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Editorial commentary in the Bulletin is the responsibility of the editor.

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Occasions arise when small groups of Catholic Christians wish to celebrate liturgically but when the official liturgies of the Church do not meet their needs. These situations present opportunities for creating new worship services. This issue suggests ways of going about this task, without becoming a book of complete liturgies. General principles, basic liturgical structures, the composition of different types of prayers, and the process of planning special liturgies are considered.
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Introduction

Since the Second Vatican Council the Church has come to possess a rich variety of official liturgies and a substantial library of liturgical books. These constitute a wonderful resource that we are still trying to appreciate fully and celebrate well.

**Additional needs:** Nevertheless, these official liturgies do not meet every liturgical need of the People of God, and other liturgical celebrations are being created to meet such additional needs and opportunities. They come from national, diocesan and parish liturgy commissions and committees; from pastors, teachers, convents, retreat houses and publishers; from members of every kind of small group that comes together for prayer or for a task that is accompanied by communal prayer.

**Terminology:** In dealing with this subject, there is a problem of nomenclature. What should such “unofficial” liturgies be called? There is no one generally accepted name, and no single term is without its limitations. Here we use “liturgy for small groups” and “special liturgies,” though neither is entirely satisfactory.

- The term “paraliturgy” is avoided for several reasons. It is an ugly word, and few know its origins or technical meaning. More importantly, the history and roots of “paraliturgy” indicate that it implies that such services are not real liturgies or at best that they are inferior, second class liturgies. This connotation is not correct or acceptable.

**Liturgies for small groups** are real liturgies and are to be taken very seriously. They, like the official liturgies of the Church, express the presence of Christ; they too are celebrations of the Church; they too are inspired by the Spirit and are occasions for the sanctifying and transforming action of the Spirit. They too express and build up Christian community; they too give the vision and strength that send baptized women and men out into the world to love and serve Jesus Christ.

**Many books and pamphlets** contain complete descriptions of various special liturgies, or provide prayers, readings and music that can be used in preparing them. These resources can indeed be useful, though it is usually not appropriate simply to borrow someone else’s liturgy and use it without change; it was prepared for other people and another occasion.

**This issue of the Bulletin** considers the planning of liturgies for small groups. It does not provide complete liturgies or a collection of prayers. Instead it considers basic principles, fundamental liturgical structures, and processes that can be used in planning special liturgies and in composing new texts. It supports the creativity of those who, from sea to sea, are striving to create the best possible special liturgies.

**Creativity is strongly encouraged** in the planning and celebration of liturgies for small groups. This is necessary if each liturgy is to be the best worship for these people on this occasion. In addition, creativity will promote the fullest use of the liturgical resources of our tradition. Furthermore, it allows for the
liturgical expression of the spiritual insights of many individuals and groups, for there are many gifts of the Holy Spirit.

**Pastoral good:** The spirit that underlies this approach to the planning of liturgies for small groups is similar to that enunciated in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal for planning the eucharistic liturgy: the pastoral good of those who celebrate.

Therefore, it is of the greatest importance that the celebration of the Mass . . . be so arranged that the ministers and the faithful who take their own proper part in it may more fully receive its good effects. (n. 2)

This purpose will best be accomplished if, after due regard for the nature and circumstances of each assembly, the celebration is planned in such a way that it brings about in the faithful a participation in body and spirit that is conscious, active, full and motivated by faith, hope, and charity. The Church desires this kind of participation, the nature of the celebration demands it, and for the Christian people it is a right and duty they have by reason of their baptism. (n. 3)

The pastoral effectiveness of a celebration will be heightened if the texts of readings, prayers, and songs correspond as closely as possible to the needs, religious dispositions, and aptitude of the participants. This will be achieved by an intelligent use of the broad options described . . . . (n. 313)¹

Beginning to Plan

How does one go about planning a special liturgy? Where does one begin? What is involved? What process is most fruitful? These questions can be answered in more than one way, and they will depend in part on individual persons, places and circumstances.

A vision: The following is an overall vision of the planning process that is suggested in this issue. It is flexible, open, and encourages local creativity.

- Ask certain basic questions that identify the situation: Who are the people? What is the place and time? What is the occasion?
- Choose the shape or outline of the service.
- Fill in this outline with the several types of constituent elements of liturgy:
  - readings, prayers and other texts
  - music
  - signs, symbols and other nonverbal elements
- Consider the beginning and ending of the liturgy, and the ministries that need to be exercised.
- Look at the liturgy as a whole, as it has come to take shape. Review and refine as seems necessary.
- After the liturgy is celebrated, reflect upon it and learn what will help make the next special liturgy better.

Initial questions

As one begins to think about planning a special liturgy, it is often useful to name, in a conscious way, some basic facts about the celebration.

Who are the people?

- Do they know each other or not? Is this a regular group, or one that comes together occasionally, or are they complete strangers? What do they have in common? What makes them unique? What might be divisive? Are they from one Church or is it an ecumenical group? Are they from one school of spirituality or several?

1 Special elements that need to be kept in mind in the planning of ecumenical and interfaith liturgies are described in Ecumenism and Liturgy II, National Bulletin on Liturgy, vol. 19, no. 104, May-June 1986, pp. 179-194.
What is the average age, and what range of ages is represented? Are they all or mostly men, all or mostly women, or a mixed group? Are there many children? Are there many parents with infants or small children?

How many people are there; is it a small or large group? What special gifts do members of the group have? Are persons with physical or mental disabilities present?

What is the occasion?
A very important point to clarify is whether the special liturgy precedes or follows some other event (meal, meeting, class, etc.) or if the liturgy is an independent event. If it is a part of a larger occasion, what connections, if any, need to be made between the liturgy and the other event? What is the character of the meal or meeting or other event that precedes or follows the liturgy?

Is the occasion a retreat, a liturgical feast or season, a special time of prayer for a group that has common concerns? Is the focus on peace, justice, creation, struggle, the gifts and pains of women, the giftedness of persons present, Christian unity? Is it a parish or diocesan celebration?

Is the basic orientation of the liturgy praise, thanksgiving, petition or intercession, commemoration, confession, adoration, or something else?

Where is the place?

Is the liturgy celebrated in a church or chapel, or somewhere else? Is it outdoors? Is the place beautiful? If not, what can be done to make it beautiful? Is the lighting adequate, or what additional lighting is required? What seating is there, and is it movable?

What is the time?

What is the time of day? If very early or very late, how much energy do the people have? What natural season is it? What liturgical feast or season is it? What have the people been doing immediately before the liturgy? What will they be doing immediately afterward?

How much time is available for the celebration? Must the liturgy be brief, or can it be longer? Is the time flexible, or is there a strict limit?

These questions are kept in mind throughout the planning process.
Basic Liturgical Structures

Liturgies are not haphazard events, but have shape and structure. Each follows an outline or order, and in planning liturgies for small groups it is important to be conscious of the shape that is employed.

A single structure: Often a group is used to a single liturgical structure, and planners use it habitually; most often this will be a liturgy of the word. Planning then consists in choosing the readings, prayers, songs and other elements that this structure calls for. This is a legitimate approach.

Many structures: It is also possible, however, to choose among a variety of liturgical structures, and to include a decision regarding structure in the planning process. A number of outlines are possible and can be used prayerfully. It is important to be clear about the structure of the special liturgy. The choice and creative use of a variety of structures for special liturgies is recommended.

Models for Special Liturgies

The official liturgies of the Church provide good models for the structures of special liturgies. For example, the various parts of the eucharistic liturgy, if taken individually, can each be a model: gathering, word, preparation of the altar and the gifts, eucharistic prayer, communion rite, and sending forth.

The liturgy of the hours can also be a model for liturgies for small groups. As some such adaptations were recently considered in the Bulletin (September 1988), this type of liturgy will not be dealt with further. The liturgies of other sacraments and rites may also provide good models for liturgies for small groups.

Here a number of liturgical structures that can be appropriate for special liturgies will be described briefly.

Liturgy of Gathering

A liturgy based on the introductory or gathering rites of the eucharist might follow this outline:

- Gathering of God's People
- Opening Song
- Symbols of the Faith
  - (light, cross, word, creation)
- Biblical Greeting and Personal Greeting
- Reminder of Baptism or Penitential Rite
- Song of Praise
- Prayer
- Blessing and Dismissal
- Sign of Peace
The reminder of baptism corresponds to the Blessing and Sprinkling of Holy Water, and the song of praise to the Glory to God of the eucharistic liturgy. "Symbols of the faith" refers to nonverbal elements such as candles, cross, bible or lectionary, flowers, fabric and color.

An introductory service: This liturgy would be suitable at the beginning of a meeting or class. It emphasizes the unity of the persons who gather by bringing them together physically, by common song, and by the mutual interaction of the sign of peace. It also reminds the people of the presence of God through the biblical greeting and the "signs of faith," as well as in the other prayers and songs.

People of God: In addition, this liturgy identifies the people as Church and People of God, and either as redeemed sinners (penitential rite) or as those baptized in the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit (reminder of baptism).

The community might stand throughout this liturgy. It could be shortened, if necessary, by the omission of the song of praise and of the reminder of baptism or penitential rite.

Liturgy of the Word
A liturgy based on the liturgy of the word of the eucharist might follow this outline:

Gathering, Opening Song, Greetings
Opening Prayer
Reading I
Response
Reading II
Response
Lord's Prayer
Sign of Peace
Blessing and Dismissal
Closing Song

This liturgy celebrates the presence and action of God in the word. We name ourselves as the Church, called and enlivened by the word. The word gives new vision, it challenges and comforts, and it calls people to witness and service.

The nature of the responses to the word are considered at length in the next chapter.

This service could be shortened by having only one reading, followed by its response. The opening prayer and closing song might also be omitted. In the longer form outlined above, this liturgy could serve as an independent service of 30 to 60 minutes length. In its shortest form it could be used at the beginning of a meeting or other event, lasting only 10 minutes or so.

Liturgy of Preparation of Table and Gifts
A liturgy based on the preparation of the altar and the gifts of the eucharist might follow this outline.
Before meals: This liturgy celebrates the goodness of God in creation and in inspiring human creativity. It might be used as a liturgical grace before meals on a major feast. Putting on the tablecloth and setting the table would be included in the liturgy, as would the bringing of the food to the table. Blessing prayers similar to those used at mass at the preparation of the gifts could be used, or other meal prayers. The opening song might be simple, and continue through the preparation and procession. The closing song might simply be an "Alleluia."

Dedication: A similar outline might be used for a liturgy in which signs or instruments of human life and particular occupations are dedicated. These would be brought up and placed in the midst of the assembly; they would be acknowledged to be God's gifts, to be used to God's greater glory. They are then returned to their owners, to be taken back to daily life.

The prayers: While the blessing prayers would bless God for the gifts, the prayer over the gifts might refer to the purpose for which these gifts are given: the glory of God and the service of others.

Liturgy of Praise and Thanksgiving

A liturgy based on the eucharistic prayer of the mass might follow this outline:

- Gathering, Opening Song, Greetings
- Thanksgiving Prayer
- Song of Praise
- Lord's Prayer
- Blessing and Dismissal
- Sign of Peace

The thanksgiving prayer would be a lengthy prayer that praises and thanks God for creation, for various aspects of salvation history as proclaimed in the Old and New Testaments, and especially for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the life of the Holy Spirit with us and the whole Church today. The structure of this prayer is considered in the next chapter. The song of praise might be the Holy Holy, the Glory to God, or the Great Amen of the eucharistic liturgy.

Many uses: This structure would be suitable for any occasion on which praise and thanksgiving to God is the main emphasis. It could be shortened by the omission of either song, as well as of the Lord's Prayer. In its longer form it could be an independent liturgy, while if shortened it could precede another event.
Communion Liturgy

A service based on the communion rite of the eucharistic liturgy might follow this outline.

- Gathering, Opening Song, Greetings
- Lord's Prayer and Doxology
- Sign of Peace
- Breaking of Bread
- Invitation
- Sharing of Bread and/or Other Food
- Silent Reflection
- Prayer
- Blessing and Dismissal

Such a liturgy celebrates the presence of God as one who feeds our deepest hungers. It also identifies the Church as those who share sustenance of all kinds.

At meals: This liturgy might be used as both the grace before a meal and the grace afterwards as well. The concluding prayer could be one of thanks-giving. Alternatively, like the prayer after communion, it might refer to the life that we are called to live after the meal.

Liturgies of Word and Action

Another common liturgical structure is that of a liturgy of the word followed by a liturgical action; of course there is also a beginning and an ending. This structure is quite versatile. Sometimes word and action will have about the same importance, while in other cases one or the other may predominate.
Often the verbal elements interpret, clarify and specify the significance of the action in an evocative manner; they respond to or reflect upon the nonverbal elements. Several examples of this type of liturgy are given here.

Liturgy of Footwashing

A liturgy in which the proclamation of God's word is followed by the action of footwashing might proceed as follows.

Gathering, Opening Song, Greetings
Remove Shoes and Socks
Opening Prayer
Reading I: for example, Matthew 25: 31-46 (service) or 2 Corinthians 5: 16-20 (reconciliation)
Silence or Psalm Response
Reading II: John 13: 1-17
Homily, shared reflection in small groups, or both
Footwashing
Silence, Lord's Prayer and/or Closing Prayer
Song, Dismissal

For various occasions: This liturgy could be used as an independent service on any suitable occasion. Alternatively, it could be celebrated as part of a meal liturgy or agape. It could be shortened by omitting the first reading and its response, and the closing song. The space and furniture used must allow for the required movement.

Everyone participates: Participants are told ahead of time that it is feet that will be washed, not socks or stockings, and they are asked to dress accordingly. It is best if each person washes someone else's feet and has his or her feet washed in turn. Just watching a leader wash the feet of a few representative people is not what this liturgy is about. (The footwashing of the Holy Thursday eucharistic liturgy takes a different approach, which is appropriate for that occasion.) Such full participation can be accomplished by dividing into groups of 10-12 persons, who might bring their chairs into a circle if this is possible. A basin, towel and pitcher containing water are given to each small group.

Washing feet: The basin is placed on the floor in front of one member of the group, and he or she puts their feet in or above the basin. Another person kneels on the floor, pours water over each foot, puts the pitcher down and washes each foot further by rubbing it gently with both hands, scooping up water from the basin. Each foot is then dried with the towel. At the end, the washer may kiss each foot. The washer then takes his or her seat, and the person whose feet have just been washed proceeds to wash the feet of the next person in the circle.

Singing: As the footwashing proceeds, a song may be sung. The Taizé “Ubi Caritas” is appropriate, as is the refrain of Weston Priory’s “The Lord Jesus.” Alternatively, appropriate recorded music may be played softly.

Helping others: The feet of persons in wheelchairs may be washed, but they in turn may be able only to wash the hands of the next person. Infants, small
children and severely handicapped persons are washed but they may not be able to wash another person, or may require help in doing so.

Some other liturgies of this type will be described more briefly.

Penitential Liturgy

In a penitential liturgy the proclamation and preaching of the word of God constitutes a call to conversion and an assurance of God's mercy, love and justice. This leads to the action, which is a communal examination of conscience, a period of silence in which there is a corresponding individual examination, and then a communal act of sorrow. A hymn or general intercessions may follow, as may an invitation to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation. The liturgy concludes in a typical manner.¹

Liturgy of Blessing

A blessing liturgy may take a variety of forms.² Often it will begin with introductory rites and then proceed to the celebration of a liturgy of the word, which may be longer or shorter. The action of blessing will follow; several types of blessing prayers are described in the next chapter.

Liturgy of Commissioning for Ministry

Following a liturgy of the word which speaks about the ministry of Jesus and of his disciples, the ministers are called forward. If possible the other participants form a circle around them and hold out one or both hands toward them as prayers are spoken. Such a liturgy is not a mini-ordination and of course does not replace any of the official rites for commissioning ministers. The prayers used may give thanks to God for gifting these persons for ministry and for making them sensitive to the needs of others; it may also ask God's continued care and strength for the persons as they minister.

Liturgy of Word and Thanksgiving

Gathering, Song, Greetings
Reading 1
Prayer of Thanksgiving 1
Reading 2
Prayer of Thanksgiving 2
Breaking and Sharing of Bread or Other Food
Lord's Prayer, Blessing, Dismissal
Sign of Peace

¹ This outline is based on the suggestions given in Penance Celebrations (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops 1981)

In this structure the two main elements of word and thanksgiving are intertwined, rather than following in sequence. A third set of readings and prayers could be added, or their number decreased to one. The sharing of food may be appropriate if the readings or prayers refer to the gifts that God gives us in creation and through which God shows love for us.

