ADVENT-CHRISTMAS
National Bulletin on Liturgy
A review published by the Canadian Catholic Conference

This Bulletin is primarily pastoral in scope, and is prepared for members of parish liturgy committees, readers, musicians, singers, teachers, religious and clergy, and all who are involved in preparing and celebrating the community liturgy.

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Preparing and celebrating the season of Advent and Christmas: this is the theme of this Bulletin. Its purpose is to help parishes, families, schools and other groups prepare for these seasons and to benefit more fully from their liturgy.

The articles in this issue describe:

- The history, spirit, liturgy, and customs of Advent and Christmas.
- Ideas for preparing for and celebrating these seasons.
- An Advent penance celebration, based on the theme: *Love others as I love you.*

This copy of the Bulletin is not limited to use in 1976. It is intended as an aid for use each year. Every year we should deepen our celebration of these seasons by improving our preparation for them. In this way, Bulletin 55, along with Bulletins 36 and 41, can be a continuing aid for you and those who share with you in the liturgy of these seasons.
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PREPARE AND CELEBRATE

Christmas can sneak up on us while we are caught up in the mad whirl of shopping and parties, and then be gone without a trace. Too often, by the time December 25 arrives, we are sated with elves and reindeer, sick of Christmas music, tired of jaded decorations. On December 26, our radios give us 'Good King Wenceslaus' and start to wear out songs about New Year's eve. Every celebration is anticipated too much, until it is worn out before it arrives. This is the way of the society in which we live today: hasty, instant, disposable.

The Church proposes a more sensible and leisurely approach, one which gives us time to taste and touch the meaning of each season. Instead of rushing headlong into a major feast, the Church leads up to it gradually. The solemnity of Christmas is a good example of this.

Advent is a time of preparation: We prepare for the joys of Christmas instead of tasting them ahead of time. We open our hearts to the Lord so that he may empty us of ourselves and our selfishness; we allow him to make straight the way of the Lord in us. Advent is a time of looking forward in joy to the coming of the Lord Jesus at the end of time; to his coming when he invites each of us to enter his joy; to the Christmas celebration of his incarnation. It is also a month when we can try to recognize his many presences among us (see Liturgy constitution, no. 7).

The Advent liturgy emphasises hope and joy — gifts of the Holy Spirit — in a time of quiet meditation and prayer. A return to family prayer can be one of the fruits of a well celebrated Advent season. This return to prayer is needed more than ever in the midst of the pre-Christmas rush that presses upon us: perhaps we should take a firm stand this year and drop out of some areas of this whirl.

Christmas is a time for celebration: Purified and made ready by our period of quiet prayer and reflection during Advent, we are ready to hear the Christmas message and to respond to it anew. God loves us so much that he sends his Son to become one of us! He sent Jesus to save us from our sins, to make it possible for us to become the family and people of God. We praise our heavenly Father and give him our thanks through Christ our savior and high priest. We celebrate Christmas with the Church by prayer and by full participation in the liturgy of the seasons; with our families and friends by happy gatherings; with our civic community by sharing our good things with those who have less than we have.

Our society is in need of true joy and peace today. In the liturgy of Advent and Christmas, the Church has these gifts of Christ to offer to its members and to others as well. If we are to gain and share these gifts, however, we need to prepare and celebrate the Advent-Christmas seasons well.

*May Christ give us his peace and joy,*
*and let us share them with others.*

*All praise and glory are his for ever. Amen! Alleluia!*

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A temptation ever present to Christians in any era is to imagine that what we know today — or knew in our youth — is the way the Church "has always done it." Even we who have lived through some of the most concentrated liturgical changes in history tend to think that the pre-Vatican II practices went back to the beginning of the Church. When we study the history of the liturgical year, and see how it developed gradually, and in different ways in different places, we are able to appreciate its meaning and value even more.

Several unrelated events led to the gradual development of the season of Advent in the Latin or Western Church:

- **The Eastern Church** kept the celebration of Theophany (our Epiphany plus the feast of the baptism of the Lord, with overtones of Cana: see Bulletin 47, pages 23-27). The emphasis of this celebration was on the Lord's baptism, and made Theophany rival Easter and Pentecost as an appropriate time for the solemn celebration of Christian initiation. This trend was generally resisted in the Roman Church.

- **Gaul** had many connections, both civil and religious, with the Eastern half of the Roman empire. In the first half of the 360s, we find the first mention of preparing for the *advent* or coming of the Lord during the three weeks before Epiphany. This period was seen as a time of prayer and communal celebration, helping the Christian community to be spiritually ready to celebrate the Theophany on January 6. (Though Rome had begun the celebration of Christ's birth around the year 336, no Christmas overtones seemed to influence Gaul's observance of Advent at this time.)

- **Rome**: After some two decades of participation in the life of the empire — twenty-three years of freedom from persecution — the Church at Rome took a major step against Arianism by establishing the feast of the birth of our Lord, or Christmas. Eleven years after Nicaea, just six months before Constantine was to die, the Roman Church celebrated the birth of the sun of justice, Christ the Lord.

At Rome they came to observe some preparatory celebrations, the December ember days. On the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday of the second last week before Christmas, they held days of prayer and fasting leading to the December ordinations of the clergy. The Saturday celebration was an all-night vigil, and was completed with the eucharist early on Sunday morning.

These ember days were observed in Rome before Advent was celebrated there. Around the beginning of the sixth century, they were reorganized to focus on preparation for Christmas and the coming of the savior.

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1 A history of the Western Church's liturgical year and its gradual and varied development is contained in a special issue of the National Bulletin on Liturgy, no. 47, *Year of Praise*. Copies may be obtained at $2.00 each ($2.50 outside Canada) from Publications Service at the address on the inside front cover.
**Eschatological emphasis:** In the fifth century, a fuller development took place. Pope Leo the Great (440-461) keeps the eschatological viewpoint prominent in his December ember day sermons, encouraging his people to look forward both to the coming of the savior at Christmas and to the final day when the Lord will come again.

**Lenten approach:** By the end of this century, Gaul was moving toward a more lenten approach to Advent, with six weeks (40 days) parallel to Lent. In 490, Advent begins on Martinmas, November 11, and goes on to Epiphany. Caesarius of Arles moves for 40 days of fasting in the first half of the sixth century, as in Lent (*St. Martin’s Lent*). Others began Advent on November 1. A six-week period to be observed before Christmas is mentioned by the Councils of Tours (565) and Mâcon (581): Monday, Wednesday and Friday were kept as fast days in this form of Advent.

Various lectionaries in Spain, Gaul and Northern Italy in the seventh and eighth centuries show five or six Advent Sundays. In the first quarter of the seventh century (Gregory the Great died in 604), Rome seems to have had a five-Sunday Advent: the Sunday before Christmas was vacant because of the Saturday night vigil Mass for the ember week ordinations.

In a way this five-Sunday Advent survived until 1969: the last Sunday after Pentecost was quite similar in its readings and prayers to the first Sunday of Advent. The current lectionary presents eschatological themes in the final Sundays of ordinary time, leading from Christ the King into Advent and the second coming of Christ and his kingdom.
**ADVENT SPIRIT**

*We pray and work together that the Church of God may become more holy, and be ready to welcome the Lord when he comes.*

Advent is a period of preparation. There are two main stages in this season:

- **Up to December 16**, the main emphasis is eschatological, looking forward to the coming of Christ in final judgment, and on our preparation for it in a spirit of joyful hope. This is particularly strong on the first Sunday of Advent each year. It continues the mood of the final Sundays and weekdays of ordinary time during November, culminating in the celebration of Christ the king, and leading us into Advent once more.

- **December 17-24**: The Church spends the final eight days of Advent in prayer, directing our attention toward the coming of the Son of Man among us as one of us. True God and true man, the Lord Jesus is our brother as well as our judge. He has come in love to save us, and to make us the holy people of God. Through us, he wants to continue his work of praising the Father and saving the world until he comes again at the end of time.

**Preparing the Way**

God is always present among us, and yet he continues to come to us. On particular occasions, under certain conditions, we are more open to recognizing his continuing presence among us.

The Second Vatican Council tells us of many ways in which Jesus is present in his Church in order to continue his saving work in the world today (see Liturgy constitution, no. 7):

**Present in his Church:** The Lord Jesus has promised to be with us always, until he comes again at the end of time (Mt. 28: 20). Through Jesus' apostles, the Father continues to shepherd and protect his flock. Through the apostles and the bishops who are their successors, Jesus continues to lead us.

Jesus has also assured us that he is with anyone who loves him (Jn. 14: 23), and that he is present in those who are in need of our love (Mt. 25: 31-46). He is the vine, we are his branches (Jn. 15: 1-10).

**Present in the liturgy:** The Constitution on the liturgy (no. 7) notes that Jesus is particularly present as the Church celebrates its worship:

- **In the Mass**: It is Jesus who is priest and victim, who offers and is offered in the Mass. Like the first Christians, we recognize him in the breaking of the bread (see Lk. 24: 35). We also recognize his presence under the appearances of bread and wine.

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2 See Constitution on the Church, chapter 3, nos. 18-29.
3 Bulletin 54, *Story of the Mass*, presents the history of the Latin rite Mass as it has developed from the last supper to the present.
• **In the sacraments**: Jesus is present in the sacraments by his power: it is he who baptizes us through the ministry of his Church.

• **In the person of his ministers**: The Lord Jesus is present in his ministers, since they are carrying out his work in the name of his Church.

• **In his word**: When the sacred scriptures are read in the liturgy, our Lord is speaking to us. It is for this reason that we give signs of respect to the scriptures, especially to the gospel when proclaimed during liturgical celebrations.

• **In the gathered community**: When two or three of us gather in his name, Jesus is among us (Mt. 18: 20). This is especially true when we come together to pray and sing praise through him to the Father. It is in the celebration of the Sunday eucharist that we are most evidently Church (see General Instruction of the Roman Missal, nos. 74-75), and our Lord is among us.

**Preparing the way of the Lord**: Advent is a time for preparing for the Lord, coming to us as our judge, and — during the closing days — coming to us as the incarnate Son of God.

How do we prepare the way of the Lord when he is already here? He is present among us in so many ways! Yes, he is present — but do we recognize him? Let us take a serious look at the way we worshipped last Sunday in our parish or community: was there a chance that anyone could have recognized Christ in our Mass, preaching, reading, celebration, prayer, community...? Is there room for improvement? Can we work to recognize him more readily, and honor his presence among us? This is the way we prepare for the Lord.

As well, if we listen to the gospel, John the Baptist tells us how to prepare. On the second and third Sundays of Advent, in each of the three cycles, the gospel presents John's message. He tells us how to prepare for Christ's coming at the end of time, and the Church uses his words to help us prepare for his coming as savior. John speaks to us quite clearly: Repent and do penance for your sins, for the Lord is coming to baptize us with his Spirit and with fire. Believe, for he has the Good News of salvation. Share your goods with one another. (This last point should be read in the light of Is. 58: 1-14, in which God asks for religion coming from the heart.)

* * *

**Advent is a fresh start** in the service of the Lord, an opportunity to wake up, to become vigilant once more, to grow into the full stature to which Christ calls us, as we wait for his coming. Advent is the time when the Church calls out: “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22: 20; see also Didache, X: 6).
**The Antiphons**

In the liturgy of the hours, the Church provides us with a form of prayer tested through the centuries. The offices for the days before Christmas contain many prayers expressing the Church's faith in the coming redeemer. During evening prayer of December 17-23, the antiphons for the canticle of Mary (Lk. 1: 46-55) are known as the *O antiphons*.

A brief commentary on some of their rich scriptural allusions is given below, in order to make them easier to use and understand in various Advent devotions.

**Commentary**

At the request of the National Liturgical Office, Rev. Marcel Gervais, executive director of Divine Word Centre in London, Ontario, prepared these notes for readers of the Bulletin. He points out some of the scriptural references contained in the antiphons, showing us further areas for our own study.

Father Gervais writes: "I enjoyed doing these antiphons in the version given in *The Liturgy of the Hours.* It is clear that the original texts were written by someone very much in touch with the bible and with the Fathers of the Church. To profit from them one would have to know the echoes that these antiphons have.

"In general they follow the overall pattern of patristic and New Testament thought. Christ is the fulfillment of the whole of the Old Testament in all its traditions — the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (Psalms and Wisdom books) — and he sums this all up in the main fulfillment: heir to the throne of David. So we have an antiphon on Wisdom, one on the Law, and the rest made up of allusions to the Messiah (new David) in the Prophets. The antiphons also play heavily on Yahweh = Lord = Jesus risen: he appeared in the burning bush, gave the law, created man from dust.

"Finally, these are poetry and are not to be interpreted mechanically. They suggest the images and texts of the Old and New Testaments. Images, like light, are so full of resonances that they cannot be traced with any firmness. The last antiphon is mostly made of this type of general allusion."
December 17

Among the readings for Dec 17 are:

O Wisdom, O holy Word of God,
you govern all creation with your strong yet tender care.
Come and show your people the way to salvation.

See Prov. 8: 22-31. In its ample note (8g) on this passage, the Jerusalem Bible (JB) explains how the New Testament sees Jesus as Wisdom in many passages. Wisdom and Word go together, and play the same role: see Jn. 1: 1-5, 9-14. See also Wisdom as Way in Jn. 14: 6.

December 18

O sacred Lord of ancient Israel,
who showed yourself to Moses in the burning bush,
who gave him the holy law on Sinai mountain:
come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free.

