are more likely to mainstream into hearing society. Without immersion in a predominantly Deaf school environment, they also seem less interested in attending Deaf churches, especially if many other hearing parishes offer sign interpreters. Some Deaf seniors ponder whether the Deaf Catholic community as they have known it will survive them.

It is difficult to detect in survey responses any affective response. The written comments, though, were generally encouraging and positive. The theological virtue of hope seems to be alive and well in the Catholic Deaf community. Before this presentation, participants’ optimism was bolstered by the keynote speaker, a 30-year-old married man who invited the Deaf to invest in the New Evangelization. His excitement left many Deaf determined to reengage themselves in ministry. That optimism may have warmed respondents toward participation in this project.

Deaf respondents may also have been buoyed knowing that a seminary teacher-priest is giving their community scholarly attention for a doctorate. As indicated earlier, few studies have
investigated how Deaf Christians worship, and even fewer come from a Roman Catholic perspective. Of these, virtually none has examined the inculturation of Roman Catholic Eucharistic Prayers in a Deaf context. On the contrary, the Deaf have often perceived the “hearing” Church as unwilling to adjust its style of worship. One Deaf writer addressing Catholic ministers at a conference in Leuven summarized:

Many Deaf people reject the Church because … they must try to fit into hearing forms of worship with its heavy emphasis on music, wordy English liturgies, and its love for ancient phrases—all through an interpreter they frequently can’t understand. Unfortunately, even in the separate deaf churches and/or programs, there has been little development of indigenous worship forms that reflect the experience of deaf people. All of this has led to alienation and/or superficial involvement in the Church.

This project makes a modest yet scholarly attempt to adapt “hearing liturgy” to account for the needs of the Deaf, and the survey results are positive. Several respondents expressed delight that any priest, hearing or Deaf, is attending to their concerns. This suggests that in addition to there being a dearth of scholarly Deaf liturgy studies, pastoral care of Deaf Catholics also lags.

More than 60% of respondents were Deaf either since birth or became so later in life, and another 9% were Children Of Deaf Adults (CODA), meaning they grew up culturally Deaf even if not audiologically so. It is not possible to know how this percentage compares to the overall conference demographics. Thus, it cannot be determined whether Deaf conference attendees were more likely to attend the project presentation than hearing attendees were. Nevertheless,

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that only 30% of survey respondents were hearing means survey results reflect in large part the experiences and opinions of the Deaf, not just of hearing people who minister among them. As is seen in the comments reported and discussed below, some of the Deaf would have preferred that a Deaf priest do this project, offering his solutions from within a Deaf perspective.

The high percentage of Deaf respondents also may explain why, on the average, respondents placed a higher value on signing the text than on performing the rubrics: signing is their language in a way that rubrics in a book are not.

Most survey participants reported that they were very active in their Catholic faith; all reported that they attended Catholic Church at least once a month, and many were involved in Deaf ministry in a professional manner (as employees or ordained persons). Again, this is not surprising, as Catholics less involved in Church events are not likely to pay for a conference sponsored by the National Catholic Office for the Deaf. It seems plausible to suppose that the more frequently the respondent participated in the liturgy, the more important the person would regard following the rubrics of *The Roman Missal*. However, as will be seen, the rubrics were still considered less important than signing the words of the prayer.

This raises an intriguing question. For a person who self-describes as being a “Deaf Catholic,” what does she/he regard to be more important: being Deaf, or being Catholic? Does the person identify her/himself *primarily* as a Deaf person who “happens to be Catholic,” or *primarily* a Catholic who happens to be Deaf? Which is more integral to her/his identity? This project was not designed to examine such a question, so it is not possible to answer with certitude. Further, posing the question this way is not without difficulties. For one, an adult who identifies her/himself to be culturally Deaf probably either was born deaf or became so early in
life. Being raised with this cultural identity was not consciously chosen. Being Deaf (capital D) is more likely to be regarded a matter of fact, not choice. On the other hand, even for those raised culturally as Catholics, remaining Catholic as an adult is more likely a matter of choice, at least in this postmodern Western culture. Independent of the sacramental character imprinted upon the soul of a baptized infant, a person can later “stop being Catholic,” at least in practice. Someone who cannot hear will likely remain Deaf (given the present state of medicine), and one’s cultural Deaf identity is linked to a bodily condition in a way that Catholic identity is not. In fact, many Deaf champion their Deafness and wear it as a mark of distinction. “Deaf Pride” is familiar in the Deaf community; one can buy buttons and tee shirts with that slogan. Popular culture perhaps now treats Deaf persons more favorably than it does Catholics. In the media, it is politically incorrect to ridicule the Deaf, but challenging the Church is commonplace. It appears riskier in secular culture to identify oneself as a practicing Catholic than as a Deaf person.

The National Catholic Office for the Deaf designed this conference to support those involved in Deaf ministry, including the ordained, consecrated, and dedicated lay employees and volunteers. Another organization—the International Catholic Deaf Association (ICDA)—is a social organization that serves all Deaf Catholics, not just those in ministerial roles. Had this project been presented at an ICDA conference instead of an NCOD event, opinions of Deaf Catholics less active in their faith may have shown up more prominently than they did in this survey, and those opinions might differ from those of NCOD professionals.

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As it is, this survey does not offer the perspective of Catholics active in the Deaf community but inactive in their faith. Their feedback would provide a fuller picture of issues the Deaf community at large faces. For such persons, hearing church details such as how to do the rubrical gestures of the *Missal* may be of little concern, and they may see no objections to more widespread liturgical innovations. Exploring additional ways the Deaf may want to advance liturgical inculturation, however, is beyond the scope of this project.

It appears that some (hearing) Catholic Church leaders are also reluctant to accede to Deaf liturgical inculturation. That some do not understand, much less attend to, the needs of Deaf Catholics is a pastoral problem. During the NCOD conference, a priest secretary from the USCCB gave a talk indicating what the USCCB can do for Deaf Catholics. During question time afterwards, one Deaf minister said the USCCB should more frequently use sign language interpreters in public presentations. The priest acknowledged that interpreters would “help the Deaf understand better what the bishops are saying.” To this the questioner countered, “The bishops need interpreters not so the Deaf understand the bishops, but so that *bishops* understand what the Deaf are saying.” Pastoral care for the Deaf is often a low priority. The USCCB’s *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons of Disabilities* mentions Deafness in only three places—a preface encourages using interpreters; the Deaf may confess their sins through sign language; and couples getting married may exchange vows using sign language—but otherwise shows no awareness of the pastoral concerns of the Deaf community.\(^4\) Ordaining Deaf men is one way Catholic leaders can attend to Deaf pastoral needs, and the Deaf pray for

more Deaf men to become priests. However, the Deaf also would like hearing priests (and bishops) to “become more Deaf,” to adapt their ministry according to Deaf perspectives and needs. In the memorable idiom of Pope Francis, the Deaf too want shepherds who smell like the sheep, who live and breathe and minister within the Deaf world.

