



# Concerning the Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC)

The clergy of Vicariate V and the staff of the Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Archdiocese of Chicago have prepared the following information in hopes of promoting understanding among families and within communities.

## The Relationship between the Polish National Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church

Over one hundred years ago, disputes over the way the Catholic Church is governed, and not over our beliefs, led to a painful split. Dissatisfied Roman Catholics left the Church and founded the Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC). The effects of this division are still felt today in families and in communities, especially where the PNCC has established parishes. Because of this division, the Polish National Catholic Church is not in “full communion” with the Roman Catholic Church. This means that, while the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist – when celebrated in the PNCC – are valid, it is not licit (not legal according to Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church) for Roman Catholics to receive them. Doing so reinforces our divisions.

## Recent History

In the wake of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), leaders of the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S. and the Polish National Catholic Church resolved to work together to overcome the division and forge a new unity that would retain the traditions and teachings of the PNCC faithful to the Gospel. They have expressed their “conviction that a way can be found to overcome this regrettable division that took place among Catholics here in the United States.” (Joint Declaration, 2006). These attempts are ongoing and not yet resolved.

Meanwhile, unfortunately, the potential for confusion, misunderstanding, and conflict still exists.

## Local PNCC Parishes in Cook and Lake Counties

- **All Saints Cathedral**, 9201 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago
- **Divine Word**, 3842 W. 57th St., Chicago
- **St. Hedwig**, 3320 E. 134th St., Chicago
- **Sts. Cyril and Methodius**, 5744 W. Diversey Ave., Chicago
- **San Juan Bautista**, 4555 S. Kedzie Ave., Chicago

These are parishes of the Western Diocese of the PNCC within the boundaries of the Archdiocese of Chicago under the administration of Prime Bishop Anthony Mikovsky. They do not belong to the Roman Catholic Church in Cook and Lake counties led by Cardinal Blase Cupich and worldwide by Pope Francis.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How do I know whether a parish is part of the Polish National Catholic Church?

Ask the pastor if Cardinal Cupich is his archbishop. If not, the parish is not Roman Catholic.

### But I've been told that the sacraments, like Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, in the PNCC are valid. So why shouldn't my family and I receive the sacraments there if it is more convenient and less expensive to do so?

It may be more convenient and less expensive in the PNCC, but sacraments are signs of the oneness of our Church community. Baptism and Confirmation are sacraments which initiate and deepen a person's membership in the Church. To receive them in the PNCC therefore makes one a member of the PNCC. Ordinarily, a Roman Catholic should not receive communion in the PNCC.

## Frequently Asked Questions, continued

**I've also heard that the PNCC's sacraments are valid but not licit for us Roman Catholics. What does this mean?**

Every community has rules and boundaries. When we say that a PNCC sacrament is not "licit," we mean that it is not legal according to Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church for Roman Catholics. A sacrament must express and promote our unity.

**We do not have money and time to spare in our family. Sometimes godparents pick up the costs related to the sacraments, but not always. Why does sacramental preparation for First Communion and Confirmation in my Roman Catholic parish cost more and take more time than it does in the nearby PNCC parish?**

Roman Catholic parishes must pay their catechists and directors of religious education fairly. Yet, in many neighborhoods, the Sunday collections are not enough to do so. Parishes must charge a fee for sacramental preparation.

Also, this preparation may take longer in the Roman Catholic Church because we think that this amount of time is needed to adequately prepare someone for reception of the sacrament. This important event in the life of your family deserves our best effort.

If the fee stands in the way, please speak with your pastor to work out a convenient financial arrangement.

**We are not happy that our grandchild will be receiving her First Communion in the nearby PNCC parish, but we plan to attend the Mass there. May we receive the Eucharist with her on her special day?**

The Eucharist is the supreme expression of the Church's unity of faith and life. While our Church and the PNCC are working towards reconciliation and reunion, the unity between us is not enough to allow Roman Catholics to normally receive communion at a PNCC Mass.

There are rare times, however, when a person's conscience and spiritual need may be the basis for an exception to the law. Roman Catholics should speak with their pastor as they are deciding whether to receive the Eucharist in a PNCC parish on an important family occasion.

**I am a Eucharistic minister in my parish. Sometimes my neighbors, who belong to the PNCC nearby, attend mass at my parish and come forward to receive communion from me. I've been giving them communion. Should I stop doing this and refuse them?**

No, you may give them communion, so continue what you have been doing. Canon Law does not object to members of the PNCC receiving the sacraments of Eucharist, penance, or anointing of the sick if they ask of their own accord and have the right disposition. The usual reason for this request would be their lack of access to a minister of their own PNCC church.

**As a Roman Catholic, can I receive communion on an ordinary Sunday at a PNCC parish?**

Roman Catholics should not approach PNCC priests for this sacrament, because there is no lack of access to the Eucharist at a Roman Catholic parish in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

**Our community emphasizes various sacramental and nonsacramental rites of passage: Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, presentaciones, quinceañeras, graduation, etc. My brother's family planned my niece's quinceañera for a particular date, but then found out that their parish is not available on that date – and they had already reserved the hall. So they went to the PNCC parish instead. What do you think about this?**

Our pastors should remind their people regularly to make arrangements with the parish first. Then unfortunate situations like this can be avoided.

Sacraments of initiation – Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation – make the person receiving them members of the Church in which they are celebrated. If you do not want your child to leave the Roman Catholic Church and become a member of the Polish National Catholic Church, then she or he should not receive these sacraments from the PNCC.

Regarding the non-sacramental rituals – presentaciones, quinceañeras, graduation, etc., it would be best to discuss the matter with your Roman Catholic pastor.