Liturgy of Food-Sharing and Story-Sharing

In this structure, which may also be called an agape, the sharing of food is the predominant element. All gather around a table (or several tables) and may begin with a song and with greetings by host and hostess. The meal may be a simple one, or very full and festive, or may consist only of a few symbolic foods.

As the meal is shared, there is also a sharing of life-stories and faith-stories. In part these may be communal, as told in scripture, song and formal prayers. They may also be personal, through witnessing, spontaneous prayer and conversing with others. Throughout, in song and prayer, there is thanksgiving and praise, acknowledgment of our dependance on God, and remembrance of the needs of others.

Liturgy for Holy Saturday

Gathering, Song, Greetings
Recitation of the Creed:
  Reading, Sharing, Recitation
Ephphetha Rite:
  Reading, Sharing, Ephphetha
Baptismal Name:
  Reading, Sharing, Telling One's Name
Renewal of Baptismal Commitment:
  Renunciation of Sin, Profession of Faith
  Sprinkling with Water
Blessing and Dismissal

This liturgy is based on the "Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday" of the RCIA, making adaptations for its use by baptized and practising Christians. It alternates the proclamation of God's word with several symbolic actions. Participants look back to their first profession of faith, reflect on what it means to them today, and then recite the creed anew. They reflect on the first signing of the cross on their ears and lips, how they hear and profess this faith today, and then exchange the ephphetha gesture. They state and reflect on the name they received at birth or baptism and share what it means to them today. They may then renew their baptismal commitment and be sprinkled with water or immerse their hands in water.

Liturgies of Word, Prayer, and Action

Another type of liturgical structure is based on some of the sacramental liturgies of the Church. Following the proclamation of the word of God (sometimes only a short reading is used), a formal and sometimes lengthy prayer is
said over some symbol and/or over the persons who will use the symbol. Some symbolic action is then carried out, and additional prayers and concluding rites may follow. A few examples of this type of liturgy will be given.

**Liturgy of Prayer for Healing**

After appropriate introductory rites, this liturgy might proceed with one or more readings from scripture and a litany of intercession for the sick person. A prayer of thanksgiving might then be said over some oil.

The sick person, and perhaps his or her spouse, children and friends as well, may then be anointed in silence.

Other prayers, songs, and an appropriate conclusion would follow.

**Liturgy for the Renewal of Vows**

It is appropriate to celebrate in special liturgies the renewal of baptismal and marriage vows, and the vows of religious profession. They might begin with an opening song, greetings, and opening prayer, and proceed to the proclamation of scripture and a litany of intercession, mentioning especially the persons renewing their vows. A special prayer might then be said over the person and any symbols that might be used in the renewal of vows, for example water or rings. Vows would then be renewed, and prayers of thanksgiving might follow.

**Baptism:** The following is an outline of a service for the renewal of baptismal vows, in which water and the sign of the cross — two baptismal symbols — are used prominently.

- Gathering, Song, Greetings
- Prayer over the Water
- Word of God: for example Ephesians 3: 14-4:6
- Response: Silent reflection, Homily and sharing
- Response: Each person dips hands in water, says baptismal name, place and date of baptism
- Song
- Response (in pairs): Each person makes the sign of the cross on another’s forehead, saying: “N., Child of God, remember that you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit, and marked with the cross of Christ forever.”
- Renewal of Baptismal Vows
- Song
- Sign of peace
Readings and Prayers

The verbal elements of liturgies with small groups consist mainly of scripture readings, prayers of various kinds and length, and other texts that facilitate the flow of the liturgy. Silence is also important.

Scripture readings

One or more reading from the bible is almost always appropriate in a liturgy for small groups. The number of readings and their place within the service will depend on the overall structure that is adopted, as already considered. Whether they are short or long depends in part on the length and nature of the liturgy as a whole, and in part on the length of the pertinent passage of scripture.

The criteria for choosing the biblical readings of the lectionary may be adopted for special liturgies:

- Reading 1: Old Testament or Acts of the Apostles
- Reading 2: New Testament epistles
- Reading 3: Gospel (if there are to be three readings).
  or:
- Reading 2: Gospel (if there are to be two readings).

Choosing the readings: The regular Sunday or weekday lectionary assignments may be used. If it seems more appropriate, however, the readings may be taken from any part of the bible and used in any order that is desired. They will be related to the pastoral needs of the assembly and the occasion at hand.

For special liturgies, the scripture readings may each be proclaimed by a single reader, or by several readers; they may be dramatized or adapted; or sung by everyone or by a soloist if appropriate music is available.

Shared proclamation: Though dramatization may sometimes be a useful way to proclaim the scriptures, it is helpful to distinguish between this and what may be called “shared proclamation.” In dramatization the narrative part of the biblical text is usually omitted, leaving only the discourse. In addition, the “players” who take the parts of the biblical characters usually resemble them in sex and age. In “shared proclamation” the passage is divided among several readers, and one of them speaks the narrative text. (Traditionally this person is called the “evangelist.”) Furthermore, the biblical characters may be “played” by anyone. Abraham or Jesus may be played by a child or a women, for example, and the woman at the well or the woman caught in adultery by a man.
Response of faith: The aim of reading scripture is always its proclamation in faith in order to evoke a response of faith in those who hear it. It needs to mean something very important for the faith-filled reader, and he or she needs to feel that the message of the passage is important to the congregation. The members of the assembly in turn ought to anticipate hearing a message that is important for their own Christian lives. Scripture may be proclaimed in whatever manner best conveys the faith message and evokes faith responses in the hearers, in the particular circumstances of each special liturgy.

Responding

The reading of scripture generally is accompanied by one or two other liturgical elements. One is "response," and the other may be termed "interpretation" or "reflection."

Interior and corporate responses: As already mentioned, the scripture reading is meant to evoke a response of faith in those that hear it. This occurs first in the hearts of the hearers as the text is being proclaimed. It is well, however, to plan a corporate, liturgical response following the reading. This may take a number of forms.

Silence: A period of silence may be the sole corporate response, or may precede some other response.

Sung acclamation or refrain: These are short, vigorous musical responses, for example, "Alleluia," "Sing a new song unto the Lord" or "O Lord, our God, we lift our hearts to you." With longer scripture readings it may be appropriate to use the sung acclamation or refrain several times within the passage, as well as at its conclusion.

Psalm: The psalm or portion of the psalm designated in the lectionary, or part or all of another appropriate psalm, may be chosen as a response to the word of God. The psalm may be prayed in different ways:

- Responsorial: Verses are sung or said by a cantor or another person, and the antiphon is sung or said by the assembly.
- Antiphonal: Alternative verses are sung or said by different parts of the assembly.
- Direct: All sing or say the entire psalm together. Alternatively, one person sings or reads the psalms in a meditative manner.
- Responsive: Verses are said alternatively by a leader and by the rest of the congregation.

Gospel canticle: The Song of Zechariah (Benedictus) or the Song of Mary (Magnificat) may be sung or said as a response to the word of God. Alternatively, one of the other biblical canticles used in the liturgy of the hours may be used.

Hymn: A hymn or song may be sung as a response to the proclamation of the word.
Litany of Confession: Short litanies of confession and praise of God's mercy are appropriate responses. These may be modeled after the third form of the penitential rite of the order of mass, or the litanies used at compline of the liturgy of the hours. Brief spontaneous prayers of confession and praise of God's mercy may precede or follow the litany.

Prayer of Praise: Prayers of praise, for example the traditional Te Deum Laudamus, are appropriate responses to God's word. Brief spontaneous prayers of praise may precede or follow the corporate prayer.

Intercessions: Prayers of intercession for the needs of the Church and the world are always appropriate responses to the proclamation of scripture. These prayers may be of the sort usually used for the general intercessions of the Sunday eucharist, or the type used in the liturgy of the hours. In both cases, brief spontaneous prayers of intercession may be presented by members of the assembly.

Creed: A traditional or modern creed (profession of faith) may be used as a response.

Audio-visual: Participants may also respond with eyes and ears by viewing an appropriate film or set of slides, which may include scenes of nature or of people. This may be accompanied by an appropriate musical background.

Movement: Some may be inspired to respond with their bodies, through prayerful movement or gesture.

Interpretation
The proclamation of scripture is often also followed by some sort of "interpretation" or "reflection." At official liturgies this is called the homily. This may include reflection on the meaning of the scripture readings in their original context, the significance they may have for the assembly today, or both. In part this is another form of response to the word of God. However, preaching has also been understood to be an extension of the proclamation of God's message. If there is more than one reading, it may follow each reading or all of them.

Reflection or interpretation may be shared in one or more of the following ways.
• Leader: The presider or another person preaches briefly in the usual way.
• Shared reflection: Two or three persons share in the preaching.
• Sharing and witnessing: Members of the community speak briefly about the message the readings have for them.
• Reading: Brief exegetical or meditative passages from appropriate commentaries or other writings may be used. It is in this way that nonscriptural readings are best used. They do not replace the bible, nor are they given equal place with scripture. However, they may be very appropriate and helpful if used as interpretation, reflection, or response to the biblical word.
Introductions and conclusions

Biblical readings may be introduced as they are at the eucharist: "A reading from . . . ." This may at times be expanded by the addition of an introductory comment: "In this passage the prophet Ezekiel tells us . . . ."

At the end of the readings, the usual kind of concluding dialogue may be used:

The word of the Lord (or the word of God).
Thanks be to God. or:
The Gospel of the Lord
(or The Good News of Jesus Christ).
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayers

Prayers used for liturgies with small groups may be of several types, and may come from a variety of sources. First, they may be common prayers that most people know by heart: the Lord's Prayer and its doxology, Hail Mary, I confess, the Apostles' or Nicene Creed.

From liturgical books: Alternatively, they may be taken from the official liturgical books, including those of other Churches. Prayers for seasons and feasts may be found in the appropriate parts of service books. A particularly important source of other prayers is that section of the Sacramentary called "Masses and prayers for various occasions". The section of the Alternative Service Book of the Anglican Church of Canada termed "Occasional prayers," and the part of the Lutheran Book of Worship called "Petitions, intercessions and thanksgivings" will also be helpful. Many other books also contain appropriate materials. Of course, prayers drawn from such sources may have to be adapted to make them more appropriate for a particular occasion and group.

Composed: Prayers may also be composed by those who plan the special liturgy. In the discussion of individual types of prayers (below), this process will be emphasized.

Spontaneous: Finally, prayers may be spontaneous on the part of leaders or other members of the assembly. Often these follow — consciously or unconsciously — some kind of pattern. Understanding the structures of different types of prayers may facilitate the formulation of spontaneous prayers.

Three groups: Liturgical prayers and related texts may be divided into three groups.

○ Longer types of prayers include collects, litanies, general intercessions, great thanksgivings (berakahs), creeds, prayers of praise, thanksgiving, confession or invocation, and blessings.

○ Shorter prayers include greetings, acclamations, doxologies, and dismissals.

○ Other texts that need to be considered include invitations and the giving of directions.
The collect is a form of prayer that is used quite often in official liturgies, for example the opening prayer, prayer over the gifts and prayer after communion of the eucharist. It is a very useful and versatile type of prayer, and not difficult to compose. Taking the opening prayer as a model, the collect has the following parts.

Invitation
Period of silent prayer
Prayer
  Invocation or address
  Basis
  Petition
  Result
  Ending
Response: "Amen"

The invitation may be simply, "Let us pray" or "Let us join in prayer." It may also be expanded to include additional directions, such as "Let us all pray in silence for a few moments." Alternatively, the content of the silent prayer may be suggested: "Let us pray for peace with justice throughout the world."

The period of silent prayer that follows is as important as the spoken prayer. It is the prayer of the assembled Church, moved by the Holy Spirit. It also constitutes an important mode of congregational participation, and balances the role of the person who speaks the text. The congregation's concluding Amen is both a response to the spoken prayer and an affirmation that they approve of and claim as their own what has been said.

In the invocation we address God by name; some biblical attribute or image is usually added. The collects of the official liturgies of the Church are almost always addressed to God — the first person of the trinity, the Father. This is a good practice, but in special liturgies it may also be appropriate to address them to Jesus Christ.

Some typical addresses found in official liturgies include the following: Merciful God, God of peace, Eternal Lord, Lord of all life and power, gracious Father, Father of all that is good, Lord God our redeemer, God our Father and protector.

The "basis" is a statement about God that gives us a reason for going on to petition God for something. It may be an attribute of God, or name something God has done for us in the past. This element may take various forms, but at root it is a proclamation of praise. Some typical "basis" formulas are the following:

— who sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of your Church
— whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread
— you unify the hearts of all your faithful
— your Son has opened for us a new and living way into your presence
— through the obedience of Jesus, your servant and your Son, you raised a fallen world

— when the Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism in the Jordan, you revealed him as your own beloved Son

**Petition:** The third and central element is the petition, for collects traditionally are prayers of petition. We ask God for something that helps us or others and that redounds to the glory of God. This too is a proclamation of faith in God, for we believe that God loves us and hears our prayers. Using the Lord’s Prayer as a model, the petitions of collects quite often use a verb in the imperative: send us, grant us, enliven us. In some cases, however, “may” or “let” are used as main verbs of petition. Some examples follow:

— increase your Spirit within us and bring us to our promised inheritance

— grant that we may not be overtaken by the darkness of error, but may always be bathed in the light of truth

— let the light of our faith shine in all that we do

— may all in heaven and earth acclaim your glory and never cease to praise you.

**The “result” element may or may not be present. It names a consequence of the granting of whatever is asked for:**

— so that our actions as well as our intentions may conform to your will

— so that we become instruments of your redeeming love

— that the whole world may behold your glory.

**Conclusion:** Finally, there is a concluding formula. Traditionally this has always referred to the fact that we pray through Jesus Christ, and in his name: he is the Mediator. A proclamation of praise of the trinity is sometimes added to the short christological ending:

— through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord

— Grant this for the sake of your only Son, Jesus Christ.

— We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

If the prayer is addressed to Christ, the ending has to be suitably adapted.

**In composing a collect,** it is best to begin with the petition; this is the core of the prayer. What do we wish to ask of God? Then the basis may be composed, choosing some attribute or act of God that is related to the content of the petition. The address is next; names, images and attributes are likewise chosen to fit the petition. The result and conclusion are added last.

**A dialogue:** It is traditional for the invitation and body of the collect to be said by the presider, and these elements then enter into dialogue with the silent prayer and Amen of the people. It may be noted, however, that in some other Churches, only the body of the prayer is used and this may be said in unison by all. This requires that everyone have the text.
Litany

The litany is a useful form of prayer for liturgies with small groups. It is used in the third form of the penitential rite of the eucharistic liturgy, and longer litanies are part of the funeral rite and rites of baptism for children, RCIA, anointing, and other sacraments. It is simple, variable enough to be interesting, and yet highly participatory in nature.

Four parts: A litany has these parts:

- Invitation or opening sentence (optional)
- Variable verses (said by leader)
- Constant response (said by congregation)
- Concluding collect or other prayer (optional)

Address: Litanies may be addressed to God or to Christ; most of those in the present official liturgies are addressed to Christ.

The variable verses may take a variety of forms, of which the following are simply examples. In this regard the litany is enormously versatile.

- You forgave the many sins of the woman who showed you great love
- You were sent to call sinners
- Lord Jesus, you heal the wounds of sin and division
- Your generous love is revealed in your gifts
- Through your Spirit you make us into one Body
- The forces of death could not hold you captive
- God has made you Lord and Messiah
- We are called to serve the needs of your people
- In your love you have chosen us to be your people
- Deliver your servant, Lord, as you delivered Susanna from the false accusers
- Father, increase his/her faith in Christ
- Relieve the sufferings of all the sick
- Give life and health to our brother/sister N.

Cue for the people: The variable verse may or may not end with a "cue" that leads to the people's response. These cues may take forms such as the following: We pray; To you we pray; Let us pray to the Lord; In faith we make our prayer; Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Our hope is in you, O Lord; We trust in you, O God; We have faith in you, O God.

The assembly's response of prayer likewise may take a variety of forms: Amen; Lord, save your people; Bless us and keep us, O Lord; Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner; Lord, hear our prayer; Lord, hear us; Have mercy on us; Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Hear our prayer. Another cue and response that go together are: Lord, in your mercy . . . hear our prayer.
Longer responses: At times the congregation’s response may be longer, and even equal the variable verse in length. For example: You love and come to us, O God; Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.

