

# Fellowship is crucial

After reading Tony Hall's letter about "chatter" at Mass (CR, May 3), I must say that I agree with his call to make sure that electronic parishioners are silenced during Mass, but I can't say the same for his condemnation of "socializing" before Mass. I have encountered numerous programs for Masses on important occasions such as the Mass of the Lord's Supper and confirmation liturgies that have a statement at the beginning explaining that "Enjoyment of one another in friendly conversation is proper and in order." If such conversation is appropriate on these solemn occasions, I argue that it is also appropriate before each Sunday's Mass for parishioners to converse with one another and with their priests, deacons, and seminarians. I would encourage music ministers to consider having some kind of prelude music before each Mass to mark the transition from fellowship time and to quiet hearts and minds before Mass begins.

Not only is conversation appropriate before Mass, I would also argue that this fellowship time is crucial in the life of the parish. As Christians, we are members of the global church, of the Roman Catholic Church in particular, and of local dioceses and parishes. We are not simply in a one-on-one relationship with our God; we are brothers and sisters in Christ and, as a wise priest has said, experience God at Mass in the members of the community present to worship God with us.