Question Five asked how important it was for the priest to sign the words in Mass for the Deaf. Among all survey questions, this one yielded the highest percentage of respondents giving it the maximum value: sixteen of twenty-three respondents considered it “absolutely important” for the priest to sign the words himself. While both videos in this presentation used ASL, the study was not about that language per se. Because Deaf persons are very attentive to ASL vocabulary and usage, including how well interpreters (and priests) sign, a disclaimer in the survey reminded participants not to evaluate the signers’ proficiency in ASL; but they were to indicate how important it was to use ASL. Recall, there was another conceivable solution to the conflict of signing/rubrical gesturing: the priest could entrust signing to an interpreter, leaving his hands free to do the rubrical gestures while he speaks the words of the Prayer. This project did not recommend that solution, and survey results confirm how important it is for the Deaf that the priest himself sign the words of the Eucharistic Prayer.

When praying the Prayer in the liturgical assembly, the ordained priest has a dual mediatory role: he acts in persona Christi capitis inasmuch as he mediates Christ’s communication with the Church, and acts in persona Ecclesia as he expresses the Church’s response. The Deaf want God to communicate to them (through the priest) in their own language, which is why sign language is important for a priest acting in persona Christi capitis. Similarly, the Deaf want to communicate with God—through the ordained minister—via sign
language, which is why it is also important for a priest to use ASL when acting in persona ecclesiae.

A topic for further reflection could compare these results to those of hearing people. How important do hearing people think it is for the priest to pray the Mass in their own language? Similarly, how important do hearing people think it is for the priest to follow the rubrics? It is conceivable that, like Deaf people, hearing people would similarly regard language to be more important than rubrics.

Without entering into a philosophical discussion of how language determines reality (à la Wittgenstein, “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world”)\(^5\), it is nevertheless true that all persons, hearing and Deaf, use language for self-expression. Even God, through the course of salvation history, chose to communicate with humans using language. “In times past God spoke to our ancestors in partial and various ways through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a Son” (Heb 1:1-2). Even more pointedly, God’s ultimate self-communication, Jesus Christ, is not called the Concept or Feeling but the Word made flesh (Jn 1:14). God’s taking a body, and God’s communicating through the body, are co-extensive. Christ’s Body is God’s communication. Already in his 1938 work Catholicism de Lubac wrote, “Christ is the Sacrament of God,”\(^6\) the outward sign of the incorporeal God. Because ASL uses the human body as its principle medium of communication, Deaf people can perhaps best of all intuitively grasp the significance of the term “the Word became flesh.” ASL is an incarnational

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language, the word embodied. In Deaf liturgy the Word becomes flesh, and not only in the Eucharistic Species, but also in language. Just as the Eucharist is the “real symbol” of the Body of Christ (as Rahner called it\(^7\)), language—including, in this case, ASL—is a “real symbol” of the Word made flesh. Both word and symbol work in concert.\(^8\)

Surprisingly, the value of performing the rubrical gestures was less appreciated by survey respondents. Question Six asked how important it was to perform those gestures in Mass with the Deaf, and respondents gave this a lower rating than they did for sign language: eighteen of twenty-three considered it “absolutely important” to include gestures, eight said “very important,” and six said only “somewhat important.”

Perhaps the idea of “following the rubrics” seems to some persons to be irrelevant, unnatural, or at best inflexible. Yet the rubrics prescribed in the Missal are not alien to natural human communication. Human gesture is not as random and spontaneous as may be supposed; social convention can determine which gestures suit an occasion, and when conventions are not followed communication is confused or weakened. The Church through the centuries has settled on certain rubrical gestures because they express non-verbally what the Church wants communicated. Consequently, doing these gestures well is more important than even many priests appreciate. Recall Aidan Kavanaugh’s poignant observation: “The human body communicates much without words. The physical deportment of liturgical ministers is therefore


\(^8\) *Catechism of the Catholic Church* n. 1153: “A sacramental celebration is a meeting of God’s children with their Father, in Christ and the Holy Spirit; this meeting takes the form of a dialogue, through actions and words. Admittedly, the symbolic actions are already a language, but the Word of God and the response of faith have to accompany and give life to them, so that the seed of the Kingdom can bear its fruit in good soil. The liturgical actions signify what the Word of God expresses: both his free initiative and his people’s response of faith.”
of great importance: it should be relaxed and natural without suggesting informality, gracefully formal without being stiff or rigid. The problem with many liturgical ministers is not that their bodies say too little but that they say too much and say it badly.”9 If this survey’s respondents regard rubrical gestures as being less important than words, they may have learned that attitude from liturgical ministers who themselves may have (intentionally or not) implied that gestures are unimportant by their own nonchalance.

As explored in the above discussion of American Sign Language, linguists suggest that both sign language and written language emerged from the same anthropological roots: human gesture. If so, Deaf people could perhaps re-educate hearing people on the importance of gesture for all human communication. Just as spoken communication does not ordinarily incorporate random, “meaningless” sounds into the pattern of communication, so too signed languages do not have random, meaningless gestures. Liturgy, as a fully human mode of communication, should not have superfluous rubrical gestures any more than it does unnecessary words. Every rubrical gesture means something, and hence retaining them and preforming them intentionally better accords with how God and humans—hearing and Deaf—communicate in the liturgical action. Pope Benedict’s observations cited at the beginning of this project seem verified: persons in our technological age no longer appreciate the significance of gestures and symbols, and a new mystagogy is needed.10 How to better rehearse performing rubrical gestures well—the so-called ars celebrandi—might be a fruitful avenue to explore with Deaf (and hearing) Catholics for future catechesis.