General Intercessions
This type of prayer is simply a special type of litany. It begins with an invitation to pray for the needs of the Church and the world, and concludes with a brief collect. The core of this prayer is a series of petitions or intercessions, each of which names a particular need and leads to the prayer response of the entire assembly. The traditional areas included in the petitions are:

- for the needs of the Church
- for civil authorities
- for those oppressed by any need
- for the local community
- for the salvation of the world
- for special categories of people, as seems appropriate.

Responsive prayer or reading
This type of prayer is not found in Roman Catholic liturgies, but is sometimes used by other Churches. Any of the longer types of prayers, or a psalm or other passage of scripture, is simply divided so that a leader says one sentence or verse, the congregation says the next, and so on. It is participative, but requires that everyone have the full text of the prayer or reading.

Great Thanksgiving or Berakah
As eucharistic people, we not only celebrate the liturgy of the eucharist, but also proclaim prayers of thanksgiving on many occasions. These may be long or short, but should never correspond too closely to the official eucharistic prayers of the sacramentary.

This type of prayer begins by praising, blessing or thanking God:

— Blessed are you, Lord our God, ruler of all nations
— All praise to you, gracious God
— All praise and glory are yours, Lord our God
— We give you thanks and praise, almighty God
— We give thanks to you, Lord our God.

Praise and thanks: This address is followed by thanks and praise for creation, for salvation history as recounted in the Old Testament, and for salvation history as proclaimed in the New Testament, leading up to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the sending of the Spirit on the Church. The following examples are taken from prayers of thanksgiving over water:
Over water the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation.
Through water you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in
Egypt into the land of promise.
In water your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anoint­
ed by the Holy Spirit as the Christ.

In the time of Noah, you washed the earth with the waters of the flood,
and your ark of salvation bore a new beginning.
In the time of Moses, your people Israel passed through the Red Sea
waters from slavery to freedom.
Jesus was baptized by John in the water of the Jordan, became living
water to a woman at the Samaritan well, and washed the feet of the dis­
ciples.

Anamnesis: In remembering these past events, we enter into them, praise
God for them, and proclaim our belief that God will do similar acts of love
and mercy in our own day and in the days to come. This part of the prayer
can be longer or shorter, and can name whatever biblical persons and
stories seem most appropriate.

Epiclesis: God may then be asked to send the Holy Spirit to sanctify, unify
and transform this particular worshipping community, the wider Church,
civil society and the whole world.

Pour out your Spirit upon the whole earth
and make it your new creation.
Gather your people together
from east to west, from north to south,
into your kingdom,
where peace and justice are revealed.

Intercession: We may then ask God for continued blessings in the future,
naming particular persons and needs.

Doxology: Finally, this prayer concludes with a short prayer of praise: a
doxology.

Blessed are you, Lord God of light
for ever and ever. Amen.

Acclamations: In use, such a lengthy prayer could be divided into parts,
each of which would be followed by a sung congregational acclamation. It
might be proclaimed by one person or a few.

Multiple short prayers: Another form of thanksgiving prayer consists of a
number of short prayers, linked together; each is concluded by a congrega­
tional acclamation. In the following examples, the dots indicate that the
person saying this prayer is to compose one line.

God, eternal Shepherd,
we praise and thank you,
because you have brought us
together to be your Church,
and . . . .
For this we thank you, O God.

Ever-living God,
we praise and thank you,
because your Spirit guides us
still today,
and every day . . . .
For this we thank you, O God.
**Brief thanksgivings:** A third approach is simply to shorten the first form.

All praise and glory are yours, O God;
we thank you for choosing us to be your people,
for adopting us as your children in Christ,
and for sending us your Spirit.
All glory and praise are yours, gracious God,
for ever and ever. Amen.

**Creeds**

In addition to using the Apostles' or Nicene creeds, it is possible to compose creeds. These use contemporary ways of expressing faith, and may reflect the concerns of the worshipping community. Of course these do not have the same status as the traditional professions of faith, but they are valid forms of prayer nonetheless. The following example is from Latin America.

We believe in God, Creator of a world that is still being born.
We believe in God who has not divided the world into the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate, the owners and the slaves.
We believe in Jesus Christ who lived our human situation and committed himself to the struggle of the people.
We believe in Jesus Christ who rose from the dead in order to free us from death and hate, from prejudice, pride and fear.
We believe in Jesus Christ who did all of this in order that we might transform the world into His Kingdom.

**Prayers of praise, thanksgiving, confession or invocation**

Short prayers that are not simply prayers of petition can be composed using some of the models already considered. For example, the collect form of prayer readily lends itself to modification. The petition can be replaced by statements of praise, of thanksgiving, of confession, or of invocation. Liturgies can also be composed that express these dimensions of prayer.

**Blessings**

Prayers of blessing may be of several types. One asks God's blessing on the worshipping community, and usually is used at the end of a liturgy. Its function in part is to strengthen the participants as they go back to their daily lives; it also reminds and assures them of God's continued presence in their lives. Both short and long forms may be used.

May the loving and gracious God,
the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless us and keep us for ever. Amen.

The blessing of the God of Sarah and of Abraham;
the blessing of Jesus Christ, born of Mary;
the blessing of the Holy Spirit who cares for us as a mother for her children, be always with us. Amen.

**A more elaborate form** divides the blessing into three parts, after each of which all respond, Amen. The solemn blessings of the eucharistic liturgy are of this type.
May God our Father bless us in all our prayers. Amen.
May God the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,
strengthen us in his love. Amen.
May God the Holy Spirit guide us in all our deeds. Amen.

Other types of blessing prayers ask God's blessing on particular members of
the assembly or on things and those who use them. They are more substan­
tial prayers, and are used within a service rather than at its conclusion. They
may be based on the collect form, or on prayers that begin by blessing God.
For example:

Lord Jesus Christ,
you showed your love for the sick
by speaking to them and touching them.
Bless these nurses
who are dedicated to helping the sick.
Guide them in their labors,
and give them the peace and joy of your Holy Spirit.
We praise you, for you are our Lord for ever and ever. Amen.
Blessed are you, Lord our God,
maker of the universe:
you have made us brothers and sisters in Jesus,
and dwelling places of your Holy Spirit.
Bless these parents in their love
as they welcome their new child N. into their family.
Lead them always in your love.
Blessed are you, O God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Greetings

A number of useful greetings are found in scripture. The following are but a
few examples:
— The Lord be with you.
— The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
— The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the
communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
— Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior be with
you.

Acclamations

Acclamations are short shouts of joy which arise from the assembly as vig­
orous and meaningful assents to God's word and action. Examples from the
official liturgies include Amen and Alleluia, as well as the Memorial Accla­
mations and Holy Holy of the eucharistic prayer. The following are a few
other examples.
— Glory to you for ever and ever.
— We praise you, we bless you.
— We thank you, Lord our God.
— Praise the Lord.
— We give you glory and praise.
Doxology

Doxologies are short prayers of praise to the Triune God, and are often sung. The following are examples:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Christ, all creatures here below;
Praise Holy Spirit, Comforter;
One God, Triune, whom we adore.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours,
creator of all.

We sing your praise, almighty Father,
through Jesus, our Lord,
in the power of the Holy Spirit,
now and forever.

Dismissals

At the end of the liturgy participants are sent forth to live the life of Christ in the world. Dismissal formulas may be brief or longer; here are several examples.

Go forth in the peace of Christ.

Go forth into the world,
rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

Sisters and brothers,
God chose us in Christ
before the world began.
Go forth to be holy and blameless
in God's sight
and the sight of all the world.
Be full of love and magnify the Lord
for all God has done for us.

Invitations

It is sometimes appropriate for presiders to facilitate the progress of the liturgy and the participation of the community by issuing invitations and giving directions.

Commonly used invitations include: Let us pray; Let us listen to the word of God; Let us profess our faith together; and Let us offer each other a sign of Christ's peace.

A more elaborate invitation is often used before the Lord's Prayer; the following are some examples:

— And now, with the confidence of children of God, let us pray:
— Let us continue by praying for the coming of the kingdom as Jesus taught us:
— Now let us offer together the prayer our Redeemer Jesus Christ taught us:
— Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us offer the prayer Christ himself taught us.

Directions
When giving directions, it is appropriate to say "please." In addition, directions need to be well thought out ahead of time, and should be as simple and clear as possible. They are best given just before they are needed; people may forget if they are given too far ahead. Key elements may have to be said twice; people may not be listening carefully the first time. Finally, they should be said loudly enough to be heard by all, but in a tone and manner that does not disturb the prayerfulness of the liturgy.

Liturgical language in general
A few guidelines may be suggested regarding the language of liturgical prayer in general. These apply both to the selection of existing prayers from various resource books and to the composition of new texts.

In our prayer we speak of God, the Church, humanity, the world, and God’s kingdom, and in each case we need to be careful about the language we use. On the negative side, we do not wish to say something we do not mean, or which is incorrect or unorthodox. We also do not want to exclude anyone because of the language that is used, or make their participation difficult.

Creative language: Positively, we want to be fresh and creative and take advantage of all the linguistic treasures of the Christian tradition. It is a good thing to expand our horizons and enrich the vocabulary of our worship.

God
Christian liturgical prayer is fundamentally trinitarian in nature. We pray to God through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. At times we pray directly to Christ. This basic orientation is important to keep in mind. Our tradition shows us, however, that all three persons of the trinity may be named and imaged in a variety of ways, and it is enriching to use this rich heritage.

Limited human language: We also need to be aware that none of our language about God actually describes God, and we need to take care not to distort or diminish God in our prayer and speech. The following principle is a helpful guide: Though no human speech is adequate to express the nature of God, every effort should be made to use language that least distorts, narrows or hampers our appreciation, understanding, experience and relationship with God.

God the first person is often also named or imaged as Lord and Father. Holy One, Most High, Creator, Redeemer, Savior, and Lover of Humanity are also used in liturgical prayers of one or another tradition.
Images of God: Our present official liturgical texts, taken as a whole, present a rich variety of images of God. Thus:

- God is all-powerful (or almighty), creator, eternal (or ever-living), ever-present, holy, unchanging and unseen.
- God is our guide, light, protector, redeemer, savior, shepherd, source of blessings, and source of light.
- God is a God of comfort, compassion, consolation, freedom, goodness, holiness, life, light, love, peace, providence, truth, and wisdom.
- God is the Father in heaven, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Father of the lowly, Father of all, God of all gifts, God of our fathers, and God of the living and the dead.

Additional biblical images: In addition to making full use of our present liturgical vocabulary, there are many images of God in the Old and New Testaments that are suitable for our liturgical prayer, but which often are ignored.

Scripture often images God in inanimate terms: rock, fortress, shield, stronghold, light. God is also imaged as an animal: eagle, lion, leopard, bear, — even moth and dry rot (see Hosea 5:12). God is also referred to as a person with eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, arms, feet, heart and wings.¹

Female images: Other biblical images of God are female or feminine in nature, though “mother” is not used as a divine name. These images include a mother eagle, mother hen and mother bear; midwife, lady wisdom, a bakerwoman, a nursing mother, a woman giving birth, and a female homemaker. Christ refers to himself as a mother hen, and medieval Christians sometimes referred to him as a mother or as a nursing mother.²

Pope John Paul II recently has written of the legitimacy and value of female images of God, and at least implicitly has encouraged the use of female as well as male images of God.³

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¹ For inanimate images, see Psalm 18: 2; 27: 1. For animal images, see Deuteronomy 32: 11; Hosea 5: 12; 13: 7. For anthropomorphic images, see Genesis 6: 6; II Samuel 22: 10; Job 1: 11; Psalm 17: 6; 8; 18: 8; 33: 18; 98: 1.


³ See John Paul II, On The Dignity and Vocation of Women (CCC8, 1988), section 8: “The Anthropomorphism of Biblical Language.” Among other things, the Pope says, “If there is a likeness between Creator and creatures, it is understandable that the bible would refer to God using expressions that attribute to him both ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ qualities.” He goes on to quote some biblical passages that use feminine images of God.

He then says: “This characteristic of biblical language — its anthropomorphic way of speaking about God — points indirectly to the mystery of the eternal ‘generating’ which belongs to the inner life of God. Nevertheless, in itself this ‘generating’ has neither ‘masculine’ nor ‘feminine’ qualities. It is by nature totally divine. It is spiritual in the most perfect way, since ‘God is spirit’ (Jn. 4:24) and possesses no property typical of the body, neither ‘feminine’ nor ‘masculine.’ Thus even ‘fatherhood’ in God is completely divine and free of the ‘masculine’ bodily characteristics proper to human fatherhood. In this sense the Old Testament spoke of God as a Father.
Christ

Jesus is most often referred to as Son, Word and Lord. Biblical writers deliberately used Lord, a title of God, to refer to Christ in order to make a faith statement about his divinity. In prayer, however, the title Lord needs to be used carefully in order to minimize confusion between the first and second person of the trinity. Generally speaking, Lord at the beginning of a collect refers to God, while at the end of a collect it refers to Christ. In greetings and acclamations, and frequently in litanies, Lord refers to Christ.

Other names and images that can be used include Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, Savior, Redeemer, Child of God, Lamb of God, Risen Christ, Brother, Risen One, Crucified One. In speaking of the incarnation it is appropriate to say that Christ became human or fully human, or one of us.

Holy Spirit

For many centuries the Holy Spirit was neglected in the prayer of the western Church, being referred to mainly in trinitarian formulas and creeds. Today we are more aware of the vital importance of the Spirit, and are naming the Spirit throughout our Christian prayer. This practice is strongly encouraged. The names Spirit and Holy Spirit may be complemented with such images as Giver of Life and Sanctifier.

Kingdom

God’s “kingdom,” which is referred to frequently in liturgical prayer, may also be spoken of as the reign or dominion of God. It may also be thought of as God’s “dream” for humanity and all creation.

People of God

Our liturgical assemblies at least potentially include women and men, children, youth and elderly persons, single and married people and members of divided families, lay persons, religious sisters and brothers, and ordained persons. While it is not necessary — or even desirable — to name all these groups, care needs to be taken not to exclude or omit the participation of anyone. What the International Commission on English in the Liturgy and the Canadian bishops have said about women applies to everyone:

Both sound theology and pastoral sensitivity require that the language used in all liturgical texts, as well as in all other aspects of liturgy, for
example, preaching, should not only permit but indeed facilitate the full participation of women in the worship of the Church. Sensitive Christians have begun to remedy the problem of liturgical language that is discriminatory toward women by careful choice of a vocabulary which includes all people.4

Language referring to the worshipping community can be enriched by use of expressions such as these: brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, men and women, humanity, human race, humankind, people(s), Church, community, companion, family, friends, faithful, children, all/we/us, all creation, whole world, forerunners, forebears, ancestors.

Sinful and redeemed: It is also well to be conscious of language used to identify the Christian people. Sometimes the focus is on our sinfulness to an extent that goes too far: "a wretch like me" in "Amazing Grace" might be an example. It is well to balance the fact that we are sinners with language that says that we are redeemed, baptized, saved, graced, gifted, etc.

Images of Church: When referring to ourselves as a community, we would do well to use more of the wide variety of images of the Church found in the New Testament. These include: the salt of the earth, unleavened bread, branches of the vine, the bride of Christ, ambassadors, the new creation, God's glory, the sanctified, the household of God, the body of life.5


Music

Liturgies for small groups are musical celebrations, just as the official liturgies of the Church are. The musical dimension of each special liturgy needs to be planned in a creative way.

**Functions of music:** It is always well to recall the various functions that music can play in worship. Music unifies the assembled people, sets the tone for a particular celebration, and imparts joy and enthusiasm. It heightens texts so that they speak more effectively and forcefully, and it discloses a dimension of meaning and feeling that words alone cannot do. Music is an important means of expressing faith.

**Musical liturgies:** Liturgies for small groups may use a great deal of music, or only a little. One example of a service that is heavily musical is the liturgy of lessons and carols, often celebrated during Advent and the Christmas season. A number of biblical passages for Advent or Christmas are read. After each one everyone sings one or two carols; each may conclude with a collect. Finally, at some point there may be a homily. This type of liturgy is seasonal, participatory, and musical.

**Taizé music:** Another very musical form of prayer originated in the monastery of Taizé in France, and is becoming popular in Canada. Its structure is based on the liturgy of the hours, but chants that come from Taizé replace the psalms. The service also includes a short scripture reading (often in several languages), intercessions, and the Lord’s Prayer; these are interspersed with additional chants.

**Many kinds of music** can be used in liturgies for small groups, and there is an almost endless number of sources from which it may be obtained. It need only meet the basic criteria: Will it help this community on this occasion in their liturgical prayer?

