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Sacramental Preparation
National Bulletin on Liturgy
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Editorial commentary in the Bulletin is the responsibility of the editor.

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How may young people and adults prepare well for the celebration of baptism, confirmation, first communion, and marriage? How can the liturgy of these sacraments be an integral part of the preparation experience from the beginning, rather than something that is planned at the end of the process?
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Sacramental Preparation

The term "sacramental preparation" is much used today. Bookstores carry published materials that are intended to assist parents prepare for the baptism of their infant. Other materials are sold to young women and men who are preparing for their marriage. Still other booklets and programs are aimed at children, parents, teachers and pastoral ministers to help young people prepare for first communion, first penance and confirmation. Parish and diocesan sacramental preparation programs of various kinds are widespread.

But what do these diverse publications and programs mean by "preparation?" Upon what understandings of sacramental celebration are they based? What are their goals, and what kinds of process do they employ? To what extent are the liturgies of the several sacraments for which people are being prepared integral to the preparation process?

In fact, published sacramental preparation programs differ considerably with respect to these questions. They vary among themselves with respect to their understanding of the nature of preparation and on the role the liturgy plays in this process. This is not surprising, and complete uniformity on these points is not necessarily desirable. It is not our intention here to consider individual programs; others have done this.¹

General Principles

The following are a few general principles concerning sacramental preparation.

All liturgies of the church require preparation, and this involves an investment of time on the part of the individuals concerned and on the part of the parish and pastoral ministers.

The goal of the process of preparation for the various sacraments is exactly the same as that for every other liturgy of the church: the full, active, conscious and fruitful participation that the Second Vatican Council enunciated as the fundamental principle of the modern liturgical renewal.

Celebration: The parents, children, youth, and couples involved do not simply "receive" the sacraments; they, with the entire community, celebrate them as full participants.

A communal process: The local Christian community as a whole needs to be involved in sacramental preparation processes; they are not simply for individ-

¹ Kenneth Guentert, "ML rates infant baptism prep programs," Modern Liturgy 16 (April 1989) 16-18

Kenneth Guentert, "ML rates first eucharist preparation programs," Modern Liturgy 17 (April 1990) 8-11
uals who are about to celebrate the sacraments. Hopefully, several parents or couples, and groups of children and youth, will prepare in a communal manner, together with members of the parish.

**Individual needs:** The nature and duration of the preparation process will vary, at least to some extent, from one couple or child to another, because their needs are different. These needs have to be discerned with sensitivity, and programs adapted accordingly.

**Methods of Preparation**

**Alternative approaches:** The processes of preparing for the sacraments under consideration here may be envisioned and carried out in more than one way. Two main approaches are in use today. These may be termed the “educational” model and the “liturgical” model, respectively.

**The educational model** of baptism preparation takes the view that there are certain things persons need to learn before they are allowed actively to prepare the liturgy of baptism. Individuals enroll in some kind of a preparation course which they are expected to complete. This intellectual preparation leads to the “planning” of the sacramental liturgy, which is then celebrated. This is the end of the process.

**The liturgical approach** takes the position that the liturgy of each sacrament, with their introductions and pastoral notes, is the core and basis for the entire process of sacramental preparation; the liturgy itself is the best teacher and guide. Here, preparation “for” the sacrament is equated with preparation “of” the liturgy of the sacrament.

**Study and prayer:** As the individuals concerned, together with sponsors and parish ministers, study and meditate upon the liturgy of each sacrament and enter into its prayer as the prayers of their own hearts, the necessary preparation will be accomplished.

**Mystagogy:** The process of sacramental preparation is ongoing and continues after the actual celebration of the sacrament. Reflection and further catechesis follows the celebration; this is called “mystagogy.” Furthermore, the preparation process will relate the liturgical celebration and its meaning to the daily life experiences of those celebrating the liturgy.

**This Issue**

In this issue of the Bulletin we will first make some suggestions regarding possible liturgical approaches to preparation for the sacraments of initiation for children, as they are usually celebrated today: baptism in infancy, first communion around age seven, and confirmation sometime later. After this, preparation for the sacrament of marriage will be considered.

The emphasis here will be on content and approach, not details of actual processes that might be used. Adaptation to different ages and individual needs will have to be done at the local level.
The Contemporary Context

Sacramental preparation is not easy to do well in our present society and world. Many challenges and difficulties confront us today that previous generations did not have to deal with. At the same time we benefit from new understandings and opportunities as well. In any case, we need take into account the world people live in and their broader needs together with the liturgy and theology of the sacraments in order to help them celebrate well. Approaches that are too narrow in their scope may well be unsatisfying.

Some of the factors that need to be considered are our complex modern society, the characteristics of youth and their "culture," stresses and strains on families and the needs of different kinds of families, and the strengths and weaknesses of the contemporary parish. This discussion simply refreshes our memory regarding the challenges we face; much more can be said on each topic. As the intention is to name challenges that we need to face in order to do sacramental preparation well, the following may appear somewhat negative and gloomy; many positive points could be added of course.

Society

Society today does not support the Christian life, the initiation of children and youth into this life, or Christian marriage. Our society is "post-Christian" and to a large extent is either a-religious or anti-religious. It is also increasingly pluralistic, and recognizes the presence and importance of persons and groups who follow religions other than Christianity, or no religion at all.

Demands and opportunities: Our society offers many alternatives to the Christian life, and these can be very attractive. It is also a very busy culture; there are many demands on our time. We are also offered many legitimate and fulfilling opportunities.

Other drawbacks: Our society is also oriented both to individualism and to consumerism. It is also fractured and divided. It can be sexist and violent.

What hope? Finally, our society is no longer prosperous; the stress of actual or potential unemployment or underemployment preys on the minds of many. Hope and self-esteem are in short supply, and to many the future seems bleak.

Youth

Culture: Youth have, within society at large, a kind of culture of their own. In part, this is fostered and communicated by commercial interests, though these
influences may not be recognized. Though this culture has valid elements, to some degree it is also characterized by sex and drugs and violence. There is much more competition for the time and attention of youth; they have many more possibilities than in former times.

**Little participation:** Youth tend to be “turned off” by church and traditional Christianity; they feel they have to say that the liturgy is “boring” (whether it is or not). They tend not to participate in parish activities, including Sunday eucharist. They often do not find suitable outlets for their generosity, enthusiasm, energy and good will in the church community or in church organizations. Youth tend not to be limited by denominational boundaries; they may have a weak Catholic identity, but be more ecumenical than their parents.

**Families**

**Stress and strain:** More and more families have been touched by divorce or separation. There are more single parent families and second marriages; this brings or is accompanied by stress and strain.

**The weekday religious lives** of families tend to be weak today. The Sunday liturgy carries almost all of the weight of their spiritual life. In addition, there is less participation in weekday activities of the parish.

**Marginal:** More and more families are marginal with respect to the church; their Christian faith is apparently weaker and practice is irregular. There is a great need for religious education, but little inclination to engage in the many programs that are offered. They may be unable (and perhaps even unwilling) to pass on their faith and the faith of church effectively to their children.

**Parish support:** Many families, whether regularly practicing or marginal, feel that they receive little support from the parish.

**The Parish**

**Community:** Parishes sometimes provide weak experiences of community, and even poor religious experiences; their self-identity and self-image as Christian communities may be weak.

**Ministry:** Because of increased demands and expectations, decreased numbers of parish ministers, and the increased cost of employing lay persons in a just manner, parish ministry may also be overextended. Larger (mega) parishes and multiple rural charges also stretch ministry to the breaking point. Morale is poor among some parish ministers.

**Our new sacramental rites** place much more responsibility than before on the parish community and on sponsors for adequate preparation and good celebration, but these expectations are not always met.

**Conclusions:** There are many challenges to good sacramental preparation and celebration today. There are also many good people, zealous ministers and serious sponsors. Though hard work, imagination and serious study are required, there is no need to despair.
Baptism for Children

A journey: The baptism of a child is not an isolated event in the life of the child or the parents; it is not something that begins and ends within the course of one hour – or even less. Instead, it is a stage in a much longer journey, the journey of human life and of the life of baptized persons. It is a stage in the journey of the child, the parents, the church, and ultimately of Jesus Christ in the Spirit. For each it is a journey of life, of faith, of community, of witness and of ministry.

Before Baptism

The journey of baptism begins before the liturgy of baptism is celebrated, and continues long afterward.

Marriage and Family Life

The beginning: We may think of marriage as the beginning of the journey toward baptism. The spouses are asked, “Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?” This law, of course, is fundamentally that of love, service and worship. The nuptial blessings add: “Bless them with children and help them be good parents. May they live to see their children’s children,” and “give them children to be formed by the gospel and to have a place in your (God’s) family.” May they “enrich your Church with their children.”

This journey continues as the marriage continues to be celebrated in the “domestic church” constituted by the new family in their home. It goes on as well in the participation of the couple in the worship, witness and ministry of the local parish community. It also moves forward in the daily social, educational and work life of the spouses.

With the church: In this phase of their life the church community needs to support and stay close to the couple. Sometimes this is difficult to accomplish, but it should at least be attempted.

Pregnancy: A special moment arrives when a child is conceived and then carried through the nine long months of pregnancy. The church community walks with the mother – and father and perhaps other children – during her pregnancy, childbirth, and bringing home of the new baby.

1 This is taken in large part from “Baptism for Children,” National Bulletin on Liturgy, vol. 23, no. 120 (March 1990) 9-17
2 Rite of Baptism for Children (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops 1989), 264 pages
Blessings and prayers: Both the Book of Blessings\(^3\) and Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers\(^4\) contain fine prayers for the family during pregnancy, childbirth, and the welcoming of a new child. These deserve to be better known and more widely used.

Practical help: The pastoral notes for the liturgy of baptism add, "Some members of the parish may show their Christian love by assisting the parents with household tasks in the days and weeks immediately following the birth of the child."

It is appropriate for parish ministers to talk to couples about baptism even while they are expecting their children.

Welcoming the New Child

A further stage of the journey comes when the parents come to the church to request that their child be baptized. This is a crucial moment for both the parents and the parish community.

The parish ministers to whom the parents first speak, as well as the local Christian community as a whole, need to present the face and spirit of Christ to the new parents. The first impulses of the ministers and community will be those of joy and hospitality. The new family will be warmly and graciously welcomed, and delight will be expressed at the birth of the baby. The minister will pray with the couple and pray for the child; the parents and baby will be referred to in the general intercessions of the Sunday eucharist.