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10 Benedict XVI, Sacrosanctum Caritatis, 64.
Questions Seven, Eight, and Nine asked for respondents’ opinions on three possible solutions: omitting some gestures, inserting some gestures within a signed text, and performing some gestures after signing. Participants identified the third solution, performing some gestures after signing, as the best solution. Omitting some gestures was considered acceptable, while the solution of inserting gestures within a signed text was less favored. This may be due to the nature of sign language itself. ASL labors to convey the grammatical variety present in many written/spoken languages. Communicating in the passive voice, for example, or the subjunctive mood (both common in liturgical prayers) is very difficult in ASL, and even something as basic as the past tense is challenging. An English speaker may say, “Yesterday Bob did X,” but in ASL it is usually signed, YESTERDAY X BOB DO. The tense of the verb DO is indicated by the adverb YESTERDAY, which implies that X was done in the past. What this suggests for this project is that while interrupting an English sentence may be acceptable, ASL may not tolerate interruption in the same way. If a non-lexeme gesture such as the epiclesis is inserted within an ASL sentence, the grammar may become confusing. In addition, the non-native signing priest in the videos lacked true ASL fluency; a Deaf signing priest might have been able more naturally to pause mid-ASL-sentence to insert a rubrical gesture.

This project proposed the priest sign the words first, then performing the rubrical gesture. The rationale was that the words would indicate the sentence topic, then the gesture would illustrate the words’ significance. This project did not test whether it would be more successful to reverse the order: perform the rubrical gesture first, and then sign the words. This may be a fruitful avenue for future study.
Excursus: One-handed Signing

While many ASL terms can be signed one-handed, others normally require both hands. But even these latter, if done with one hand, can often be understood by the sign’s context. In casual conversation, especially as Deaf people encounter each other in public, if only one hand is free, the Deaf can still communicate reasonably well using the free hand. This presents an intriguing possibility: Can a priest do some of the rubrical gestures in the Eucharistic Prayer one-handed, leaving the other hand free to sign the words? An examination of the ASL signs for words accompanying the rubrical gestures discloses that typically this is not possible. Some words that occur during the epiclesis, the words of institution over the chalice, and the doxology require both hands.

The words of institution over the bread present a different scenario. A moderately skilled signer can form these ASL words so their meaning can reasonably be determined. Knowing ASL grammar often refers to the sentence topic at the beginning, a priest can pick up the bread with his non-dominant hand and with the other signs, “Take this, all of you …” But the words over the chalice require two hands. In fact, even the ASL term CHALICE itself requires both hands to sign the words over the chalice. If it were attempted one-handed, the resultant sign would resemble another ASL term entirely inappropriate for the Eucharistic Prayer.

Independent of this project’s research, a Deaf-since-birth priest at the NCOD conference himself arrived at the solution of signing one-handed while holding the bread with the other, and picking up the chalice only after signing its words with two hands. When asked about his choice, he was aware of the issues—lower grammatical register, nonparallel gestures with bread and chalice—yet he thought ASL’s preference for referencing the sentence topic at the beginning
outweighed other factors. In sum, the final solution offered by this project is a good one, but other options are defensible.

The final two questions on the survey asked whether the project helped respondents understand the Eucharistic Prayer, and helped them participate better in the liturgy. Though both scored reasonably high, it is unclear why the first question (helped understand the Eucharistic Prayer better) did not score higher. The lower-than-expected results suggests the need for mystagogical catechesis that reflects on rubrical gestures, symbols, objects, colors, etc. Such a need appears a necessity in contemporary culture, not just among the Deaf.11 Merely describing how to solve the difficulty of signing-while-gesturing does not meet a need Catholics have today to understand the full significance of the Prayer.

Further, many Deaf do not even know the written text of the Eucharistic Prayer. Recall that written English is virtually a foreign language for those born Deaf, and many exhibit a low level of literacy. Hearing people can both listen to the priest’s words and watch his gestures. Even if some words or concepts are unfamiliar, at least they know “what he said.” When in doubt they can follow along by reading the words in print. The Deaf cannot read while listening. During liturgy, they simply watch the priest, who (if they are fortunate) is both signing and gesturing. Several theological terms and concepts in the Prayer may also be unfamiliar to the Deaf, who indicated by their survey results they would like more catechesis on the Prayer itself.

Responses to the final question showed that respondents appreciated the project, which they thought would help them participate in the liturgy. Interestingly, two respondents gave this

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question the lowest rating: neither thought the project would help them celebrate the Eucharist.

One of these identified himself as not Catholic and the other as a hearing person who may have thought this project less relevant for her/his situation in life.

In conclusion, the responses to the questions indicate that the participants liked the solutions presented for signing the Eucharistic Prayer and indicated this project overall would help them celebrate liturgy better. The next section presents their written comments, which, in general, indicate that the participants want to explore this topic more deeply.

**Written Comments**

A little more than half of the twenty-three survey respondents—thirteen—wrote additional comments at the end of the survey. Most of these were insightful and encouraging. Some have been edited for grammar and clarity and grouped into six categories (A – F). Because sometimes a participant commented on more than one aspect of the project, the total number of quotes adds up to more than thirteen.

A. The Importance of Sign Language in Mass with the Deaf

1. “For the Deaf really to participate in Eucharistic Celebrations we need to see a priest signing the Mass. Then it becomes Jesus signing. That makes a connection and enhances participation; the priest is showing the Deaf they are important members of the Body of Christ.”

2. “I felt more connected being able to watch the priest instead of feeling disjointed when I had to watch the interpreter. I think this is essential for the Eucharistic Prayer.”

3. “I prefer sign language to make us to attend to what the priest is doing; then Deaf people will feel it in their hearts as well and understand what the priest is communicating through sign language.”

4. “Since I have become hearing impaired, recently, I liked the priest signing the Mass.”

These comments suggest that even more fundamental than an attempt to solve the rubrics/signing conflict is the actual use of sign language by the priest. To put the matter simplistically, first they
want to know what is said, then attend to how it is said. But the “how” does make a difference. Tangentially, many hearing people report that, the first time they attend Mass wherein the priest and congregants both sign, it was a beautiful and captivating experience. They observe how theological meaning can be communicated in new ways and ritual comes more fully alive in liturgy among the Deaf. This is because sign language forces the priest to attend to bodily communication far more than hearing priests typically do. The Deaf are keenly aware of this.

B. Preference for a Deaf Priest to Solve the Issue

1. “I would like to see Deaf priest sign the video before making a decision regarding its overall success.”
2. “Look into getting a Deaf priest to do the same video, but do it his way.”