**Musical challenges:** Very small groups of people may have particular problems with respect to music for their special liturgies. They may not be strong singers, and may not include persons who can provide vocal leadership or instrumental accompaniment. In such cases music can still be chosen that is simple, yet beautiful and suitable for the liturgy. The Taizé style of music is one possibility. Another is to use short refrains or antiphons, such as those found *Catholic Book of Worship II* or in the hymnal *Glory and Praise*; many of these are widely known. Even if the group might find the verses of particular songs difficult, the refrains are often relatively easy to sing. A third approach is to use recorded music to support the singing of the group. However, this needs to be used in ways that will not diminish participation, but rather enhance it.

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1 Several volumes of “Music from Taizé” have been published by Collins (London) and GIA (Chicago).
Signs and Symbols

Readings, prayers and music do not exhaust the ways we pray liturgically or the needs and opportunities for planning. The nonverbal dimension of liturgies for small groups may be considered under three headings: the prayer of whole persons; the environment of worship; and symbolic action as prayer.

Prayer of whole persons

Those who participate in special liturgies are whole persons, and not just persons with mouths, ears, and minds. We pray with our posture, gesture, movement and touch; with sight, hearing and smell.

Seeing and hearing: Careful attention needs to be taken to be sure that all present can see what there is to see. In special liturgies outside of church buildings this may mainly be the other people present, leaders, readers and other ministers, and the symbols that may be used. In addition, all should be able to hear the readings and prayers, and planning may have to include obtaining one or more microphones and using them appropriately.

Posture is also a matter for planning. A decision needs to be made if one posture — standing, sitting, kneeling — is appropriate for the entire liturgy. If not, then the posture appropriate for each song, reading, prayer and other part needs to be designated. Prostration is another ancient posture of prayer.

Gesture: Special liturgies often include few gestures and little movement, except for coming together and dispersing afterwards. However, these are dimensions of worshipping with the whole body that need to be explored further. Appropriate gestures during songs or prayers can contribute much to worship; of course people cannot hold books or pieces of paper at the same time. Holding hands can be appropriate for certain prayers. This can be a way of valuing children, as they then are obviously as important as everyone else. Gestures of blessing can also be used by all.

Other gestures that might be considered include bowing, genuflecting, beating the breast, kissing objects or people, touching objects or people, holding hands outstretched or folded, in the orans position or in a gesture of invocation, making the sign of the cross in different ways, exchanging the sign of peace.

Movement during special liturgies can include dance by one or several persons with special gifts in this area, or by the entire community.2

K.M. Irwin, Primer of Prayer Gesture (Logos Mediations 1977)
Processions: Movement can also take the form of processions. Space permitting, and assuming that it makes sense in terms of the celebration as a whole, the assembly might move from one place to another place for different parts of the liturgy. Alternatively, the entire liturgy could be a procession, with the different prayers, readings and songs prayed as the group moves along. This could take place indoors or outdoors, but might be especially appropriate outdoors during good weather. Provision would have to be made for those who might need help in participating in the procession.

The environment of worship

Worship is much influenced by the environment in which it is carried out, and this needs to be considered as part of the planning process. How will people be gathered? What will catch and delight the eye? Where will special furniture be placed for the best effect?

Hospitality: Prayerful gathering first of all involves gracious hospitality. This is everyone's responsibility, but particular persons may also be designated for this role.

Seating: If chairs or benches will be used for seating — and these are not always required — planners need to consider how they can best be placed to promote the unity of the worshipping community and hence the embodying of the Church in this time and place. Circular or U-shaped arrangements often are best, especially if the group is small. If the existing seating in a place cannot be rearranged in a suitable manner, serious consideration should be given to worshipping elsewhere.

Special furniture might include a lectern for readings, a table, candle holders and cross stand, as well as seats for leaders or others who have special roles.

Visual focus: Planners need to consider the creation of a visual focus — the place where the eyes of members of the community will naturally come to rest and which will promote worship. This might be in the center of the group or in front of it; the visual focus might be a banner, or a bright cloth on a table, for example. There might be one or more lighted candles, a cross, crucifix or icon, perhaps the bible or lectionary.

Unity and beauty: The visual focus — if it is a good one — facilitates the unity of the group; it draws everyone together. It also reminds us of the presence of God and says something about the identity of the worshipping community. Hopefully it will be beautiful, reflecting the beauty of our God, who has created us and the whole world. The cross reminds us of the paschal mystery and of the love of God in Jesus Christ. All of these also remind us who we are: created by God, recreated in baptism, disciples of the one who died on the cross and was raised up by the glory of God.


Adelaide Ortegel, A Dancing People (West Lafayette: Center For Contemporary Celebration 1976).
Symbolic action as prayer

In some liturgies with small groups, some symbolic action will play a central role and indeed may be the predominant form of prayer. These symbolic actions may be similar to the ones that are used in the sacramental liturgies: bathing in water, anointing with oil, laying on of hands, sharing bread and wine (and/or other food). They may also include signs of God’s creation (earth, light), signs of human labor, signs of ministry, and signs of human exploitation and sinfulness.

Symbolic actions can have more than one meaning, hence the meaning that is intended in a particular celebration needs to be specified through words that precede, surround or follow the action. For example, a biblical reading might be used first, hence the core structure of the liturgy becomes word plus symbolic action. Alternatively, a prayer of thanksgiving and invocation may be prayed over the symbol and those using it, and then the symbolic action may be carried out. Finally, the prayer may follow the symbolic action.

The following are a few examples of symbolic action:

- Water. People may be sprinkled generously with water, using an evergreen or palm branch. They may immerse hands and arms in a deep basin, cool their faces, or walk in a pool or stream.

- Food. Food, such as an apple, can simply be looked at as a sign of God’s creation. Food and drink can also be shared by the community, and some can be put aside for those in need.

- Oil. People’s foreheads may be anointed with perfumed or ordinary oil, or it may be poured on their palms to be rubbed on hands, arms, and face.

- Laying on of hands. This may be done, by one person or several, as a sign that the recipient is the object of special concern and prayer. It may also be used to signify commissioning for ministry.

- Light. Candles may be lit as signs of spiritual or physical life, or extinguished as signs of sin or death. The number of candles used may have a meaning in the context of a particular celebration.

- Cross. A cross or crucifix may be part of the visual focus, or may be carried, passed, or kissed. Making the sign of the cross on oneself can be a moving action; the Rite of Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age has inspired the following:

  Sisters and brothers, Christ has called you to be his disciples. Always remember him and be faithful to him. Therefore we mark ourselves with the sign of the cross. It is the sign of Christians; let it remind us always of Christ and how much he loves us.

  Mark your ears with the sign of the cross: hear the words of Christ.
  Mark your eyes with the sign of the cross: see the works of Christ.
  Mark your lips with the sign of the cross: speak as Christ would speak.
Mark the sign of the cross over your heart: make your heart the home of Christ. Mark your shoulders with the sign of the cross: be strong with the strength of Christ.

Place yourselves entirely under the sign of Christ's cross in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: live with Jesus now and for ever. Amen.

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Putting It All Together

Planners finally need to take the constituent elements that they have chosen — structure, readings, prayers, music, signs and symbols — and integrate these to form a unified liturgy. Among the points that still have to be considered are the beginning and ending of the service, and the question of participation and ministry.

Beginning and Ending

Beginnings and endings of liturgies for small groups are important, and can help or hinder the prayerfulness of the whole experience. They need to be planned, but should not receive so much attention that the core of the liturgy suffers as a result.

Need for planning: They also constitute unique kinds of planning problems. The same or similar type of beginning and ending can be used in a variety of situations, even when the core of the liturgy varies greatly.

Function: The beginning of a liturgy has several functions. It unifies the gathered people and brings them together to embody the Church. It reminds everyone of the presence of God with them, and sometimes names the identity of the worshipping community in a special way. Of course it also serves the pragmatic function of signaling that the service has begun.

The gathering of the people and the embodying of the Church in unity have important verbal and nonverbal dimensions that are dealt with elsewhere. Both the physical setting and the extending of hospitality are important elements.

The shape of the beginning will depend on the length of the service as a whole, for the introductory rites should take only a small portion of the entire service. In addition, it will depend on what the people have been doing immediately previously, especially whether they have been together or not.

Singing: After gathering physically, a song is often appropriate to further unify the group, set the tone, encourage full participation, and establish a note of joy. Its text may also have to do with the “theme” of the celebration.

Transition: If the people have already been together for some event, a transition may need to be made between their previous activities and the liturgical celebration. Sometimes a period of silence is suitable; someone invites the group to recollect themselves in silence for a few moments. Alternatively, the singing of appropriate music sometimes can achieve this purpose.

Formal beginning: At some point, before or after an opening song, it is appropriate to signal the beginning of the more formal part of the liturgy. In Roman Catholic tradition this is most commonly done by making the sign of the cross with its accompanying words, by giving a biblical greeting such as “The Lord be with you” with its response from the congregation, or by a scriptural verse such as “O Lord, come to my assistance,” with its response.
Scripture sentence: In Protestant tradition the beginning of a service is often signaled by the proclamation of an appropriate verse or two from the bible. In either case a more personal greeting by a presider may follow if appropriate. If it is necessary to do so, an introduction to the liturgy and necessary directions may be given next. This often leads to the first prayer or biblical reading.

Who we are: If opportune, these introductory rites can be expanded by some prayer or action that reminds us further of who we are, who our God is, and of the nature of our relationship with God. Typically this may take the form of a "penitential rite," consisting of some sort of prayer of confession together with praise of God's love and mercy. Alternatively, we may be reminded of the fact that we are children of God and sisters and brothers of Jesus Christ through baptism. This may consist of a prayer over water and subsequent sprinkling. An opening prayer sometimes concludes the first part of the liturgy.

Ending

Concluding rites have several functions. One is to assure us of God's continued presence in our daily lives; this is often signified by a benediction or blessing. A second is to remind us that we are called to lives of witness and service; this is often communicated through a commissioning or dismissal. Finally, they simply signal that the liturgy is over. The Lord's Prayer, a concluding collect, and a song may also be included.

A quiet ending: Though liturgies for small groups usually end with everyone actually leaving the place of worship, they may also lead to an indefinite period of silent prayer and meditation; people eventually leave one by one. In this case the conclusion will be more quiet, and the dismissal will have to be worded appropriately.

Sign of peace: Special liturgies sometimes conclude with the exchange of the sign of peace, after which people leave informally. If not used previously in the service, this provides an opportunity for mutual interaction and the exchange of gestures and words that might not be as appropriate in the middle of the liturgy. However, the sign of peace is never simply a way of saying goodbye; it should always be a deep expression of the reconciliation and unity all have in Christ and a prayer that others may experience the reign of God in their everyday lives.

Ministry and Participation

It goes without saying that full, active, conscious and fruitful participation by everyone is a basic principle of liturgies for small groups as much as it is for the official liturgies of the Church. The primary minister of the celebration is the entire liturgical assembly. Both verbal and nonverbal modes of participation have already been considered.

Special ministries: Particular individuals exercise certain ministries in the course of the liturgy or of its preparation. Planners, readers, musicians, greeters, leaders of general intercessions and other litanies, and those with gifts for art and environment are obvious examples. Children, elderly per-
sons and disabled persons should participate in these ministries as much as possible.

**Leadership in the liturgy** is of particular importance. Very often lay women and men will lead or preside at liturgies for small groups, though of course ordained persons may do so as well. The role of leaders is to enable, facilitate and coordinate the prayer and participation of everyone who is present and of the group as a whole. They need not say many of the prayers themselves, or read lessons, or even preach. Instead, it may be more important for them to speak greetings, invitations, introductions, dismissals, and to give nonverbal cues.

**A shared ministry:** Leadership can be shared by several persons, so long as this does not lead to confusion and disunity.

**Prayerful leadership:** Leaders should seek to make the service the prayer of everyone and of the group as a whole. To do this they need to enter into the prayer themselves, and hence need to be prepared. They should know the people of their group, and know what will be prayer for them. Leaders need to lead the assembly into prayer, and not just say prayers themselves.

**Promoting mutuality:** Leaders need to be conscious that communal prayer involves mutuality, and seek to promote a unity of purpose and attitude among those participating. They should promote a consciousness of community, seek the participation of all, foster mutual attentiveness and respect, and encourage interaction among the members of the assembly, for example through the sign of peace, sharing in pairs, and other words or gestures.

**Integration**

Planners will then examine their work and make sure that the special liturgy works, makes sense, is good ritual prayer, and is theologically sound. Questions such as the following will need to be considered.

**Structure**

- Does the structure or outline originally chosen still make sense in light of the readings, prayers and other elements that have been chosen? Does the structure need to be adjusted, or another one chosen?
- Do the readings, prayers and symbolic actions fit within the structure? Is there too much material or too little? Is there balance among the various types of elements?

**The big picture**

- What is the main verbal element?
- What is the main nonverbal element?
- What is the main music element?
- How will these be interrelated?
Dynamics

• Is there a clear beginning and clear ending? Are these secondary to the core of the liturgy?
• Are directions given only when and as needed? Are they clear and simple?
• What are the high points?
• What pace is appropriate?

Ministry and participation

• Who will provide overall leadership, at what point, and in what ways?
• Who will lead or perform music?
• Who will say the various prayers?
• Who will read or do other special ministries?
• How can the assembly participate in each part and the liturgy as a whole? Is there a satisfactory balance between the role of the congregation and that of special ministers?

Resources

• Are the needed liturgical books, signs and symbols, other texts, music, etc. available and in usable form?
• Are all participation aids needed for the assembly available and in usable form?

Theological content

• Will the liturgy be a good human experience?
• Will it be a good experience of God?
• Will it be a good experience of Church?
• Will it be a good experience of liturgical prayer?
• Will it be a good experience of peace and justice?
• Will it be a good experience of ministry?
A Canadian Institute in Pastoral Liturgy

Saint Paul University in Ottawa announces its Summer Institute in Pastoral Liturgy, July 4-28, 1989.

This Institute is intended for people working in liturgies in parish, school, or community, and offers topics which will help them to understand their role better and carry it out more effectively. Parish liturgy committee members, planners, ministers, musicians, catechists, teachers, religious, seminarians, clergy, and other interested in the Church’s worship can benefit from this type of learning.

Topics planned for 1989:

July 4-14

INTRODUCTION TO LITURGY
SUNDAY EUCHARIST
ART AND ARCHITECTURE FOR THE CHURCH
THE CHRISTIAN IN THE FACE OF ILLNESS AND DEATH:
  PASTORAL-LITURGICAL CARE OF THE SICK
  THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

July 17-28

LITURGICAL YEAR
PASTORAL-LITURGICAL SYNTHESIS
LITURGICAL PRESIDING
  BY LAY PEOPLE
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

The Institute is arranged so that students may return in subsequent summers for other topics. A certificate will be developed for successful completion of an appropriate variety of topics. Fuller details will be available upon registration.

The sessions offered in 1989 will blend theory and practice in a way that adults can learn comfortably, and be equipped to bring this learning into the worship life of their parish or community. Eucharist and daily prayer will be encouraged as an opportunity for deepening of worship and prayer during the Institute.

Students may register for one to four courses. No previous university studies are required. These courses may be taken for academic credit, as arranged with the Faculty of Theology.

For further details and registration forms, contact:

Summer Institute in Pastoral Liturgy
Faculty of Theology
Saint Paul University
223 Main Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 1C4
Anniversaries are special moments in the lives of individuals and of communities. They call for celebration and thanksgiving for blessings received, and for reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of our human endeavors.

In January, 1985, Pope John Paul II announced an Extraordinary Synod of Bishops for the purpose of commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council. Among the purposes of this initiative, the Holy Father cited the desire to exchange and examine experiences and information about the application of the Council in the universal Church and in particular Churches. In addition, he stated that the Synod would serve to promote the constant incorporation of the Council into the life of the Church in light of new developments and circumstances.

On December 4, 1988, the Church marked another anniversary. Twenty-five years have elapsed since the promulgation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. As we mark this anniversary, we are invited to be attentive to the principles which guided the extraordinary synod. We give thanks for the liturgical renewal that has taken place in our parish communities. At the same time, we are called to share our experiences and reflect on them in light of the principles outlined in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, with a view to deepening our common experience of the Paschal Mystery.

In this spirit, the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy (French Sector) met with diocesan directors and liturgical chairpersons to celebrate the anniversary of the Constitution. What follows is a summary of their discussions, and an invitation for parish communities to continue reflection on the implementation of the renewal of liturgy envisioned by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council.

