

What is “Ad Orientem”?

Ad orientem is Latin and translates as *toward the orient, or toward the East*. Mass *ad orientem*, then, is when Mass is celebrated with **ALL** the people facing East (“All” meaning, everyone, priest and lay faithful, facing the same direction). Why East? East is the direction of the rising sun, which is a symbol of the resurrection of our Lord. East is also the direction according to scripture, from which the Lord will come from when He returns. Having a common orientation for both the priest and the people at Holy Mass gives a new direction and a new focus to the celebration. Instead of being a circle, where people face each other, the Mass has a more upward and vertical focus where the priest stands in union with the people and as their mediator.

When a church building has not been physically built toward the East, the term is ***ad Deum*** (toward the Lord), because the people symbolically face the Lord and His coming. This was how Mass was celebrated from the earliest ages of Christianity until about 1970. The idea of celebrating Mass facing the people was an innovation of the Second Vatican Council. It is not a bad or evil thing to celebrate Mass facing the people - I want to make that VERY clear; we have been doing it for 40 years! However, I also want you, my parishioners, to see and experience the beauty and value of Mass celebrated facing the East/the Lord.

When we restored the four campuses here at All Saints I became more and more convinced that this was God’s will, the celebrating of Mass ***ad orientem/Deum***. Then, when Cardinal Sarah invited priests and bishops to take up the practice in Advent 2016, I was convicted. Our four campuses were designed for ***ad orientem/Deum*** celebrations. The historic altars have all been restored and are in great condition; they are truly worthy, and I think they should be used for the reason our ancestors put them there - to have Mass celebrated upon them.

A couple of notes about Mass facing the East/Our Lord.

1. Making this adjustment will only affect the Eucharistic Prayer – the rest of Mass (the opening, the readings, the creed, the homily, the petitions, and the concluding rite) will look exactly the same. This is not as “huge” an adjustment as you might think.
2. Please **NEVER say** “Father has his back toward us.” This is NOT the case and really deflates the entire purpose of what is trying to be accomplished. We are all, priest and people, praying in union together and we are all facing the Lord to whom we look to for salvation. I will never turn my back on you; but I will stand **with** you and **for** you as your priest and mediator!
3. While some other parishes are making this adjustment, there are others that are not. This is an option not a mandate. So please realize that what you see at All Saints Parish may not be what your neighbor/relative experiences in a different parish, county or state. Do realize however, that there are several priests in our own diocese, and throughout the world, who are moving in this direction.
4. Please be patient and positive. As always, if you have any concerns, please feel free to contact me. I’d also be happy to sit down and talk with folks individually or in groups