Questions: One writer raises the following questions for the parish ministers:

The manner in which the [parish minister], be it lay minister or ordained minister, expresses the attitude of Christ to the couple is critical: Is he/she welcoming, gentle, nonjudgmental, open to where they are in their lives? Does he/she adequately listen to their story? Is he/she willing to take time to share with this couple the church's concept of baptism as it is understood today? Does he/she respect this crucial moment as a possible occasion for conversion? In other words, is the reception that this couple is given truly representative of that which would be extended by Christ.\(^5\)

Always show Christ: Even if the parents later decide to withdraw their request for the baptism of their child, the parents should be touched with the love of Christ, they should be invited to come home to their church – and this home should be seen as loving and hospitable. The initial conversation between parish minister and parents is an occasion to plant or water seeds

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\(^3\) (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops 1981) 51-64


\(^5\) Joan Torres, "Uncommitted Catholic parents and children's baptism," Church (Winter 1989) 215-227. See also:

Joseph M. Champlin, "Welcoming marginal Catholics. Pastoral challenges of baptism and matrimony," Church (Spring 1989) 3-8

that may not flower immediately, but perhaps, in God’s providence, at a later
time in their lives.

The parish minister will then spend some time getting to know the young
couple and the circumstances of their lives. In fact canon law\(^6\) directs that
“where possible, each family [be] visited” in their home. The introduction to the
rite says, “Before and after the celebration of the sacrament, the child has a
right to the love and help of the community” and often this will be expressed
through the presence of the parish minister.

The pastoral notes add,”The priest ought to welcome all parents who request
the baptism of their children. The priest (or a member of the parish) ought to
visit the parents to express the joy of the parish community at the birth of their
child and assure them of the community’s prayers and concern for them and
their family. He may use this occasion to talk about their faith, to pray with
them, and invite the parents (and godparents, if available) to participate in a
parish program of preparation. The pastoral visit may conclude with a blessing
of the parents and child...."

In the course of welcoming the new baby and getting to know the parents,
the parish minister will learn of their relationship with the church and with
Jesus Christ, and how they live and view the Christian life.

Preparation

The celebration of baptism is preceded by a period of preparation. What
principles guide this process, what methods are to be used, how are individual
needs to be discerned?

Basic Principles

Several basic principles govern the practice of infant baptism in the Roman
Catholic Church today. These need to be understood by parish ministers and
parents alike. They also need to be considered together, even though they
may in pastoral practice be in tension with one another.

Dignity and honor: The parents, as baptized women and men, are sisters
and brothers of Jesus Christ and members of Christ’s body, the Church. The
dignity they have as persons created by God and reborn in baptism is to be
honored.

The church earnestly desires that their child be baptized. It never refuses to
baptize a child brought by believing parents.

The church has a very high regard for baptism. Baptism is held high and
reverenced; it is not something trivial. It is because baptism is so precious that
it is not entered into lightly.

\(^{6}\) Canon 852,2
Infant baptism makes no sense unless there is a hope that children will be brought up to be practising, believing Christians. To baptize a child otherwise would make a mockery of this sacrament of God’s love.

Baptism is only the beginning of the process of Christian initiation. As the child grows, initiation will be completed by the celebration of confirmation and first communion, and by the development and practice of a Christian vision of life.

The raising of the child as a practising Christian, within the Catholic Church, though a primary responsibility of the parents, will be supported and assisted by the parish community.

No compulsion: As the parents grow in their appreciation of the nature, meaning and consequences of baptism, and of their own responsibilities for the raising of their child, they are free at any time to withdraw their request to have him or her baptized. The church never forces baptism on anyone.

Continued care: This decision needs to be accepted in a caring manner and, if possible, the parish minister will pray with the couple and bless them. They are to be assured that the church continues to care for them and wishes to help them in their future life. These parents will be carried in prayer by the parish minister and through the general intercessions of the Sunday eucharist. If possible, the parish minister or other members of the community will keep in touch with them by personal contact.

Baptism postponed: Some parents who do not wish to have their child baptized will have decided that they will wait until the child is older, and then enroll him or her as a catechumen as part of the rite of Christian initiation of children of catechetical age. Though not encouraged by the church, this option is permitted. The parish community will want to walk with these families, care for the children, and help them arrive at the point at which the catechumenate is appropriate.

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Four Approaches to Preparation

Because the needs of parents vary so much, more than one approach to preparation is required.

Discerning the Needs of the Parents

The parish minister and the parents jointly need to discern their needs with respect to preparation. Four different types of needs come to mind.

• Some couples have celebrated the baptism of other children previously, are active in parish life, have participated in the baptism of other parents’ children, and may even have studied some theology as adults.

• Other couples may have an active life of faith, but have little experience of baptism and therefore, have not thought very much about its meaning.
• Still others are "marginal" Catholics. They rarely worship and have little direct contact with the parish community. When asked, however, they still consider themselves to be members of the church.

• Finally, there are some who admit they have no active Christian faith, but have requested baptism to satisfy family pressures or for some other reason that has no basis in faith.

**How are such different needs to be accommodated?**

**Four approaches:** Based on the four kinds of parental needs outlined above, four related but distinct approaches to preparation for the rite of baptism may be envisioned. Rather than term these "preparation course" or "preparation processes," it might be better to think of them as alternative "experiences" of preparation.

The four scenarios or kinds of experiences suggested below will need to be adapted and refined to fit the needs of individual couples or groups of couples (and, if possible, the godparents).

**Step One: Provide Resources**

**All four kinds of experiences** of preparation will begin by providing parents and godparents with certain key resources. In addition, the parish minister needs a further resource.

• All will require a copy of the Rite of Baptism for Children, including the texts of all alternative texts and scripture readings.

• The parish minister will also have the new Canadian edition of this rite, with its introductions, pastoral notes, and the 1980 Instruction on Infant Baptism.

• All will need a copy of the March 1990 (vol. 23, no. 120) issue of this Bulletin, on "Baptism for Children." It contains a chapter on general principles, and another entitled "Celebrating Baptism," which considers the liturgy of baptism in some detail. The chapter entitled "Living a Baptismal Life" considers some of the consequences and expectations of baptism, and a chapter on "Reminders and Renewal of Baptism" provides a broader perspective.

The parents will wish to look over the rite of baptism immediately.

**Step Two: Provide An Overview**

**All four scenarios** begin by providing an overview of the rite of baptism for children, as given, for example, at the beginning of the chapter "Celebrating Baptism" in the March 1990 issue of the Bulletin. In addition to reading this, couples and the parish minister will meet in the church and walk through the several processions. The minister will speak about the broad outline of the rite, its basic structure, its dynamic of dialogue, and the respective roles of the parents, godparents, priest, congregation and child.

They may then, in the church, rectory or meeting room, consider the preparation of the liturgy of baptism in more detail, as considered in the four scenarios given below.
Step Three: Four Scenarios

Following this kind of initial preparation, which will be common to all couples, the different needs of individual couples will be respected by dividing them into several groups. The four scenarios considered below show how different couples might progress in their preparation of and for the liturgy of baptism.

First scenario: this requires the least amount of time. Parents with some appreciation of baptism and its meaning and consequences will focus their attention on the specific details of the liturgy. This dimension of preparation includes the adaptation of the liturgy to the circumstances of a particular time, place and assembly; the choice of readings, prayers and other alternatives and options that are provided in the rite; the choice of suitable music; the assignment and if necessary, training of readers, greeters, musicians and other liturgical ministers. All of this will be done prayerfully.

• Planning for baptism: The liturgy of baptism has its own set of planning requirements. These include deciding whether to celebrate it outside mass or within mass, planning the different locations and processions set out in the rite, and preparing the water, chrism, paschal candle, new garment and other items needed.

The dialogues: The parents will also need to review and plan the dialogues in which they have a role. In some cases alternative texts are provided, or they may compose the dialogues (together with the parish minister).

• Difficulties and joys of parenthood: The parents may also wish to share with the parish minister and with other couples, the meaning that the child’s name has for them, their hope and dreams for their baby, and their understanding of the baptismal life ahead for the child. If they have older children, they might wish to share their experiences of raising children as Christians – the difficulties and joys, the ups and downs of being a Christian mother or father.

• The rite of baptism for children and the chapters “Celebrating Baptism” and “Living a Baptismal Life” in the March 1990 issue of the Bulletin will be resources for these dimensions of preparation.

Second scenario: Those who are active in parish life but have little knowledge or experience of baptism might spend more time preparing the liturgy of baptism.

• The opening dialogues: Using the rite and the commentary in the March 1990 issue of the Bulletin, they might begin by considering the significance of the opening dialogues of the liturgy of baptism.

• The word of God: Next, they will study the alternative scripture readings provided for the celebration of baptism. These are privileged teachers of the meaning of this sacrament. Silent prayer and shared reflection will be part of this.

• Faith and the church: The renunciation of sin and profession of faith will be another focus of consideration. What are their values and their beliefs? What is their relationship with God? Because the parents act as representatives of the church, they need also to ask: “Who are we as members of the church?” “What does the church mean to us?”

• The baptismal life: The consequences and expectations of the liturgy of baptism will then be considered. These are expressed throughout the liturgy, and
all the liturgical and scriptural texts need to be examined from this perspective. The chapters “Celebrating Baptism” and “Living a Baptismal Life” in the March 1990 issue of the Bulletin will be of help.

• Alternatives and options: Finally, texts, readings and music will be chosen, and the other matters considered in the first scenario will be planned.

**Third scenario:** Parents whose relationship to the church is weak will need to take longer to prepare for the celebration of baptism. Their experience will include everything that has already been considered in the previous scenarios.

• Other parts of the rite: In addition to what has been outlined in the second scenario, the other rites and prayers should be given more detailed study: the intercessions, prayers of exorcism, prayers over the water, explanatory rites, introduction to the Lord’s Prayer, and final blessings.

**Detours and Side Trips**

**For these parents** the experience of preparing the celebration of baptism probably will be interspersed with side trips to deepen their relationship with the church, their life of prayer, and their view of the Christian life.

**A closer relationship:** The nature of the church and the parents’ relationship with the church will arise in the course of considering the liturgical assembly that is celebrating the liturgy, the welcoming and signing with the cross by the Christian community, and especially their representing the church in the profession of faith. This hopefully will lead to the development of a closer relationship to the parish community on the part of the parents.

• This may be expressed through more frequent participation in the Sunday eucharist and in the ministries of the parish. It may be desirable to discontinue the preparation of the baptismal liturgy for a while in order to allow this to develop.

• Consideration of the question of faith and the parents’ relationship to God may lead them to express the need for help in their prayer life. Providing this help may again constitute a sort of sidetrack on the process of preparing the liturgy of baptism.

• Consideration of the expectations of raising the child to be a practising Christian may raise questions regarding Christian values, the formation of conscience, and religious education. Again, it may be desirable to spend time dealing with these issues.

**These and other “detours”** in the path of preparing the liturgy of baptism should arise out of and lead back to the process of preparing the liturgy, and not be extraneous to it.

**Fourth scenario:** Those whose request for baptism is not based on Christian faith should start out as in scenario three.

**The inconsistency of** their request with the meaning and consequences of baptism should become clear to them as they enter into the process of preparing the liturgy of baptism. The parish minister – and perhaps other couples as well – will help them in this regard. Their own integrity should lead them to
withdraw their request once they find out what the rite means and requires. They should be told about the possibility of their child enrolling in the catechumenate at an older age.

Step Four: Criteria of Progress

In all cases, it is the responsibility of the parish minister to discern when parents are ready for the celebration of the baptism of their child. How is this to be done? What criteria are to be used?