On December 4, 1963, Pope Paul VI promulgated the conciliar Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. It was the first document approved by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council. This long awaited document situated the liturgy at the very heart of the life of the Church. It demonstrated a firm desire on the part of the bishops to provide for the renewal and fostering of the liturgy in order to "intensify the growth of Catholics in Christian living ( . . . ) and to nurture whatever can contribute to the unity of all who believe in Christ; and to strengthen those aspects of the Church which can help summon all of mankind into her embrace" (SC no. 1).

This document was received with enthusiasm among Christians and soon gave rise to a movement of reform. Even today, it is difficult to measure all the results and implications of this reform.
If we were to undertake the task of retracing the progress that has been made and evaluating its success, we would have much to say on many topics.

It would be necessary to speak about the introduction of the vernacular into our celebrations, the publication of new liturgical books and the adaptations that have been made to our places of worship. We would have to consider the large number of new hymns which have been composed, and to examine what we have accomplished thus far in the proclamation and explanation of God’s word, to which the reform attached such great importance. It would be important for us to say a few words about the simplification of rites that has taken place since the Council, and to evaluate the results of efforts to promote a more active, communal and fruitful participation in liturgical celebrations. It would certainly be fitting to observe how lay people are exercising their various ministries, and to examine to what extent our celebrations have been better adapted to the great diversity of assemblies which celebrate the Church’s liturgy. Above all, it would be necessary to evaluate the extent to which the people of God have made the liturgy the “source” and “summit” of their whole existence, for that is the primary objective of the reform during the past twenty-five years (cf. SC 10, 14).

These are vast and important subjects. However, we do not intend to deal with them at this time. On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, we have decided to call attention to only a few questions which seem to be fundamental to the continuation of the liturgical reform. Our most profound conviction is this: after the initial phase of implementation which has been beneficial in many ways, the reform has now reached a point where it requires of all of us a new and energetic effort and involvement on the pastoral level. Only by such an effort will the fundamental liturgical principles become deeply rooted in the Christian people, and that which is essential be clearly recognized in every celebration.

The liturgy is intended to be the place where one finds the sanctification of humanity realized and manifested in signs. It is in the liturgy that the full public worship of the Church is performed (cf. SC 7). What the liturgy must be, is a privileged moment in which Christ and his Church encounter one another, give themselves to one another, and constantly renew their covenant by offering themselves to the Father. The liturgy is meant to be the unique place to which all the faithful — baptized and confirmed, in order to form the Body of Christ and to collaborate in building the Kingdom — return to draw strength, light, courage and hope to accomplish their mission. The liturgy is the outstanding means by which the work of our redemption is accomplished, and the faithful can express and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the authentic nature of the true Church (cf. SC 2).

THE CENTRAL PLACE OF LITURGY

What we have just stated enables us to distinguish the important place the liturgy ought to have in the life of every Christian and in the midst of every ecclesial community.

In order that the Christian people may more securely derive an abundance of graces from the sacred liturgy, holy Mother Church desires to undertake with great care a general restoration of the liturgy itself. For the liturgy is made up of unchangeable elements divinely instituted, and elements subject to change. The latter not only may but ought to be changed with the passing of time if features have by chance crept in which are less harmonious with the intimate nature of the liturgy, or if existing elements have grown less functional. [SC 21]

Rightly, then, the liturgy is considered as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. In the liturgy the sanctification of man is manifested by signs perceptible to the senses, and is effected in a way which is proper to each of these signs; in the liturgy full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head of His members. [SC 7]
There is no Christian life without liturgy; there is no Christian community without liturgy. The sacraments — and especially the eucharist — build and nourish the Church. These make of all believers, living members of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Certainly, it is not the liturgy alone that builds up the Church, expresses it and supplies its needs (cf. SC 9, 12). However, the liturgy accomplishes these things in a special way and is of such great importance that no one can pass it by without finding himself or herself exposed to spiritual harm. Little by little, they will be led further away from Christ and his Church.

In the early days of implementing liturgical reform, we thought and hoped that the feeling of alienation from liturgical practice would be overcome. We believed that many who had ceased participating in liturgical celebrations would return to them. This, however, is not the case. The movement of secularization, which has exercised its influence among us for many years, has not relented. In every situation — family, school, work — one discerns the loss of a sense of the sacred and an attempt to build a society without God. We have arrived at the point where, in the Church itself, more and more people believe it is possible to live a normal Christian life without participating regularly in the celebrations of their Christian communities. There is here, a serious problem which we cannot fail to address.

It is our belief that the primary task that faces us in the years ahead, is to rediscover for ourselves, and to help others rediscover the proper place which liturgy ought to occupy in the life of every Christian.

Twenty-five years ago, the Council declared that it is the liturgy which, day by day, builds up those within the Church into the Lord's holy temple (cf. SC 2). It is the liturgy which strengthens the faithful in their ability to proclaim Christ. It is also the primary and indispensable source from which they must draw a truly Christian spirit (cf. SC 14).

It is not possible, therefore, to be a true Christian without the liturgy.

A PASchal LITURGY

The genuine spirit which the faithful discover in the liturgy is a paschal spirit: that spirit which led Jesus to deliver himself to us entirely, out of love, in a gesture of self-offering and thanksgiving.

In this action, as we know, Jesus rose from the dead as Lord, took his place at the right hand of the Father, and was manifested as savior of all humanity.

In a very particular way, it is the task of the liturgy to keep alive in our world the passover of Christ. As the Council reminds us, to accomplish such a great task, namely, the work of the Paschal mystery, Christ is present in his Church, especially in its liturgical celebrations (cf. SC 7). In this way, those who are baptized are plunged into the paschal mystery of Christ, and those who participated in the eucharist proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes (cf. SC 6).

Death and life! Death which leads to life. A passage into life. The means by which we die to sin and are restored to life in Christ. The mystery of suffering and joy. The event in which we give ourselves entirely in order to receive all from God. The event in which we imitate Christ and give thanks to the Father, thereby learning to live not for ourselves, but for others. That is the liturgy! That, in particular, is the significance

The wonders wrought by God among the people of the Old Testament were but a prelude to the work of Christ the Lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God. He achieved His task principally by the paschal mystery of His blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and glorious ascension, whereby “dying, he destroyed our death and, rising he restored our life.” For it was from the side of Christ as He slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth the wondrous sacrament which is the whole Church. [SC 5]
of the Sunday eucharist which gathers together all the faithful: rich and poor, free and in chains, young and old. That is the mystery they celebrate in the smallest and the largest, the most famous and the most modest of churches. Everywhere and for everyone, it is the paschal mystery which is celebrated, in order that all men and women may become united in Christ.

The world in which we live is marked by selfishness and the concern for personal well-being. Our liturgies must contribute to the transformation of this world. As Christians we often live in ways that are not inspired by the Gospel. The task of the liturgy is to bring us back to the paschal way of life, in which we are willing to die to self in order to become bearers of life.

We believe it will be important, in the years to come, to make every effort to promote and bring to life a liturgy that is centered on Christ’s paschal mystery and on our own. In these difficult and demanding times in which we live, we cannot afford to let ourselves be distracted by what is secondary and useless. What we need is solid and nourishing food. We must constantly return to what is essential, in order to draw life from it.

Essential for disciples of Christ is the paschal mystery. The liturgy is the royal gate by which we enter into that mystery.

**LITURGY AND LIFE**

Some may think that the paschal mystery is present only in liturgical celebrations. However, we also enter into this mystery and celebrate it in the world.

That is the way it was for Jesus, who was animated by the paschal spirit from the day of his birth. He celebrated his passover ritually on the evening of his last supper and then proceeded to its completion on the following day when he stretched out his arms on the cross. Three days later he rose from the dead. His entire life was a passover.

All our Christian liturgies are meant to express the paschal mystery in our lives. They are also to lead to it. The eucharist itself, must always serve as our model, since it is the paschal sacrament par excellence.

In order that the liturgical reform may bear more abundant fruit, it is appropriate that all be frequently reminded that the rites of the Church and the way we live our lives form one and the same act of worship, that the offering of ourselves in ritual and the offering of ourselves at home or at work form one and the same offering. This is the work of the Spirit who fills the hearts of all the faithful, transforming them in Christ and making of their lives in the world and in the Church, an everlasting gift to the glory of the Father. (See Eucharistic Prayer 3.)

All the liturgical rites which were denounced by the ancient prophets and spurned by God failed to express genuine love and a commitment to greater charity (Is. 1: 13-17; Hos. 6: 6; Amos 5: 24). It is only a life that is concretely marked with the paschal spirit that is able to offer the kind of worship that is pleasing to God — a worship “in spirit and in truth” (John 4: 23). In vain are baptisms, confirmations and the Sunday euchar-
rist if they do not form men and women with a genuine desire to feed the poor, loosen the bonds of those in chains, and welcome the homeless.

When they are correctly understood, liturgical rites constantly invite us to put the Gospel into practice. Think of the handshake that we give to one another as we enter the church, and the sign of peace we exchange before receiving the Body of Christ. Are not both these gestures invitations to recognize a brother or a sister in every person we meet? Consider the monetary offering which we make each Sunday for the poor and for the needs of the Church. Is this not a pressing invitation to live each day with the desire to share and a commitment to justice? Think also of our sharing of the eucharistic bread, in which all of us eat the one bread and become one body (1 Cor. 11-17). Does not that action oblige us to work both in public and in our own homes for reconciliation among all people living on this earth?

We believe that the moment has come to examine carefully the meaning of our liturgical rites in order to see how they call us to a life steeped in the spirit of the Gospel, and to discover how they are the source of that life. This examination must be carried out with special attention to the link which must exist between parish celebrations and those celebrations which are part of family life. For it is in the family that the beginnings of the Christian spirit are fostered in baptized children. These children who will one day be called upon to announce the Gospel and the coming of the Kingdom in the Church and in the world.

A LITURGY OF THE HEART

To speak of liturgical rites as source, is to recognize their power to touch the inner depths of human beings and to form them in the image and likeness of God, and of his Son. The liturgy constantly makes a memorial of the Lord for all who are united with Christ and imitate him. "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him" (John 6: 56). "I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you" (John 13: 15). "You have been taught that when we were baptized in Christ Jesus we were baptized in his death; in other words, when we were baptized we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life" (Romans 6: 3-4).

These rites have this power because Christ is present in them and acts with the power of the Spirit (cf. SC 7). We must insist that the liturgy is the action of Christ. It is never the action of the Church without Christ. It is the effective action of the Church because it is first and foremost the action of Christ. However, Jesus never acts alone in the liturgy. He always associates himself with the Church. If the liturgy is efficacious for our sanctification and for giving glory to God, it is so because it is an activity of the whole Christ: an action of the body of Christ which is the Church, and Christ the head.

If we believe in the efficaciousness of liturgical rites, we are also fully aware that their effectiveness has nothing to do with anything magical or automatic. Their effectiveness is dependent on the dynamism of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It also depends on the dispositions of those who participate in them.

For the liturgy to produce its full effect, the faithful must approach it with the proper dispositions, unite their thoughts and words, and cooperate with grace from above. Otherwise, as the Constitution notes, they may receive God's grace in vain. The text goes on to say that this is why pastors of souls must see to it... that the faithful take part in the liturgical action intelligently, actively, and fruitfully (cf. SC 11).

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To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. [SC 7]
Actively! Ever since the Council, we have worked hard to prevent the liturgy from becoming an activity at which people assist merely as spectators. Instead, we have strongly urged people to participate actively. The results have been considerable.

To progress further, however, it seems necessary to remind ourselves that the active participation which Vatican II had in mind is both “internal and external” (cf. SC 49). This means the use of our hands, our voices and our eyes must be the outward expression of our innermost hearts. It also means that liturgical rites do not really achieve their purpose unless they succeed in moving people’s hearts and bring about in them a more profound conversion to Christ and his message.

The interior aspect of active participation in the liturgy is not a reality that is easily achieved. It implies constant attention of body and soul to spiritual realities. It presupposes a sincere and lively desire to encounter and make oneself receptive to God’s action as Mary did. This interior participation is largely fostered and particularly nourished by silence and serenity.

Silence, serenity, moderation and simplicity: these are all qualities that we should strive for in our celebrations.

It seems to us that, after the busy and exciting stage of implementing a form of the liturgy in which everyone is actively involved in the singing, responses, postures and gestures, it is now important to devote a lot of effort to the development of a better understanding and practice of that kind of interior participation which is indispensable for entering more deeply into the heart of the paschal mystery and thereby deriving more abundant fruit.

A LITURGY WHICH BUILDS THE CHURCH

Among the results that are to be attained from the liturgical mystery, the most important should be the establishment of Christian communities that are alive and mission-minded. This is the ultimate goal of liturgical activity; we have emphasized it earlier by referring to the second paragraph of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. The liturgy strives to form us in such a way that we may become the Church, which is “like a visible sign before the nations” and for those who are still outside the Church (cf. SC 2).

The Church throughout the world, finds its principal manifestation in those celebrations over which the bishop presides, surrounded by his priests and ministers (cf. SC 41). But it is equally present and manifest wherever believers gather to celebrate in the name of the Lord, especially in our parishes. This is why the Council has invited us to make every effort to foster a sense of community especially within the Sunday celebration of the eucharist (cf. SC 42).

We realize that this is a difficult task to accomplish. During the last few decades, we have devoted much of our time and energy, and our spirit of creativity to this task. However, we have not obtained the results for which we had hoped. It is much more evident now that the vitality of the parish community and its Sunday assemblies depend to a large extent on many smaller groups in which believers participate.

The ideal for which we continue to strive is that the parish community should become a community of communities. In each of these communities, the liturgy must be given its proper place. In one or other of these communities all Christians should be able to find a response to their own legitimate aspirations.

But because it is impossible for the bishop always and everywhere to preside over the whole flock in his church, he cannot do other than establish lesser groupings of the faithful. Among these, parishes set up locally under a pastor who takes the place of the bishop are the most important: for in a certain way they represent the visible Church as it is established throughout the world. [SC 42]
The ideal proposed in the Acts of the Apostles never ceases to attract and inspire us: “These remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers... The faithful all lived together and owned everything in common... Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved.” (Acts 2: 42-47)

We do not have any miraculous solution to offer to pastors and liturgical animators who at times are discouraged because their Sunday assemblies are not yet communities. We ask them to be realistic: the large Sunday gathering will never have the warmth and intimacy of the smaller groups. This, however, does not prevent us from bringing together men and women who are of one mind and heart, and profess and celebrate one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one hope.

Indeed, we invite pastors and liturgical animators to be realistic. We encourage them to continue their efforts with complete honesty and the greatest possible fervor in order to attain their objective.

In particular we feel it is necessary for those who prepare and bring about liturgical celebrations to meet on occasion. In this way they will be better informed, inspired by the same spirit, work together more closely, and give living testimony to what they celebrate. We also believe it is advantageous to constantly review the liturgical rites in order to discover anew their meaning and to see how they may better be celebrated, and manifest more clearly the paschal mystery in the active participation of the faithful. For example, have we made the responsorial psalm a moment of prayer and beauty so that the word of the Old Testament can be internalized? Have we taken the opportunity to adapt the general intercessions each Sunday to express the actual needs of our world and our community? Do we present the bread and wine at the altar as the symbol of all that the eucharistic assembly presents; namely, themselves as an offering to God in the unity of the Spirit? (Cf. John Paul II, The Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, 24 February, 1980, no. 9.) Are we attentive to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal which says “it is most desirable that the faithful receive the Lord’s body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass, and that in the instances when it is permitted, they share in the chalice?” (GIRM, no. 56h) Have we discovered how to use and foster periods of sacred silence at the designated times throughout the liturgy so that they contribute to interior prayer? (See GIRM, no. 23.)

In accomplishing the task of implementing good liturgical celebrations, pastors and animators must never forget that with the power of the Spirit, the rites themselves are effective. By extending our hands to our brothers and sisters we bring about friendship. By sharing in the one bread, people become true companions. By praying together, kneeling together and by offering praise together — when this is done with sincere hearts — we become one body, the Church. Here on earth, this body never reaches its full stature. However, it is truly the body of Christ. In its very weakness and imperfection it is a reflection of the Son of Man crucified, and announces the risen Lord.

SKILLED LITURGICAL MINISTERS

What we have just stated leads us to say a few words about the manner in which our liturgies are being celebrated.

One of the results of the liturgical reform is that we have discovered that the performance of the rites is not unrelated to their effectiveness.