"Yahweh" means Lord. The name revealed in the burning bush (Exod. 3: 1-15) is applied to the risen Lord. In this antiphon, Christ is identified as the giver of the Law in the Old Testament (Exod. 19-20). "Set us free" is a possible allusion to the exodus from Egypt (Exod. 14-15), with Christ as the new exodus: see Lk. 9: 31, where he is speaking with Moses and Elijah of his passing (the Greek word is exodus) which he was to complete in Jerusalem.

December 19

O Flower of Jesse's stem,
you have been raised up as a sign for all peoples;
kings stand silent in your presence;
the nations bow down in worship before you.
Come, let nothing keep you from coming to our aid.

On the shoot of Jesse, see Is. 11: 1-9. The sign refers to Is. 7:14. "Kings stand silent" — this appears to be a poetic text combining several allusions: the principal one is Is: 52: 15 (suffering servant); see also Zech. 2: 14-17. "Nations bow down" — see Ps. 72: 11 and Ps. 22: 27.
**December 20**

_O Key of David, O royal Power of Israel,_
_controlling at your will the gate of heaven:
_come, break down the prison walls of death_
_for those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death;_
_and lead your captive people into freedom._

“Key” — see Is. 22: 22 (and the note on it in JB), and Rev. 3: 7, where the Church Fathers saw Eliakim as foreshadowing the Messiah. “Prison walls” — see Is. 61: 1-2 and eucharistic prayer IV. “Dwell in darkness” — see Is. 9: 1-6 and Lk. 1: 79.

**December 21**

_O Radiant Dawn,_
_spendor of eternal light, sun of justice:_
come, shine on those who dwell
_in darkness and the shadow of death._

“O Radiant Dawn” — We can depend on the prophecies of Christ’s coming as the morning star, the dawn, the rising Sun (2 Pet. 1: 19; Lk. 1: 78). He is the sun of justice (Mal. 3: 20 or 4: 2). As the splendor of eternal light, he reflects the glory of God. He has destroyed sin, and is now seated at God’s side (Heb. 1: 3). Now he is coming to bring light to those in the darkness (see Is. 9: 1; Mt. 4: 13-16; Lk. 1: 79; also Jn. 1: 4-5; 8: 12).

**December 22**

_O King of all the nations,_
_the only joy of every human heart;_
_O Keystone of the mighty arch of man,_
come and save the creature you fashioned from the dust._

There are many texts about God as king: some to look at are Ps. 2; Ps. 72 (see note in JB); Ps. 110; Gen. 49: 10; 2 Sam. 7. Jesus as king of Israel: see Jn. 1: 49. The inscription on the cross proclaimed this in the three languages (Jn. 19: 20) of the empire: see Mk. 15: 26 (also 15: 2, 10, 12, 18, 32); Mt. 27: 37 (also 27: 11, 29, 42); Lk. 23: 38 (see also 23: 2-3, 37, 42); Jn. 19: 19 (see also 18: 33-37; 19: 3, 12, 15-16, 21; also 6: 15).

“The only joy” sounds like Augustine (see Confessions, Book I: 1; Book X: 23). “Keystone” — see Ps. 118: 23; Mt. 21: 42; Acts 4: 11; 1 Pet. 2: 7-8.
December 23

*O Emmanuel, king and lawgiver,*

*desire of the nations, Savior of all people,*

*come and set us free, Lord our God.*

"Emmanuel"—see Is. 7: 14 (with notes in JB), and Mt. 1: 23. The rest of the text is general: there is room for expanding on the general sense of "savior" in the scriptures.4

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Any person or group who follows Father Gervais' suggestions and studies these texts will be able to develop a deeper understanding of the richness latent in the O antiphons.

If each parish made a study of only one antiphon each year, its members could gradually increase their awareness of the immenseness of God's mercy to us in giving us Christ as our Lord, savior and brother.

**Using the O Antiphons**

Those wishing to use some of the Church's prayers during the days before Christmas may include the O antiphons in family prayer and parish devotions in some of the ways suggested here:

- At evening prayer, as the antiphon to the canticle of Mary on December 17-23.
- As a simple prayer; after a moment of silence, we may add: "Come, Lord Jesus!" (See Rev. 22: 20.)
- After saying the antiphon and a time of silent reflection on it, we may add the opening prayer of the third or fourth Sunday of Advent.
- During the rosary, perhaps between decades, we may say the antiphon; at the end, we may add the collect from the third or fourth Sunday in Advent.

**Better sung:** Originally these antiphons were written to be sung with the canticle of Mary. As well as the Latin chant in the Liber Usualis, musical versions may be used in English:

- 'O come, O come, Emmanuel' is based on the O antiphons. CBW, no. 248, contains five of the verses.

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4 For suggestions on following up this reference, see:

- Jerusalem Bible (1966, Doubleday, New York), page 495 (NT);
- John L. McKenzie, Dictionary of the Bible (1965, Bruce, Milwaukee), under "salvation" (pages 760-763);
A more modern version in the form of a litany of intercession, is given in *Morning Praise and Evensong*. This version has become quite popular, and provides a simple response for the people.

Other uses: Liturgy committees, priests, and catechists might consider further ways of employing the O antiphons as part of their Advent program. Key phrases from the antiphons could be used for banners and notes in parish bulletins.

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**READING SCRIPTURES WITH THE SICK**

*We may wish to pray in this manner before reading the scriptures with the sick:*

Heavenly Father,
speak to us, your beloved people,
as we listen to your word.
Deepen our faith so that we may be ready
to carry out your will.

Lord Jesus, light of the world,
guide us as we hear your truths,
and help us to carry our cross daily with you.
Through our prayer and suffering,
save the world and make your Church holy.

Holy Spirit, power of God,
open our hearts to your message:
fill us with love,
so that we may carry forward the work of Christ.

Father, Son, and Spirit,
bless us as we read your word.

Further ideas on visiting the sick and on praying with them are contained in *Sunday Mass Book*, pages 1137-1138.
SUGGESTIONS FOR ADVENT MUSIC

At the request of the National Liturgical Office, Father James Hutton prepared these suggestions for congregational singing during the season of Advent.

Father Hutton is the pastor of Holy Name parish in North Bay, Ontario; diocesan director of liturgy, English sector, Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie; president of the Ontario Liturgical Conference, and regional representative on the National Council for Liturgy. A graduate of the M.A. program in liturgical studies at Notre Dame, he has composed a number of Masses and hymns, including the music for no. 332 in Catholic Book of Worship.

Introduction

The primary source for music to be sung by the congregation is the national hymnal Catholic Book of Worship. Music to be done by the choir alone or choir music with refrains which can easily be done by congregations should be chosen from other available sources: doing such refrains from memory will require purchasing these other texts or music only for the choir.

The season of Advent-Christmas has, as an overall thrust, the threefold approach of looking back, looking at our here and now, and looking ahead:

Looking back (Christ in history): The Church observes in Advent-Christmas a historical remembrance of the period of waiting for the redeemer, a period which was fulfilled in the manifestation of God in our flesh through the birth and epiphany of Jesus. Music has tended to focus only on this aspect of Advent-Christmas. In this context the prophet Isaiah is prominent in the Advent-Christmas cycle.

Looking at the here and now (Christ in mystery): Another emphasis of the Advent-Christmas season is to sense that the Lord of history and the historical events of his birth and epiphany are somehow present to his body the Church here and now in our time. We are called to be aware of his coming in our daily lives, of his coming through the word and sacraments of the worship of the Church, of his presence in our daily struggles and triumphs. Such an approach avoids an overly sentimental expression focussing on the details of the manger, the crib, the baby Jesus, the animals, the wise men, etc. An emphasis of the renewed liturgical reforms is the presence of the risen Lord whenever the liturgy is celebrated. The readings for Advent all stress this theme of the Lord present among us calling

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1 Catholic Book of Worship is Canada's national hymnal. It was edited by the National Council for Liturgy, an advisory body to the National Office. The hymnal is available in two editions:

- **Choir edition:** for all who plan the community liturgy, including priests, liturgy committees, organists, choir members, other musicians. It contains everything in the pew edition, plus musical and liturgical directives and extensive indices. 7½ x 10 inches, hard cover. $5.50.

- **Pew edition:** for congregational use, providing the worshipping community with all texts and music needed for Sunday Mass, Holy Week, weddings, funerals, and eucharistic devotions. 5¼ x 7½ inches, hard cover. $3.50.

These are available from CCC Publications at the address on the inside front cover of this issue.
us to hope. In this context John the Baptist and Mary are presented as models for the Church to follow.

**Looking ahead** (Christ in glory): A very ancient theme which is slowly coming back into its own is the revealed truth of the return of the Lord. Advent is seen at the beginning of the Church year but can also be seen in terms of the end of all time when the risen Lord will come back. The scripture readings referring to the coming of the Lord should not be read only as looking back to his birth long ago in Bethlehem but also as looking forward to his coming again in glory.

All three themes seem to interweave themselves with emphasis upon the emotions of joy and hope. The tendency to see Advent as a type of "mini-Lent" distorts its purpose: it is not a penitential season as Lent is. Its emphasis seems to be more on the attitudes of expectation, longing, waiting, alertness to the invitations of the Lord in our daily living. Here again, Isaiah, John the Baptist, and Mary emerge as signs of how the Church is to stand ready to meet its Lord.

In preaching and celebrating, the local congregations of the faithful are led to ponder this threefold presence of the Lord in history, mystery and glory. Music, as a servant of the worshipping community, must strive to meet these requirements.

**Advent wreath:** An ancient custom of lighting four candles for the four weeks of Advent, followed by a Christ candle for the Christmas season, can be a visual means of expressing the threefold emphasis of Advent-Christmas. Music as part of the ritual at the beginning of each Advent Mass or after the homily of each Mass could give emphasis to these themes.

Following this threefold orientation of the Advent-Christmas season and the specific readings for each Sunday of the three year cycle of readings, music is proposed for each Sunday and feast day. Suggestions will also be made for music to accompany the Advent wreath ritual.

* * *

These suggestions cover the entrance hymn, responsorial psalm, gospel acclamation, preparation of the gifts, memorial acclamation, great Amen, communion hymn, and recessional hymn. Other parts (Lord, have mercy; Holy, holy, holy Lord; Lamb of God) could be sung as they are commonly done by the parish. The mood of these pieces should not be subdued, or penitential in flavor as in Lent.

Suggestions for music during the Christmas season are given in the Christmas section of this Bulletin.

**First Sunday of Advent**

(Isaiah the prophet)

**Entrance hymn:** The priest and other ministers could enter in silence (accompanied by organ music). This would be the procedure if the Advent wreath candle was to be lit at the beginning of the Mass.

If a hymn is to be sung as part of the Advent wreath celebration, no. 248 (O come, O come, Emmanuel) could be used each week of Advent.

For an entrance hymn to accompany the entrance of priest and other ministers: nos. 255, 249, 253, 353.
Responsorial psalm:

- **Year A**: Seasonal psalm with refrain no. 172 or 173; or seasonal refrain no. 192 with proper psalm (page 17, CBW choir edition); or CBW, no. 323, I was full of joy; or no. 242, Ps. 121 (Gélinau).
- **Year B**: Seasonal psalm with refrain no. 172 or 173; or seasonal refrain no. 192 with proper psalm (page 17, CBW choir edition).
- **Year C**: Seasonal psalm with refrain no. 172.

**Gospel acclamation** (omitted if not sung): Commonly known “Alleluia” (nos. 201-207) with the sung text on page 18 of the choir edition.

**Preparation of the gifts**: An appropriate moment for the choir to sing alone. The music should be fairly subdued in character and related to the general themes of Advent.

If the congregation sings, some appropriate hymns are nos. 256, 248, 398, 371, 404.

**Memorial acclamation**: During Advent no. 215 might be most suitable.

**Great Amen**: no. 220.

**Communion hymn**: Hymns with a refrain or psalms are best: nos. 251, 248, 418, 414.

**Recessional hymn**: One of the following (if not already sung): nos. 255, 249, 256, 251, 250, 395.

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**Second Sunday of Advent**

(John the Baptist)

**Entrance hymn**: Same procedure as Advent I.

**Responsorial psalm**:

- **Year A**: Seasonal psalm with refrain no. 172 or 173; or seasonal refrain no. 192 with proper psalm (page 18, CBW choir edition).
- **Year B**: Musical setting no. 173.
- **Year C**: Seasonal psalm with refrain no. 172 or 173; or seasonal refrain no. 192 with proper psalm (page 19, CBW choir edition); or no. 243, verses 1-4.

**Gospel acclamation** (omitted if not sung): Commonly known “Alleluia” (nos. 201-207) with the sung text on page 19 of the choir edition.

**Preparation of the gifts**: An appropriate moment for the choir to sing. The music could reflect the call to faithful service as St. John the Baptist showed.

Appropriate hymns if the congregation sings: nos. 254, 256, 255, 404.
Memorial acclamation: no. 215.
Great Amen: no. 220.
Communion hymn: See Advent I.
Recessional hymn: One of the following (if not already sung): nos. 255, 251, 395, 385, 353.

Third Sunday of Advent
(John the Baptist)

Entrance hymn: Same procedure as Advent I.

Responsorial Psalm:
- Year A: Musical setting no. 192; or seasonal psalm with refrain no. 172 or 173.
- Year B: Musical setting no. 400; or seasonal psalm with refrain no. 172 or 173.
- Year C: Seasonal psalm with refrain no. 172 or 173; or seasonal refrain no. 192 with psalm of the day (CBW choir edition, page 20).

