

Liturgical impoliteness: what my mother would say

Maureen Fiedler | Oct. 2, 2009 NCR Today

I've been thinking lately about the decision of Bishop Edward Slattery of Oklahoma City [to begin facing the altar](#) [1], rather than the people, at Mass.

Bishop Slattery says he is celebrating *ad orientem*, (facing East) as part of his urging Catholics "to draw upon the ancient liturgical practice of the church to recover a more authentic Catholic worship."

Authentic tradition of Catholic worship? From what age of the church, I wonder. Surely not the Last Supper. And surely not the "house churches" in the early centuries of Christianity where people sat around a table.

But mostly, I cannot image a faster way to alienate people in parishes than to do this. After decades of being taught that the Eucharist is a communal celebration, this feels like shunning the People of God. I want to ask Bishop Slattery: Are you afraid of the people? If not, then why? as my mother would say? are you being so impolite?

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[1] <http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/okla-bishop-no-longer-faces-people-mass>