The word of God speaks to us more forcefully when it is properly proclaimed. Singing binds us together more effectively when it is directed by a competent leader. Music leads us more certainly to prayer when it is the work of true artists. The grace of the eucharist is better expressed, when the bread is actually broken before our eyes, and when the cup is shared by all as Jesus instructed us to do.
It is certainly true that much has already been done to enhance the quality of our liturgical celebrations. But no one can deny that there is still much to be done. We hope therefore that the celebration of the Twenty-fifth anniversary of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy will engender in each of our diocesan churches in Canada, a new effort to study the renewed liturgy and to form people who, in various ways, are called upon to exercise leadership roles in the liturgy.

When the Council stated that we must earnestly strive for full and active participation by everyone in the liturgy, because it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful must draw the true Christian spirit, it went on to add that there is no hope of attaining this result unless pastors themselves are first and foremost profoundly imbued with the spirit and power of the liturgy, and capable of teaching it... (cf. SC 14). In the same spirit, the Council urged pastors to promote with zeal and patience, liturgical formation and active participation of the faithful (cf. SC 19).

Pastors must promote this formation and active participation not only by a systematic instruction, but by the manner in which they themselves preside over the eucharist and other liturgical rites. If they truly pray, the faithful will be inspired to pray. If they truly give thanks, the members of the assembly will spontaneously associate themselves with this praise. If pastors proclaim the word of God with conviction — seeking to live themselves what they preach — all who listen to them cannot help but be inspired. In the midst of the Christian assembly, the priest is, in a special way, a sign of Christ's presence, and is called to unite the participants in the life of the Church. He must always prepare carefully for this most important and demanding task; he must carry it out with confidence. The Spirit he received on the day of his ordination will sustain him each time he presides over celebrations of the mysteries of salvation.

As we reread the directives of the Constitution, we are convinced that they are still relevant and necessary for the continuation of the liturgical reform. We must point out, however, that a solid theoretical and practical training is required not only for pastors, but also for those who are responsible for preparing and leading these celebrations. Readers, animators, servers, eucharistic ministers, organists, choir directors and singers ... all stand in need of ongoing formation so that they can better celebrate themselves, and lead their brothers and sisters more effectively in the celebration of Christ's mysteries.

CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion to this brief document, which is really an invitation to give a new impetus to liturgical practice in our country, permit us to recall some convictions and principles which must always inspire and guide us in the area of pastoral liturgy.

The liturgy provides us with the opportunity to make a gift of ourselves. It is a loving response of people who know that they are loved by the Father and washed in the blood of Christ. The liturgy is the hymn of the universe for salvation accomplished in Christ and manifested to believers. When the Church, as spouse of Christ, in union with its bridegroom, celebrates the liturgy, it exercises its common priesthood.

The earthly liturgy will always leave us unsatisfied, for from day to day, it continues to deepen our desire to see the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit face to face.

With zeal and patience, pastors of souls must promote the liturgical instruction of the faithful, and also their active participation in the liturgy both internally and externally. The age and condition of their people, their way of life, and degree of religious culture should be taken into account. By so doing, pastors will be fulfilling one of the chief duties of a faithful dispenser of the mysteries of God; and in this matter they must lead their flock not only in word but also by example. [SC 19]
In the Kingdom, there will no longer be a place for faith, for we shall see God clearly. There will no longer be any room for hope, for we shall possess in their fullness, the gifts which God has promised to us. But there will always be love, for it never passes away. There will also exist the eternal liturgy, for the liturgy sings of God's love which is everlasting: that love God has for us and that we will return to God for all eternity.

In the Kingdom, with the elect, we shall acclaim the Lamb, whom we have welcomed here below under the outward signs of bread and wine, of water and oil, the word and the cross. We shall cry out: "... all praise, honor, glory and power, for ever and ever" (Rev. 5: 13).

While we wait for the coming of that day, we gather together regularly for praise and prayer, and with all Christians throughout the world, we make the prayer of true believers ring out: "Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22: 20)

La Commission épiscopale de Liturgie
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August 25, 1988
QUESTIONNAIRE
For follow-up reflection and group discussion

PART ONE: The Central Place of Liturgy
Why does the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy say that “liturgy is the summit of the Church’s activity, and at the same time the source from which all of its power flows?” (SC 10)

How do you know that liturgy is given its proper place? What are the signs?
— in your personal life.
— in your family life.
— in the life of your Christian community.

PART TWO: A Paschal Liturgy
In your own words describe your understanding of the term, “Paschal mystery.”

What ways can we live the paschal mystery?

Give examples of situations in which you might be invited to live the paschal mystery:
— in your personal life.
— in your family life.
— in your Christian community.

PART THREE: Liturgy and Life
— Give an example of a celebration of liturgy which is linked with life. In what ways is the celebration linked with life experience?
— How can you make the Sunday celebrations in your parish more closely related to the life of your community?

PART FOUR: A Liturgy of the Heart
— In your regular Sunday celebrations, are there any words or actions on the part of the ministers which encourage “interior prayer?”
— In what ways can the presider encourage prayerfulness in the celebration?

PART FIVE: A Liturgy which Builds the Church
— In what ways can you say that the Sunday liturgies in your parish are the source, the center and the summit of your community life?
— In what ways can you improve the community dimension of your Sunday celebrations?

PART SIX: Skilled Liturgical Ministers
— What is being done in your parish at this time to provide formation for liturgical ministers? (readers, servers, ministers of hospitality, organists, choir members, ministers of the eucharist . . .)
— Is there a need in your parish for an organized program of formation? How would you see it being structured?

CONCLUSION
— Each person is invited to write a few words to express what liturgy means to him or her.
— Read again the conclusion of the bishops’ statement.
— To conclude, discuss what each person has written in light of the conclusions made by the bishops.
CIRCULAR LETTER CONCERNING
THE PREPARATION
AND CELEBRATION
OF THE EASTER FEASTS

Congregation For Divine Worship

Prot. N. 120/88

Preface

1. The Easter Solemnity, revised and restored by Pius XII in 1951 and then the
Order of Holy Week in 1955 were favorably received by the Church of the Roman
Rite.

The Second Vatican Council, especially in the Constitution on the sacred Lit­
urgy, repeatedly drawing upon tradition called attention to Christ's paschal mystery
and pointed out that it is the fount from which all sacraments and sacramentals draw
their power.

2. Just as the week has its beginning and climax in the celebration of Sunday,
which always has a paschal character, so the summit of the whole liturgical year is in
the sacred Easter Triduum of the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord, which is
prepared for by the period of Lent and prolonged for fifty days.

3. In many parts of the Christian world, the faithful followers of Christ, with their
pastors, attach great importance to the celebration of this rite, and participate in it
with great spiritual gain.

However, in some areas where initially the reform of the Easter Vigil was
received enthusiastically, it would appear that with the passage of time this enthu­
siasm has begun to wain. The very concept of the Vigil has almost come to be for­
gotten in some places with the result that it is celebrated as if it were an evening
Mass, in the same way and at the same time as the Mass celebrated on Saturday
evening in anticipation of the Sunday.

It also happens that the celebrations of the Triduum are not held at the correct
times. This is because certain devotions and pious exercises are held at more con­
venient times and so the faithful participate in them rather than in the liturgical cele­
brations.

Without any doubt one of the principal reasons for this state of affairs is the
inadequate formation given to the clergy and the faithful regarding the paschal mys­
tery as the center of the liturgical year and of Christian life.

4. The holiday period which today in many places coincides with Holy Week and
certain attitudes held by present day society concur to present difficulties for the
faithful to participate in these celebrations.

5. With these points in mind, the Congregation for Divine Worship, after due con­
sideration, thinks that it is a fitting moment to recall certain elements, doctrinal and
pastoral, and various norms which have already been published concerning Holy
Week. All those details which are given in the liturgical books concerning Lent, Holy
Week, the Easter Triduum and Paschal time retain their full force, unless otherwise
stated in this document.
It is the aim of this document that the great mystery of our Redemption be celebrated in the best possible way so that the faithful may participate in it with ever greater spiritual advantage.

I. LENTEN SEASON

6. "The annual lenten season is the fitting time, to climb the Holy Mountain of Easter.

"The lenten season has a double character, namely to prepare both catechumens and faithful to celebrate the paschal mystery. The catechumens both with the rite of election and scrutinies, and by catechesis, are prepared for the celebration of the sacraments of Christian initiation; the faithful ever more attentive to the word of God and prayer, prepare themselves by penance for the renewal of their baptismal promises."

a) Concerning the Rite of Christian Initiation.

7. The whole rite of Christian initiation has a markedly paschal character, since it is therein that the sacramental participation in the death and resurrection of Christ takes place for the first time. Therefore Lent should have its full character as a time of purification and enlightenment, especially through the scrutinies and by the presentations; naturally the paschal vigil should be regarded as the proper time to celebrate the sacraments of initiation.

8. Communities that do not have any catechumens should not however fail to pray for those who in the forthcoming paschal vigil will receive the sacraments of Christian initiation. Pastors should draw the attention of the faithful to those moments of significant importance to their spiritual life nourished by their baptismal profession of faith, and which they will be invited to renewal in the Easter Vigil, "the fullness of the lenten observance".

9. In Lent there should be catechesis for those adults who, although baptized when infants, were not brought up in the faith and consequently have not been confirmed nor have they received the eucharist. During this period penitential services should be arranged to help prepare them for the sacrament of reconciliation.

10. The Lenten season is also an appropriate time for the celebration of penitential rites on the model of the scrutinies for unbaptized children, who are at an age to be catechized, and also for children already baptized, before being admitted to the sacrament of penance.

The bishop should have particular care to foster the catechumenate of both adults and children and according to circumstances, to preside at the prescribed rites, with the devout participation of the local community.

b) Celebration during the Lenten season

11. The Sundays of Lent take precedence over all feasts and all solemnities. Solemnities occurring on these Sundays are observed on the preceding Saturday. The weekdays of Lent have precedence over obligatory memorials.

12. The catechesis on the paschal mystery and the sacraments should be given a special place in the Sunday homilies, the text of the lectionary should be carefully explained, particularly the passages of the Gospel which illustrate the diverse aspects of baptism and of the other sacraments, and of the mercy of God.

13. Pastors should frequently and as fully as possible explain the word of God, in homilies on weekdays, in celebrations of the word of God, in penitential celebrations, in various reunions, in visiting families or on the occasion of blessing fami-
lies. The faithful should try and attend weekday Mass and where this is not possible they should at least be encouraged to read the lessons, either with their family or in private.

14. "The Lenten season should retain something of its penitential character"15. "As regards catechesis, it is important to impress on the minds of the faithful not only the social consequences of sin but also that aspect of the virtue of penance, which involves the detestation of sin as an offense against God"16.

The virtue and practice of penance form a necessary part of the preparation for Easter: from that inner conversion of heart, should spring the practice of penance, both for the individual Christian and of the whole community; which while being adapted to the conditions of the present time, should nevertheless witness to the evangelical spirit of penance and also be to the advantage of others.

The role of the Church in penitential practices is not to be neglected and encouragement given to pray for sinners, and this intention should be included in the prayer of the faithful17.

15. "The faithful are to be encouraged to participate in an ever more intense and fruitful way in the Lenten liturgy and in penitential celebrations. They are to be clearly reminded that both according to the law and tradition, they should approach the sacrament of penance during this season, so that with purified heart they may participate in the paschal mysteries. It is appropriate that during Lent the sacrament of penance be celebrated according to the rite for the reconciliation of several penitents with individual confession and absolution, as given in the Roman Ritual"18.

Pastors should devote themselves to the ministry of reconciliation, and provide sufficient time for the faithful to avail themselves of this sacrament.

16. "All lenten observances should be of such a nature that they also witness to the life of the local Church and foster it. The Roman tradition of the "stational" churches can be recommended as a model for gathering the faithful in one place. In this way the faithful can assemble in larger numbers, especially under the leadership of the bishop of the diocese, or at the tombs of the saints, or in the principle churches of the city or sanctuaries, or some place of pilgrimage which has a special significance for the diocese"19.

17. "In Lent the altar should not be decorated with flowers, and musical instruments may be played only to give necessary support to the singing"20, this is in order that the penitential character of the season be preserved.

18. Likewise from the beginning of Lent until to the paschal Vigil "Alleluia" is to be omitted in all celebrations, even on solemnities and feasts21.

19. The chants to be sung in celebrations especially of the eucharist, and also at devotional exercises should be in harmony with the spirit of the season and the liturgical texts.

20. Devotional exercises which harmonize with the lenten season are to be encouraged, for example "The Stations of the Cross"; they should help foster the liturgical spirit with which the faithful can prepare themselves for the celebration of Christ's paschal mystery.

c) Particular details concerning the days of Lent

21. "On the Wednesday before the first Sunday of Lent, the faithful receive the ashes, thus entering into the time established for the purification of their souls. This sign of penance, a traditionally biblical one, has been preserved among the Church's customs until the present day. It signifies the human condition of the sinner, who seeks to express his guilt before the Lord in an exterior manner, and by so doing
express his interior conversion, led on by the confident hope that the Lord will be merciful. This same sign marks the beginning of the way of conversion, which is developed through the celebration of the sacrament of penance during the days before Easter."22.

The blessing and imposition of ashes should take place either in the Mass, or outside of the Mass. In the latter case, it is to be part of a liturgy of the word and conclude with the prayer of the faithful23.

22. Ash Wednesday is to be observed as a day of penance in the whole Church, one of both abstinence and fasting24.

23. The first Sunday of Lent marks the beginning of the annual lenten observance25. In the Mass of this Sunday there should be some distinctive elements which underline this important moment; e.g., the entrance procession with litanies of the saints26. During the Mass of the first Sunday in Lent, the bishop should celebrate the rite of election in the cathedral or in some other church, as seems appropriate27.

24. The Gospel pericopes of the Samaritan woman, of the man blind from birth and the resurrection of Lazarus, are assigned to the III, IV and V Sundays of Lent of year A, and of particular significance in relation to Christian initiation, they can also be read in years B and C, especially in places where there are catechumens28.

25. On the fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare) and in solemnities and feasts, musical instruments may be played and the altar decorated with flowers. Rose colored vestments may be worn on this Sunday29.

26. The practice of covering the crosses and images in the church may be observed, if the episcopal conference should so decide. The crosses are to be covered until the end of the celebration of the Lord's passion on Good Friday. Images are to remain covered until the beginning of the Easter Vigil30.

II. HOLY WEEK

27. During Holy Week the Church celebrates the mysteries of salvation accomplished by Christ in the last days of his life on earth, beginning with his messianic entrance into Jerusalem.

The lenten season lasts until the Thursday of this week. The Easter Triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, is continued through Good Friday with the celebration of the Passion of the Lord and Holy Saturday, to reach its summit in the Easter Vigil, and concludes with vespers of Easter Sunday.

"The days of Holy Week, from Monday to Thursday inclusive, have precedence over all other celebrations"31. It is not fitting that baptisms and confirmation be celebrated on these days.

a) Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday)

28. Holy Week begins on "Passion (or Palm) Sunday" which joins the foretelling of Christ's regal triumph and the proclamation of the passion. The connection between both aspects of the paschal mystery should be shown and explained in the celebration and catechesis of this day32.

29. The commemoration of the entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem, has according to ancient custom, been celebrated with a solemn procession, in which the faithful in song and gesture imitate the Hebrew children who went to meet the Lord singing "Hosanna"33.

The procession may take place only once, before the Mass which has the largest attendance, even if this should be in the evening either of Saturday or Sunday.
The congregation should assemble in a secondary church or chapel or in some other suitable place distinct from the church to which the procession will move.

In this procession the faithful carry palm or other branches. The priest and the ministers also carrying branches, precede the people.

The palms or branches are blessed so that they can be carried in the procession. The palms should be taken home, where they will serve as a reminder of the victory of Christ which they celebrated in the procession.

Pastors should make every effort to ensure that this procession in honor of Christ the King be so prepared and celebrated that it is of great spiritual significance in the life of the faithful.

30. The missal, in order to commemorate the entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem, in addition to the solemn procession described above, gives two other forms, not simply for convenience, but to provide for those situations when it will not be possible to have the procession.

The second form is that of a solemn entrance, when the procession cannot take place outside the church. The third form is a simple entrance such as is used at all Masses on this Sunday which do not have the solemn entrance.

31. Where the Mass cannot be celebrated, there should be a celebration of the word of God on the theme of the Lord’s messianic entrance and passion, either on Saturday evening or on Sunday at a convenient time.

32. During the procession, the choir and people should sing the chants proposed in the Roman Missal, especially psalms 23 and 46, as well as other appropriate songs in honor of Christ the King.

33. The Passion narrative occupies a special place. It should be sung or read in the traditional way, that is by three persons who take the part of Christ, the narrator and the people. The Passion is proclaimed by deacons or priests, or by lay readers, in the latter case, the part of Christ should be reserved to the priest.