Gospel acclamation (omitted if not sung): Commonly known “Alleluia” (201-207) with sung text on page 20 of the choir edition.

Preparation of the gifts: An appropriate moment for the choir to sing. The music could again sing of the faithful witness of John.

Appropriate hymns if the congregation sings: nos. 254, 256, 326, 389, 397, 364.

Memorial acclamation: no. 215.
Great Amen: no. 220.
Communion hymn: See Advent I.
Recessional hymn: One of the following: nos. 250, 395, 373, 363, 255, 335, 391.
Fourth Sunday of Advent

(Mary)

Entrance hymn: Same procedure as Advent I. Other appropriate hymns today could be nos. 272, 313.

Responsorial psalm:

- Year A: Seasonal psalm with refrain no. 172 or 173; or seasonal refrain no. 192 with psalm of the day (CBW choir edition, page 21).

- Year B: Seasonal psalm with refrain no. 172 or 173; or seasonal refrain no. 192 with psalm of the day (CBW choir edition, page 21).

- Year C: Seasonal psalm with refrain no. 172 or 173; or seasonal refrain no. 192 with psalm of the day (choir edition, page 17: the psalm for the first Sunday, year B, is used).

Gospel acclamation (omitted if not sung): Commonly known “Alleluia” (no. 201-207) with sung text on page 21 for years A, B, or C.

Preparation of the gifts: The choir could sing a Latin “Ave Maria” (no. 316a).

Appropriate hymns if the congregation sings: nos. 310, 311, 313.

Memorial acclamation: no. 215.

Great Amen: no. 220.

Communion hymn: See Advent I.

Recessional hymn: nos. 308, 312, 313, 316 (sung to melody of no. 254).

* * *

Suggestions for music in the Christmas season, from Christmas to the Baptism of the Lord, are given on pages 233-234 of this Bulletin.
SEASONAL BLESSINGS

A few blessings for use during the Advent-Christmas season are included here. Many suggestions and models for blessings, and help for those who want to use this form of prayer, are included in Bulletin 49, Blessed Be God and His Creation.

Blessing An Advent Wreath

An Advent wreath at home is a reminder that spiritual preparation for Christmas is really necessary. The wreath may be flat on a table or counter, with four candles (three purple, and one red or rose), one for each week of Advent. This form of prayer may be used for blessing a home Advent wreath.¹

- Scripture reading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday lectionary</th>
<th>Sunday Mass Book</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Cor. 1:3-9</td>
<td>no. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer. 33:14-16</td>
<td>no. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mk. 13:33-37</td>
<td>no. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is. 11:1-10</td>
<td>no. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lk. 21:25-28</td>
<td>see no. 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Prayer:

  Heavenly Father,
  this wreath reminds us of the victory of Jesus Christ
  over sin and sadness and death.
  He was crowned the heroic savior of people everywhere.
  We look forward to his coming again at the end of time,
  when his victory will be completed.

  May this wreath remind us
  to prepare our hearts for his coming.

  We ask this grace, Father,
  through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

- Song: A hymn may be sung: O come, O come, Emmanuel (CBW, no. 248)
  — at least the first verse and refrain.

¹ This blessing for a home Advent wreath was contributed by Rev. Allan Charbon, OSA, and is reprinted with permission from the parish bulletin of St. Augustine's Church, Ottawa.
Blessing a Crib

For use in home or classroom. All should be involved in preparing the crib (and decorating the room and tree). At home, various members may share in parts of the rite, with the blessing given by one or both of the parents. A school group may choose one of their members or their teacher to read the prayer of blessing; a different person would read each of the short scripture passages.

A short prayer begins the period of work on the crib and tree. One person leads the prayer, and the rest respond.

Leader:
Lord Jesus,
bless + us as we make everything ready for Christmas.

All Amen!
Holy Mary, mother of God,

All Pray for us.
St. Joseph,

All Pray for us.
St. John the Baptist,
help us to prepare the way of the Lord:

All Pray for us.
All you saints of God,

All Pray for us.
Teach us to repent,
and to turn back to God.

Decoration: Then the time of decoration begins. During this season, or at another time, banners and posters, wreaths and other decorations may be made for trees, doors or windows at home or school. While this work goes on, Advent songs or Christmas carols (rather than sleighbell or winter songs) may be sung quietly, or played in the background. If possible, each home, room or tree should have a cross of lights — outdoors or in a window — a visible proclamation of our faith.

Prayer service: When everything is ready and the room tidied, all stand around the crib.

* Readings:

Leader:

Let us listen to the story of Christmas.

A first reader reads Heb. 1: 1-3 (God prepares us for the coming of our savior). A second reader reads Jn. 3: 16-17 (God’s love for us). Then a third
reader reads Lk. 1: 28-33 (our savior is coming).

All may sing a response (for example, the refrain from CBW, no. 400).

The first reader reads Lk. 2: 1-5 (trip to Bethlehem), followed by the second reader with Lk. 2: 6-7 (birth of Jesus). The third reader concludes with Lk. 2: 8-20 (shepherds).

All may sing a verse or two of Silent night, or the Huron carol (CBW, nos. 257, 266).

The first reader then reads Heb. 1: 4-6 (adoration by angels). A song follows: Angels we have heard on high, What child is this, or Good Christian men, rejoice (CBW, nos. 268, 265, 270).

*Litany:* A litany may be prepared in advance, based on the format of Ps. 136, praising God for the events of the Christmas story. This would use scripture phrases taken from the readings of the Christmas season (lectionary, nos. 13-20, 203-219). The refrain may be CBW, no. 196; or one of nos. 185, 191, 239, 246. Sample petitions:

Give thanks to God, for he is good.  \( \Re. \)

He sent his Son to be one of us.  \( \Re. \)

He sent his Son because he loves us.  \( \Re. \)

He sent his Son to dwell among us.  \( \Re. \)

He sent his Son to save us.  \( \Re. \)

Jesus came to save us from sin.  \( \Re. \)

He came to bring us eternal life.  \( \Re. \)

*Blessing:* After the litany, the leader or the person chosen for this blesses the crib:

Let us ask God to bless our work.

(All pause for a moment of silent prayer).

Blessed are you, Lord God, king of all creation: we praise you for your love.

We thank you because you have loved us so much that you sent your only Son to bring us eternal life.

Bless + this crib that we have prepared, and let it be a reminder to us of the Lord Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary.

Father, we praise you through Christ our Lord.

All  Amen!

*The celebration concludes with all standing around the crib, singing O come, all ye faithful (CBW, no. 258).*
Blessing a Christmas Tree

The Christmas tree is prominent in most homes during this season of celebration. To some it would seem to be only a sign of materialism, surrounded by a lavish display of gifts. Each family may easily make it a more Christian symbol in several ways. The prayers may be adapted as desired.

Lights: The lights on the Christmas tree can be a reminder of Christ, who called himself the light of the world (see Bulletin 41, page 314). A cross of lights may be placed on the tree.

- **First lighting:** When the tree lights are lighted for the first time, a reading based on some of John's texts about Christ as light could be read, along with the prayers suggested below, or in the place of the reading during the blessing of the tree.

- **Each day:** When it is time to turn on the tree lights, the family can make it a moment of prayer. After the sign of the cross, someone says:

  Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

  All answer:

  He is the true light who enlightens us all.*

  Then the tree lights are turned on.

- **Collect:** If desired, a suitable collect may be added: during Advent, from the previous Sunday, or another prayer for light: see *Sunday Mass Book*, pages 744, 751. On Christmas night, the opening prayer in SMB, page 98; during the Christmas season, SMB, pages 102, 123, or 128; on feasts, the prayer of the day is appropriate. A brief ending, such as “We ask this grace through Christ our Lord,” is added, and all answer, “Amen!”

Symbols: Families could be encouraged to make a number of tree decorations which incorporate Christian symbols. (Christmas cards and magazines often contain some of these: they can be saved for next year's tree.) Symbols can be made of cardboard, construction paper, cloth, aluminum foil, wood, or other suitable materials.

- **A small banner** can be made in a long, narrow form (about four inches wide, several feet long), and used either as a hanging near the tree, or as a streamer from one branch to another. An appropriate symbol, or the title of one of the O antiphons could be on the banner. Others may prefer to hang a banner or two elsewhere in the room.4

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2 See Jn. 1: 4-5, (7-8), 9; 3: 19-21; (5: 35); 8: 12; 9: 5; 12: 36, 46. See also Lk. 2: 32.

8 See Jn. 8: 12 and 1: 9.

**Blessing the Christmas tree:** When the tree is decorated, the family gathers around it. Friends and neighbors may be invited also.

- **Opening song:** All sing a verse or two of a suitable hymn or carol: O come, O come, Emmanuel (CBW, no. 248, especially verse 3, "O come, thou day-spring"); Awake, awake (no. 255); Silent night (no. 257); O come, all ye faithful (no. 258).

- **Reading:** A gospel passage may be read: Lk. 2:1-14 (SMB, pages 100-101); Lk. 2:15-20 (SMB, page 104); Lk. 2:16-20 (SMB, page 121, first paragraph); Lk. 2:25-32 (SMB, page 115, bottom two paragraphs); Jn. 1:1-5, 9-14 (SMB, pages 110-111).

- **Silent prayer:** The group pauses for a moment of silent reflection on God's love for us.

- **Blessing:** All stand — if desired, with hands outstretched in prayer — as one of the parents prays:

  All glory and praise to you, heavenly Father:
  we thank you for sending us your Son Jesus
to be our brother.

  Bless + us as we gather here,
  and bless + our Christmas tree.
  Let its lights remind us of Jesus,
  who came to save us from sin.

  Father, we love you,
  and we praise you through Christ our Lord.

  All  Amen !

Or this form of blessing may be used:

Father in heaven,
we thank you for your goodness.
Bless + this tree that we have decorated
in honor of your Son's birth among us:
let its lights remind us that he is Lord,
and its decorations recall our joy.
Grant that we may receive him as our savior,
and continue to give you glory by our lives.

We ask this grace, Father,
in the name of Christ our Lord.

All  Amen !

- **Sign of peace:** The family may share a sign of peace.

- **Concluding hymn:** One of the songs mentioned above, or another carol may be sung.
**Blessing of a Family Gathering**

This blessing⁵ may be given by the father when the family gathers during this season. Perhaps the most suitable time would be at the beginning of Christmas dinner. All remain standing during this blessing.

Father in heaven,
we praise you for giving us your Son
to be our savior and Lord.
Bless us all as we gather here today (tonight),
and let us live happily in your love
throughout this coming year.

Hear our prayer, loving Father,
for we ask this in Jesus’ name.

**All** Amen!

The parents may conclude this blessing by a ritual gesture — laying their hands on the heads of their children and other guests, or by a sign of the cross on their foreheads, by a kiss or handclasp or embrace, or by inviting each person to sign himself or another person. All wish one another the peace of Christ and continue the meal.

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⁵ Adapted slightly from Bulletin 49, page 176.

**A PRAYER**

_Blessed are you, Lord God,  
king of the universe:  
you have forgiven us our sins  
and have called us to be your holy people.  
Give us your Spirit to guide us each day,  
so that we may continue to die to sin  
and to live with Jesus for you._

_Father, we ask this grace  
through Jesus, our brother and our Lord,  
in the communion of your Holy Spirit. Amen!_
TEACHING AID

This article is the second in a series on using Sunday Mass Book as a means of helping people to grow in their understanding, celebration, and love of the liturgy in their daily lives. The first article appeared in Bulletin 54.

Pastor and teachers can use Sunday Mass Book to help themselves and their people to prepare for and celebrate the Advent and Christmas seasons well. Some elements are listed below:

Contents: Abundant texts and instructional material are provided for these seasons:

- Overview of the liturgical year; place of the Christmas cycle (pages 20-22).
- Advent:
  - Introduction to the season (pages 34-35).
  - Advent Mass texts, including insights into each liturgy of the word: Sundays of year A, the year of Matthew (pages 36-53); year B, the year of Mark (54-70); year C, the year of Luke (71-87).
  - Appropriate prefaces: nos. 1-2 (pages 597-598); also no. 44 (page 625); nos. 56-57 (pages 633-634); nos. 61-62, pages 636-637.
- Christmas season:
  - Introduction to the season (pages 90-91).
  - Mass texts, including insights into each liturgy of the word, from Christmas eve to the baptism of the Lord (pages 92-139).
  - Suitable prefaces: nos. 3-7 (pages 598-601); no. 49 (page 628).
- Additional material for Advent and Christmas seasons:
  - Common psalm refrains (pages 679-680).
  - Some saints of Nov. 30-Jan. 12 (pages 1265-1273, 1186-1187).
  - Calendars to locate Mass texts for current year (pages 1336-1344).

Art: The art in this book also provides another source of inspiration for these two seasons. Several works are related to the liturgy of Advent and Christmastime:

- Hands: Advent (page 33); Christmas (89).
- Color reproductions:
  - Waiting for the Lord (facing page 48).

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1 Sunday Mass Book for Canada: Designed by the National Liturgical Office as a pastoral aid for preparing and following up the Sunday liturgy, this is a book for worship, for prayer, and for Christian living. Twenty Canadian artists from all parts of the country were commissioned to prepare the art section: 19 pages of full-color reproductions, seven pages of black and white pencil drawings. Printed in red and black, padded covers, ribbons, protective slip case; 1344 pages, 4½ x 6¾ inches. $10.95, including postage. Available from CCC Publications, 90 Parent Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1.
— Mary the mother of God (facing 816).
— Nativity (facing 96).
— The baptism of the Lord by John the Baptist (facing 1104).