As mentioned, the author of this project invests 10 – 15 hours per week at a parish where only 25% of active parishioners are Deaf or hard-of-hearing, so his signing skills are limited because ASL is a foreign language for him. A priest whose first language is not ASL tends to stumble while signing. In most contexts, the faithful (hearing and Deaf alike) appreciate a foreigner’s efforts to communicate with them, yet naturally, they prefer a priest fluent in their own language. Interestingly, though, Deaf-since-birth priests at the NCOD conference attempting to solve the issues examined in this project arrived at mostly the same solutions. Had a Deaf priest done the video, survey participants would not have seen significantly different solutions. Still, they prefer native signers because for the Deaf, just as for hearing persons, it is difficult to ignore a person’s “accent” and focus only on the content. Should the NCOD release a DVD with (unofficial) ASL translations of the priest’s prayers at Mass (much as they did with DVD “Liturgical Prayers in American Sign Language,” distributed via Our Sunday Visitor), they certainly would use Deaf priests as models for the videos.
C. The Need for More Mystagogy, especially about Gestures

1. “I'm a Hearing, nonfluent signer. I would suggest the priest and D/deaf community have tutorial sessions to learn the signs for the Mass parts and rubric signs for the Mass so both D/deaf and Hearing know what’s going on.”
2. “Even though not all the rubrics are used, the presider is still thinking and feeling with the Church during the liturgy if the priest's body language shows he is honoring the rubrics.”
3. “This gave a non-Catholic like me great insight to the rituals and ceremonies of the priests. Thank you!!”

Comment C.1. suggests both hearing and Deaf Catholics would benefit from something more than this project offered, namely mystagogical catechesis on the meaning of gestures, symbols, and ritual itself. Comment C.2. refers to the presider’s style and demeanor, what is commonly called the *ars celebrandi*. As indicated, Pope Benedict affirmed that if a priest celebrates the liturgy attentive to the actual rite—including its rubrical gestures—the faithful would be encouraged to participate more fruitfully: “The primary way to foster the participation of the People of God in the sacred rite is the proper celebration of the rite itself. The *ars celebrandi* is the best way to ensure their *actuosa participatio*.”

The respondent offering Comment C.3. appreciated the modest amount of mystagogy the project offered. This person, however, answered Question 11 (Did this project help you participate in the liturgy more fully?) with the response of “No, it did not help me.” Because what the respondent meant by the term “participate in liturgy” was not indicated, it is not possible to account for this low score.

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12 Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis,* 38.
13 Perhaps this respondent interpreted “participate” to mean, “receive holy communion.” In certain circumstances baptized non-Catholics may receive Catholic holy communion (can. 844), and attendance at this presentation of course would not be sufficient to grant permission. Nevertheless, one not receiving communion could participate in Catholic liturgy other ways—prayer, attending to the Word of God, etc.
D. This Project Concerns Others More than It Does the Respondent

1. “Because I am hearing, this doesn't have a direct effect on me. Perhaps the survey & video should focus on all deaf people's reactions.”
2. “This project would be very good for newly-signing hearing priests.”

While this project’s primary intended demographic is Deaf Catholics, hearing persons could also presumably appreciate these efforts. Comment D.1. suggests the respondent felt somewhat distant from the Deaf world, as though this person’s opinions didn’t matter—unexpected for a person attending an NCOD conference. Nevertheless the opinion of hearing persons is also valuable for this project. Comment D.2. was given by an ordained person who may have had to learn Deaf ministry by trial-and-error and wanted to make is easier for those just beginning Deaf ministry. His good advice would certainly both benefit ministers and encourage the Deaf faithful.

E. The Solutions Proposed in the Project

1. “Gestures are important if they are compatible with signs or can replace a sign. Try to do both words and gestures.”
2. “As long as gestures don't interfere with the signing they can be done …”
3. “When hands come down on gifts [at the epiclesis] use a gesture like ‘snow’ coming down.”
4. “I think you should hold up the Body and Blood first, then say, ‘Through Him …’ afterwards.”
5. “Having another person holding the vessels while the priest signs is good.”

These are the most practical comments received on the proposed solutions. Comments E.1. and E.2. affirm the importance of doing both the rubrical gesture and signing when possible. Yet both comments clearly give priority to signing the words over the rubrical gestures. This is consonant with overall survey results for Questions 5 and 6, which indicate respondents considered signing the words more important that attempting the gestures.

Comment E.1. implicitly acknowledges the possibility of a rubrical gesture replacing the signed words. Arguably, some liturgies are too didactic and talkative. Just doing rituals without
explanation or comment can have a more powerful impact than overloading it with too many words. In practice, at certain points within Deaf liturgy gestures can be performed without signing words. When making the Sign of the Cross, e.g., at the beginning of Mass with the Deaf, and blessing the assembly at the end, the priest can trace the shape of the Cross by his hands without having to sign the words “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” The Trinitarian formula can be implied, or at least mouthed with the lips (which the Deaf can observe as a cue to understanding the words). The text of Eucharistic Prayer II itself does not include Trinitarian words when tracing the Sign of the Cross over the gifts; this gesture is “articulate enough” just by its being performed. This approach (gesture without words) also reinforces the solution of performing the epicletic gesture without articulating words: the gesture is evocative on its own.

Regarding the epicletic gesture, E.3. offers an interesting suggestion: modify how the hands descend over the chalice and bread. Some priests presiding at Deaf Mass have been seen to perform the epiclesis as suggested: instead of hands descending plainly (movement that resembles the ASL term RAIN), the fingers are wiggled slightly as they descend (which resembles SNOW). The moving fingers suggests the dynamism of the Spirit’s activity at this point. Yet this seems like an attempt to “improve” the gesture. But does it? As the Second Vatican Council reminded, in the Roman liturgy “rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity; they should be short, clear, and unencumbered by useless repetitions” (SC 34). Eastern liturgies’ gestures often have become complex (see, e.g., the highly ritualized unfolding of the antimension cloth in the Byzantine Eucharist). Wiggling the fingers during the epiclesis may appeal to those who appreciate a more florid style, but this movement seems unnecessary.
Comment E.4. offers an alternative during the doxology. Instead of signing the words, then elevating the vessels, the respondent recommended first elevating the vessels without articulating the text, then re-placing them and signing the doxology. Some priests already do this during Deaf Masses. While sign language, whenever possible, values identifying the sentence topic before commenting on it (recall Question 9, regarding whether sign language grammar would expect the priest first to pick up the bread, then return it before beginning to sign the words, “Take this, all of you …”). During the doxology, if the priest were to raise the vessels first, then sign the words, the meaning of the doxological elevation might be misconstrued. It is not an offering (this happened earlier in the prayer), but is a climax, the culmination of the entire prayer. Further, if the priest were to silently raise the vessels, then replace them while signing the words, what would he do while the assembly proclaims Amen? The rubrics make clear the response belongs not to the priest but to the people (though many priests do say it). Instead, this project prefers signing the doxology first, after which the priest can raise the vessels aloft while the assembly proclaims the Amen. This also follows the ritual order indicated in the Roman Missal. In addition, this visually makes holding the Species high the culmination of the Eucharistic Prayer, taking the focus away from the priest’s signed words.