The parish minister will always show Christ's own care for children and their parents, as well as the church's concern for the integrity of baptism.

The basic criterion by which the progress of the parents is to be evaluated is liturgical: Are they ready to participate fully, actively, consciously and fruitfully? The same question may be applied, making the necessary adaptations, to the godparents and the community.

The second question is, "Will the liturgy of baptism be celebrated joyfully, prayerfully, and in a way that is transforming?"

Our Next Issue

The Three Great Days: The Easter Triduum is the centre and high point of the liturgical year. How do Holy Thursday Evening, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday form a single, integrated experience? What is the content of each liturgy, and how may they be celebrated well?
First Communion

Preparation for first communion needs also to be preparation for full participation in the eucharistic liturgy as a whole. Such a preparation process for children around the age of seven might include the elements suggested here.

Moment in a Process

The reception of first communion is a special moment in the lives of the children. At the same time it is also a part of their entire spiritual journey, extending from baptism to the end of their lives. The celebration of first communion therefore builds on baptism and on the many eucharistic celebrations in which they have already participated. It builds as well on the growth in the children's life that has been fostered over the years at home, in school and through parish life.

Initiation: First communion is also an important moment in the process of initiation of children into the Body of Christ, the church. In present practice this process reaches its completion in confirmation a few years hence.

Previous Experiences of Eucharist

Sunday after Sunday: Preparation for first communion needs to value and build on the fact that children will have already celebrated the eucharist many times. They have been coming with their parents Sunday after Sunday since infancy, and have come to experience the eucharistic liturgy in ways appropriate to their age.

Balance needed: Preparation, then, needs to strike a careful balance between the novelty of the first act of eucharistic communion and the already established familiarity of the rest of the eucharistic liturgy.

Not “first eucharist”: This prior experience of eucharistic celebration is one reason why it is better to speak of “first communion” rather than “first eucharist.” The latter term tends to suggest that these previous experiences are not “eucharist” or that the children, though present, have not really participated in them.

Marginal families: Children from families that do not regularly participate in the Sunday eucharist are at a serious disadvantage, and efforts need to be made to make up for this relative lack of familiarity with the eucharistic liturgy and the community that celebrates it.

The several parts of the Sunday eucharist might be the subjects of reflection and catechesis. Special liturgies that draw out and spend time on distinc-
tive features of these parts might well be celebrated separately. The aim, as always, will be fuller participation. In addition, visits might be made to the church to allow the children to wander about its several parts and become familiar with their church home. Furniture, furnishings, vessels, vestments and other features will be shown to them and named, and questions that the children may have will be answered.

Gathering: Reflection on the introductory or gathering rites will focus on the assembly, on its inclusiveness and its welcoming of girls and boys, on song and the movement of coming together, on renewal of baptism, communal confession, praise and both spoken and silent prayer. Common dialogues and responses will be reviewed, as well such texts as the I confess and Glory to God. The liturgical experiences of gathering will be linked to community building in the childrens' everyday lives – home, school, play.

Word: In reflecting on the liturgy of the word the children will come to appreciate the dynamics of proclamation and response, the relevance of scripture for themselves today, the goal of preaching, and the significance of the profession of faith and general intercessions. Connections will be made between the liturgical dynamics of dialogue, conversation, listening and responding, interpretation, and these experiences in daily life.

The concluding rites – or sending forth – of the eucharistic liturgy will be linked with the acceptance of responsibility for witnessing to Christ and service to others.

Presence of Christ: In preparation for their first communion children will be led to appreciate the real presence of Jesus Christ in the sacramental bread and wine. This mode of the real presence of Christ, however, needs to be experienced in association with the other modes of his presence in liturgical celebrations: the assembly, the ordained minister, and the word. Again, a sensitive balance needs to be maintained between what is new – Christ's sacramental presence in his Body and Blood – and those modes of Christ's presence that the children have already experienced in their previous celebrations of the eucharist.

Communion and the Communion Rite

Eucharistic communion will be presented to children as the fullness and completion of the eucharistic action. It will always be rooted in the preparation rites and eucharistic prayer, however, and never considered in isolation. Sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ is what the eucharist is for; consecration without communion is as incomplete as communion without thanksgiving and consecration.

Lord's Prayer: The children will be led to reflect on the parts of the communion rite in which they have already been participating, especially the Lord's Prayer and sign of peace. This is an appropriate occasion to spend time reflecting on the meaning and significance of the Lord's Prayer (with its embolism and doxology). The relevance of its liturgical setting will be considered as well: a kind of recapitulation of the eucharistic prayer, a prayer of cor-
porate reconciliation before sharing the holy food, and an anticipation of the banquets of God's reign to come.

Peace: The children will also reflect on peace, especially in its biblical sense of total wholeness and well-being (shalom). By considering the absence of peace in individual lives, families and the world, they can come to see peace both as a great gift of God and as a ministry of the church in which they share. They might also discuss the sign of peace as another act of mutual reconciliation before communion. Finally, communion itself can be viewed as a sign of peace.

Bread and wine: Preparation for first communion might next consider the bread and wine and the breaking of bread. The children will if possible bake bread themselves, under the tutelage of a mother, another member of the community who is skilled in this art, or in the school. They might visit a bakery and see bread baked there; they might also visit a wine-making establishment or talk with someone in the community who makes wine at home.

Fullness of sign: These activities will lead to reflection on the desirability of full sacramental signs. The children might later, with help, prepare the bread for their own first communion celebration.

The cup: Of course the children will be led to experience and expect communion from the cup as well as the bread, both at their first communion celebration and at every eucharistic liturgy; this is their right. (This will be an opportunity to promote communion from the cup in the parish at large, if this is necessary.)

Breaking of the bread: Paul's interpretation of the breaking of the bread in his first letter to the Corinthians will be proclaimed, explained and reflected on. This is a good opportunity to consider the ecclesial dimension of the eucharist and the place of the children within both the local church community and the diocesan and international church. Conversely, it is an opportunity to correct any excessively individualistic views of eucharistic communion that might be encountered.

Communion procession: Preparation will also consider the procession up to the table of Christ, the joyful singing which accompanies the procession, and music that may follow communion. Exactly how to receive the bread in the hand, and how to drink from the cup, will be rehearsed.

Many levels of meaning: The children will be led to reflect on the meaning of eucharistic communion at many levels. For example, food as a gift from God, stewardship of creation, justice in all that has to do with the growing and distribution of food, the tragedy of famine and the need to share our food with those in need.

Deeper hungers: They will move on to reflect on the deeper hunger of human persons and human society and how Jesus Christ nourishes us at these deeper levels. The real presence of Christ in the eucharistic bread and wine will of course be considered at length, as will the relationship between the eucharistic Body and ecclesial Body of Christ. The distinction between the sacramental presence of Christ and his physical presence during his life on earth will also be considered.

Makes a difference: Finally, reflection on the prayer after communion will help to show another level of significance: that eucharistic communion is supposed to make a difference in our lives following the liturgy.

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The Eucharistic Action

The context of first communion is not simply the Sunday liturgy as a whole but also the liturgy of the eucharist in a narrower sense: preparation of altar and gifts, eucharistic prayer, and communion rite. Sharing in the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ is never an isolated event, but also connected with the preparation rites and eucharistic prayer. Furthermore, “eucharist” needs to be appreciated especially as a verb rather than a noun. “Doing” eucharist is far more than simply the act of communion, and this is another reason why “first communion” is preferable to “first eucharist.”

The need for appreciation: All of this of course is difficult for adults to appreciate, and we as a church need to learn better how to lead children into the eucharistic action in its entirety and its fullness.

Through simple table liturgies children can be led to see the basic dynamics of the liturgy of the eucharist: setting the table and bringing the gifts of food, the prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification, and sharing food. They can be taught that all meals are sacred, and encouraged to say grace at their meals at home. They can be helped both to memorize a suitable grace and to compose such prayers spontaneously.

Eucharistic prayers: Through the use of the eucharistic prayers for masses with children, they can be led to a deeper level of meaning and experience. Children need to learn and experience that the eucharistic prayer is the prayer of all, not just that of the presbyter (despite his special role). They need to learn the common acclamations of this prayer, and the sung versions that are used in their parish. They might write prayers that express thanksgiving for Jesus Christ, his life, death and resurrection. In ways that are appropriate for their age, they will be taught about the invocation of the Holy Spirit in the eucharistic prayer, and the consecratory nature of this prayer as whole. The fact that the Spirit is invoked upon the community for its transformation will be referred to. Any ideas that the children might have that this is the priest’s prayer alone, or that the priest alone brings about the presence of Christ in the sacramental bread and wine, should be corrected.

Eucharistic Life

Living thankful lives: Preparation for first communion needs to include laying the groundwork for a long term eucharistic approach to life. This includes being thankful for creation and for the continual loving care and presence of God, being thankful for Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit and their presence and influence in our lives, being open to the sanctifying and transforming action of the Spirit, uniting all one's life to the paschal mystery of Christ in the Spirit, sharing food and drink with others – especially those in dire need, appreciating one's close relationship with other persons around the world and with the whole church, and giving praise to God.

Meals at home: As already mentioned, the children should come to appreciate the importance of meals with the entire family at home, and of thanking God in prayer for all they have. Opening their table to others and sharing food with persons in need, also needs to become part of their regular life experience.
Ministry

First communion involves both the ministry of the church and the ministry of the children.

Ministry of the Church

Ecclesial dimension: In first communion the church community and its presbyters reach out to the children and draw them ever more closely into the church; it is a sacrament of initiation into the People of God and Body of Christ. The ecclesial dimension and significance of first communion needs to be appreciated by the entire community. The children and the members of the community who are already fully initiated enter into an even closer mutual relationship of love, care, and responsibility. The entire community is feeding the children upon the sacramental bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

Ministry of the Children

Gifts of eucharist and of children: In first communion the children also minister to the local church community. The community is reminded what a precious gift eucharistic communion is – indeed, the entire eucharistic action. We are also challenged genuinely to accept children as our sisters and brothers and fellow members of the church. The parish is challenged to foster full participation of these children in every eucharistic liturgy. The care and planning that goes into planning the first communion liturgy ought to characterize every Sunday liturgy as well. The assembly is challenged to learn from the freedom, enthusiasm and naïveté of the children as well.

Liturgal ministries: If and when suitable, children will be brought into the specialized liturgical ministries. This may suitably begin with their participation in the ministry of hospitality and with bringing up the gifts (with adults).

Mystagogy

The preparation process continues after the actual celebration of first communion itself.

Reflection and response: The children need to be given opportunities to express their reaction and response to this important event in their lives, and to ask any questions that they may have. In addition, their actual experience of sharing the holy food, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, can serve as a foundation for further reflection on his presence, the relationship of communion to the preparation of altar and gifts and eucharistic prayer, and to the “doing” of eucharist in its entirety.
Confirmation

At the present time, confirmation is celebrated at different ages across the country, from a fairly early age (two or three years after first communion) to the late teens. Preparation programs of course will be adapted accordingly.