The proclamation of the Passion should be without candles and incense, the greeting and the sign of the cross are omitted; only a deacon asks for the blessing, as he does before the Gospel.

For the spiritual good of the faithful the Passion should be proclaimed in its entirety, and the readings which precede it should not be omitted.

34. After the Passion has been proclaimed, a homily is to be given.

b) The Chrism Mass

35. The Chrism Mass, which the bishop concelebrates with his presbyterium and at which the holy chrism is consecrated and the oils blessed, manifests the communion of the priests with their bishop in the same priesthood and ministry of Christ. To this Mass, the priests who concelebrate with the bishop should come from different parts of the diocese, thus showing in the consecration of the chrism to be his witnesses and cooperators, just as in their daily ministry they are his helpers and counsellors.

The faithful are also to be encouraged to participate in this Mass, and to receive the sacrament of the eucharist.

Traditionally the Chrism Mass is celebrated on the Thursday of Holy Week. If however, it should prove to be difficult for the clergy and people to gather with the bishop, this rite can be transferred to another day, but one always close to Easter. The chrism and the oil of catechumens is to be used in the celebration of the sacraments of initiation on Easter night.
36. There should be only one celebration of the Chrism Mass given its significance in the life of the diocese, and it should take place in the cathedral or, for pastoral reasons, in another church, which has a special significance.

The holy oils can be brought to the individual parishes before the celebration of the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, or at some other suitable time. This can be a means of catechizing the faithful about the use and effects of the holy oils and chrism in Christian life.

c) The Penitential Celebrations in Lent

37. It is fitting that the Lenten season should be concluded, both for the individual Christian as well as for the whole Christian community with a penitential celebration, so that they may be helped to prepare to celebrate more fully the paschal mystery.

These celebrations, however, should take place before the Easter Triduum, and should not immediately precede the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper.

III. THE EASTER TRIDUUM IN GENERAL

38. The greatest mysteries of the redemption are celebrated yearly by the Church beginning with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday until vespers of Easter Sunday. This time is called "the triduum of the crucified, buried and risen"; it is also called the "Easter triduum" because during it is celebrated the Paschal mystery, that is the passing of the Lord from this world to his Father. The Church by the celebration of this mystery, through liturgical signs and sacramentals, is united to Christ, her Spouse, in intimate communion.

39. The Easter fast is sacred on the first two days of the Triduum, which according to ancient tradition the Church fasts "because the Spouse has been taken away". Good Friday is a day of fasting and abstinence, it is also recommended that Holy Saturday be so observed, so that, the Church, with uplifted and welcoming heart be ready to celebrate the joys of the Sunday of the Resurrection.

40. It is recommended that there be a communal celebration of the office of readings and morning prayer on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. It is fitting that the bishop should celebrate the office in the cathedral, with as far as possible the participation of the clergy and people.

This office, formerly called "Tenebrae" held a special place in the devotion of the faithful, as they meditated upon the passion, death and burial of the Lord, while awaiting the announcement of the resurrection.

41. For the celebration of the Easter Triduum it is necessary that there should be a sufficient number of ministers and assistants who should be prepared so that they know what their role is in the celebration. Pastors must ensure that the meaning of each part of the celebration be explained to the faithful so that they may participate more fully and fruitfully.

42. The chants of the people and also of the ministers and the celebrating priest are of special importance in the celebration of Holy Week and particularly of the Easter Triduum, because they add to the solemnity of these days, and also because the texts are more effective when sung.

The episcopal conferences are asked, unless provision has already been made, to provide music for those parts which it can be said should always be sung, namely:

a) The general intercessions of Good Friday, the deacon's invitation and the acclamation of the people;

b) chants for the showing and veneration of the cross;
c) the acclamations during the procession with the paschal candle and the Easter proclamation, the responsorial "Alleluia", the litany of the saints, and the acclamation after the blessing of water.

Since the purpose of sung texts is also to facilitate the participation of the faithful they should not be lightly omitted, such texts should be set to music. If the text for use in the liturgy has not yet been set to music it is possible as a temporary measure to select other similar texts which are set to music. It is, however, fitting that there should be a collection of texts set to music for these celebrations, paying special attention to:

a) chants for the procession and blessing of palms, and for the entrance into church;

b) chants to accompany the procession with the holy oils;

c) chants to accompany the procession with the gifts on Holy Thursday in the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, and hymns to accompany the procession of the Blessed Sacrament to the place of repose;

d) the responsorial psalms at the Easter Vigil, and chants to accompany the sprinkling with blessed water.

Music should be provided for the Passion narrative, the Easter proclamation, and the blessing of baptismal water, obviously the melodies should be of a simple nature in order to facilitate their use.

In larger churches where the resources permit a more ample use should be made of the Church's musical heritage both ancient and modern, always ensuring that this does not impede the active participation of the faithful.

43. It is fitting that small religious communities both clerical and lay, and other lay groups should participate in the celebration of the Easter Triduum in neighboring principal churches.

Similarly where the number of participants and ministers is so small that the celebrations of the Easter Triduum cannot be carried out with the requisite solemnity, such groups of the faithful should assemble in a larger church.

Also where there are small parishes with only one priest it is recommended that such parishes should assemble, as far as possible, in a principal church and there participate in the celebrations.

An account of the needs of the faithful, where a pastor has the responsibility for two or more parishes, in which the faithful assemble in large numbers and where the celebrations can be carried out with the requisite care and solemnity, the celebrations of the Easter Triduum may be repeated in accord with the given norms.

So that seminary students "might live fully Christ's paschal mystery, and thus be able to teach those who will be committed to their care", they should be given a thorough and comprehensive liturgical formation. It is important that during their formative years in the seminary, they should experience fruitfully the solemn Easter celebrations, especially those over which the bishop presides.

IV. HOLY THURSDAY EVENING MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

44. With the celebration of Mass on the evening of Holy Thursday "the Church begins the Easter triduum, and recalls the Last Supper, in which the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, showing his love for those who were his own in the world, he gave his body and blood under the species of bread and wine offering to his Father
and giving them to the apostles so that they might partake of them, and he com-
manded them and their successors in the priesthood to perpetuate this offering.

45. Careful attention should be given to the mysteries which are commemorated in
this Mass: the institution of the eucharist, the institution of the priesthood, and
Christ's command of brotherly love: the homily should explain these points.

46. The Mass of the Lord's Supper is celebrated in the evening, at a time which is
more convenient for the full participation of the whole local community. All priests
may concelebrate, even if on this day they have already concelebrated the Chrism
Mass or if, for the good of the faithful, they must celebrate another Mass.

47. Where pastoral considerations require it, the local ordinary may permit another
Mass to be celebrated in churches and oratories in the evening, and in the case of
true necessity, even in the morning, but only for those faithful who cannot otherwise
participate in the evening Mass. Care should nevertheless be taken to ensure that
celebrations of this kind do not take place for the benefit of private persons or of
small groups, and that they are not to the detriment of the main Mass.

According to the ancient tradition of the Church all Masses without the partic-
ipation of the people are on this day forbidden.

48. The tabernacle should be completely empty before the celebration. Hosts for
the communion of the faithful should be consecrated during that celebration. A
sufficient amount of bread should be consecrated to provide also for communion on
the following day.

49. For the reservation of Blessed Sacrament, a place should be prepared and
adorned in such a way as to be conducive to prayer and meditation; that sobriety
appropriate to the liturgy of these days is enjoined, to the avoidance or suppression
of all abuses.

When the tabernacle is sighted in a chapel separated from the central part of
the church, it is appropriate to prepare there the place of repose and adoration.

50. During the singing of the hymn “Gloria in excelsis” in accordance with local
custom, the bells may be rung, and should thereafter remain silent until the “Gloria in
excelsis” of the Easter Vigil, unless the conference of bishops or the local ordinary,
for a suitable reason, has decided otherwise. During this same period the organ
and other musical instruments may be used only for the purpose of supporting the
singing.

51. The washing of the feet of chosen men which, according to tradition, is per-
formed on this day, represents the service and charity of Christ, who came “not to be
served, but to serve.” This tradition should be maintained, and its proper signif-
icance explained.

52. Gifts for the poor, especially those collected during Lent as the fruit of penance,
may be presented in the offertory procession, while the people sing “Ubi caritas est
vera.”

53. It is more appropriate that the eucharist be born directly from the altar by the
deacons or acolytes, or extraordinary ministers at the moment of communion, for
the sick and infirm who must communicate at home, so that in this way they may be
more closely united to the celebrating Church.

54. After the postcommunion prayer, the procession forms, with the crossbearer at
its head. The Blessed Sacrament, accompanied by lighted candles and incense, is
carried through the church to the place of reservation, to the singing of the hymn
“Pange lingua” or some other eucharistic song. This rite of transfer of the Blessed
Sacrament may not be carried out if the liturgy of the Lord’s Passion will not be cele-
brated in that same church on the following day.
55. The Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a closed tabernacle or pyx. Under no circumstances may it be exposed in a monstrance.

The place where the tabernacle or pyx is situated must not be made to resemble a tomb, and the expression “tomb” is to be avoided: for the chapel of repose is not prepared so as to represent the “Lord’s burial” but for the custody of the eucharistic bread that will be distributed in communion on Good Friday.

56. The faithful should be encouraged after the Mass of the Lord’s Supper to spend a suitable period of time during the night in the church in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament that has been solemnly reserved. Where appropriate this prolonged eucharistic adoration may be accompanied by the reading of some part of the Gospel of Saint John (ch. 13-17).

From midnight onwards, however, the adoration should be made without external solemnity, for the day of the Lord’s Passion has begun.

57. After Mass the altar should be stripped. It is fitting that any crosses in the church be covered with a red or purple veil, unless they have already been veiled on the Saturday before the fifth Sunday of Lent. Lamps should not be lit before the images of saints.

V. GOOD FRIDAY

58. On this day, when “Christ our passover was crucified”, the Church meditates on the Passion of her Lord and Spouse, adores the cross, commemorates her origin from the side of Christ asleep on the cross, and intercedes for the salvation of the whole world.

59. On this day, in accordance with ancient tradition, the Church does not celebrate the eucharist: Holy communion is distributed to the faithful during the celebration of the Lord’s Passion alone, though it may be brought at any time of the day to the sick who cannot take part in the celebration.

60. Good Friday is a day of penance to be observed as an obligation in the whole church, and indeed through abstinence and fasting.

61. All celebration of the sacraments on this day is strictly prohibited, except for the sacraments of penance and anointing of the sick. Funerals are to be celebrated without singing, music, or the tolling of bells.

62. It is recommended that on this day the office of readings and morning prayer, be celebrated with the participation of the people in the churches (cf. n. 40).

63. The celebration of the Lord’s Passion is to take place in the afternoon, at about three o’clock. The time will be chosen as shall seem most appropriate for pastoral reasons in order to allow the people to assemble more easily, for example shortly after midday, or in the late evening, however, not later than nine o’clock.

64. The order for the celebration of the Lord’s Passion (the liturgy of the word, the adoration of the cross, and holy communion), that stems from an ancient tradition of the Church, should be observed faithfully and religiously, and may not be changed by anyone on his own initiative.

65. The priest and ministers proceed to the altar in silence, and without any singing. If any words of introduction are to be said, they should be pronounced before the ministers enter.

The priest and ministers make a reverence to the altar prostrating themselves. This act of prostration, which is proper to the rite of the day, should be strictly observed, for it signifies both the abasement of “earthly man”, and also the grief and sorrow of the Church.
The faithful for their part, as the ministers enter should be standing, and there­after should kneel in silent prayer.

66. The readings are to be read in their entirety. The responsorial psalm and the chant before the Gospel are to be sung in the usual manner. The narrative of the Lord's Passion according to John is sung or read in the way prescribed for the previous Sunday (cf. n. 33). After the reading of the Passion, a homily should be given, at the end of which the faithful may be invited to spend a short time in meditation.

67. The general intercessions are to follow the wording and form handed down by ancient tradition, maintaining the full range of intentions, so as to signify clearly the universal effect of the Passion of Christ, who hung on the cross for the salvation of the whole world. In case of grave public necessity the local ordinary may permit or prescribe the adding of special intentions.

In this event it is permitted to the priest to select from the prayers of the missal those more appropriate to local circumstances, in such a way however that the series follows the rule for general intercessions.

68. For veneration of the cross, let a cross be used that is of appropriate size and beauty, and let one or other of the forms for this rite as found in the Roman Missal be followed. The rite should be carried out with the splendor worthy of the mystery of our salvation: both the invitation pronounced at the unveiling of the cross, and the people's response should be made in song, and a period of respectful silence is to be observed after each act of veneration, the celebrant standing and holding the raised cross.

69. The cross is to be presented to each of the faithful individually for their adoration, since the personal adoration of the cross is a most important feature in this celebration, and only when necessitated by the large numbers of faithful present should the rite of veneration be made simultaneously by all present.

Only one cross should be used for the veneration, as this contributes to the full symbolism of the rite. During the veneration of the cross the antiphons, "Reproaches" and hymns should be sung, so that the history of salvation be commemorated through song. Other appropriate songs may also be sung (cf. n. 42).

70. The priest sings the invitation to the Lord's Prayer, which is then sung by all. The sign of peace is not exchanged. The communion rite is as described in the Missal.

During the distribution of communion, psalm 21, or another suitable song may be sung. When communion has been distributed the pyx is taken to a place prepared for it outside of the church.

71. After the celebration, the altar is stripped, the cross remaining however with four candles. An appropriate place (e.g., the chapel of repose used for reservation of the eucharist on Maundy Thursday) can be prepared within the church, and there the Lord's cross is placed so that the faithful may venerate and kiss it, and spend some time in meditation.

72. Devotions, such as the Way of the Cross, processions of the Passion, and commemorations of the sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary are not, for pastoral reasons, to be neglected. The texts and songs used, however, should be adapted to the spirit of the liturgy of this day. Such devotions should be assigned to a time of day that makes it quite clear that the liturgical celebration by its very nature far surpasses them in importance.

VI. HOLY SATURDAY

73. On Holy Saturday the Church is as it were at the Lord's tomb, meditating on his passion and death, and on his descent into hell, and awaiting his resurrection with
prayer and fasting. It is highly recommended that on this day the office of readings and morning prayer, be celebrated with the participation of the people (cf., n. 40)\textsuperscript{76}. Where this cannot be done, there should be some celebration of the word of God, or some act of devotion suited to the mystery celebrated this day.

74. The image of Christ crucified or lying in the tomb, or the descent into hell, which mystery Holy Saturday recalls, as also an image of the sorrowful Virgin Mary can be placed in the church for the veneration of the faithful.

75. On this day the Church abstains strictly from celebration of the sacrifice of the Mass\textsuperscript{77}. Holy Communion may only be given in the form of viaticum. The celebration of marriages is forbidden, as also the celebration of others sacraments, except those of penance and the anointing of the sick.

76. The faithful are to be instructed on the special character of Holy Saturday\textsuperscript{78}. Festive customs and traditions associated with this day on account of the former practice of anticipating the celebration of Easter on Holy Saturday should be reserved for Easter night and the day that follows.

VII. EASTER SUNDAY OF THE LORD’S RESURRECTION

A) The Easter Vigil

77. According to a most ancient tradition, this night is “one of vigil for the Lord”\textsuperscript{79}, and the Vigil celebrated during it, to commemorate that Holy night when the Lord rose from the dead, is regarded as the “mother of all holy vigils”\textsuperscript{80}. For in that night the Church keeps vigil, waiting for the resurrection of the Lord, and celebrates the sacraments of Christian initiation\textsuperscript{81}.

1. The meaning of the nocturnal character of the Easter Vigil

78. “The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before nightfall; it should end before daybreak on Sunday”\textsuperscript{82}. This rule is to be taken according to its strictest sense. Reprehensible are those abuses and practices which have crept in many places in violation of this ruling, whereby the Easter Vigil is celebrated at the time of day that it is customary to celebrate anticipated Sunday Masses\textsuperscript{83}.

Those reasons which have been advanced in some quarters for the anticipation of the Easter Vigil, such as lack of public order, are not put forward in connection with Christmas night, nor other gatherings of various kinds.

79. The passover vigil, in which the Hebrews kept watch for the Lord’s passover which was to free them from slavery to pharaoh, is an annual commemoration. It prefigured the true Pasch of Christ that was to come, the night that is of true liberation, in which “destroying the bonds of death, Christ rose as victor from the depths”\textsuperscript{84}.