As mentioned, if the priest has a deacon (or concelebrant) assisting at the altar, the preferred solution at the doxology in a Deaf Mass is to have him raise both the paten and the chalice while the priest signs the doxological words. Video 2 did not show this because the priest alone appeared in that video, but the PowerPoint mentioned that if a priest had a deacon this is the suggested solution. All the priests at the NCOD conference Masses themselves did this already during the doxology. Comment E.5. may corroborate this solution. As worded, however,
E.5. does not specify which gesture the assisting minister might perform. Some priests in Deaf
Masses have been known to have the deacon pick up the bread and the wine during the words of
institution while the priest signed. This solution seems less desirable as it may confuse the
respective roles of the priest and deacon during this part of the Eucharistic Prayer. If the deacon
were to hold the vessels while the priest signed the words of institution, the deacon might look
like a co-consecrator—a misunderstanding assiduously to be avoided—and this project does not
recommend such an approach.

F. Gratitude and Encouragement

1. “Thanks for helping me. I need help! God bless you!”
2. “You are a very good signer! Congratulations on your doctorate!”
3. “Nice job. Thanks for doing this.”
4. “Thanks -- Great!”

These sentiments indicate that overall the solutions were appreciated. This method for
integrating rubrical gestures while praying Eucharistic Prayer II in sign language seems to have
been received well.

Suggestions for Further Study

While this project appears to have been successful—it has found a method of integrating
the rubrical gestures while praying the Eucharistic Prayer in sign language—it has raised more
questions than it has answered. These could be developed in further studies, and several of them
have already been indicated. A dozen areas for further research are mentioned here but are not
intended to be exhaustive. They are listed in order from specific to general, concluding with the
broadest questions about what Deaf ministry says about the Church and what it means to be
members of the Body of Christ.
1. **Would hearing people have answered the survey questions differently?** This project sometimes assumed Deaf people are not much different from hearing people, and other times very different. A fuller comparison of whether hearing people and Deaf people would assign a different relative importance to gestures and language would clarify whether pastoral care for the Deaf needs to be significantly different from that for hearing people.

2. **How do the results of this project apply to other Eucharistic Prayers?** Other Eucharistic Prayers in use in the Catholic Church—notably Eucharistic Prayer I (The Roman Canon)—have additional rubrical gestures not discussed in this project. Which of this project’s solutions work in those Prayers, which do not, and what additional rubrical gesture modifications would be necessary?

3. **How do these results apply to other parts of the Eucharistic Liturgy?** As mentioned, the Roman Missal directs the priest to trace the Sign of the Cross at the beginning and end of Mass as he says the Trinitarian words, occasioning the same conflict that arises when attempting to follow the rubrics of the Eucharistic Prayer. Likewise, before receiving Holy Communion the priest is instructed to hold aloft the fractioned Host over the paten or chalice as he says, “Behold the Lamb of God …” He cannot hold them and simultaneously sign the words. Rubrical gestures in other parts of the Eucharistic liturgy present similar difficulties. Do the solutions proposed in this project work in those other parts of the Mass? What other options might be possible?

4. **Do these results apply to other non-Eucharistic liturgies?** In baptism, for example, the minister cannot simultaneously sign the words, “N., I baptize you …” as he is immersing
or pouring water. As mentioned earlier, the German ritual book for celebrating the Sacraments among the Deaf, *Gottesdienst mit Gehörlosen*, offers a solution. This text suggests interrupting the formula to perform the gesture: first the minister signs the words, “I baptize you in the name of the Father …” then stops signing to pour water a first time; then continues signing: “… and the Son …” and pours the water a second time; and finishes signing “… and the Holy Spirit” and pours the third time. The results of this project, however, indicate survey respondents did not prefer the solution of interrupting the ASL sentence with the rubrical gesture. It is not known how much the authors of the German text consulted the Deaf in creating that text. Nor is it known whether German sign language (*Deutsche Gebärdensprache*, DGS) resists interrupting the grammar with a gesture the way ASL does. If Deaf Catholics who use ASL were to see Baptism performed the way the German text recommends, would they respond similarly for this Sacrament and regard the interruption a less-desirable solution? Similar signing-while-gesturing conflicts occur in other sacraments. For example, the priest is instructed to apply the Oil of the Sick on the forehead of the recipient while saying, “Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy …”, and anoint the palms of the recipient’s hands while continuing, “May the Lord who frees you from sin …” What are the best solutions for these sacramental moments?

5. **Would it be better first to perform a rubrical gesture, and then sign the words, instead of vice-versa as this project suggested?** As we have seen, ASL grammar often prefers to identify the sentence topic first, and then continue the sentence. Would reversing the order have improved this project? Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Deaf themselves
sometimes would have preferred this approach, but this would need to be tested and evaluated.

6. Are Church officials willing to acknowledge ASL as a language capable of adequately expressing sacramental form? While this project did not consider ASL per se, but only the conflict of attempting the rubrical gestures while signing, it is inescapable that the language itself must feature prominently in future studies, since ASL grammar affects how to solve the conflict. Mainstream culture has made great strides in recognizing ASL as a bona fide language, and one can satisfy a school’s requirement to take a foreign language course by enrolling in ASL. Yet Church leaders do not always follow society’s lead. As was seen, some bishops are unfamiliar with the particularities (and opportunities) of communication among Deaf Catholics, to whom language is the most important cultural identifier. Misinformation perpetuates ignorance, and until ASL is acknowledged as a fitting official liturgical language, it is uncertain how much further progress can be made in pastoral care among Deaf Catholics.