A catalogue containing these reproductions along with fuller descriptions of the art in *Sunday Mass Book* may be obtained from CCC Publications.2

**Prayer section:** This book provides practical help for people wishing to deepen their prayer life. The section on growing in prayer (1286-1335) provides 50 pages of instruction and guidance in prayer, along with many prayers and forms of prayer from the Church's tradition as a praying people.

These are some prayers appropriate for use during the seasons of Christmas and Advent:

- **Seasonal Masses** provide many prayers, readings, acclamations, and psalms for use in personal prayer and reflection.

- **Other prayers:**
  - Prayers to Mary (pages 1293-1298); canticles of Zechariah (1299-1300) and of Mary (1301); Angelus (1302-1303); forms for morning and evening prayer (1299-1302).
  - New Testament prayer (*Come, Lord!* — page 1321); prayers of praise (1318, 1291, 1322); prayers of thanksgiving, including the *Te Deum* (1325-1326); praying before and after Mass (1331-1335).
  - Prayer for the family (page 1323); parental blessing for children (1327-1328); meal prayers (1328-1330).

- **Seasonal bible services:** Several outlines of a seasonal bible service may be developed for use by families, classes, organizations, or as parish devotions.

  - **Simple form of morning and evening prayer** (pages 1299-1302), using seasonal readings and responsorial psalms.

  - **Simple daily service:** Sign of the cross; opening prayer (from seasonal Mass); a reading or responsorial psalm from last Sunday's liturgy; silent prayer; intercessions or prayer of the faithful (see pages 1300, 1301-1302, 1335); Lord's prayer (672-674, or 1290).

  - **On Saturday or Sundays:** Texts are taken from the proper Sunday Mass (see calendars, pages 1336-1344). Sign of the cross; opening prayer; responsorial psalm, with sung antiphon if possible (679-680), or *alleluia* (587); gospel; silent prayer; *Lord, have mercy* (582) or *Lamb or God* (675), sung if possible; (during Christmas season, *Glory to God*, page 583, may be used); blessing of children (1327-1328) or prayer for the family (1323); *Our Father*, sung if possible (672-

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2 *Art Collection/Collection d'Art:* This catalogue contains the 19 full-color reproductions and seven black-and-white pencil drawings from *Sunday Mass Book*, along with fuller notes and explanations of the art, based mainly on comments by the artists. English and French text. Coated paper, 59 pages, 6½ × 10 inches, $3.50, including postage. Available from CCC Publications.
674). Seasonal hymns may begin and end the celebration. In a church service, several readings may be used, and a homily would be given after the gospel.

**Practical use:** From the wealth of material now available in Canada's *Sunday Mass Book*, different items can be selected over a period of years.

- **Parishes:** the pastor and the liturgy committee could suggest some of these ideas through the weekly bulletin, or in a bulletin insert; or in a pre-seasonal letter to all families.

- **Catechists** can use seasonal material in their teaching, and can encourage their students to use *Sunday Mass Book* as a resource book in their class work and in their celebrations.

*Used to its fullest extent, Sunday Mass Book provides a strong aid for growing in the spirit of the liturgy.*
PENANCE CELEBRATION
Advent 1976

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

a) Purpose: Bible services are encouraged in a special way during Advent and
Lent as one way of promoting a warm and living love for scripture among God's
people (Liturgy constitution, nos. 24; 35:4). Penance celebrations help the
Christian community to deepen its spirit of penance, and assist individuals as they
prepare to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation.

Many members of a spiritual community may benefit from a bible service
celebrating God's gift of forgiveness. This service may be used at any time during
Advent, but it is recommended for the final ten days of the season. Preparations
should begin well in advance of the date chosen.

During the final days of Advent, the Christian community is preparing for
the celebration of Christmas. This penance celebration should help them in making
straight the way of the Lord.

b) Personal attention: The priest should seek to make the celebration of the
sacrament of reconciliation a personal meeting of the penitent with Christ and
his Church. Individual attention in the form of instruction, advice, encouragement,
should be given to each penitent by the priest. When the sacrament is celebrated
after the bible service, as suggested in this outline, more time will be available
for giving each penitent the individual attention he or she needs and desires.

c) A guide: The following outline is a guide, with suggested texts. While these
may be used as printed, it is usually better to adapt them to the needs of the local
congregation. Other suitable readings and psalms may be found in the lectionary
for Advent (nos. 1-12 and 176-202; nos. 174-175, page 405), or in the liturgy
of the hours for this season.

In Rite of Penance,1 several outlines are provided for specific penitential
services (Canadian edition, Appendix II, pages 113-152). As well, the rite provides
an extensive list of scripture texts in nos. 101-201 (pages 86-94).

The parish liturgy committee should be encouraged to develop this service
as required to meet the spiritual needs of the community.

d) Proclamation: The readings suggested are contained in the lectionary, and
should be proclaimed from it or from a dignified bible. Canada's lectionary is richly
bound in red and gold to signify our respect for the scriptures and to emphasize
the place of God's word in our spiritual growth.

Scripture references are to the Jerusalem Bible; in the case of the psalms,
the second number refers to the Vulgate.

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1 Rite of Penance, available from CCC Publications (address on inside front cover) at $2.00
(six or more at $1.50 each).
e) Participation: The Vatican Council suggests many ways of promoting active participation in the liturgy: pastors are to encourage people to take part by their acclamations and responses, and by singing psalms, antiphons and hymns, as well as by their actions and bodily postures. Reverent silence for reflection is an essential part of good participation (see Liturgy constitution, no. 30). An effort should be made to include all or many of these methods in this celebration.

f) Music should help the celebration to achieve its purpose. Hymns and songs are suggested from Catholic Book of Worship, the Canadian hymnal. Other ideas are given in the liturgical index of the choir edition (pages i-iv at the back of the book) under Advent, Christian vocation, community, penance celebrations, word of God.

g) Full celebration: These should be a presiding priest, a number of confessors, the reader carrying the lectionary, servers (including two with lighted candles), crossbearer, thurifer, and choir. The president presides from the chair, leads the prayers and preaches the message of conversion. His work will be more effective when he encourages others to assume their proper roles.

h) Team work: A number of smaller or scattered parishes may wish to pool their efforts in celebrating penitential services in each place. A team of priests going from parish to parish on several different days will bring the benefits of this celebration to more people.

i) People's leaflet: Some parishes may prefer to encourage the people to use the Canadian hymnal as their response book; others may wish to prepare leaflets to help their people take a full part in the psalms and responses.

j) Prayer for sinners: The people of God are called to be people of prayer. The entire Church prays for sinners, asking God in his mercy to bring them back to full life in his family. During the penance celebration, the president should invite and encourage the congregation to pray for sinners: for themselves, for members of the community, and for sinners throughout the world (see 1 Jn. 5:16). This prayer may well be backed up by an appeal for individual, family and community fasting.

k) Prayer and fasting: During the week before the penance celebration, members of the parish may be invited to prepare for it by prayer, fasting and penance on one or more weekdays. By their communal prayer and fasting they will plead for God's mercy on sinners and help for all his people in this community (see Bulletin 42, pages 16-18).

l) Suitable days: A weekday — especially Wednesday or Friday, the Church's traditional days for fasting and penance — is more appropriate for a penance celebration than is the Lord's day. In planning these services, pastors should lead their community into greater accord with the practice of the universal Church.

m) Banners and posters based on the theme, or reflecting the spirit of Advent, may help to set the mood for this celebration.
CELEBRATION OUTLINE

Theme

“Love others as I love you.” The theme may be explained in a few sentences before the service begins, after the greeting, or in any leaflet distributed to the congregation.

Entrance rite

1. Song

- Come, thou long-expected Jesus
- O come, O come, Emmanuel
- Psalm 85(84)
- or another seasonal hymn

2. Enthroning the word of God

The lectionary, the book of God’s word, is carried in procession by the reader, accompanied by servers with lighted candles, and the others mentioned in (g) above. He or she places the book in a place of honor (reading stand or lectern), and the candles are placed nearby. The presiding priest incenses the book after it has been enthroned.

3. Greeting

After all make the sign of the cross, the president greets the assembled community with one of the following, adapted as necessary: Rom. 16:29; Phil. 4:23; or the following greeting from St. Ignatius of Antioch:

- Every good wish to you
- for perfect joy in Jesus Christ.
- And also with you.

The president or one of his assistants may explain the theme briefly, if this has not already been done.

4. Opening prayer

The president may choose a suitable prayer from the Advent liturgy; he is encouraged to compose his own, based on the theme as developed in the readings chosen from this celebration. One example of this prayer:

- Let us pray to God our Father,
- asking him to help us love others
- as Jesus has loved us.

All pause for silent prayer
Blessed are you, Father of all, 
ruler of the universe: 
you have loved us so fully 
that you sent your Son to save us. 

He loved us and gave his life for us, 
dying so that we might die to sin, 
rising in order to raise us to life in you. 

Help us to love others 
as Jesus has loved us. 

All glory and praise are yours, Father, 
for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

God's word invites us to conversion and renewal of our life by proclaiming that Christ's death and rising have freed us from slavery to sin.

5. Readings from the word of God

The first reading is chosen from Is. 48:17-19 (lectionary, no. 186); Rom. 13:11-14 (no. 1); 1 Thess. 3:12—4:2 (no. 3); or Phil. 1:4-6, 8-11 (no. 6).

6. Meditative silence

A few moments of silence should follow the reading, allowing all to reflect and pray in response to the word they have heard in faith.

7. Psalm

After silent prayer, a psalm or hymn is sung:

Ps. 116(114)  
Ps. 25(24): lectionary, page 405
Forgive our sins

CBW, no. 241
nos. 172, 229
no. 276

8. Second Reading

If a second reading is used, it may be chosen from one of N.T. texts above, or from Advent readings in the lectionary. A moment of silent prayer follows this reading.

9. Gospel reading

The deacon (or another priest, but not the president) takes the gospel book and prays for God's help. After receiving the blessing of the presiding priest, he goes in solemn procession with candles and incense to the lectern. He incenses the book solemnly, and then proclaims the gospel.

Jn. 13:1-15  
Jn. 13:16-20  
Jn. 13:31-33a, 34-35

lectionary, no. 40
no. 282
no. 55
10. **Homily**

The president proclaims the wonderful works and mercy of God as revealed in the scripture texts, and leads the assembly to prayer for sinners, to a reflective examination of conscience, and to repentance.

11. **Prayer for sinners**

The presiding priest introduces this prayer; he may use ideas from introductory note (j). Then he invites all to prayer:

*Let us pray for sinners*

*and ask God to forgive them:*

All pause for silent prayer

**Heavenly Father,**

you do not want sinners to die,

but to live in grace and serve you in love.

**Look upon the people of the world**

and draw them back to you through Christ.

**With him we pray:**

Father, forgive them,

for they know not what they do!

Send your Spirit to soften hard hearts,

to bend rigid wills

and to warm those who are indifferent to you.

Father, forgive us our sins

and listen to our prayers for all sinners.

Bring them back to your love through our example,

so that with them we may praise you

and celebrate our thanks

through Christ our Lord.

12. **Hymn**

If desired, a hymn may be sung:

*The Lord has done marvels*

*At the name of Jesus*

*From the depths*  

CBW, no. 400  

CBW, no. 369  

CBW, no. 279
Examination of our Christian Living

The points below are suggestions. The liturgy committee may work on developing others. Care should be taken, however, not to omit the ones that disturb you or the community: these are probably the questions that most need to be asked. (Other forms of the examination are given in past issues of the Bulletin: nos. 32, 36, 37, 41, 42, 46, 47, 51 and 52. Another form is given in Sunday Mass Book for Canada, pages 1108-1112).

The questions should be read slowly, and a pause is to be made for reflection after each group. The examination of conscience is the heart of the penance service: unless suitable time is given for reflection during it, it becomes a waste of everyone's time.

13. Examination of conscience

Presiding priest:

Let us turn to God our Father,
and ask his mercy,
that we may repent of our sins
and turn back to him in love.

Reader:

Do we ever remember how much our Father loves us?
Do we praise him as our God?
Do we thank him for sending his Son to save us?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Do we remember what Jesus has done to save us?
Do we thank him for saving us from the power of Satan?
Do we love him?
How do we show our love for him?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Do we take part in Sunday Mass as well as we can?
Is there room for improvement in our parish worship?
Do we pray at home every day?
Are we encouraging our family to pray together often?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Do we try to recognize Christ among us whenever we gather together in his name?
Do we read his word and listen to him?
Are we seeking to know God's will for us?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.
Are we making any efforts — as individuals and as a parish — to help those who are oppressed in our community by poverty, racial hatred, or by our indifference? Do we love Jesus in people who are hated or ignored?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Are we hearing Christ's plea for help in the voice of those who are sick, or feeble, or overcome by disaster and tragedy, or enmeshed by hatred and warfare?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Are we going along with evil in the world, or do we stand up for Christ and for the will of God? Do we stand with Christ and his Church against war, killing, and abortion? against revenge, lying, and theft? against hunger and injustice? against the rape of our planet and its people?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Is our daily way of living a sign of Christ's life in the world, a light shining in the darkness, or are we just the same as everyone else? Are our ideas formed by the gospel, or mainly by our neighbors, our newspapers, by magazines, by radio and TV?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Are we working with Christ to save the world? Do we pray for sinners? Are we giving wholesome guidance and example to the young? Do we do penance often, and carry our daily cross with Christ?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

The parish council or liturgy committee may wish to add other reflective questions at this point.