The goal of any program of preparation for confirmation will be full, active, conscious and fruitful participation in the liturgy of confirmation. This liturgy is set within the context of the eucharistic liturgy, and it includes part of the liturgy of baptism.

Moment in a Process

A special occasion: The celebration of confirmation is an important moment in the lives of older children or youth. It is (in the present scheme of things) the third and final sacrament of initiation into the Body of Christ. Confirmation also receives special status from the fact that it is not repeated, it is usually presided over by a bishop, its preparation is taken very seriously, and parents and teacher place great weight on it as a beneficial influence in the lives of the young people who celebrate it.

In the journey: At the same time it is also part of the larger spiritual journey of youth. Baptized (usually) in infancy, admitted to first communion around age seven, introduced to the sacrament of penance at a suitable time, they now celebrate confirmation as part of their ongoing liturgical and sacramental life.

Based on Baptism

Confirmation is intimately related to baptism, both historically and theologically. A prominent part of the liturgy of confirmation is the renewal of the baptism covenant (also called baptism commitment or baptismal vows).

The meaning of baptism: Preparation for confirmation will therefore include serious reflection on the meaning baptism had at the time we were originally baptized, has at the present time, and will have in our lives in the future.

Faith

Our relationship with God: This will include reflection on faith as a fundamental relationship with God and fundamental orientation of our lives with respect to God. Faith also includes our intellectual understanding of Christian belief and as well, how we live. Who is God – Father, Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit – for us? And how do we live in accordance with our experience of God and understanding of the teaching of Jesus Christ and his Church?
Approaches to faith that neglect the relational aspects in favor of the intellectual or behavioral dimensions of faith very likely will be less than satisfying for the young people.

Who is God for us? Youth might be encouraged to be creative in naming and describing God, in writing prayers that express their experience of God and relationship with God. They might also write their own professions of faith, along the lines of: I believe in God...; I believe in Jesus Christ...; I believe in the Holy Spirit....

What idols? In addition, youth might be invited to name the idols that they are aware of in their lives - all that is not of God, all that is an obstacle to their relationship with God, or which tempts them away from God.

Renewal of Baptism

Easter: The preparation process will include reflection on the ways and occasions on which we renew our baptismal commitment. Youth will have renewed their baptismal vows, for example, each year at Easter. The Roman Catholic Church holds this annual recommitment to be of the greatest importance, and confirmation needs to be related to this Easter experience.

Infant baptism: In addition, at every celebration of baptism for children we charge the parents and godparents to speak for us when they profess simultaneously their faith and the faith of the church - our faith.

In the eucharist: Finally, we recall our baptism and reprofess our faith every time we say the creed, participate in proclaiming the eucharistic prayer, and every time we use blessed water.

We will continue to renew our baptism for the rest of our lives, each Sunday, at each baptism, every year at Easter.

In context: The renewal of baptism in the liturgy of confirmation, then, needs to be viewed in this larger context: a significant moment, but also a moment in a larger spiritual journey of baptismal life.

The Holy Spirit

In the liturgy of confirmation young people receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit in the liturgy: This is an extremely important event, but again it needs to be viewed in a broader context. These young people have already received the Holy Spirit in baptism, and they and the entire worshipping assembly invoke the Holy Spirit upon themselves (as well as on the bread and wine) in every celebration of the eucharist. In addition, the Spirit is invoked upon them in liturgical greetings ("The love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you") and in blessings ("May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit"). Finally, they celebrate the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is not new to their lives.
Preparation for confirmation will therefore include reflection on the experience of the Holy Spirit in baptism and in the eucharist.

In the liturgy of baptism we say:

• Send your Holy Spirit to dwell within them (prayer of exorcism)

• We now ask God to give these children new life in abundance through water and the Holy Spirit (invitation to prayer)

• By the power of the Holy Spirit give to this water the grace of your Son, so that in the sacrament of baptism all those whom you have created in your likeness may be cleansed from sin and rise to a new birth of innocence by water and the Holy Spirit (prayer over the water 1)

• Praise to you, God the Holy Spirit, for you anointed Christ at his baptism in the waters of the Jordan, so that we might all be baptized in you (prayer over the water 2)

• Lord, make holy this water which you have created, so that all those whom you have chosen may be born again by the power of the Holy Spirit, and may take their place among your holy people (prayer over the water 2)

• You have set us free and filled our hearts with the Spirit of your love, that we may live in your peace (prayer over the water 3)

• God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin, given you a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and welcomed you into his holy people (anointing after baptism)

• By God's gift, through water and the Holy Spirit, we are reborn to everlasting life. (blessing 1; cf 2)

In the eucharistic liturgy we pray:

• Today you sent the Holy Spirit on those marked out to be your children by sharing the life of your only Son, and so you brought the paschal mystery to its completion.

• Today we celebrate the great beginnings of your Church when the Holy Spirit made known to all peoples the one true God, and created from the many [human] languages ... one voice to profess one faith. (Preface for Pentecost)

• May all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit (Eucharistic Prayer 2)

• Grant that we, who are nourished by his body and blood, may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ (Eucharistic Prayer 3)

• Lord...by your Holy Spirit, gather all who share this bread and wine into the one body of Christ, a living sacrifice of praise. (Eucharistic Prayer 4)

In confirmation: Finally, those preparing for confirmation will want to reflect on the prayer that the bishop says over them. He prays to God to send the Holy Spirit upon the young people, and then, quoting Isaiah, speaks of some of the consequences of life in the Spirit of God:
Send your Holy Spirit upon them
to be their Helper and Guide.
Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of right judgment and courage,
the spirit of knowledge and reverence.
Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence.

The Holy Spirit sanctifies and transforms, gives new life, enables prayer, empowers for ministry, prompts our response to God's grace, and strengthens us to accept responsibility for furthering God's reign of love and justice.

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Hands and Chrism

Laying on of hands: Preparation for confirmation will include reflection on the act of laying on of hands by the bishop and anointing with chrism. It will also be helpful to distinguish between the general laying on of hands over the candidates (which is not central to the sacramental sign), and the laying on of hands that is accomplished during the anointing with chrism; this is central to the sacramental act.

At the laying on of hands the bishop first recalls baptism:

   All-powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
   by water and the Holy Spirit
   you freed your sons and daughters from sin
   and gave them new life.

In anointing the young people, the bishop makes the sign of the cross on the forehead and says,

   N., be sealed with the Holy Spirit, the Gift of the Father.

Laying on of hands is a gesture that expresses relationship, care, the passing on of tradition and ministry, empowerment and enabling.

The holy chrism, applied in the form of the cross on the foreheads of the young people, signifies healing, wholeness, and full participation in the priestly, prophetic and pastoral ministry of Jesus Christ. It identifies persons who carry the name and ministry of Christ into the world today.

Sign of Peace

The exchange of the sign of peace between bishop and confirmands will also be the subject of reflection.

Mutual relationship: The exchange of the peace is a mutual prayer, a mutual commitment, a mutual act of reconciliation. The bishop and the Church whom he represents, will share its peace with the young people, and they – also full members of the Church – will share peace with the bishop and church community. The peace the bishop shares is wholeness and total well-being.
In the liturgy of confirmation ministry is exercised by the bishop, by the entire local church community, and by the young people themselves.

Ministry of Bishop and Community

Confirmation is a ministry of the bishop and the whole church to the young people. It is a ministry of and to the apostolicity of the church, its rootedness in Jesus Christ and the apostles whom he choose. It is a ministry of fidelity and truthfulness to this apostolic tradition which is embodied not only in the church in general but also in the person of the bishop.

It is also a ministry of affirmation of the young people. It proclaims their great dignity and worth.

Initiation: Finally, confirmation completes the process of initiation into Christ’s Body the Church. It is the end of their journey of initiation into the People of God.

Ministry of the Young People

The young people who are confirmed also have an important ministry of their own. They minister to the rest of the church in celebrating confirmation; they are not simply recipients of the bishop’s ministry, but celebrants as well.

Sacramental persons: Confirmation makes the young people sacramental persons in a new way. They are now fully initiated into the church, they have received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, they celebrate the eucharist fully. As sacramental persons, they show us Jesus Christ, they show us the Holy Spirit, they show us the church in a special way.

Challenge: The young people also minister to the rest of the church by the challenge they present to us. They challenge by their youth, by their energy, enthusiasm, and hope, by their prophetic vision and voice. They challenge the rest of the church to pay attention to them, genuinely include them in the church, honor them, give them opportunities to serve, recognize and permit their leadership in the church. They challenge the rest of the church to foster their full, active, conscious and fruitful participation in the church as a whole and in each liturgy, not just special “youth” liturgies (though these are important as well). All liturgies should be well planned and attractive to young people.

The Eucharist

The context for the liturgy of confirmation is the eucharist. This shows the unity of the sacraments of initiation and the fact that the eucharist is the principle sacrament of initiation. Careful and caring planning, good celebration, and full participation in the eucharist should characterize the entire liturgical life of the young people as well as of the rest of the church.
The Holy Spirit and the eucharist: The celebration of confirmation provides an opportunity to reflect on the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the eucharist, something that is often neglected at other times. The presence and action of the Holy Spirit is integral to eucharist; this has been pointed out above.

Mystagogy

Finally, reflection on the mystery and the experience of confirmation needs to continue after the immediate celebration. 

Obituary

Bernard Mahoney

The first director of the National Liturgical Office, Rev. Bernard James Mahoney, died at St. Michael’s Hospital, Toronto on April 4 after a short battle with cancer. Born and raised in Toronto, a graduate of St. Michael’s College and St. Augustine’s Seminary, Mahoney received his S.T.D. from the “Angelicum” in Rome.

While professor of Moral Theology at St. Augustine’s Seminary, he was appointed the Director of the National Liturgical Office in 1966, a post he held as a part-time position until 1969, when additional responsibilities at the Seminary made it impossible for him to continue with the increasing duties of the Office.

Bernard Mahoney piloted the Office through the first liturgical changes that resulted from the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council. He was instrumental in setting the stage for the use of interim texts of the Eucharist in English (loose-leaf missal and lectionary) as well as edit the National Bulletin on Liturgy.

His interest and devotion to liturgical renewal will be felt and appreciated across Canada for many years.
Much need for preparation: It is widely acknowledged that marriage requires preparation, in part simply because of its importance. In addition, we are aware of the pressures that contemporary society places on young married couples, and of the high frequency of marital discord and marriage breakdown. Today there is also a better understanding of the human dynamics of falling in love and getting married, and an appreciation that some couples are not close to the church and that some spouses are from other Christian (or other) traditions.

The rite of marriage itself refers to preparation. "The bridal couple should be given a review of the fundamentals of Christian doctrine. This may include instruction on the teachings about marriage and the family, on the rites used in the celebration of the sacrament itself, and on the prayers and readings." In addition, "Priests should first of all strengthen and nourish the faith of those about to be married, for the sacrament of matrimony presupposes and demands faith."