7. Would American Deaf Catholic parishes welcome an ASL editio typica of liturgical texts?

As indicated, ASL is the most predominant sign language used by American Deaf Catholics, but it is not the only one. Elderly Deaf persons especially often hold on to a version closer to SEE (Signed Exact English). SEE follows English word order and grammar. Consequently, it is easier for hearing priests to sign SEE as they speak the words of the Roman Missal. Having learned to sign liturgy this way, they may be reluctant to use ASL, and their Deaf congregants may prefer “father’s familiar way” of signing the liturgy. Because ASL does not follow English word order and grammar, it is
virtually impossible to sign ASL fluently while speaking. Some priests may be squeamish about the sacramental validity of the Eucharist done only in ASL, without at least mouthing the approved (English) words. From the perspective of culturally Deaf Catholics there may also be hesitation. Their hesitation might not so much be the use of ASL, but the necessity of seeking formal permission to use it. They might regard the requirement to seek such a recognitio as yet another instance of the hearing Church imposing its values upon Deaf believers. How might Deaf Catholics be educated to appreciate the value of the recognitio instead of being suspicious that the hearing world is still trying to colonize Deaf culture?

8. Until sign language translations of sacraments are formally approved, should Church officials nevertheless acknowledge the sacramental validity of sacraments celebrated in these unapproved translations? The Code of Canon Law can. 928 states, “The eucharistic celebration is to be carried out in the Latin language or in another language provided that the liturgical texts have been legitimately approved.” Since there is no formally approved translation of the Latin editiones typicae of the Eucharist or any other sacrament into ASL (or any other sign language), sacraments celebrated exclusively in a sign language could be considered invalid. Yet various bishops have already ordained more than a dozen fully-Deaf priests—men incapable of celebrating the sacraments in an approved (spoken) language. To assert that the sacraments they celebrate in sign language have been de facto invalid leads to a pastorally intolerable conclusion: all those baptisms, confessional absolutions, Masses, etc. would have to be “redone.” Further, because these men are incapable of pronouncing the sacramental formulae in an approved translation, it
would call into question the validity of their very ordination. It seems pastorally prudent—and theologically possible—to concede the validity of these men’s ordinations, as well as that of the sacraments they have celebrated in signed languages. This would invite sacramental theologians to adjust their articulation of what is required for canonically valid sacraments. To make such an adjustment, the commonly-held belief (even if never dogmatically defined) that for a sacrament to be valid it must use a formally approved translation of its form would need to be reconsidered.

9. **What translation(s) of the Sacraments would (eventually) be submitted for recognitio?**

Among all the world’s commonly used sign languages, arguably American Sign Language (ASL) is the most fully-developed and widely-used. Yet this language is variable and changes rapidly, even as numerous regional dialects exist. If the sacraments were to be translated into ASL, which version would be used? Who among the Deaf is qualified to determine the “official dialect” of ASL? If one could be identified, and the Vatican were to grant recognitio to that particular translation, it is likely that not all Deaf would welcome that version of ASL. Further, ASL has changed significantly in the past few decades, and continues to change rapidly. By the time recognitio were granted, some grammar in that version might already be obsolete. Would the Deaf favor an ASL translation containing terminology that went out of usage years ago? Addressing this issue would require studying how ASL functions in Deaf culture. As we have seen, the Deaf regard ASL differently than hearing persons regard spoken languages, and differently from how the Roman Catholic Church regards Latin as her official liturgical language. Complicating matters, ASL very infrequently uses “frozen texts.” In most
spoken languages, certain texts become frozen: the exact words of the *Pater Noster* or a country’s Pledge of Allegiance do not often change. Writing the words on paper fixes these texts in a stable form. But there is as yet no universally-agreed-upon way to “freeze” a sign language text on paper. With the increasing availability of electronic media, it is becoming more possible to distribute a video of a frozen ASL text. But the idea that a liturgical text’s *editio typica* exists not on paper but in electronic format would very likely cause discomfort, if not suspicion or outright resistance. Is the Church ready to accept ASL as an official liturgical language so that the Deaf have the pastoral care they need?

10. *How can the liturgy be more thoroughly inculturated to suit Deaf worship?* This project’s very modest proposal—the attempt to retain as many of the rubrical gestures of the *Roman Missal* as possible when praying Eucharistic Prayer II in sign language—does not go very far in meeting the pastoral needs for a style of liturgy suited to the Deaf’s worldview. Issues of liturgical space (lighting, church architecture, etc.), liturgical roles, and even such basic issues as liturgical language (e.g., the use of dialogues, formal register, etc.) have all historically developed with no reference to a Deaf perspective. How much can the Roman liturgy bend and still remain true to its identity? Similarly, how much regional variation should an officially sanctioned ASL liturgy allow? Who determines these matters: hearing people familiar with Church polity, even if less familiar with the Deaf World? Or Deaf people, thoroughly aware of the pastoral needs of their members, even if unfamiliar with Church polity? If both hearing and Deaf persons are involved, how many of each, with what qualifications, and who decides?
11. Would granting recognitio to an ASL liturgy in itself be adequate to meet Deaf Catholics’ pastoral needs? Liturgy may be the source and summit of Deaf Catholics’ lives too, but “The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church” (SC 9). As seen, Deaf Catholics’ faith and worldview is so different from hearing peoples’ that pastoral efforts beyond inculturating the liturgy are warranted. Further, an ASL editio typica for today may be inadequate to meet the needs of tomorrow’s Deaf Catholics. As seen, how American Deaf Catholic culture has historically looked—Deaf persons attending the same Deaf schools together, growing up in a culturally Deaf Catholic environment—is rapidly changing. What the next generation of Deaf Catholics will look like, and how distinct their cultural identity will be, is yet to be seen. Who in the Church is qualified to oversee these pastoral efforts? One possibility might be to establish something like a Deaf Ordinariate, akin to what is already granted to Anglican Catholics.

12. How can the universal Church better understand herself precisely as universal by giving greater attention to her Deaf members? The unarticulated assumption that Catholicism is a hearing person’s Church to which Deaf persons assimilate must be challenged. The larger Church must affirm the distinct identity of her Deaf members, and not only for the sake of the Deaf, but for the sake of the Church at large. Charity demands it, justice demands it, and the nature of the Church demands it, as she is not fully herself without all her members. While numerically small, Deaf Catholics cannot be treated as unimportant members. In fact, it is precisely on account of their littleness that they merit greater attention. “There are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I do not need you’ …” Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more
necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with
greater honor” (ICor 12:20 – 23). It seems to the author of this project that granting Deaf
Catholics greater approbation for the use of sign language in the liturgy—all its
complications notwithstanding—is one significant way to give these brothers and sisters
the “greater honor” that is their due.