Are we living as followers of Jesus Christ? Do we live as the people of God, holy and blameless in his sight? Do we ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and strength to love others as Jesus has loved us?
All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

* * *

Presiding priest (he may extend his hands over the congregation):

People of God,
prepare a way for the Lord.
Make his paths straight in your lives,
and smooth out the rough roads in your hearts.
Let his Spirit lead you back to him,
forgiving you and filling you with his love.

14. Silent prayer

For about five minutes, all remain in silence. Sitting or kneeling as they wish, they discuss their way of life with the Lord.

For those who wish it, the sacrament of reconciliation will be celebrated after this bible service.¹

15. Community act of sorrow

The “Lord, have mercy” may be sung from CBW, nos. 165-169, or using a tune familiar to the community.

Reader or president:

Lord, you have called us to be the people of love:
forgive us for choosing hatred and sin.
Lord, have mercy.

All Lord, have mercy.

Christ, you have chosen us to do good,
to help others in your spirit of love:
forgive us for preferring to serve ourselves.
Christ, have mercy.

All Christ, have mercy.

Lord, you have taught us to be the light of the world;
forgive us for failing to be people of light.
Lord, have mercy.

All Lord, have mercy.

¹ The act of satisfaction (formerly known as “the penance”) is to be personal and must be given individually, in a way that is fitting to each person's sins and sorrow. It is contrary to the mind of the Church to impose a general or universal act of satisfaction on all members of the congregation before or after the individual celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation (see rite, no. 55).
16. Acclamation

A hymn may be sung:

Prayer of St. Francis
Awake, awake, fling off the night

Or a brief prayer of the faithful may be based on the theme, ending with the Lord's prayer, no. 17.

Conclusion of the Rite

17. Lord's Prayer

This prayer is best sung by all, as at Mass (CBW, nos. 221-223). The president may prepare an introduction to this prayer, based on the theme of the service. For example:

God has taught us to love one another
as Jesus has loved us.
Let us pray together to our Father in love:

Our Father . . .

18. Sacred action

The presiding priest invites all to share the peace of Christ with one another. This may be done as at Sunday Mass, or less formally. He may introduce the rite in this way:

Jesus gives his forgiveness and peace
to all the people of God.
Let us share his peace and love with one another.

19. Invitation to the sacrament

The president invites the congregation to celebrate the sacrament of penance after the bible service has ended. The various locations for a personal encounter with Christ through the priest (see introductory note, b) should be mentioned in a positive way. (They could also be described in the parish bulletin on the previous Sunday, with a strong mention of the spiritual opportunities being offered on this occasion of grace.)

20. Blessing

The presiding priest may conclude with a simple blessing, or may use this form:

May the Father who has reconciled us in his love continue to shower his blessing upon us.

All Amen!
May the Son who died and rose to save us
forgive us our sins,
and help us to love one another more.

All Amen!

May the Holy Spirit of God,
who makes us his temples of love and praise,
give us unending joy and peace.

All Amen!

May almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the + Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All Amen!

21. Concluding hymn

As the priests move toward the places for individual reconciliation, all sing
a seasonal hymn or song of praise:

The king of glory CBW, no. 353
Help us to help each other no. 281
or another hymn may be chosen: nos. 248-256

Sacrament of Penance

Those who wish to receive individual guidance and sacramental absolution
are encouraged to take the opportunity provided by the presence of a number of
priests. The choir might sing meditative or seasonal hymns or psalms in a quiet
manner for the first five or ten minutes after the communal service ends.

______________________________

PUT ON THE MIND OF CHRIST

Ever-living God,
help us to think in the same way
that Jesus Christ thought.
From the abasement of his cross he stooped to death:
may we humble ourselves,
believing, obeying, living and dying for your glory.
May we be raised with Christ
into everlasting peace.

Father of love,
we ask this grace
in the name of the Lord Jesus.
CHRISTMAS SEASON

A SHORT HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS

This brief account is based on one printed in the parish bulletin of St. Alphonsus parish, Wooler, and Holy Angels, Brighton, Ontario, at Christmas in 1974. Its purpose is to help the parishioners understand more fully the meaning of this feast in the life of the Christian community.

In the first few centuries of the life of the Catholic Church, Sunday was the major feast day. Easter was introduced gradually in the second century. In the East, Epiphany (or Theophany) was also celebrated as the feast of all the ways in which God shows us his loving power through Christ.

The first record of the celebration of Christmas is in Rome in the year 336. December 25 was chosen as the date for Christians to celebrate the incarnation, to praise God for sending his Son to become man and save us. The Mass used then, more than sixteen centuries ago, is still celebrated as the Mass during the day or third Mass of Christmas.¹ The emphasis of this Mass is on our belief that the Word — the Son of God — is made flesh and now dwells among us. This is still the main message of the Mass prayers and readings on Christmas.

In English, the word Christmas comes from “Christ” and “Mass,” that is, from the Mass celebrated on the day commemorating Christ’s coming among us as one of us.

The Mass of the shepherds, now used at midnight on Christmas, did not come into use for some centuries. St. Francis of Assisi (1181/82-1226) popularized the devotion of the Christmas crib.

We do not know the actual date of Jesus’ birthday. December 25 was chosen by the Church at Rome for a particular reason: on this day the sun is starting to shine more strongly, and the hours of daylight are increasing once more. Through this new feast, the Church hoped to overcome pagan festivals of sun worship, and to replace them with the feast of Jesus, the sun of justice (Mal. 4:2) and light of the world (Jn. 8:12; 12:46).

The lights we use on trees and in other decorations still remind us that Jesus is the light of the world, the one who saves us from the darkness of sin, who brings us into his kingdom of justice and peace, of life and light.

¹ See Sunday Mass Book for Canada, pages 106-111. These texts, along with the three Christmas prefaces (pages 598-600), proclaim the central message of Christmas: God loves us and sends his Son to become one of us and save us (Jn. 3:16). Christmas Mass texts are also discussed in the following article, on the spirit or meaning of our Christmas celebration in the liturgy.
WHAT IS THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS?

There are different ways of trying to answer this question. In this article, we look at the manner in which the Church is teaching us about the meaning and spirit of Christmas in its liturgical texts.

In the proper texts for Christmas and for the other days of this season, the Church teaches us by its language of prayer. These texts are contained in Sunday Mass Book, as described in Teaching aid, above.

Basic Truths

The Christmas texts proclaim many of the wonderful ways in which God shows his love for us. We are invited to respond to his love and mercy as we meditate on these basic truths.

As an example, an examination of the four Christmas Masses (vigil Mass, and three Masses on Dec. 25 — see SMB, pages 92-111) can show how the Church speaks to us of some of these truths of our faith.

Story of our salvation: Jesus has come to save us. He is the promised Messiah, a king in the line of David. He will restore the people of God, and invites them to respond to God's love by singing his praise. Jesus is the savior of the world: in him, God's glory and grace are revealed to us. Jesus brings us true peace.

Jesus has come to free us from the yoke of sin, and to judge the world. He pours out his Spirit on us, cleanses us in baptism, and nourishes us in the eucharist. We are filled with divine life through his coming. Through Jesus, God speaks to the world, and shares his riches with us, so that we may inherit his kingdom.

Jesus is the Son of God. The Word of God became flesh, one of us, to bring light into the darkness of the world, to become the source of life for the human race. He makes us the children of God, and brings us the fullness of his grace.

Mary, the mother of our Lord, is blessed: she believed in God's promises to his people, and now they are being fulfilled. She treasures words about Jesus in her heart, and ponders them in faith.

John the Baptist was sent by God to announce the coming of his Son. John acted as a witness to Jesus, and led others to the light of the world.

As God's people, we are invited to give up worldly ambitions, and to live in hope. Jesus has purified us and made us holy so that we would be a people eager to do good works. We are his, and he wants us to become more like him in our daily lives, in everything we say and do. Because of God's mercy, we are invited to celebrate, to shout for joy, to proclaim his salvation to the world.

Christmas Prefaces

The three prefaces for Christmas (nos. 3-5; in SMB, pages 598-600) provide many strong expressions of our faith, and invite us to thank the Father for his greatest gift.

- Our Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Word, whom we know by faith. He reveals the invisible Father to us (see Jn. 1:18 and 14:7), and leads us to give him unending praise.
• The eternal Son of God is born as one of us, in order to draw all things to himself and to unite creation in the work of salvation and of praising God. As our leader, Jesus is the one who will bring us into the eternal kingdom of heaven.

• God's plan for saving us involves the incarnation of his Son, the eternal Word, as one of us. In this way, Jesus is our mediator, reconciling us and making us one with God (see also Jn. 14:6). In Christ we are renewed, and are given eternal life.

• Through Christ, all creation is united in giving praise and thanksgiving and glory to the Father of all.

**Liturgical Texts**

Liturgical texts express and form the faith of the Church. They are part of our living tradition. It is important for us to prepare for liturgical celebrations by reading over the prayers and readings ahead of time, and by using them in our prayer. When participating in the Mass, we need to listen carefully as these texts are proclaimed and prayed in the name of the Church — part of a worldwide celebration to his glory.

And, like Mary, it is important for us to treasure these words in our hearts and ponder over them. They are ancient phrases, often compact and concise. During the following week, we need to chew them over and gain more of their flavor. We can use some of these phrases in our prayer, asking for help to follow the Lord Jesus in greater love.

Until we learn to prepare ourselves to share more fully in the liturgy, and to follow up our liturgical celebrations by meditation and action, what we do on Sunday cannot be as good as Christ wants our worship to be.

* * *

**What is the spirit of Christmas?** As we pray over the liturgical texts of the feast and of the season, we begin to understand a little more fully the riches that we are celebrating. We are rejoicing because God loves us, and has shown it by sending us his Son (see Jn. 3:16).

If we are to regain the meaning of Christmas, we need to let the scriptural truths proclaimed in the liturgy seep into our minds and our hearts. These truths need to become the basis of what we think and say and do about Christmas.
Christmas happens under starry skies
in midnight churches
in parents' hearts
in children's eyes
asking for the Christmas story
just before bedtime
with tiny arms hugging brand new dolls
with toy train's clatter and whistle
around silver tracks.

It's the bright time of gifting love
and wished-for things.

Christmas happens in all kinds of people —
those who lie in hospitals
and wait
and ask sometimes
and ask for things they don't need
(or really want)
and listen to the carolers
singing for them
because they won't have much Christmas.

But sometimes they surprise you —
how much they know
about darkness
and midnight
and how the snow falls
and Christ.

Sometimes Christmas happens without a lot of fanfare.

Sr. Pat Ann Mulkey, OSF
MUSIC IN THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

Father Hutton suggests hymns from Catholic Book of Worship for the Christmas season, continuing from his Advent choices (see pages 205-209, above).

Liturgically the Christmas festival begins with the vigil Mass on the evening of December 24, but popularly with the Mass at midnight. The Christmas season includes the Sunday after Christmas (Holy Family Sunday), the solemnity of Mary the mother of God (Jan. 1), Epiphany, and concludes with the Sunday after Epiphany, the solemnity of the Baptism of Jesus. Christmas carols are most appropriate during this season.

Unfortunately, commercial exploitation of this time of the year determines that Christmas ends on December 26. Canned Christmas music, which assaults people everywhere during the days preceding December 25, is automatically shut off when Christmas day is over.

Only the Christian liturgy calls for the continued use of Christmas hymns as Christians reflect for the next few weeks on the meaning of “God in our flesh.” There is a tension here which those who plan Christian worship cannot ignore. Who will win out?

Christmas Day

It is not necessary to give suggestions for Christmas, except for the responsorial psalm and gospel acclamations:

Mass at midnight

Psalm: One may use no. 193 with psalm verses (see CBW, choir edition, page 22), or no. 174.

Gospel acclamation: “Alleluia” (201-207) with text on page 22: Good news and great joy.

Mass at dawn

Psalm: (choir edition page 23: no music is provided.) Perhaps Joy to the world, no. 260, could be sung after the first reading.

Gospel acclamation: “Alleluia” (201-207) with text on page 23, Glory to God in heaven.

Mass during the day


Gospel acclamation: “Alleluia” (201-207) with text on page 24, A holy day.

Feast of the Holy Family


**Responsorial psalm:** Choir edition (page 24): no. 244, or no. 174 could be sung.

**Gospel acclamation:** "Alleluia" (201-207) with text on page 24: May the peace of Christ.

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**Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God**

**Entrance hymn:** nos. 310, 312-314.

**Responsorial psalm:** Seasonal refrain (no. 196) with the proper psalm on page 25, or substitute seasonal psalm no. 174.

**Gospel acclamation:** "Alleluia" (201-207), with text on page 25.

**Preparation of the gifts:** "Ave Maria" (no. 316a) sung by the choir or soloist; or no. 315.

**Communion:** no. 400 (verses sung by the choir), 401, 418.

**Recessional hymn:** nos. 260, 262, 268, 270, 310, 312-314, 316 (can be sung to melody of 255).

---

**Epiphany of the Lord**

**Entrance hymn:** nos. 250, 272 (can be sung to melody of 391), 273-275.

**Responsorial psalm:** Choir edition, page 25. Musical setting no. 175, or use the seasonal psalm of Christmas, no. 174.