Excellent preparation programs have been developed and are in use in many parishes and dioceses. In addition to the theology of marriage, they often deal with understanding oneself and one's relationship with the partner, roles of husband and wife in marriage, how to resolve conflict, lifestyle, values and finances, sexuality, responsible parenthood, and related topics. Psychological maturity, attitudes and faith development are also assessed.

All of this is excellent and a real contribution, and the preparation is often conducted in a prayerful spirit. The process generally concludes with a brief study of the rite of marriage and the actual preparation of the marriage liturgy.

Serious deficiency: From a liturgical point of view, such preparation programs — whatever their other merits — often are seriously deficient. They do not really take the rite of marriage seriously; it is not an integral or central component of the preparation process, but is added on at the end. This has a number of detrimental consequences.

The planning process: One concern is at the practical level. Many couples start to plan their wedding from the day of their engagement, and unless they get some help from the church, their ideas will be based on movies and television, the memories of their parents and grandparents, and perhaps the experience of attending a few weddings of friends, often in other denominations.

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1 This is based on "Celebrating Marriage," National Bulletin on Liturgy, vol 21, no 115, (December 1988) 254-256
2 Rite of Marriage, Introduction, nos. 5-7
This can lead to tensions when they come to deal with the liturgies and liturgical expectations of the Catholic Church. The earlier the church enters into their thinking about the wedding, the better.  

**Is the rite important?** There are other concerns as well. By leaving the liturgy to the end, a message may be communicated that the rite is not as important to the wedding or to marriage as other matters. There may be an unspoken implication that the marriage liturgy pertains just to the act of getting married, and not to married life. The liturgy may even be seen as a minor part of the process of getting married.

**Is the rite relevant?** The message may be communicated that the liturgy of marriage is not relevant to sexuality, finances, the relationship of spouses, lifestyle and the rest – which is not true. There may be an implication that the liturgy of marriage is either a final hurdle to be overcome, or a final reward for getting through the preparation course. In addition, preparation becomes a sort of academic requirement, and not part of a ritual process.

**More than cursory choices:** Some otherwise fine preparation processes also do not do justice to the rite of marriage. Preparation does not involve detailed study and deep reflection, but only a cursory look at alternative texts and readings without much time or thought being given to their meaning. The non-verbal elements inevitably receive less attention than the texts.

**Suggestions:** How might the rite of marriage be more integrally and centrally involved in marriage preparation? This requires additional thought and study, but here are a few suggestions.  

**Rejoice and pray:** When a couple first approaches the parish with news of their engagement, they should be greeted with joy and with prayer. One of the final solemn blessings from the rite of marriage (suitably paraphrased where necessary) might be prayed over them. They might be taken into the church building in which they hope to celebrate their wedding. Finally, a copy of the vows and an outline of the marriage liturgy would be given to them. All this is worthwhile even if the couple’s plans fall through.

**Use liturgical prayers:** The marriage preparation process, which often includes several sessions, could begin and end with prayers taken from the rite of marriage. Some passages will need to be paraphrased; for example, “who today are united in marriage before your altar” could be replaced with something like "who hope to be united...." The opening prayers or the prefaces of the rite of marriage could be used at the beginning, and the final solemn blessings at the end.

**Use the scripture lessons:** One or more scripture lessons from the lectionary for marriage could be used to start sessions and provide inspiration for the topic under consideration. For example, 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:8 (Love will never pass away) could be used to initiate a consideration of spousal relationships. Genesis 2:18-24 (And they will be two in one flesh) or Mark 10:6-9 (What God

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3 It is for this reason that the liturgical commission of the Archdiocese of Edmonton prepared a videotape of a good Catholic marriage liturgy.

4 Suggestions along similar lines have been made by Kevin O'Driscoll, “The liturgy and preparation for marriage,” Liturgy (London) 2 (August-September 1979) 234-237
has united, no one must divide) could be the springboard for talking about sexuality. Appropriate liturgical prayers could also be used.

Reflection on the rite: One element of the rite of marriage itself would be the subject of reflection at each session: the vows, the rings, the nuptial blessing, etc. Couples would be asked to choose alternatives where this is appropriate. The three preparatory questions would appropriately be considered when a final assessment of readings for marriage is being made.

The rite as a faith inventory: The rite of marriage could also be used as a "faith inventory." One merely has to look at the text and dynamics of the liturgy and ask, "Do you really believe this?" "How do you express this in your lives now?" "How will you express this in your married lives?" God, the church, Christian lifestyle, relationship of spouses, parenthood, the Christian vision of life in general, all are included somewhere in the rite of marriage. What more is needed?

Obituary

Robert Hovda

One of the great liturgists of our time, Robert W. Hovda, died in his sleep February 5, at the age of 71. Perhaps his last visit to Canada was to participate in a Word and Table symposium of the United Church of Canada that was held in Vancouver in June 1991. His address there, on liturgy and social justice, was delivered with frail voice but clear mind and still vigorous spirit; it was received with strong applause.

Originally from the midwestern United States, he became a presbyter of the diocese of Fargo, North Dakota. In the early 1960s Hovda became an editor with The Liturgical Conference in Washington, D.C., and hence a leader in the liturgical movement of the time. Living Worship became his monthly newsletter to the church, always showing clear vision and deep concern for the liturgy and the church at large. As a prophet he always challenged, prodded, and pointed ahead to the future. His book, Strong, Loving and Wise. Presiding in Liturgy (Liturgical Conference 1976) has influenced many a presider. Later he wrote a regular column, "The Amen Corner," in Worship for a number of years.

Bob Hovda was deeply concerned about justice and about the mutual relationship of liturgy and social justice. He spoke and wrote passionately on this topic, and influenced many a younger liturgist.

A warm person and kind friend and mentor, he is now at rest. May he enjoy the heavenly liturgies.
First Communion and Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest

There is much discussion today regarding the following question: When a community is without a priest on a Sunday and therefore cannot celebrate the eucharist, what kind of liturgy should be (or might be) celebrated instead? The two most commonly proposed alternatives are first, a liturgy of the word (plus a prayer of thanksgiving) and second, the same type of liturgy plus holy communion. Those who comment on this situation are divided regarding the desirability of including communion (from reserved hosts, of course); debate on this point is sometimes intense.

The hesitations or objections expressed by those who are reluctant to include holy communion in Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest may have their roots, at least in part, in our present practices of first communion and preparation for first communion. Let us consider this possibility.

The problems associated with Sunday liturgies of the word plus holy communion when a priest is absent may be expressed in four distinct but closely related ways:

1. The act of communion becomes separated from the action of preparation of altar and gifts and the eucharistic prayer; hence the totality and integrity of the eucharistic action as a whole is disrupted.

2. "Eucharist" comes to mean the eucharistic bread and wine received in communion, rather than an action expressed in the entire liturgy of the eucharist.

3. The action that is the eucharistic prayer becomes primarily or exclusively that of the priest. It does not require the full, active, conscious and fruitful participation of the laity as well. The fact that we still can receive communion, even in the absence of a priest and hence of the fullness of the eucharist, makes us focus on the priest's role in the eucharistic prayer.

4. The real presence of Christ in the eucharistic bread and wine is inappropriately stressed to the detriment of Christ's presence in the assembly, the ordained minister, and the word.

How might these difficulties be related to our current practice of first communion and preparation for first communion?

1. The basic premise of first communion is that the act of communion may legitimately be separated from the rest of the eucharistic action for the first seven or so years of a baptized child's life. During this time the integrity of the eucharistic action is disrupted for the child.

This disruption is considered normal and acceptable, and everyone, children as well as adults, has gotten used to it. We know how to justify this practice, and many become alarmed when it is challenged.
2. As children approach their first communion, it often is communion rather than the eucharist as a whole that receives emphasis. Sometimes the phrase "first eucharist" is used instead of "first communion." This tends both to equate eucharist with the sacramental bread and wine, and also to move the focus of eucharistic attention from the totality of eucharist to one of its parts.

3. The many difficulties surrounding full participation of the entire assembly in the eucharistic prayer have been much discussed. To these may be added the fact that children are not offered any preparation for their participation in this central prayer of the assembly; instead, all the attention goes into preparation for the act of communion.

The emphasis in first communion preparation, on the child's own role in receiving communion, tends both to reduce emphasis on the child's role in the eucharistic prayer and to increase emphasis on the priest's role in confecting the eucharist in order to prepare it for the child's communion.

4. Failure to appreciate Christ's presence in the assembly and the word leads people to devalue Sunday liturgies that do not include communion. For them, Christ is not really present, or at least is not present in a "real" way if there is no communion.

As our communities face an increasing number of Sundays without a priest and hence without the eucharist, we need to consider whether our traditional approaches to first communion and preparation for first communion do not complicate our problem. It might be concluded that our experience of preparation for first communion has been extremely successful— but to some extent, misguided. □
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Her newest book, The Rituals of Dinner. The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities and Meaning of Table Manners (1991), is of considerable interest to liturgists inasmuch as it considers ritual and meals. Though her context and examples are largely non-liturgical (and her brief discussion of the eucharist is disappointing), liturgists will see many connections with the rituals of the church. This book makes a fascinating conversation-partner, even though liturgists will not agree with everything the author says. The following excerpt on ritual, from pages 17-27, is reprinted with the permission of the publishers, Harper Collins Publishers of Toronto. Emphases are in the original.

A North American father, presumably initiating his son, aged fifteen, into the world of adult business affairs, took him out to what the boy described as "a big dinner meeting." When the company was served spaghetti, the boy ate it with his hands. "I would slurp it up and put it in my mouth," he admitted. "My dad took some grief about it." The October 1985 newspaper article does not describe the response of the rest of the company. The son was sent to a boarding school to learn how to behave. "When we have spaghetti," he announced later, "you roll it up real tightly on your fork and put in your mouth with the fork."

What he described, after having learned it, is a dinner-table ritual – as automatic and unquestioned by every participant in it, as impossible to gainsay, as the artificial rules and preferences which every cannibal society has upheld. Practical reasons can be found for it, most of them having to do with neatness, cleanliness, and noiselessness. Because these three general principles are so warmly encouraged in our culture, having been arrived at, as ideals to be striven for, after centuries of struggle and constraint, we simply never doubt that everyone who is right-minded will find a spaghetti-eating companion disgusting and impossible to eat with where even one of them is lacking. Yet we know from paintings and early photographs of spaghetti-eaters in nineteenth-century Naples (where the modern version of spaghetti comes from) that their way of eating pasta was with their hands – not that the dish was likely to appear at a formal dinner. You had to raise the strings in your right hand, throw back your head, then lower the strings, dexterously, with dispatch, and without slurping (there are invariably "polite" and "rude" ways of eating), into your open mouth. The spaghetti in the pictures does not seem to have sauce on it.

Today, spaghetti-eating manners demand forks, and fistfuls of wet pasta are simply not acceptable at any "civilized" occasion. The son's ignorance cast a dark reflection upon his father: he had not been doing his duty, had not given
his child a proper “upbringing.” Even if the boy had not seen spaghetti before, he subsequently admitted that what he ought to have done was to look about him, watch how other people were eating this awkward food, and imitate them. In any case, the options were clear after this demonstration of ineptitude: either the boy learned his table manners, or he would not be asked to a “big dinner meeting” again, by anyone who had heard of his unfinished education.