Conclusion

While these questions remain—and several others could be posed—this project’s success
indicates that attempts—however modest—to inculturate the liturgy for the Deaf are promising
and likely to bear much fruit as they assist Deaf Catholics to participate fully and actively in the
Church’s liturgy.
Appendix A: Survey Questions
A Model for Integrating Rubrical Gestures
While Praying the Eucharistic Prayer in Sign Language
Fr. Tom Margevičius
January 2015

Disclaimer:
The information collected in this Survey will remain anonymous. The data will not be disclosed in any way such that your identity as a participant is knowable by either the researcher or others. You have no obligation to participate in this survey and are not required to answer any question with which you are uncomfortable. Your agreeing or declining to participate will have no effect on your status or reputation. The National Catholic Office for the Deaf assumes no responsibility for the study, and the survey is the sole responsibility of the researcher.
Check here □ if you understand and agree to participate in the survey.

Background:
1. What is your gender?
□ Female □ Male

2. What is your age?
□ Under 25 □ 25 – 44 □ 45 – 59 □ 60 – 79 □ Over 80

3. Which of these best describes your experience with deafness?
□ I’m Deaf since birth or childhood. □ I had hearing loss later in life.
□ I’m CODA: my parents are Deaf. □ I’m hearing, but live or minister with the Deaf.

4. Which of these best describes your involvement in the Catholic Church?
□ I’m a lay person and attend a Catholic Church a few times a year.
□ I’m a lay person and attend a Catholic Church monthly or more.
□ I’m a lay person, paid as a Catholic Church minister among the Deaf.
□ I’m a hearing priest, deacon, or vowed religious ministering among the Deaf.
□ I’m a Deaf priest, deacon, or vowed religious.

5. How important do you think it is for the priest at Mass with the Deaf to sign the text of the Eucharistic prayer?
□ Not important □ Somewhat important □ Very important □ Absolutely important

6. How important do you think it is for the priest at Mass with the Deaf to attempt the hand gestures in the Roman Missal?
□ Not important □ Somewhat important □ Very important □ Absolutely important
After viewing Video Two, please answer the following questions.
NOTE: You are not evaluating how good a signer the priest is.

7. The signing priest omitted some gestures, such as the open-hands. What do you think of this solution?
   □ It was not successful.
   □ It worked somewhat.
   □ It overall worked well.
   □ This is a very good solution.

8. The signing priest did some gestures, such as holding his palms extended over the bread and wine, without proclaiming any words. What do you think of this solution?
   □ It was not successful.
   □ It worked somewhat.
   □ It overall worked well.
   □ This is a very good solution.

9. The signing priest performed some gestures, such as picking up the chalice and paten, after he signed the words. What do you think of this solution?
   □ It was not successful.
   □ It worked somewhat.
   □ It overall worked well.
   □ This is a very good solution.

Overall Impressions:
10. Did this project help you understand the Eucharistic Prayer?
    □ No, it did not help me understand better.
    □ It helped a little.
    □ It overall helped pretty well.
    □ Yes, this a very good way to help me understand the Prayer.

11. Would a priest signing the Eucharistic Prayer in the way suggested here help you participate in the liturgy more fully, actively, and consciously?
    □ No, it would not help me.
    □ It would help me a little.
    □ It would help pretty well.
    □ Yes, it would help very much.

Please use the space below to write any other comments you want to add.
Thank you very much for your participation!

Father Tom Margevičius

Comments:
Appendix B: PowerPoint Presentation

RUBRICS + ASL?
How many hands does a priest have??
NCOD Pastoral Workers Conference
San Diego, CA January 19, 2015

DISCUSSION OF A DOCTORAL PROJECT

• Part of a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) Degree
• Catholic University of America, Washington DC
• Feedback from NCOD will be used in doctorate
• Expected completion May 2015
FR. TOM MARGEVIČIUS

- Full-time teacher in the St. Paul Seminary, Minnesota
- Specialty: Liturgy, Sacraments, Homiletics
- Also Pastor of Minneapolis Deaf Church
  - Our Lady of Mt. Carmel
  - Blended Deaf and Hearing Community

MEETING OF TWO WORLDS

Church Liturgy

Ministry among Deaf
**LITURGY**

- When praying Mass, the Priest uses the book called *The Roman Missal*
- Official Roman Catholic version uses Latin
- Translated into many languages around world

**DEAF MINISTRY**

“Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations … to which the Christian people have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism.”

-Vatican II on the liturgy

*Sacrosanctum concilium # 14.*
1966: POPE PAUL VI ALLOWED SIGN LANGUAGE IN MASS

“With great willingness and kindness the Holy Father has given full approval … and said that sign language could be used with and by deaf people through the Liturgy, wherever it was judged to be pastorally desirable.” -Response to Detroit’s Archbishop Dearden

(Maybe NCOD PW 2017, to celebrate 50 years of sign language in Mass, should be in Detroit!)

FURTHERING DEAF MINISTRY

Pope Benedict called for “the formulation of proposals and guidelines for an ever more specialized attention to these [Deaf] brothers and sisters of ours.”

- “Ephphatha! The Deaf Person in the Life of the Church.”
- International Conference in the Vatican November 19-21, 2009
THE CHURCH NEVER OFFICIALLY OFFERED GUIDELINES HOW TO SIGN THE MASS

Never answered certain questions:
• Versions of sign language (SEE, ASL)?
• Must the priest mouth the words?
• What is needed for “valid” ASL Eucharist?

FOR EUCHARIST TO BE VALID:
• Right minister (ordained priest)
• Right intention (he really means it)
• Right matter (bread and wine)
• Right formula (approved translation)

This last one is why some are uncomfortable with ASL Mass: they don’t realize ASL as a real language, and even if they do, they hesitate because there exists no official ASL translation.
WHAT THIS DOCTORATE IS NOT ATTEMPTING TO ANSWER

1. What is best ASL translation of certain words in Mass?
   a. “Mystery;” “Consubstantial with the Father”
   b. For people’s Mass parts, see Religious Sign Committee NCOD video
   c. I don’t know anyone trying an official ASL translation of priest’s parts

2. Should we try to get official Church approval?
   a. Long, complicated process, about which Deaf are rightly nervous
   b. Does Rome – or even USCCB – know much about Deaf culture and worship?