**Gospel acclamation:** "Alleluia" (201-207), with text on page 26 of the choir edition.

**Preparation of gifts:** nos. 272-275, or organ solo, or singing by choir.

**Communion:** nos. 377-380, 418.

**Recessional hymn:** Epiphany hymns, nos. 272-275; or 378, 381, 385, 398; or kingship hymns, nos. 360, 354, 356, 357, 352, 358.

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**Baptism of the Lord**

**Entrance hymn:** nos. 254-256, 258, 260.

**Responsorial psalm:** Psalm 104 (103), on page 43 of the choir edition, could be sung. No. 199 with the proper psalm (on page 26) could also be used.

**Gospel acclamation:** "Alleluia" (201-207), with text on page 26.

**Preparation of the gifts:** no. 431.

**Communion:** nos. 372, 415, 418.

**Recessional hymn:** nos. 372, 367, 368, 371, 373, 375, 392, 395, 398, 401, 403: these are songs of baptismal commitment.
I RESOLVE

New Year's resolutions are often laughed at. Yet a Christian who is serious will be happy to take another step forward in growing up to the full maturity to which Christ invites us. The same should be true of each believing community. The Lord is challenging us to begin a new year in his service, and begin it well.

Individual Resolutions

Every Christian could benefit from some resolutions in these areas:

Reading God's word: Each day, I will open my bible or New Testament, and let the Spirit teach me more about the mystery of God, of his loving plan for creation, of his beloved Son Jesus. With the help of the Lord, I will rebuild my life on his words (see Mt. 7:24-26; Jn. 6:68, 63).

Growing in prayer: Daily I will take adequate time for prayer, asking the Lord Jesus to teach me to pray. During this year I will seek to grow in prayer by learning to use the psalms, or by using them better. I will read about prayer, and seek advice on my prayer life from a spiritual director or other wise counsellor.

Growing in love and service: Each day, I will make sure that my Christian faith overflows into love and service of others. I will make positive use of all the gifts the Spirit has given me.

The concerns of Christ and his Church will be of more importance than my petty selfishness. Am I closing my eyes to the needs of my brothers and sisters who are nearby? to social abuses? to injustices which cry out to the Lord?

Community Resolutions

Those responsible for the community's liturgy might consider these suggestions as they prepare their resolutions.

God's word: What can be done to promote a warm and living love of scripture among your people? One community resolution should be to promote a deeper awareness of the importance of the bible by introducing and encouraging daily bible reading.

Public worship: In what ways should we be seeking to deepen the spirit of worship in our community? How can our liturgy become more pleasing to God? In particular, the Sunday celebration should be the subject of one resolution; in many cases, the way the parish celebrates the sacraments needs some serious improving.

Encouraging growth in prayer: May we suggest that your liturgy committee should reread Bulletin 35 (pages 183, 194-196, and 217), and Bulletin 44 (pages 164-165) on its concern for the prayer life of the parish or community. In the light of these ideas, a specific resolution should be made.

Using more opportunities for Christian service: Humans always seem to want to get religion into a neat package, so that God can be understood, and then pacified by a few ritual actions. True religion, God keeps telling us, is found in such awkward and "unneat" circumstances as hungry and homeless people, neighbors in need, world concern for peace and justice.
In what ways should this community open its eyes and dedicate its talents, time, and money to serving Christ in his suffering brothers and sisters?

**Serious Resolutions**

*Be definitive:* Pin yourself down! The suggested resolutions above are still a little too general. Individual persons and parishes need to zero in on more specific commitments: to choose something possible, positive, and appropriate.

*Keep them open-ended:* A resolution should not be minimal or restrictive, but rather should encourage growth. If a person resolved to read a chapter of scripture each day, his resolution could lead to spending more time with the bible, or to increasing this to two chapters, or a chapter followed by prayer from the psalter.

*Make a few:* Nothing is more prone to failure than a long list of noble resolutions! Pick two or three — or even one — and then resolve, with God's help, to keep it. Ask him to help you.

*And keep them!* The most important one is the resolution to keep one's resolutions. Writing them down and referring to them occasionally will be helpful, especially as it gets harder to keep up to the initial enthusiasm of the first few days.

**Let Everybody Know**

*Community resolutions:* It does not make much sense for the liturgy committee to plan great resolutions for the community and then keep them hidden in the minutes. A committee should propose its resolutions to the parish council and the members of the community, and invite them to join in.

Some particulars should be given. For example, the worship committee could explain its plans for encouraging growth in individual and community prayer during the year.

*Individual resolutions:* Why not prepare a few, perhaps along the lines suggested above, and include them in your bulletin as a sample of what one could do. Each person in the parish should be encouraged to take them and tailor them according to personal needs.

Further ideas for resolutions are contained in Bulletin 36, pages 267-271, especially on page 269.

**Growing Up in Christ**

*Why all the fuss and bother?*

New Year's resolutions are a good example of a secular custom which the Church can take and adapt for more spiritual growth. (*See Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — 1976*, note 20a, pages 37-38.)

Rightly understood, they can promote the work of the Lord Jesus and his Church in today's world.

They can become one more indication that your believing community is striving to let your faith guide your living as you begin another year in the service of the Lord.
FATHER, WE GIVE YOU THANKS

You bless us with the gift of life:
Father, we give you thanks.

You give us your Son as our savior:
Father, we give you thanks.

You teach us his words of life:
Father, we give you thanks.

You make us your holy people:
Father, we give you thanks.

You cleanse us from our sins:
Father, we give you thanks.

You invite us to love you by loving others:
Father, we give you thanks.

You grace us with talents to use for your glory:
Father, we give you thanks.

You help us to do good works for you:
Father, we give you thanks.

You nourish us with the bread of life:
Father, we give you thanks.

You give us the cup of salvation:
Father, we give you thanks.

You have gifted us with your Spirit:
Father, we give you thanks.

You promise us the joys of heaven:
Father, we give you thanks.

You call us to sing your praises for ever:
Father, we give you thanks.

Beloved Father,
you have given us all grace and life
through the hands of Christ our savior.
With Jesus, we bless your name.
With him we thank you.
With Christ our Lord, we pray to you:

Our Father...
CONTINUING IMPORTANCE

The spirit and the celebration of the seasons of Advent and Christmas continue to be important. In the past, two complete issues of the Bulletin have been prepared on these subjects: Bulletin 36, Advent and Christmas; and Bulletin 41, Advent Unlimited.

A list of articles in these and other Bulletins is given below:

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NEXT ISSUE

The November-December copy of the Bulletin is entitled Training Readers. Bulletin 56, the final issue for 1976, will be available in November.

Written for readers, parish liturgy committees, priests and deacons, Bulletin 56 provides helps for training new readers and retraining the ones who are presently active. The issue even proposes ways of helping a reader retire gracefully when the time has come.

This Bulletin may be used as the basis of a course, or may be a means of self-retraining for readers.

Bulletin 56 may be ordered now, at $1.50 for each copy ($1.75 outside Canada, because of postal rates); bulk orders of 50 or more receive a 33½% discount. Order today from Publications Service at the address on the inside front cover.
FAMILY CUSTOM

There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night (Lk. 2:8).

Each Christmas Eve over the past thirty years, it has become a tradition in our home, when the children are ready for bed, to read the Christmas story and each one of us suggests a Christmas carol which we sing (some not very well). In this way, after the hustle and bustle of shopping and all the commercial emphasis of Christmas in the stores, and on radio and TV, we are able, as a family, to concentrate on the real meaning of Christmas, the birth of Christ and all it stands for in a Christian family.

In our family, this tradition has become quite important to us.

* * *

The author of this note is Percy Ross, a member of the Anglican Church of Canada, and Chief Executive of Boy Scouts of Canada. (Reprinted with permission from Scout Executive, December, 1972.)

A PRAYER FOR HELP

Let us ask God for the strength we need to live as his holy people.

All pause for silent prayer.

God our Father,
you have called us to be your beloved people;
you have rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and sin,
and have brought us into the kingdom of light.
Help us to continue to die to sin,
so that we may always live for you.

Father,
we ask this through Jesus our Lord.

TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

What is the real meaning of Christmas?

Many people have asked that question down through the centuries. St. Leo the Great, who was pope from 440 to 461, gives his answer in his first Christmas homily.

EUCHARIST

STORY OF THE MASS

The eucharistic celebration is the center of Christian life and liturgy. Because it is so important, each generation wants to enrich it, to embellish it with contemporary signs of respect and veneration.

In Bulletin 54, the story of the Mass — of the various prayers and rites that make up our present Sunday Mass — was presented in many details.

In this article, we take a brief tour through the centuries, looking at the Mass as celebrated at different periods in the history of the Roman Church.1

Early Centuries

_During the early centuries, liturgical books as we know them were not used, but were beginning to be developed._

New Testament: The New Testament gives us some references to the eucharist.2 Four types of passages in the gospels have contributed strongly to the Church's understanding of the eucharist: Jesus' meals with outcasts; the last supper narratives; the accounts of the multiplication of loaves (including the discourse in Jn. 6); Jesus' meals with his apostles after he rose from the dead. In Acts (see 2:42, 46; 20: 7) we read of the breaking of bread, an early name for the Mass. Paul discusses the Corinthians' behavior at Mass (1 Cor. 11: 17-22; 11: 27-34; 10: 16-17), and gives the traditional account of the institution (1 Cor. 11: 23-26). A few other passages in the New Testament refer to the Lord's day (1 Cor. 16: 2; Rev. 1: 10; note also the appearances of the risen Christ on the first day of the week).

_Didache:_ Written sometime 70 and 150, this booklet 3 describes some aspects of the Christian faith. Its description of what is done at Mass is in simple terms: Christians assemble on the Lord's day — our Sunday — and break bread and offer thanks (eucharist). First of all, however, they are to confess their sins and be reconciled (see Mt. 5: 23-24). Only those who are baptized in the Lord's name are able to take part in this assembly.

A brief form of thanksgiving (eucharistic prayer) is given, along with prayers for use after eating and drinking the eucharist.

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3 These texts are reprinted in Bulletin 43, pages 80-81. The full text of the _Didache_ with explanatory notes is readily available in _Early Christian Writings_, translated by Maxwell Staniforth, 1968, 1975, Penguin, Hardmondsworth, Mdx. (Penguin Classics, no. L-197, about $2.95.)
St. Justin: Writing in Rome about the year 150, Justin describes the Christian eucharist to the pagan emperor. He tells what baptism means, and how an adult is baptised. After immersion, the new Christian is brought into the assembled community. Following the common prayers (prayer of the faithful), bread and wine, mixed with water, are brought in to the one who presides. The president takes them, and praises the Father through the name of the Son and Spirit. After he makes this thanksgiving at some length (eucharistic prayer), the people shout out their assent by saying Amen. Then the deacons distribute the gifts to all who have assembled. The Christians believe that these gifts are the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus. After the communion of the people, the deacons bring some of the eucharistic gifts to those who are absent from the assembly.

Justin gives us a further description of the Sunday eucharistic assembly. After a reader proclaims texts from the apostles and prophets, the president speaks, and urges the community to imitate these examples. Then all stand to pray aloud. The gifts are brought as before, and the president makes the thanksgiving (eucharistic prayer) to the best of his power; all answer Amen. The deacons distribute communion, and bring it to the absent. Offerings are collected from those with some means, and are given to the president, who looks after those in need.

Hippolytus: Writing in Rome about 215, Hippolytus describes the eucharist in some detail in Apostolic Tradition. After telling how a bishop is to be ordained, he mentions the kiss of peace, and then the deacons bring in the offering. The bishop lays his hands on it, with all the priests, and gives thanks. After the preface dialogue still used today, Hippolytus gives a simple model text of a eucharistic prayer (our second eucharistic prayer is based on this). There is no sanctus, and the entire prayer is one long sentence; the narrative of institution is part of a subordinate "who" clause. Communion is under both forms.

- Communion reserved at home: Hippolytus also describes how lay people reserve the eucharist at home under both forms. They receive it first before eating any other food. They are to guard the sacrament with respect, since it is the Lord's body: it is not to be eaten by unbelievers, nor is it to be dropped or lost, or left where mice or other animals may eat it. The cup is not to be spilled, for it is the blood of Christ.

- Communion in the hand: Tertullian, writing about this same period, says that each person comes up to the president at the altar and holds out his hands to receive the eucharistic bread. Clement of Alexandria speaks against those who pick it up by themselves.

St. Ambrose (c. 339-397) describes some parts of the Mass when he explains it to the newly baptized in the days after Easter. Bishop of Milan from 374,

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he is preaching about the Mass around 391, not long after Pope Damasus (366-384) has changed the Roman liturgy from Greek to Latin.

Speaking of the Mass of baptism, Ambrose begins to explain the Mass ceremonies after the new Christians — washed and sealed and clothed in white — arrive at the altar. Now they are members of God's holy and priestly people. Bread and wine — mixed with water — are placed on the altar (preparation of the gifts), and praise is offered to God. By the words of Christ the bread and wine are consecrated, and become the body and blood of Christ. Ambrose quotes passages from the epiclasis, the narrative of institution with the people's *Amen*, the anamnesis, and the offering. At communion time, the people approach the altar for communion under both forms, and answer *Amen*.