He had offended not only against modern proprieties that limit the use of hands while eating, but also against ritual: he had done something unexpected. Ritual is action frequently repeated, in a form largely laid down in advance; it aims to get those actions right. Everyone present knows what should happen, and notices when it does not. Dinner too is habitual, and aims at order and communication, at satisfying both the appetite of the diners and their expectations as to how everybody present should behave. In this sense, a meal can be thought of as a ritual and a work of art, with limits laid down, desires aroused and fulfilled, enticements, variety, patterning, and plot. As in a work of art, not only the overall form but also the details matter intensely.

This pernicketiness has some of its basis in biology. Human beings, like animals, are extremely sensitive to small signs, to tiny noises in the night, to small discrepancies in the customary layout of their environment, for these may be the only warnings received before a hidden danger strikes. Alertness and sensitivity are normally essential for survival, especially in the wild. But being human, and depending as we do on knowing our way round our complex and perilous social world, it is entirely necessary to us that we should also react instinctively to very small signs given by other people in social contexts. No one in the group might even be conscious that such a sign has been given. But those of us with the best-attuned social sense will instantly and instinctively “know” what is afoot. Every person must be careful – or rather, drilled from an early age until automatically disposed – not only to notice signs, but also to provide them, as a reassurance that this person is what other members of the group hope he or she is; that this individual wishes to join in, play the game, and be civil.

It is equally understandable that mixing with people whose rituals differ from our own can be very trying. Innumerable travellers’ tales involve the visiting hero being offered some horrendous “delicacy” which he has either to eat, or risk offending his host. But we can be put out just because some foreigner raises his eyebrows to mean yes, or asks us how much money we make, or stalks off in a rage because we folded our arms or failed to take our hands out of our pockets. The really dramatic “ethnic” behavior we consciously apprehend at once, and so can “make allowances” for; everyone has heard of the chances of having to eat an eyeball, or smash glasses after the toast. But the smaller less noticeable signs can catch us off our guard and rob us more insidiously of our sense of security. Most of the picturesque details that strike travellers as weird have to do with table manners. Tourists quite commonly visit marvels as mighty as the Pyramids of Egypt but come home really jolted by, and unable to forget, the Egyptian manner of pouring tea into a glass until it slops into the saucer. When eating and drinking we are particularly sensitive and vigilant, and immediately react to the slightest deviation from what we have learned to regard as the proprieties.

Ritual, being both expected behavior and correct, is a series of actions constantly repeated. Repetitiveness serves the meaning being expressed, for if the pattern is at least generally constant we can concentrate on the message embodied in the performance. (We do not have to think how to handle our knife and fork
every time we are served, but can set to and enjoy the steak, while demonstrating effortless restraint and competence, and showing our desire to be communicative, sharing companions.) We also notice the slight intentional variations which always occur in ritual, and are therefore thrown into relief. (What fun, and how formally informal, to be served artichokes and be allowed to use our hands.) But this does not entirely account for our need constantly to repeat actions ritually. The repetition soothes us, apparently, in and by itself — inducing what James Joyce called "those here-we-are-again gaieties." Rituals survive because people want them to do so; they "work." Culture, not instinct, determines a good deal of what we do. Human beings rejoice in the action of patterning, in itself.

There is no etymological connection whatever between the words "man" (or "woman" or "human") and "manners," but speakers of English have nonetheless found the presence of that common syllable fascinating. "Meat feeds, cloth cleeds, but manners make the man," went a sixteenth-century jingle: what you eat and what you wear are less important than how you do both. In our own time, Mae West assures us:

It's not what I share but the way that I share it —
That's all, brother, that's all.

The problem is: how much of the way we are is culture, and how much is not ours to control?

Ever since humankind began thinking (the word or syllable "man" very possibly comes from a root word meaning "think"), at any rate since the age of the earliest cave paintings, we have speculated and worried about the difference between ourselves and animals. It has always been intensely important for us to grasp this difference as far as we are able to do so, especially since we cannot help noticing how much like animals we are. For animals have no culture in the human sense; animals are therefore not, as human beings are, free from some of the tyranny of natural law. Nothing could be more revealing about twentieth-century preoccupations and anxieties than the latest way of posing this forty-thousand-year-old problem. We now tend to ask not "How are people different from animals?" but "In what ways are we the same?" We are so terrified of our own power, our own clear difference from animals, that we desperately seek ways to assure ourselves of our affiliation with the rest of creation. We are trying to remind ourselves, among other things, how much we belong; and struggling to restrain our greed and control our power, which we now see as threatening the earth and everything living on it. We are especially fascinated to find correspondences in animals, not only with our physical nature and biological needs, but with our social behavior as well.

It was with considerable excitement, therefore, that a longing to repeat a successful scenario was reputedly found among monkeys living on Koshiba Islet in Japan. One day in 1953 a year-and-a-half-old female ape called lmo appears to have deeply impressed her fellows (and the watching Japanese scientists) by washing her sweet potato in water before she ate it. She repeated this action whenever she subsequently ate. She would hold the potato under the water with one hand and brush it, presumably trying to get the mud off, with the other. Other monkeys imitated her. The fashion spread, mainly among her kin and playmates. Within four or five years, potato-washing before eating had become de rigueur among most monkeys aged two to seven, and among some adults as well. All monkeys over five who took up washing potatoes were females.
Starting in 1958, a tradition had begun, as these females passed on potato-washing by example to their children. The salt taste on potatoes dipped in sea water seems to have resulted in a variant: some monkeys began dipping their potatoes in salt water in between bites; others kept on simply washing them first. It certainly is tempting to detect here not only an ability in a group of monkeys to adopt improvements once they have been discovered by a particularly gifted member, but also an obsessive delight in drama that “works,” and a love of sticking to “the way it’s done,” even without the conscious perception of material benefits. We are reminded of human rituals, and the satisfactions we find in the constant re-enactment of routines, experiencing them as not merely useful but pleasantly repeatable.

Another of the reasons for “manners” is precisely that they pressure people to behave in a predictable fashion. When we all “know what to do” on a given occasion – say at a wedding, or a death – we are all enabled by convention to interrelate, to play our often pre-ordained roles, just where having to make choices and think up scenarios would be most difficult and exhausting. This is why rules of politeness tend to cluster round moments of transition, of meeting others, making decisions, conferring, parting, commemorating. Rituals are there to make difficult passages easier. They include the gestures – waving, nodding, smiling, speaking set phrases – which daily smooth our meetings with other people; the attitudes and postures we adopt when standing or sitting in the presence of others, especially when we are talking to them; the muttering of “excuse me” when interrupting others or squeezing past them. Full-dress celebrations of coming together, of marking transitions and recollections, almost always require food, with all the ritual politeness implied in dining – the proof that we all know how eating should be managed. We eat whenever life becomes dramatic: at weddings, birthdays, funerals, at parting and at welcoming home, or at any moment which a group decides is worthy of remark. Festivals and feasts are solemn or holy days; they are so regularly celebrated by people meeting for meals that “having a feast” has actually come to mean “eating a lot.”

Families meet for meals too; the custom goes back 2 million years, to the daily return of protohominid hunters and foragers to divide food up with their fellows – whom they have usually, but by no means always, decided they would not eat. The extent to which we demand meals at regular times, mostly giving them specific names each with their own connotations (breakfast, lunch, supper), is as arbitrary as it can be solemnly binding. We even develop physical demands for food when food is “due”; the stomach contractions we experience at midday or in the evening, often quite painful ones, which signal mealtimes and which we call “hunger,” are strictly speaking nothing of the kind. They are the result of habit and bodily rhythm only, and they result from a culturally induced custom of eating regular meals. It is often part of a society’s manners code never to eat between meals, so that not only the meals but also the spaces between them are controlled. This turns every shared family dinner into a mini-feast or festival, so that it can, like a feast, celebrate both the interconnectedness and the self-control of the group’s members. Family dinners are rituals too, even though the typical “plot” of a family meal might include the device of lowering the level of formality as compared with other ritual occasions.

The predictability of manners (if this is happening, then we must all do that) makes us interlock with each other, all act in concert. We connect, in addition, with events, dates, shared emotions, kinship and group ties, the life cycle, the world in general. Conventions, as the word suggests, are attitudes and pat-
terns of behaviour we have in common: we "come together" (as in a business or political "convention") in accepting them, or at least in knowing what they are, as everybody else does – everybody, that is, with whom we are accustomed to associate. It is an extremely complex and time-consuming business, making all these customary links and celebrating all this understanding. But if we stop celebrating, we also soon cease to understand; the price for not taking the time and the trouble is loss of communication. And conversely, the moment communication is lost, "manners" drop away. Li Chi, the Chinese Book of Rites, compiled in the first century A.D., warns that "the ruin of states, the destruction of families, and the perishing of individuals are always preceded by their abandonment of the rules of propriety."

Today, whatever we eat is enormously controlled and limited by rules – we demand that it be so – and the conditions under which we live make food supplies necessarily impossible without artifice. We also, even when alone, keep rules of bodily propriety that are as strict as they are largely unconscious; other people are present to us in that they have formed our habits. And few of us willingly eat always alone. Food is still our ritual relaxation (a "break" in the working day), our chance to choose companions and talk to them, the excuse to recreate our humanity as well as our strength, and to renew our relationships.

Ritual is an extension of solidarity. Our own society is not one homogeneous mass: individuals in it belong not only to it and to their families, but often, in addition, to groups of people chosen for various reasons; one person may belong to many such groups. Each of these groups must "define" itself (literally, "place a boundary round" itself), or cease to exist as a group; it must declare itself to be both a single entity and marked off from the rest. Definitional enactment of togetherness and difference may include clothing style, bodily marking such as shaven heads or wild locks, and "in" language; nothing is as powerful, however, as ritual performance. People get together and enact what they hold in common. They might speak their agreement as part of the occasion, but more satisfactory still is the doing of an action together. The actual taking part establishes identity. It is obvious why the action of eating together – of partaking in a meal – suggests itself so immediately. An action comprises not only what is done, but how: the two are indissociable in the course of the action's performance. In ritual behaviour, the "how" as well as the "what" of the matter have been laid down in advance. The individual performs, but the group's conventions have decided the sequence, the spatial layout, and the manner. Table manners are rituals because they are the way in which it is commonly agreed that eating should be performed.

