



### **Guidelines for Covering Mass, Vespers, and other Prayer Services**

**Services are sacred events.** Please remember that, while you are certainly covering a newsworthy event, it is first and foremost a liturgical service to which people have been invited to pray. Nothing that you do in your coverage of this event should detract from that, or distract those who are nearby.

**Common sense is your best guide.** Do not speak more loudly in Church while covering a Mass or prayer service than you would speak in a judge's courtroom while a witness testifies.

**Keep descriptions concise.** If you describe an action that is taking place during a service, keep your descriptions concise and leave the discussions and color commentary to those in the studio.

**Let the ceremony speak for itself.** One of the most common complaints we hear from viewers or listeners who are trying to "pray along" at home is that there is too much talking over the hymns and prayers. Try to strike a balance between describing what is taking place and letting the ceremony speak for itself. For instance, at the start of a Mass, you might describe Pope Francis moving down the center aisle towards the altar and the reaction he is receiving. Next, you might identify what the choir is singing but then please let the music be heard for a few minutes so that the audience can feel as if they are participating.

**There are particular moments when it is best not to speak at all:**

1. During the readings from Scripture.
2. While the Pope, the main celebrant, is delivering his homily or address.
3. In a Mass, during the "Eucharistic Prayer," especially when Pope Francis holds up the Eucharistic wafer to the congregation and then the chalice.
4. In a Mass, when the Pope consumes the Body and Blood of Christ (the Eucharistic wafer and the wine from the chalice), and then turns to offer Communion to the Deacon who has been assisting him at the altar.
5. If you absolutely must speak during these moments, please keep your voice to a whisper, out of consideration for those who may be near you and to respect the solemnity of what is transpiring.

If you have a question at any time about what might be appropriate, Archdiocesan or USCCB staff will be nearby at all events to answer your question.