**Middle Ages**

*The middle ages cover about half of the Christian Church's life. Running approximately from 500 (the end of the ancient Roman empire) to 1500 (the beginning of modern times), this period had deep influences on the organization and life of the Church, and hence on its liturgy as well.*

**Mass at Rome in the fifth century:** The rites have developed since the days of Justin (150) and Hippolytus (215), but the same structure is visible:⁷

- **Introductory rites:**
  — A psalm is sung by the choir as the clergy enter
  The psalm varies during the year
  — The president concludes the procession by a prayer:
  _Let us pray, silent prayer, collect, Amen_

- **Liturgy of the word:**
  — First reading by reader
  — Responsorial chant: psalm
  — Second reading, by reader
  — *Alleluia*: cantor alternating with people
  — Gospel
  — Homily:
  Celestine I (422-432) disapproves of preaching by priests
  Leo I (440-461) did preach homilies
  — Prayer of the faithful:
  in form of our Good Friday prayers
  including prayers for catechumens and faithful

- **Liturgy of the eucharist:**
  A. Preparation of the gifts:
  — Singing of psalm by choir as people bring gifts to altar
  or as clergy collect their gifts
  Psalm varies during the year
  — President concludes with prayer over the gifts, aloud

B. Eucharistic prayer:
- Variable preface with dialogue
- Sanctus
- Rest of canon continues:
  Intercessions at beginning
  - Doxology and great Amen

C. Communion rite:
- Break consecrated loaves for communion
- Our Father; Deliver us
- Kiss of peace
- Singing of psalm by choir as people go to communion, or as they remain in places and clergy go to them
- Concluded by president's prayer of conclusion (our prayer after communion)

- Concluding rite:

  - Dismissal

Sixth century Rome: Some additions and changes have been made, beginning to obscure the clear vision and structure of earlier centuries:

- Introductory rites:
  - Psalm sung by choir as clergy enter
  In papal Mass, by alternating choirs; end with doxology
  Psalm varies during year
  - At the end of the fifth century (Gelasius I: 492-496) litany of some 18 petitions is sung, and people answer in Greek: Kyrie eleison
  - In the sixth century, Glory to God is sung: by pope on feasts; by other clergy on Easter
  People join in singing this Eastern hymn
  - President concludes entrance rite by a prayer:
    Let us pray, silent prayer, collect, Amen

- Liturgy of the word:
  - Three readings, with chants: as in fifth century
  - Clerics replacing readers in Rome
  readers still active in Gaul in 529
  - Homily: presbyters permitted to preach in Gaul: 529
  - Prayer of the faithful — none
    (replaced by litany at beginning)

- Liturgy of the eucharist:
A. Preparation of the gifts:
  - as in fifth century
B. Eucharistic prayer:
- Variable preface with dialogue
- Sanctus
- Rest of canon continues:
  Intercessions included in canon
  Variable hanc igitur in special Masses
  Memento for dead (not on Sundays or feasts)
  Occasional blessing before Per quem
- Doxology and great Amen

C. Communion rite:
- as in fifth century
  • Concluding rite:
    - Dismissal

Gregory the Great (590-604): At the end of the sixth century and the begin-
ning of the seventh, St. Gregory makes a few minor changes in the sixth century
Mass:
  • Kyrie: shortened; people respond when clergy sing it
  • Hanc igitur: changed to general form
    from variable prayer listing individual intentions
  • Our Father: moved ahead of the breaking of the bread
    to begin the rites preparing for communion

Papal Mass: We have a detailed description of the way the pope celebrated
Mass on Easter Sunday in the Ordo Romanus I. The people just listen to the
chanting of the choir: they do not join in the singing at a papal Mass. This Mass
is outlined below:

  • Introductory rites: The pope and his ministers ride up on horseback, and
    are received solemnly at the church door. After he vests in the sacristy, he is told
    the names of those who are to read the first reading and to sing the psalm. Before
    the entrance, the gospel book is carried into the church by an acolyte and laid on
    the altar by a subdeacon. The pope orders the lighting of the candles, and the
    singers begin the entrance psalm. A subdeacon carrying the brazier or bowl of
    incense and acolytes with the seven candles lead the procession. Two subdeacons
    accompany the pope.

    During the procession, a subdeacon and acolytes appear and show the pope
    a container with fragments of the consecrated bread from the previous papal Mass.
    The pope bows his head in greeting, and indicates how much is to be used for the
    fermentum in this Mass; the rest is to be kept.

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8 Jungmann, op. cit., page 289.
9 The early sacramentaries contained only prayer texts, with few rubrics; customs were passed
  on from one generation to the next. When Roman sacramentaries were sent to the Franks in
  the eighth century, the ordinex provided guidelines and rubrics for proper celebration according
  to the Roman manner. A description of this Mass is given in Theodor Klauser, A Short History
10 The fermentum was a sign of unity: a portion of the eucharistic bread from the last papal
  Mass is dropped in the chalice this day, and a portion of today's is saved for the next Mass;
  at the same time, the pope sent a portion of his eucharistic bread — the one loaf of 1 Cor.
  10: 17 — to the pastors of the Roman churches, showing the unity of their celebrations with
  his.
On arriving at the altar, the pope bows to it, makes a cross on his forehead, and shares the kiss of peace with some of his ministers. Then he signals the choir to end the entrance psalm with the doxology. He kneels at the altar; then he kisses the gospel book and the altar, and goes to his chair at the center of the apse. The choir begins singing Lord, have mercy, repeating it until the pope tells them to stop. He intones the Glory to God, and after it is sung, he greets the people, sings Let us pray, and begins the collect without pausing for silent prayer.

- **Liturgy of the word:** Those with seats sit down while the subdeacon reads the first lesson. A cantor sings the response (gradual). The gospel acclamation seems to be omitted frequently. The deacon is blessed, and goes with the gospel book in procession, with lights and incense, to the ambo. After the proclamation, a subdeacon brings the book to each of the clergy to be kissed. Then the book is locked in its box. There is no sermon, no creed (this came to Rome only in the eleventh century), no prayer of the faithful.

- **Liturgy of the eucharist:** The choir begins to sing the offertory psalm. The pope goes to the nobles for their gifts, and the clergy—bishops and priests—collect offerings of bread and wine from each part of the congregation. The wine is poured from each person’s flask into a larger container, and bread is placed in a large linen cloth held by acolytes. After washing his hands, the pope places his own offering on the altar, and the archdeacon picks out enough loaves from the gifts of bread, and puts these on the altar. Similarly, the pope’s offering of wine is poured into a large chalice, and some water is added. The pope signals to the choir to end their chant, and he whispers the secret prayer over the gifts.

All the clergy line up in the sanctuary. Standing at the altar and facing the people, the pope sings the preface dialogue and preface, and the clergy and choir sing the Holy, holy, holy Lord. All bow as the pope says the rest of the canon in a low voice. At the end of the canon, the pope and archdeacon raise the consecrated gifts to be seen by all: this was the only elevation known at that time. The canon concludes with the doxology and Amen.

After the Lord’s prayer, the pope places the consecrated particle from the previous Mass in the chalice, and breaks off a portion of today’s for use in the next celebration. Then he goes back to his chair and is seated while the bishops and priests break bread for communion; during this the choir sings the Lamb of God. At the chair, the pope breaks a piece from the consecrated bread and puts it in the chalice. Then he receives communion at the chair. Some of the contents of his chalice are poured into the large container: in that era, it is accepted that this consecrates the wine in the large container.

Since the people who do not receive communion leave the church at this time, the date and church of the next station Mass are announced. Communion begins with the clergy and officials coming to the pope’s chair for the consecrated bread, and then to the altar to drink from the chalice; as needed, it is refilled from the large container. The choir sings the communion psalm with its refrain throughout this time. Then the pope and clergy give communion to the people: the consecrated bread is laid on each person’s hand, and then they drink from the chalice.

After communion, the pope gives a sign to end the singing, and sings the completion prayer (our prayer after communion). One of the deacons dismisses
the congregation, and the pope returns to the sacristy in procession, blessing the people as he passes through them.

**During the middle ages,** many developments took place in the way the Mass was celebrated in the Roman rite. Some of these, which have had a deep influence on the celebration and spirituality of our modern times, are sketched below:

- **Latin** was no longer the language of the people, and became the preserve of the educated, most of whom were clerics. The readings were repeated in the vernacular, and the sermon, the ceremonial, and the decor of the church attempted to continue the teaching function of the liturgy and bridge the gap between the Latin ritual and the people. This situation lasted until the Second Vatican Council restored the use of the vernacular.

- **Silent canon:** A growing sense of awe led to the recitation of the eucharistic prayer in a quiet voice by the priest. No longer was it seen as the Church's public and solemn prayer of thanks, prayed aloud in the presence and name of the believing assembly: now it was done for them. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, elevations, bells, incense, genuflection, and kneeling began to emphasize the moment of consecration, and tended to obscure the aspect of praise and thanks being offered by Christ and his people to the Father.

- **Votive Masses:** The practice of votive Masses expanded greatly during the fourth and sixth centuries. Formulas were provided for many special circumstances and occasions. This practice continued to develop, but was reformed in the 1970 sacramentary, which provides texts for ritual Masses, Masses for particular occasions, and a few votive Masses.

- **“Private” Masses:** This term is really contradictory, and was discouraged by Pius XII. The increased desire for votive Masses led in several directions: the ordaining of more monks as priests (seventh century), the celebration of daily Mass (a practice known in third century North Africa), the offering of several Masses each day for various intentions (eighth century), Mass celebrated with a server but no congregation, and even to solitary Mass — celebrated without a server (condemned in the ninth century). Gradually the “private” Mass came to be accepted as the norm, and this was incorporated in the 1570 missal of Pius V.

- **Allegorical explanations:** The best way to understand what the Mass — or any type of liturgy — is to listen to the texts (what are they saying?) and to perceive the actions (what are they doing?). Unfortunately, the Mass has had many fanciful or allegorical “explanations” imposed upon it in the course of history. Theodore of Mopsuestia in the closing years of the fourth century sees the bringing in of the bread and wine as the funeral procession of the dead Christ. Amalarius of Metz, a disciple of Alcuin in the first half of the ninth century, tried to see each part of the Mass as a reminder of some portion of Christ’s life on earth or of his passion. Though his ideas were condemned by a local synod in 838, they have remained influential for much of the Church’s history.

- **Emphasis on the real presence:** The first ten centuries of Christianity saw the eucharist as an action. But then the emphasis shifted, and more attention was

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12 See Yarnold (note 6, above), pages 173, 227-230.
given to the eucharist as a reserved sacrament. During the thirteenth century, the growing devotion to the eucharist outside the Mass led to strong emphasis on one aspect of presence. At the beginning of the century, in 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council had to legislate annual communion — a clear sign that people were not receiving that frequently. The elevation, first of the host, and then — toward the end of the century — of the chalice, became increasingly popular and widespread. People were content to stare at the host instead of receiving it. This trend was deepened as the feast of Corpus Christi (solemnity of the body and blood of Christ) became a universal feast in the Church in 1264.

In our time, the Second Vatican Council placed new emphasis on the many presences of Christ — all real — in the liturgy (Liturgy constitution, no. 7), and in 1973, the whole approach to worship of the eucharist outside Mass was given a new and balanced direction.13

- **Chalice restricted**: Communion from the cup is part of the normal mode of eating and drinking the eucharist. Given to us by Christ, this has been retained in the Eastern Churches, although some of them use intinction. Communion from the cup was normal in the Latin Church until the thirteenth century, but then it died out. This fact gave the Reformers a strong point in the heated debates of the sixteenth century. The practice of chalice communion has been restored by Vatican II, and is gradually increasing once more in the Catholic Church. It is one of the anomalies of our history that at the same time when eucharistic devotion was flourishing, the primary form of devotion by communion was being neglected.

- **Participation** — such a strong emphasis at Vatican II — has had a varying history. The earlier centuries did it with clear insight into their dignity and responsibilities as members of God's holy and priestly people. Then, in the middle ages, adult initiation fell into disuse, and a more lukewarm approach to the sacraments became evident. As Latin became a foreign language, responses and prayers lost their meaning for people who were mostly illiterate. In the papal Mass of the seventh and eighth centuries, the clergy responded and the choir sang, leaving the people to be spectators and to go to communion. The Carolingian reform placed a new stress on having the people sing the psalm refrains, the common chants, and take part in the prayer of the faithful. Later the tendency grew — aided by the allegorical interpretations — toward seeing the Mass as a drama, a theater, a spectacle to be watched rather than an action in which to share. During the later middle ages, vernacular primers or prayer books describing the Mass were popular among those who could read. During the past fifty years in our own century, we have experienced the more frequent use of missals as participation aids, and as a means of educating people in the meaning and depth of the liturgy.

- **Posture**: Our understanding of the Mass and our part in it are both indicated and influenced by the postures we take and the gestures we make. In the early Church, the normal prayer position for priest and people was standing, facing east, with hands outstretched in prayer. Kneeling was forbidden on the Lord's day and throughout the Easter season by the Council of Nicaea in 325 (canon 20). A deep bow was made during the eucharistic prayer and when

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receiving a blessing. By the beginning of the ninth century, however, kneeling was considered normal for the congregation (a further sign of lack of participation?), and this continued until fairly recently. The current rites now place much more emphasis on standing and on common gesture (GI, no. 21).

- **Handing on the rites**: Before the invention of printing around 1450, missals were copied out by hand. Over the years, they were rearranged, adapted, and changed in many ways, especially before 1200. During this period, however, the Roman canon remained relatively unchanged. The first printed missal in 1474 is close to the book used by Innocent III (1198-1216). In turn, Pius V’s missal — the first *Roman Missal* as such — is little changed from the missal of 1474.14 Various trends in medieval devotions — to the saints, to relics — tended to outweigh the sobriety of the liturgical texts. By 1500, abuses and lack of balance and historical perspective had obscured the Roman liturgy and its resulting spirituality. The spirit of a new age was in the air, as the middle ages ended and the modern era began. An age of exploration and adventure opened with the rediscovery of America in 1492.

