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## Holy See Press Office Communiqué: some clarifications on the celebration of Mass

Vatican City, 11 July 2016 – It would appear opportune to offer clarification in the light of information circulated in the press after a conference held in London a few days ago by Cardinal Sarah, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship. Cardinal Sarah has always been rightly concerned about the dignity of the celebration of Mass, so as to express appropriately the attitude of respect and adoration for the Eucharistic mystery. Some of his expressions have however been incorrectly interpreted, as if they were intended to announce new indications different to those given so far in the liturgical rules and in the words of the Pope regarding celebration facing the people and the ordinary rite of the Mass.

Therefore it is useful to remember that in the *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* (General Instruction of the Roman Missal), which contains the norms relating to the Eucharistic celebration and is still in full force, paragraph no. 299 states that: “*Altare extruatur a pariete seiunctum, ut facile circumiri et in eo celebratio versus populum peragi possit, quod expedit ubicumque possibile sit. Altare eum autem occupet locum, ut revera centrum sit ad quod totius congregationis fidelium attentio sponte convertatur*”(“The altar should be built separate from the wall, in such a way that it is possible to walk around it easily and that Mass can be celebrated facing the people, which is desirable wherever possible. Moreover, the altar should occupy a place where it is truly the centre toward which the attention of the whole congregation of the faithful naturally turns”).

Pope Francis, for his part, on the occasion of his visit to the Dicastery for Divine Worship, expressly mentioned that the “ordinary” form of the celebration of the Mass is that expressed in the Missal promulgated by Paul VI, while the “extraordinary” form, which was permitted by Pope Benedict XVI for the purposes and in the ways explained in his *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum*, must not take the place of the “ordinary” one.

Therefore, new liturgical directives are not expected from next Advent, as some have incorrectly inferred from some of Cardinal Sarah’s words, and it is better to avoid using the expression “reform of the reform” with reference to the liturgy, given that it may at times give rise to error.

All the above was unanimously expressed during a recent audience granted by the Pope to the same Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship.