80. From the very outset the Church has celebrated that annual Pasch, which is the solemnity of solemnities, above all by means of a night vigil. For the resurrection of Christ is the foundation of our faith and hope, and through baptism and confirmation we are inserted into the paschal mystery of Christ, dying, buried, and raised with him, and with him we shall also reign\textsuperscript{85}.

The full meaning of vigil is a waiting for the coming of the Lord\textsuperscript{86}.

2. The structure of the Easter Vigil and the significance of its different elements and parts

81. The order for the Easter Vigil is so arranged so that after the service of light and the Easter proclamation, (which is the first part of the vigil), Holy Church meditates on the wonderful works which the Lord God wrought for his people from the earliest
times, (the second part or Liturgy of the Word), to the moment when, together with those new members reborn in baptism (third part), she is called to the table prepared by the Lord for his Church, the commemoration of his death and resurrection, until he comes (fourth part)\textsuperscript{87}.

This liturgical order must not be changed by anyone on his own initiative.

82. The first part consists of symbolic acts and gestures, which require that they be performed in all their fullness and nobility, so that their meaning, as explained by the introductory words of the celebrant and the liturgical prayers, may be truly understood by the faithful.

Insofar as possible, a suitable place should be prepared outside the church for the blessing of the new fire, whose flames should be such that they genuinely dispel the darkness and light up the night.

The paschal candle should be prepared, which for effective symbolism must be made of wax, never artificial, renewed each year, only one in number, and of sufficiently large size, so that it may evoke the truth that Christ is the light of the world. It is blessed with the signs and words prescribed in the missal or by the conference of bishops\textsuperscript{88}.

83. The procession, by which the people enter the church, should be led by the light of the paschal candle alone. Just as the children of Israel were guided at night by a pillar of fire, so similarly Christians follow the risen Christ. There is no reason why to each response "Thanks be to God" there should not be added some acclamation in honor of Christ.

The light from the paschal candle should be gradually passed to the candles which it is fitting that all present should hold in their hands, the electric lighting being switched off.

84. The deacon makes the Easter proclamation, which tells by means of a great poetic text the whole Easter mystery placed in the context of the economy of salvation. In case of necessity, where there is no deacon, and the celebrating priest is unable to sing it, a cantor may do so. The bishops' conferences may adapt this proclamation by inserting into it acclamations from the people\textsuperscript{89}.

85. The readings from sacred scripture constitute the second part of the vigil. They give an account of the outstanding deeds of the history of salvation, which the faithful are helped to meditate calmly upon by the singing of the responsorial psalm, by a silent pause and by the celebrant's prayer.

The restored order for the vigil has seven readings from the Old Testament chosen from the law and the prophets, which are everywhere in use according to the most ancient tradition of East and West, and two readings from the New Testament, namely from the apostle and from the Gospel. Thus the Church, "beginning with Moses and all the prophets" explains Christ's paschal mystery\textsuperscript{90}. Consequently wherever this is possible, all the readings should be read in order that the character of the Easter Vigil, which demands that it be somewhat prolonged, be respected at all costs.

Where, however, pastoral conditions require that the number of readings be reduced, there should be at least three readings from the Old Testament, taken from the law and the prophets; and the reading from Exodus chapter 14 with its canticle must never be omitted\textsuperscript{81}.

86. The typological import of the Old Testament texts is rooted in the New, and is made plain by the prayer pronounced by the celebrating priest after each reading; but it will also be helpful to introduce the people to the meaning of each reading by means of a brief introduction. This introduction may be given by the priest himself or by a deacon.
National or diocesan liturgical commissions will prepare aids for pastors.

Each reading is followed by the singing of a psalm, to which the people respond.

Melodies should be provided for these responses which are capable of promoting the people's participation and devotion. Great care is to be taken that trivial songs do not take the place of the psalms.

87. After the readings from the Old Testament, the hymn “Gloria in excelsis,” the bells are rung in accordance with local custom, the collect is recited, and the celebration moves on to the readings from the New Testament. There is read an exhortation from the apostle on baptism as an insertion into Christ's paschal mystery.

Then all stand and the priest intones the “Alleluia” three times, each time raising the pitch. The people repeat it after him. If it is necessary, the psalmist or cantor may sing the “Alleluia,” which the people then take up as an acclamation to be interspersed between the verses of Psalm 117, which is so often cited by the apostles in their Easter preaching. Finally the resurrection of the Lord is proclaimed from the Gospel as the high point of the whole liturgy of the word. After the Gospel a homily is to be given, no matter how brief.

88. The third part of the Vigil is the baptismal liturgy. Christ's passover and ours is now celebrated. This is given full expression in those churches which have a baptismal font, and more so when the Christian initiation of adults is held, or at least the baptism of infants. Even if there are no candidates for baptism, the blessing of baptismal water should still take place in parish churches. If this blessing does not take place at the baptismal font but in the sanctuary, baptismal water should be carried afterwards to the baptistery there to be kept throughout the whole of paschal time. Where there are neither candidates for baptism nor any need to bless the font, Baptism should be commemorated by blessing of water destined for sprinkling upon the people.

89. Next follows the renewal of baptismal promises, introduced by some words on the part of the celebrating priest. The faithful reply to the questions put to them, standing and holding lighted candles in their hand. They are then sprinkled with water: in this way the gestures and words recall to them the baptism they have received. The celebrating priest sprinkles the people by passing through the main part of the church while all sing the antiphon “Vidi aquam” or another suitable song of a baptismal character.

90. The celebration of the eucharist forms the fourth part of the vigil and marks its high point, for it is in the fullest sense the Easter sacrament, that is to say the commemoration of the sacrifice of the cross and the presence of the risen Christ, the completion of Christian initiation, and the foretaste of the eternal pasch.

91. Great care should be taken that this Eucharistic Liturgy is not celebrated in haste, indeed, all the rites and words must be given their full force: the general intercessions in which for the first time the neophytes now as members of the faithful exercise their priesthood; the procession at the offertory in which the neophytes, if there are any, take part; the first, second or third eucharistic prayer, preferably sung, with their proper embolisms; and finally eucharistic communion, as the moment of full participation in the mystery that is being celebrated. It is appropriate that at communion there be sung psalm 117 with the antiphon “Pascha nostrum,” or psalm 33 with the antiphon “Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,” or some other song of Easter exultation.

92. It is fitting that in the communion of the Easter Vigil full expression be given to the symbolism of the Eucharist, namely by consuming the eucharist under the species of both bread and wine. The local ordinaries will consider the appropriateness of such a concession and its ramifications.
3. Some pastoral considerations

93. The Easter Vigil Liturgy should be celebrated in such a way as to offer to the Christian people the riches of the prayers and rites. It is therefore important that authenticity be respected, that the participation of the faithful be promoted, and that the celebration should not take place without servers, readers and choir exercising their role.

94. It would be desirable if on occasion provision were made for several communities to assemble in one church, wherever their proximity one to another or small numbers mean that a full and festive celebration could not otherwise take place.

The celebration of the Easter Vigil for special groups is not to be encouraged, since above all in this Vigil the faithful should come together as one and should experience a sense of ecclesial community.

The faithful who are absent from their parish on vacation, should be urged to participate in the liturgical celebration in the place where they happen to be.

95. In announcements concerning the Easter Vigil care should be taken not to present it as the concluding period of Holy Saturday, but rather it should be stressed that the Easter Vigil is celebrated “during Easter night,” and that it is one single act of worship. Pastors should be advised that in giving catechesis to the people they should be taught to participate in the vigil in its entirety.

96. For a better celebration of the Easter Vigil, it is necessary that pastors themselves have an ever deeper knowledge of both texts and rites, so as to give a proper mystical catechesis to the people.

B) Easter Day

97. Mass is to be celebrated on Easter Day with great solemnity. It is appropriate that the penitential rite on this day take the form of a sprinkling with water blessed at the Vigil, during which the antiphon “Vidi aquam,” or some other song of baptismal character should be sung. The stoops at the entrance to the church should also be filled with the same water.

98. The tradition of celebrating baptismal vespers on Easter Day with the singing of psalms during the procession to the font should be maintained where it is still in force, and as appropriate restored.

99. The paschal candle has its proper place either by the ambo or by the altar and should be lit at least in all the more solemn liturgical celebrations of the season until Pentecost Sunday, whether at Mass, or at morning and evening prayer. After the Easter season the candle should be kept with honor in the baptistery, so that in the celebration of baptism the candles of the baptized may be lit from them. In the celebration of funerals the paschal candle should be placed near the coffin to indicate that the death of a Christian is his own passover. The paschal candle, should not otherwise be lit nor placed in the sanctuary outside the Easter season.

VIII. EASTER TIME

100. The celebration of Easter is prolonged throughout the Easter season. The fifty days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday are celebrated as one feast day, the “great Sunday.”

101. The Sundays of this season are regarded as Sundays of Easter, and so termed, and they have precedence over all feasts of the Lord and over all solemnities. Solemnities that fall on one of these Sundays are anticipated on the Saturday. Celebrations in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary or the Saints, which fall during the week may not be transferred to one of these Sundays.
102. For adults who have received Christian initiation during the Easter Vigil the whole of this period is given over to the mystagogical catechesis. Therefore wherever there are neophytes the prescriptions of the Ordo initiationis Christianae adultorum, nn. 37-40 and 235-239 should be observed. Intercession should be made in the eucharistic prayer for the newly baptized through the Easter octave in all places.

103. Throughout the Easter season the neophytes should be assigned their own special place among the faithful. All neophytes should endeavor to participate at Mass along with their godparents. In the homily and, according to local circumstances in the general intercessions mention should be made of them. Some celebration should be held to conclude the period of mystagogical catechesis on or about Pentecost Sunday, depending upon local custom. It is also appropriate that children receive their first communion on one or other of the Sundays of Easter.

104. During Easter time, pastors should instruct the faithful who have been already initiated into the eucharist on the meaning of the Church’s precept concerning the reception of holy communion during this period. It is highly recommended that communion be brought to the sick also, especially during the Easter octave.

105. Where there is the custom of blessing houses in celebration of the resurrection, this blessing is to be imparted after the solemnity of Easter, and not before, by the parish priest, or other priests or deacons delegated by him. This is an opportunity for exercising a pastoral ministry. The parish priest should go to each house for the purpose of undertaking a pastoral visitation of each family. There he will speak with the residents, spend a few moments with them in prayer, using texts to be found in the book De Benedictionibus. In larger cities consideration should be given to the gathering of several families for a common celebration of the blessing for all.

106. According to the differing circumstances of places and peoples, there are found a number of popular practices linked to celebrations of the Easter season, which in some instances attract greater numbers of the people than the sacred liturgy itself; these are not in any way to be undervalued, for they are often well adapted to the religious mentality of the faithful. Let episcopal conferences and local ordinaries therefore, see to it that practices of this kind which seem to nourish popular piety, be harmonized in the best way possible with the sacred liturgy, be imbued more distinctly with the spirit of the liturgy, in some way derived from it, and lead people to it.

107. This sacred period of fifty days concludes with Pentecost Sunday, when the gift of the Holy Spirit to the apostles, the beginnings of the Church and the start of its mission to all tongues and peoples and nations are commemorated.

Encouragement should be given to the prolonged celebration of Mass in the form of a vigil, whose character is not baptismal as in the Easter Vigil, but is one of urgent prayer, after the example of the apostles and disciples, who persevered together in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as they awaited the Holy Spirit.

108. “It is proper to the paschal festivity that the whole Church rejoices at the forgiveness of sins, which is not only for those who are reborn in holy baptism, but also for those who have long been numbered among the adopted children.” By means of a more intensive pastoral care and a deeper spiritual effort, all who celebrate the Easter feasts will by the Lord’s grace experience their effect in their daily lives.


Paul Augustin Card. Mayer
Prefect

Virgilio Noe
Titular Archbishop of Voncaria
Secretary


3 Cf. General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, n. 18.

4 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops Christus Dominus, n. 15.


6 Cf. Caeremoniale episcoporum, n. 249.

7 Cf. The Roman Ritual, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, n. 8; C.I.C., can. 856.

8 Roman Missal, The Easter Vigil, n. 46.

9 Cf. The Roman Ritual, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, cap. IV, especially n. 303.


13 Ibidem, n. 16, b).

14 Roman Missal, General Instruction, n. 42; Cf. Rite of Penance, nn. 36-37.


16 Caeremoniale episcoporum, n. 251.


18 Cf. Caeremoniale episcoporum, n. 251.


20 Ibidem, n. 252.

21 Cf. General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, n. 28.


23 Roman Missal, Ash Wednesday.


25 Roman Missal, First Sunday of Lent, Opening Prayer and Prayer over the gifts.

26 Cf. Caeremoniale episcoporum, n. 261.


29 Cf. Caeremoniale episcoporum, n. 252.

30 Roman Missal, rubric Saturday of the fourth week of Lent.

31 Cf. General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, n. 16, a.

32 Cf. Caeremoniale episcoporum, n. 263.

33 Cf. Roman Missal, Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday) n. 9.

34 Cf. Caeremoniale episcoporum, n. 270.

35 Cf. Roman Missal, Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday) n. 16.


38 Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, Presbyterorum ordinis, n. 7.

39 Caeremoniale episcoporum, n. 275.


43 Cf. Mc 2, 19-20; TERTULLIAN, *De ieiunio* 2 et 13, Corpus Christianorum II, p. 1271.
47 Cf. SCR, Ordinances et declarationes circa Ordinem hebdomadae sanctae instauratum, (1 febr. 1957) n. 21; AAS 49 (1957) 91-95.
51 Cf. Roman Missal, Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper.
52 Cf. *Ibidem*.
56 Cf. Roman Missal, Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper.
57 Cf. *Caeremoniale episcoporum*, n. 300.
58 Mt 20, 28.
60 Cf. Roman Missal, Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper, nn. 15-16.
63 1 Cor 5, 7.
64 Cf. Roman Missal, Good Friday, Celebration of the Lord’s Passion, nn. 1-3.
65 Paul VI, Apost. Const. *Paenitemini*, II, 2; AAS 58 (1966) 183; C.I.C., can. 1251.
67 Cf. *Ibidem*, n. 3; SRC, *Ordinationes et declarationes circa Ordinem hebdomadae sanctae instauratum*, (1 febr. 1957) n. 15; AAS 49 (1957) 94.
68 Cf. *Ibidem*, n. 5, alternative prayer.
70 Cf. *Ibidem*, n. 12.
71 Cf. Roman Missal, General Instruction, n. 46.
72 Cf. Roman Missal, Good Friday, Celebration of the Lord’s Passion, n. 19.
73 Cf. Mich 6, 3-4.
75 Cf. Roman Missal, Holy Saturday; The Apostles’ Creed; 1 Pet 3, 19.
77 Roman Missal, Holy Saturday.
79 Cf. Ex 12, 42.
Caeremoniale episcoporum, n. 332.
Cf. Ibidem, n. 332; Roman Missal, The Easter Vigil, n. 3.
Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium, n. 6; Cf. Rom 6, 3-6; Eph 2, 5-6; Col 2, 12-13; 2 Tim 2, 11-12.

"We keep vigil on that night because the Lord rose from the dead; that life ... where there is no longer the sleep of death, began for us in his flesh; being thus risen, death will be no more nor have dominion ... If we have kept vigil for the risen one, he will see that we shall reign with him for ever." S AUGUSTINE, Sermo Guelferbytan., 5, 4, PL5 2, 552.

Lc 24, 27; Cf. Lc 24, 44-45.
Cf. Caeremoniale episcoporum, n. 352.
Cf. Act 4, 11-12; Mt 21, 42; Mc 12, 10; Lc 20, 17.
Cf. The Roman Ritual, Rite of Baptism for Children, n. 6.
Cf. Ibidem, n. 47.
Cf. Ibidem, n. 49; The Roman Ritual, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, n. 36.
Cf. General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours, n. 213.
Cf. General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, n. 22.
Cf. C.I.C., can. 920.
De Benedictionibus, caput I, II, Ordo benedictionis annuee familiarum in propriis domibus.
Cf. General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, n. 23.

It is possible to combine the celebration of first Vespers with the celebration of Mass as provided for in the General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours, n. 96. In order to throw into greater relief the mystery of this day, it is possible to have several readings from Holy Scripture, as proposed in the Lectionary. In this case, after the Collect the reader goes to the ambo to proclaim the reading. The psalmist or cantor sings the psalm, to which the people respond with the refrain. Then all stand and the priest says: Let us pray, and after a short silent pause, he says the prayer corresponding to the reading (for example, one of the collects for the ferial days of the seventh week of Easter).

Cf. Roman Missal, Saturday of the Seventh Week of Easter, Opening Prayer.