3. Should NCOD endorse my work?
   a. I speak only for myself; if it helps others, great. If not, no harm done.

WHAT AM I DOING?

• Trying to find a way a priest, when he is praying the Roman Missal using sign language, can simultaneously try to follow the “rubrics.”

• Official Title: “A Model for Integrating Rubrical Gestures While Praying the Eucharistic Prayer in Sign Language.”
WORDS TO PRAY PRINTED IN BLACK

THINGS TO DO ARE IN RED INK

“Rubric” comes from Latin ruber, meaning “red.”

Priests are required to follow rubrics when celebrating Mass.

Rubrics sometimes allow for adaptation, sometimes not.

THE ISSUE: RUBRICS WERE DEVELOPED BY HEARING PEOPLE, WITHOUT CONSIDERING HOW A SIGNING PRIEST IS SUPPOSED TO DO THEM.

He cannot do all the rubric gestures with his hands and simultaneously sign the words.
MY SPECIFIC TEXT: EUCHARISTIC PRAYER II

• Shortest, simplest, often used in Deaf Mass
• Other Eucharistic Prayers (10 in USA) have a few other rubrics, not considered here
• Not looking at other parts of Mass (e.g. preparing altar) or other Sacraments

THINGS TO CONSIDER IN THIS STUDY

Liturgy
• What is the meaning of the rubrical gesture?
• Where and when did it come from?
• How important is it? Can it be modified – or even omitted?

Deaf Communication
• How important is it for the priest to use ASL?
• Does ASL tolerate the insertion of non-lexical gestures into its grammatical structure?
WHAT ARE THE RUBRICAL GESTURES IN EUCHARISTIC PRAYER II?

FORTUNATELY, A FEW TIMES ASL GRAMMAR ACTUALLY CONTAINS THE “RUBRICS” IN THE SIGNING

At the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer – the “Preface Dialogue – the priest must:

• Extend hands while saying “The Lord be with you.”
• Raise his hands while saying “Lift up your hearts.”

After that, things get complicated …
**TWO BASIC SETS**

- Some rubrical gestures do not pose a problem
  - Genuflecting
  - Bowing slightly
  - Joining hands while saying nothing
  - Showing Host/Chalice to the people while saying nothing

- Others can be a challenge
  - Extending open hands while praying ("orans")
  - Praying with hands joined
  - Holding hands over bread/wine while praying ("epiclesis")
  - Making Sign of Cross over bread/wine while praying words
  - Picking up bread/chalice when praying "Take this, all of you ..."
  - Holding up both chalice and paten (bread plate) during doxology ("Through Him, with Him, in Him ...")

**FIVE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

1. Priest does **rubrical** gesture, *somebody else* signs words
   - I won’t regard this as a good solution; if the priest can sign some of the words, he should sign these too.

2. Priest signs words and *omits* **rubrical** gesture.
   - Some two-handed gestures can’t be done while signing.

3. Separate words from **rubrical** gesture.
   - Either sign words first, then do the gesture; or vice-versa.

4. Modify the sign and/or **rubrical** gesture.
   - Some gestures can be done one-handed and signing one-handed.

5. Priest signs words while *somebody else* does **rubrical** gesture.
WHICH IS THE BEST SOLUTION?

• My answer: It depends on three factors
  1. Examine each rubrical gesture individually
     • What is its meaning and importance?
  2. Examine meaning of words to be signed
  3. Practically speaking, what is the priest able to do?

• After considering these three, decide what works best in each case.

SHOULD EACH PRIEST MAKE UP HIS OWN SOLUTION?

What’s good about that
• Been happening for 50 years
• Liturgy should have some healthy diversity
• Priest can decide what he judges best

What’s difficult
• Too much diversity makes it hard to pray in unison
• Church doesn’t give each priest complete freedom
  • “No person, even if he be a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority”
  ~ Vatican II on liturgy (SC 22)
OK, FR. TOM. WHAT DO YOU WANT US TO DO?

• I’m glad you asked!
• I need your feedback.
• I will show two 6-minute videos. In the first a priest (me) speaks the words and does the rubrical gestures (they are Closed Captioned); an interpreter in the background signs the words.
• The second shows the priest doing the prayer solo, both signing the words and attempting to do the rubrical gestures.
• You take a survey to tell me what worked well, what didn’t.
• Your anonymous opinions will be summarized in my doctorate.

NOW LET’S WATCH THE FIRST VIDEO!
BEFORE SECOND VIDEO, LET’S FILL OUT FRONT PAGE OF SURVEY SHEET

• Basic demographic information about your age, experience with Deafness, etc. This will all remain anonymous.
• You must agree to let your responses be used in the research.
  • Don’t forget to ✔ “Disclaimer” box at the top of the page saying you agree.
• Once everyone is ready, we’ll watch second video.

VIDEO 2: SOLO PRIEST ATTEMPTS TO DO (MOST) **RUBRICAL** GESTURES HIMSELF
QUESTIONS, COMMENTS ABOUT SOLUTIONS IN VIDEO 2?

• Remember: Topic is not how good a signer the priest is, but his attempt to integrate rubrical gestures with sign language.

• One note: In the doctorate, but not shown in Video 2, I recommend if priest has a deacon, at end of Prayer deacon could lift up both the bread plate (paten) and the chalice when priest prays, “Through Him, with Him, in Him …”

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

Take as long as you like with the survey papers.

You can even take them with you and return them to me later, before the end of the conference tomorrow.

If you want to discuss more with me contact me at Saint Paul Seminary website.


• tsmargeviciu@stthomas.edu
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March 16, 2015

Rev. Tom Margevicius
St. Paul Seminary
2360 Summit Ave.
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Dear Rev. Margevicius,

On November 3, 2014 the National Catholic Office for the Deaf (NCOD) Board of Directors convened to discuss your doctoral project, "A Model for Integrating Ritual Gestures While Praying the Eucharistic Prayer in Sign Language." After viewing your proposed videos, the Board agreed to allow you to offer an optional, 1-hour presentation to attendees at the annual NCOD Pastoral Week Conference in San Diego, CA January 16 – 20, 2015. The presentation is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. on Monday January 19, 2015 in a room as determined by the conference organizers. The Board also agreed to allow you to distribute and collect anonymous paper surveys and use the data as you describe.

We hope this presentation assists you in the completion of your doctorate and that your work will serve Deaf Catholics and those who minister among them.

Sincerely Yours,

Pat Richey
President, NCOD

Please sign