This was the general situation when the Reformation began in 1517, and when the Council of Trent undertook its work in 1545.

**Modern Times**

*The period from 1500 to the present has seen many levels of liturgy, from the lowest ebb to our contemporary resurgence. In 1976, we stand at the threshold of further vital growth if we continue to value the riches of our liturgy for Christian living.*

**Reform of 1570**: The Council of Trent (1545-1563) concentrated mainly on doctrinal and disciplinary issues about the Mass, and left the publication of a reformed missal to the pope. This was completed under Pius V in 1570. His reform stabilized medieval forms of celebrating the eucharist, and imposed the new rite on all who could not prove that they had been using their current rite for 200 years or more. The missal contained both lectionary and sacramentary, and in general continued the medieval practice of having the priest say or read everything that everyone else did. While the rubrics did provide for Mass facing the people, this was normally seen only at the main altars of the Roman basilicas.

There was a distinction in solemnity between solemn Mass (sung, with deacon and subdeacon), a later sung or high Mass, and a read or low Mass. Dialogue masses were widely introduced in the twentieth century.

- **Introductory rites**: The entrance antiphon (introit) was not begun until the priest and his ministers reached the foot of the altar. While the singing continued, priest and assistants quietly alternated the prayers at the foot of the altar: Ps. 43: 1-5, using part of verse 4 as antiphon. This was followed by an extended *confiteor*, first by the priest and then by the servers, a double conclusion, and verses and responses. The priest said two silent prayers as he went up to the altar and kissed it; in a solemn Mass, he incensed the altar at this time. Then he went to the right side to read the introit, and say the triple *Kyrie*, and back to the center to intone the *Gloria*. The priest said this quickly, and sat down while the

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14 A brief summary of the history of the missal is given in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, Introduction, nos. 6-9 (Canadian sacramentary, pages 12-13).
choir sang it. Then he returned to the altar, kissed it, said *Dominus vobiscum* at the center, and returned to the book at the right for the oration.

- *Liturgy of the word:* This was not seen as a distinct part of the ceremony, but continued on from the previous rites. The epistle, gradual or tract, *alleluia,* (sometimes followed by the sequence), and gospel followed: the celebrating priest read everything but the gospel at the right hand side ("epistle" side), and then the book was transferred to the left ("gospel" side) for the reading of the gospel; he read all these texts even when they were read or sung by others. Incense was used for the gospel in sung or solemn Masses. The order of Mass and the general rubrics did not mention the sermon, but the *Ritus servandus* (VI: 6) does mention casually: "If, however, there is to be a sermon, the preacher preaches at the end of the gospel." In North America, most churches added prayers for the sick and the dead and for other causes after the sermon and announcements. The Nicene creed followed, with all genuflecting during the *et incarnatus est.* In a solemn Mass, the priest would say it, and then sit down while the choir finished singing it.

- *Liturgy of the eucharist:* The offertory consisted of a series of silent prayers, with incensing in sung Masses, and concluded with the "secret" (our prayer over the gifts) said silently. The *Amen* after this prayer was placed with the preface dialogue, so that no distinction was evident between the preparation of the gifts and the eucharistic prayer.

The preface was sung, or said aloud, and concluded with the *Sanctus;* in sung Masses, the second half of this (*Benedictus*) came after the consecration. The canon — considered to begin after the preface and its acclamation — was said in complete silence, with bells, incense, elevations, and genuflections to mark the narrative of institution. At the end of the eucharistic prayer, only the *per omnia saecula saeculorum* was said aloud, and it was run together with the introduction to the *Our Father.* In the missal of Pius V, the canon was considered to go on to the end of Mass.

The communion rite began with the Lord's prayer, sung or said by the priest alone, with a silent *Amen* at the end. The fraction or breaking of the bread took place during the silent *Deliver us,* and was followed by the commingling. The *Agnus Dei* was sung or said, and a silent prayer for peace; in solemn Masses, the clergy would pass on a stylized kiss of peace while the celebrating priest said two more silent prayers before communion, and received the consecrated elements in silence. The people's communion is mentioned only briefly: "If there are any who are to receive communion, he gives them communion before he purifies himself." Two silent prayers are said during the ablutions. He reads the post-communion prayer at the right side. The end of this part of the Mass was usually marked by closing the missal after the prayer.

- *Concluding rites:* At the center of the altar the priest greets the people, says the dismissal, (there were three forms for various circumstances), and gave the last blessing. Then he went to the gospel side and read the "last gospel" (Jn. 1: 1-14) from the altar card. The rubrics also added that while leaving the altar, he was to say the canticle of the three young men (Dan. 3: 57-88, 56) with Ps. 150 and other prayers.

Lasting for four centuries, the missal of Pius V was the one in use in the Roman Catholic Church during the 1950s and 1960s, when the renewal of the
liturgy was beginning in an official manner under Pius XII, John XXIII, and Paul VI.

Reforms of 1964-1965: The first effects of the Second Vatican Council's reforms were felt in the Mass in 1964, when the epistle and gospel could be read by the priest in the vernacular, without having to read them in Latin first. Then in 1965, the first major steps toward reshaping the Mass were taken:

- **Introductory rites:** The psalm was dropped from the prayers at the foot of the altar.

- **Liturgy of the word:** The priest presided at this at the chair or lectern. In practice, before lay readers began to be trained, the priest read all the readings, now from the lectern rather than from the altar. The homily and the prayer of the faithful were now recognized as part of the normal Mass structure.

- **Liturgy of the eucharist:** The priest returned to the altar for the preparation of the gifts. The canon was in Latin, but the *Holy, Holy* was in the vernacular, and soon the preface with its responses was permitted in the people's language. The Lord's prayer was sung or said by all in the vernacular, as were the responses during the communion rite.

- **Concluding rite:** This was done in the vernacular, and the blessing was placed first, so that the dismissal ended the Mass. The prayers after Mass were dropped.

In the following years, more parts of the Mass were permitted in the vernacular.

Our present order of Mass (1969-1970): The rites that we presently use were issued in 1969 and were incorporated in the *Missale Romanum* (i.e., sacramentary) of 1970: this is the book translated as our present sacramentary. The lectionary was issued in 1969 in Latin, and followed in the vernacular in the next few years. This reform under Paul VI tried to take into consideration the directives of Vatican II, the better understanding of the structure and rites of the Mass arising from the historical studies of men like Jungmann, and the newly discovered dynamics of a vernacular liturgy.

Our present rites are distinguished by a balance (important parts are emphasized more than less important ones), by a distinction in roles (one person does not do what someone else should do — see Liturgy constitution, no. 28), and by setting off the various parts of the Mass: the introductory rites at the altar, the liturgy of the word at the chair and lectern, the liturgy of the eucharist at the altar, and the concluding rites at the chair or altar.

Today, Mass facing the people, a free-standing altar, communion under both forms, singing in every Mass, and the full use of ministers are considered to be usual. The norm and model for every Mass is that of the bishop surrounded by his priests, ministers, and people (General Instruction, no. 74).
Since we are familiar with our current rite, its elements are presented here in outline form, taken from Sunday Mass Book, pages 23-24. Each of these sections is described in more detail in the order of Mass, beginning on page 579. These explanations are drawn from the order of Mass, the General Instruction, from the Vatican Council decrees, and from later official documents.

- **Introductory rites**
  - Entrance procession and hymn
  - Sign of the cross
  - Greeting
  - Brief introduction to the day's Mass
    - (this may be done before Mass begins)
  - Penitential rite
    - or blessing and sprinkling of holy water
  - *Glory to God*
  - Opening prayer or collect

- **Liturgy of the word**
  - Introduction to the readings
  - First reading; may be followed by silent prayer
  - Responsorial psalm
  - Second reading, silence
  - Gospel acclamation
  - Gospel, silence
  - Homily, silence
  - Creed or profession of faith
  - General intercessions (prayer of the faithful)

- **Liturgy of the eucharist**
  - A. Preparation of the gifts
    - Preparation of the altar
    - Procession with the gifts
    - Preparation of bread and wine
    - Incensing of the gifts and altar
    - Prayer over the gifts
  
  - B. Eucharistic prayer
    - (The eucharistic prayer is one prayer, made of several parts)
    - Preface
    - Acclamation: *Holy, holy, holy Lord*
    - Eucharistic prayer continues
    - Narrative of institution
    - Memorial acclamation
    - Eucharistic prayer continues
    - Final doxology
    - Acclamation: the great *Amen*
C. Communion rite

Lord’s prayer
Kiss of peace
Breaking of bread, Lamb of God
Communion
Silent prayer
Prayer after communion

• Concluding rites

(Announcements, if necessary)
Greeting
Blessing
Dismissal
Recessional hymn may be sung

As it stands, the present order of Mass is clear, and can be celebrated effectively. Some constructive criticisms that have been made are that the entrance rite still has too many diverse elements: fewer would be better; silent prayers continue at various parts of the rite (the history of other times, particularly medieval developments, shows us how these can get out of hand and warp the rite); it is somewhat wordy, particularly when the roles are not shared properly. But as the latest stage of evolution in our 2,000 years, it is still a fine format for worshipping God.

What will the future bring? Before further changes are made, much study needs to be done. Excellent suggestions for future directions are contained in the reports of the 1976 meeting of the North American Academy of Liturgy.15

It is important in the meantime for each community of faith, under the guidance of their bishop and priests, to make serious efforts at celebrating our present liturgy as well as possible, using all the options and freedom permitted. Good celebration in faith — not tinkering in ignorance of tradition and in disobedience — is the only way to live now and prepare for what is to come in the decades ahead. Only thus can we appreciate the tradition we have received and lived and enriched, and pass it on to the generations that follow us, until the Lord comes again in glory.

15 See Worship, 50: 4, July 1976.
BOOKS

BRIEF BOOK REVIEWS


This collection of 36 eucharistic texts and descriptions, spanning the period between the first century and 1662, shows how various rites have handled the four main actions in the eucharist: taking, giving thanks, breaking, giving. A brief introduction to each chapter makes the book helpful for all, and the short bibliographies are valuable for students. Recommended as a book of interest to all who want to understand the Church's eucharistic tradition more fully.

* * *


As a member of the commission which prepared the decree on Masses with children, Father Matthews is able to help priests and teachers to understand the three eucharistic prayers for Masses with children. His previous book, Celebrating Mass with Children, was reviewed in Bulletin 51, page 335. This new booklet gives help to teachers in preparing with their class for a eucharistic celebration. Suggested music for the acclamations is provided in the CCC edition of Masses with Children, Masses of Reconciliation. ($5.00)

* * *


This book explores the lives of 21 Catholics who helped to shape the U.S. Church and nation during the past three centuries. Biographies, learning experiences, and bible services make it practical for classroom or youth groups. Some of the persons in the book are of interest to Canadians, including the Jesuit martyrs, Kateri Tekakwitha, and Elizabeth Seton. In Canada this book may suggest similar projects on persons who helped to build our Canadian heritage.

* * *

The God of the Group, by George McCauley, SJ, 1975, Argus Communications (7440 Natchez Ave., Niles, Ill. 60648). 136 pages. $6.95 cloth; $3.95 paperback.

This book explores sacramental theology today with the aid of group dynamics. The author lets various groups of religious educators and ministers examine one sacrament at a time, exploring reality and expressing it in theological terms. The book develops some interesting insights, and will be helpful to students of liturgy and to all who want to explore sacramental theology more fully.
LAY MINISTERS OF COMMUNION

A prayer that lay ministers of communion may wish to use:

*All praise to you, holy Father,*
giver of all good gifts to your people:
you have endowed us with your Spirit
to build up your Church
and to make your kingdom come.

*Father, I thank you for choosing me*
to serve as a minister of communion.
*Give me your grace to be holy and free from sin,*
so that I may nourish your people
*with the body of Christ and with the witness of my life.*

*Bless your Church on earth*
and give strength to all your ministers.
*Make them worthy and holy in their service.*

*All glory and praise and honor to you, Father in heaven,*
*through Jesus your Son,*
in *the unity of your Holy Spirit,*
*now and for ever. Amen!*

THANKSGIVING FOR MUSIC

*Blessed are you, Lord God,*
king of the universe:
you have created the world in harmony
and have given mankind musical talents.

*We praise you for giving us voices to sing with,*
and ability to make musical instruments,
*woodwinds, percussion, and strings.*
*We thank you for orchestras and choirs,*
*for composers and arrangers.*

*We thank you for giving us the ability*
to make radios and records and tapes.
*Help us to use all these gifts in your service,*
*for your glory and for our salvation.*

*Father of all, we praise you and sing your glory.*
*Accept our music as we offer it to you*
in *the unity of your Spirit*
*through Christ our Lord. Amen!*

A prayer for thinkers, writers, artists and craftsmen is given in Bulletin 45,
page 256.
LITURGY CONFERENCE

The Canadian Liturgical Society is planning Worship '77, to be held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, from 24-26 May 1977. The theme of the interdenominational conference is CHRISTIAN INITIATION.

Speakers include:

- Aidan Kavanagh
- G.R. Beasley-Murray
- Eugene Brand
- Leonel L. Mitchell
- Alexander Schmemann

Further information may be obtained during the fall of 1976 and spring of 1977 from:

Worship '77 Phone: (416) 929-0811
117 Bloor Street East
Toronto, Ontario
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