There is another kind of solidarity expressed by ritual, and this it shares with language. Language is a cultural construct inherited from the past. If we wish to speak and be understood, we have no choice but to learn the linguistic system. This necessity forces us to enter into relationship – whether we like it or not – with the past: we need, and willingly accept, the constraints of pre-ordained rules. Language is not only for communication with people our own age; it is something we have in common with people older than us, who may have spoken our language before we were born. (Writing and reading have been invented to permit the extension of this continuity into the past and the future.) When we are young, older people occur the field; they are in charge and in power. We must learn their language in order to meet and communicate with them, and if we want one day to occupy their place. We must, similarly, learn their manners if we want to be asked to dinner by them.
The group which decides the "how" of ritual is composed not only of the present participants but also of the dead, insofar as we are prepared to entertain the ideas of people no longer living. Ritual is about *lasting* (which is one reason why ritual occasions are constantly repeated). Because it is pre-ordained, it always expresses order, and it predicts endurance; it links the present with the past, and it hopes also to link the present with the future. Ritual can be used, in its "continuity" function, to keep things going when energy flags and the members in a group cannot maintain their experience at the pitch they would like. People often say that "going through the motions" can help to remind them of past, more successful, experiences. It is possible to look about and see other people apparently rising to the occasion – so perhaps those less inspired might manage, too. Ritual can not only raise the emotional tone of the proceedings, but also lower it if necessary: for instance, ritual politeness can prevent rage from boiling over into action.

But what about ritual that is merely empty form? Animals can "pretend," as a puppy does when playing with a ball instead of pursuing prey; but animals can never match the human capacity for performing a ritual without intending what it says. Ritual becomes meaningless to us, and finally destructive, if it is used for deception. Jesus participated in many social and religious rituals and objected to bad manners. He nevertheless condemned the false pretences to purity of soul which were expressed, for example, by pre-dinner ablutions, and pointed to Isaiah's insight that God detests "lip-service" that covers up the truth. Self-aggrandizing ritual was to be replaced by actions expressing real love and humility: where rituals impeded us, they must be changed.

In our own time, cataclysmic social revolutions have made large numbers of rules and conventions redundant, and many of them have not yet been replaced with new signs and voluntary constraints that are broadly recognized and accepted. This is a time of transition, when old manners are dying and new ones are still being forged. A good many of our uncertainties, discomforts, and disagreements stem from this state of flux. Sometimes we hold the terrifying conviction that the social fabric is breaking up altogether, and that human life is becoming brutish and ugly because of a general backsliding from previous social agreements that everyone should habitually behave with consideration for others. At other times a reaction against the social rituals of our own recent past leads us to lump all manners together as empty forms, to be rejected on principle. There is a shying away from elaboration, a preference for the bare bones of everything. We often seem, for instance, to prefer listening to incoherent speakers than to articulate ones, feeling that incoherence is "straight from the heart" while fluency must be a trick, or at least a method of hiding something. Apologies have almost gone out of style because they are hard to make, and being required by others to make them easily convinces us that they are merely insincere.

We do cling to the (largely unexamined) ideal that we should strive to be "natural." Spontaneity seems to be annihilated by anything resembling ritual: how can you be "natural" and still behave in predictable, because pre-ordained, patterns? (People rarely think of animal rituals, which are natural yet invariable, in this context.) We are also deceived, by our desire to reject ritual, into thinking that we are "freely choosing," from within each individual self, to act in ways that are often in fact decided in advance by cultural forces, or by unrecognized but nevertheless real social structures. Such structures, indeed, often govern us precisely insofar as we are unconscious of their existence.
The conventional prejudice against ritual assumes that rituals never change, and that individuals can have no influence upon ritual forms. In fact, individuals are just as important to ritual performance as the group and the rules are. It is only the individual who can personally mean what is going on. Each participant uses that ritual, plays with it, rings changes on it, subtly brings it into line with his or her present needs. Ritual is a process; it guides, but it also serves, and is guided. People do influence ritual — and they do so just because human rituals are not “natural.” We made them, so we can adapt them to our present requirement. We can also bend the rules if necessary: ritual codes that last always make allowance for circumstance.

The fact is that our personalities are necessarily both individual and social, “natural” and “cultural”: these aspects of us can be discussed separately, but they cannot exist alone. The life of the social and cultural “parts” of us is communication with others, and this is achieved and enhanced by means of shared patterns, routines, systems of signals, in a word the performance — whether conscious or not — of rituals. (Even a hermit is a socially conditioned being. Hermits react to society by deliberately leaving it. They normally live alone, and act differently, in ways their societies can “read” and understand.)

It might well seem to us at times, when we are disheartened by spectacles of human error and iniquity, that “culture” is a thoroughly bad thing; that we should stick with plain sex and nutrients and try to get over the rest. But as long as we live in society, purely physical and individual needs and desires must be mediated by rituals and manners. Social forms become part of the environment; society cannot exist without them. None of us would want to live “by bread alone,” even if it were possible. We are forced to create culture just because we are ourselves the building blocks of society. But that very condition makes society a human construct: if its manners deteriorate or become inappropriate, they can conceivably be changed, just because we ourselves collectively make and live by them. Therein lies our freedom. □
**Bow your Heads**

The **concluding rites** of the eucharistic liturgy consist of the announcements (optional), the presider’s greeting to the people, the blessing, and the dismissal. (The concluding song, which is so familiar to us, is optional and in fact it is not mentioned either in the Sacramentary or in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal.)

**For the blessing**, the Sacramentary presents three options: the simple blessing, the solemn blessing, and the prayer over the people. The texts of the solemn blessings and prayers over the people are found in two appendices that follow the Order of Mass.

- The simple blessing is just the trinitarian formula, "May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen."

- The solemn blessing contains three "verses" said by the presider, each of which is concluded by a congregational "Amen". The blessing concludes with the simple trinitarian formula.

- The prayers over the people consist of a collect said by the presbyter, to which the people respond "Amen". It concludes with the simple trinitarian formula, which makes these prayers another kind of blessing.

**The solemn blessings** and prayers over the people typically are preceded by the words, "Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing". Whereas the blessings and prayers themselves are said by the presbyter, "Bow your heads..." is said by the deacon; only in the absence of a deacon is it said by the priest. This text is described as an “invitation”.

**This article** is concerned with the words, “Bow your heads....” and the rubrics that accompany them. As is so often the case, something that looks so simple at first turns out, upon further reflection and study, to be somewhat complex.

The phrase, “Bow your heads...” raises a number of questions:

- What is the history of this text?

- Are these words and their rubrics presented in the Sacramentary in the clearest possible way?

- How does the English text compare with the Latin original?

- What is the literary genre of these words?

- Are they optional or required?

- Why do such words precede the solemn blessing and prayer over the people but not the simple blessing?

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An exception is solemn blessing no. 11, which has only one verse and Amen.
• What does it mean that these words seem to indicate a preferred posture for the solemn blessing and prayer over the people?

• Might some other posture better accompany the solemn blessing and prayer over the people?

History

Origins: Where does the diaconal exhortation, “Bow your heads and pray for God’s blessing” come from? There are several historical precedents.2

The earliest record for such a text comes from the late fourth century writing called the Apostolic Constitutions. At the end of the eucharistic liturgy the deacon says, “Bow your heads before God, through his Christ, and receive the blessing.” The bishop then prays a blessing; finally, the deacon pronounces the dismissal.3

In the early medieval West, a blessing called the prayer over the people followed the prayer after communion. It was preceded by a call from the deacon, “Bow down your heads before God” (Humiliate capita vestra Deo). In the course of time these prayers were said less and less often; in our pre-Vatican II liturgy they were used only on the weekdays of Lent. The call to “bow” was preceded by “Let us pray.”

Another medieval practice, especially in the Gallican and Visogothic liturgies, was a blessing given by the bishop after the Lord’s Prayer and before communion.4 These began with the deacon saying, “Bow for the blessing (or a blessing)” (Humilitate vos ad benedictionem). The people responded with “Thanks be to God,” and the bishop then prayed blessings of the sort we now know as the solemn blessings. These somewhat elaborate blessings later spread to the Roman rite and often were used at the end of the liturgy, as the bishop processed from the altar to the sacristy.

Our contemporary liturgy has recovered both the solemn blessings (now shared by bishop and presbyter) and the prayers over the people. The diaconal exhortation that preceded both of these, “Bow your heads...” has also been retained, at least as an option.

Presentation

Two versions: In the English-language Sacramentary, the words, “Bow your heads...” appear in two places.


3 See Lucien Deiss, Springtime of the Liturgy. Liturgical Texts of the First Four Centuries (Collegeville: Liturgical Press 1979), 240

4 See Edmund Moeller, ed. Corpus Benedictionum Pontificioalium (Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, CLXII) (Turnhold: Brepols 1961), vii-viii
• The full and definitive text and rubrics is repeated twice, at the beginning of each of the two appendices containing the solemn blessings and the prayers over the people (pages 625 and 636 of the 1983 Canadian edition.)

• An abbreviated version is found within the concluding rite of the Order of Mass, but only when the solemn blessing is mentioned (page 623).

Two problems appear immediately.

• First, though this text is intended to be applied to both the solemn blessing and prayer over the people (according to the appendices), in the Order of Mass it is printed in the first case and not in the second.

• Second, the definitive rubrics in the appendices indicate that it is an option (see below); this is not indicated at all when it is printed in the Order of Mass.

Simple blessings: It may be noted that the Latin, French, German, and Spanish sacramentaries 5 give only the simple blessing within the Order of Mass, and refer to the appendices for all texts and rubrics having to do with the solemn blessings and prayers over the people.

Naming all three options for the blessing within the Order of Mass in the English Sacramentary clearly is an attempt to be helpful to the deacon/priest. However, the priest/deacon may well be led to think that the texts and rubrics given in the Order of Mass are complete, and hence not pay close attention to the fuller rubrics given in the appendices or think about the fact that they differ in some respect from those in the Order of Mass.

English and Latin Texts

Two differences: The English version of the text, "Bow your heads and pray for God’s blessing," differs from the Latin original in two significant ways. Neither, “your heads” nor “pray for God’s” appear in the Latin, which is simply “Bow for the (or ‘a’) blessing” (Inclinate vos ad benedictionem).

The Spanish version of the Sacramentary gives two versions of this text: Inclinaos para la bendicion (for the solemn blessings), and Inclinaos para recibir la bendicion (for the prayers over the people). The French version adds “brothers and sisters” as a prefix: Freres et soeurs, inclinez-vous pour la bénédiction. In marked contrast, the German text says “We kneel down for the blessing” (Wir knien nieder zum Segen).

Before Vatican II: It seems likely that the pre-Vatican II “invitation” to the prayers over the people, Oremus. Humilitate capita vestra Deo, influenced our present English version. It refers explicitly to “your heads” (capita vestra). In addition, it began with “Let us pray,” which seems to be integrated into our present text as “pray for”. Finally, it names God.

5 Missale Romanum, editio typica altera (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1975)
Missel Romain (Tournai: Desclée 1977)
Messbuch (Einsiedeln and Koln: Benziger and others 1984)
Misal de la Comunidad, 7th ed. (Madrid: Ed. Madova and others 1981)
Literary Genre

**Invitation:** In the English Sacramentary, the words "Bow your heads..." is called an "invitation"; this is also true of the French (invitation), Spanish (invitación) and German (Einladung) versions.

**Invitatory:** The Latin text, however, does not use the usual word for invitation, invitationem. Instead it speaks of the invitatorium, more commonly translated into English as "invitatory," a term usually associated with the antiphon and psalm with which the liturgy of the hours begins each day. The Latin term invitatorium is not used elsewhere in the Missale Romanum nor is it to be found in the Latin text of the General Instruction.

**Presbyteral invitations:** The most common type of liturgical "invitation" is spoken by the presbyter, and uses a verb in the third person plural and in the subjunctive mood. A well-known example is "let us pray".

**Diaconal directions:** Deacons, in contrast, often give directions to the people and in doing so use verbs in the imperative, for example, "Go in peace" and "Offer each other the peace". We have not yet established an agreed-on English word for this kind of liturgical speech; sometimes it is called a diaconal exhortation. Perhaps the use of invitatorium indicates some difficulty in naming this type of speech in Latin as well. Though "Bow your heads..." serves the function of inviting — or preparing — people for the blessing, it is not really an invitation in its literary form.

An Option?

The Latin Missale Romanum presents "Inclinate ad benedictionem" as one of three options.

- The text we have been considering, "Bow your heads..."
- Another equivalent text
- No text at all.

The rubric reads, "The deacon...may say..." (diaconus...dicere potest invitatorium). It then adds, "Another form of invitation may be used" (vel alis verbis expressum).

The English Sacramentary gives only two options at the beginning of the appendices in which the solemn blessings and prayers over the people are found: "Bow your heads..." or "Another form of invitation may be used." However, within the presentation of the Order of Mass itself, only one option is given, "Bow your heads...."

The three options of the Latin text are honored in a footnote to the present Canadian edition of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (n. 124, reply

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*Used, for example, in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), nn. 53, 56a, 136

*This is the literal translation of the Latin Offerte vobis pacem. Because this sounds so abrupt in English it has been softened to "Let us offer each other the sign of peace".

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to query) "The rubric at the beginning of this part of the Missal says: '...may give the invitation: Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing'.... Therefore the deacon or the priest celebrant is at liberty to use this invitation, to put it in different words, or to omit it altogether."

In addition the Ceremonial of Bishops says, "One of the deacons may give the invitation 'Bow your heads' or use similar words."  

The French missal retains all three options (Le diacre...peut dire...), the German gives two (like the English), whereas the Spanish gives only one, the text in question.

An alternative text: Though the Latin, English, French and German Sacramentaries refer to the possible use of an alternative text, only the French version actually makes a suggestion in this regard. It says, par exemple: 'Recevez la bénéédiction de la part du Seigneur.' It is of interest that this "equivalent phrase" does not refer to any posture.

The range of options given in the Latin missal is reflected in the variety of practices presented in the Roman Book of Blessings. First, no "invitation" is ever suggested for simple blessings. However, when the blessing text is of the "solemn" form (three verses, each followed by Amen, with or without a trinitarian formula at the end), the following practices are used:

- A rubric states, "In the following or similar words, the assisting deacon invites those present to prepare for the blessing." The following is then printed as a regular liturgical text: "Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing." (three cases)
- The rubric states: "In the following or similar words, the assisting deacon may then invite the people to receive the blessing. 'Bow your heads....'" (five cases)
- The rubric states, "After the invitation, 'Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing,' or something similar is said," [and the minister then says the blessing]. (four cases)
- No such text or rubric is given at all (twenty-two cases).

One way to express the optional character of this rubric would be the following: The deacon may say, in these or similar words, "Bow your heads..."

Why Does Such a Text Not Accompany the Simple Blessing?

Historical basis: It seems likely that the "Bow your heads..." precedes the solemn blessing and prayer over the people, but not the simple blessing, simply for historical reasons. That is, our pre-Vatican II Mass liturgy, which contained the simple blessing, did not use this "invitation". In contrast, both the medieval solemn blessings and the medieval and pre-Vatican II prayers over the people, did begin with "Bow your heads...." These traditions have been retained when all three traditions were incorporated into the present Sacramentary.

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8 Ceremonial of Bishops (Collegeville: Liturgical Press 1989), nn. 169-1126
Solemnity: In addition, it may be considered appropriate to use a more solemn "invitation" for the longer and more elaborate blessings.

But why is this "invitation" an option? Perhaps it was realized that such an "invitation," borrowed as it is from an earlier period, may not always be appropriate today.

Why a Special Posture?

Postures in history: In his history of the eucharistic liturgy, Joseph Jungmann tells us that postures adopted for different parts of the mass have varied widely in the course of time. At some periods the postures of the presider and those of the people have been essentially identical. At other times the people bowed for most of the prayers (not just the blessing), while the presider stood upright; sometimes they knelt much of the time, while the presider stood. Sitting down was uncommon until the late middle ages; prior to that people stood (in earlier periods) or knelt (later).¹⁰

In the contemporary eucharistic liturgy people generally sit for the readings, homily and after communion, and stand for most of the rest of the liturgy. The rubrics indicate the following special postures for the people, in addition to our "Bow your heads...." ¹¹

• Nicene Creed: All bow at the words, "by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man." ¹²

• Nicene Creed: All genuflect at the words, "and he became man" on Christmas and the Annunciation of Our Lord. ¹³

• Eucharistic prayer: [The people] should kneel at the consecration unless prevented by the lack of space, the number of people present, or some other good reason. ¹⁴

• Communion: The communicants approach, make the proper reverence, and stand in front of the [minister]. ¹⁵

• In cases where kneeling is not possible, a deep bow and a respectful bearing are signs of the reverence and adoration to be shown at the time of the consecration and communion. ¹⁶

Actual practice varies widely. In the writer's experience, few bow during the Nicene Creed. Of course, in Canada the Apostles' Creed is often used, and it has no rubric about bowing. Certainly all will genuflect on Christmas and the Annunciation, if the Nicene Creed is used and if the presider remembers this rubric. Posture during the eucharistic prayer in general, and the consecration

¹⁰ Jungmann, Mass of the Roman Rite, vol. 1, 239-243
¹¹ Other special postures are indicated for the presbyter and deacon, e.g., GIRM 232-234
¹² Sacramentary; GIRM 234b, Reply to query
¹³ GIRM 234b, Reply to query
¹⁴ GIRM 21
¹⁵ GIRM 244c, 245b, 246b, 247b
¹⁶ GIRM 21, Reply to query 3
in particular, varies widely, and is the subject of considerable difference of opinion. What a "proper reverence" is before communion has not been officially defined, and this rubric seems generally to be ignored. The church here and around the world is in the process of discerning postures that are appropriate for their culture and for the different parts of the liturgy. Additional and sensitive discussion is needed on this point.

With respect to "Bow your heads...", recall that the German Messbuch suggests kneeling as an alternative to bowing. 17

Some Other Posture?

Using our imagination: Despite a certain amount of confusion and inconsistency regarding "Bow your heads..." as indicated above, this "invitation" may serve to stimulate our imagination. What posture(s) or gesture(s) might be especially suitable for a solemn blessing?

Four starting places may be considered.

• General principles regarding posture that are referred to in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal.

• Basic principles of the contemporary liturgy.

• The nature of the concluding rites of the eucharistic liturgy.

• The nature of liturgical blessings.

The General Instruction states:

Actions and postures... [should] correspond to the meaning and character of each part of the celebration. 18

Clearly people should express their faith, devotion, and reverence not only by words but also by gestures and posture. 19

Full participation: As always, we need to keep in mind the preeminent principle of the contemporary liturgical renewal, "full, conscious, and active participation". 20 In addition, all are to "take part knowingly, actively, and fruitfully." 21 Finally, "liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the church". 22

The concluding rites: Next, the solemn blessings and prayers over the people are to be considered in the light of the nature and purpose of the concluding rites of which they are a part. These rites follow the prayer after communion, which "petitions for the effects of the mystery just celebrated," 23 that is, it speaks of the

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17 In practice, at least some German parishes in Canada bow instead of kneel.
18 GIRM 21
19 GIRM 234, Reply to query
20 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (CSL) 14
21 CSL 14
22 CSL 26
23 GIRM 56k
consequences of celebrating the eucharist for our lives after the liturgy is over. The announcements, viewed theologically, also have to do with the life of the eucharistic community in the days to come. The dismissal "sends each member back to doing good works, while praising and blessing the Lord." 24

And daily life: In this context, then, we will see the blessings as speaking of our lives – as individuals and as a local church community – in the week following the Sunday or festal eucharist. They are part of our going forth to witness to the good news of Jesus Christ; they are acts of commissioning to ministry in Christ’s name. They strengthen us, give us hope, and assure us of God’s presence.

Blessings: Finally, we need to consider the nature of blessings in general. The General Instruction says nothing about this; however, the introduction to the Roman Book of Blessings is quite eloquent. To quote merely a few statements: “Blessings are signs of God’s merciful love; gifts of God; a promise of divine help; a proclamation of God’s favor; a reassurance of God’s faithfulness to the covenant, praise for God’s goodness and mercy. They contribute to God’s praise and glory and serve to better God’s people. Blessings move us to praise, adoration, thanksgiving, and works of charity; to spread the fruits of the Spirit in order to bring God’s healing blessings to the world; to honor God with our lips; to become before the world a sign and sacrament of divine blessings; to glorify God for his gifts; to declare and manifest the newness of life of Christ.” 25

What conclusions might be drawn from all of this? Certainly bowing is one traditional expression of reverence. As considered previously in these pages, however, we need to re-think the whole question of the nature and expression of reverence in light of the nature and principles of the contemporary liturgy. 26

A communal action: Bowing might seem to diminish the communal nature of the liturgy, inasmuch as everyone looks down, away from the presider, altar and chair, and other members of the assembly. It might also seem to diminish full participation, as it seems awkward to acclaim the Amen’s in this position, especially if they are sung. It might also be seen to be a posture of passivity rather than of active participation. Today, rather than speaking of “receiving” a blessing, the Book of Blessings for example speaks of “celebrating” a blessing. The minister no longer “gives” the blessing, but “presides” at the blessing. Finally, bowing also has overtones of penitence and submission.

Standing upright: The special blessings at the conclusion of the eucharistic liturgy would seem to call for an attitude of joy and gladness, and proud and eager acceptance of responsibility for witness and ministry. They show our worth and dignity. An upright posture seems appropriate, then, with eyes on all (or many) of the symbols of Christ’s presence: assembly, ordained minister, cross, altar, perhaps book as well. Outstretched or upraised arms might also seem appropriate.

24 GIRM 57b
25 Book of Blessings, xxiii-xxvi
Inclusive Language in Latin Liturgical Texts

Inclusive language with respect to women is language that includes women and does not exclude them; that recognizes women and does not conceal them; that names women correctly and does not disguise them; that facilitates the participation of women and does not hinder or prevent their participation. This kind of language is endorsed and encouraged by the Roman Catholic bishops of Canada.

A modern issue? We tend to think of inclusive language as a modern issue that did not trouble previous generations. But is this so?

Generic inclusivity: Furthermore, we know that the liturgical prayers of yesteryear were in Latin, and that the Latin language is characterized by a system of grammatical gender in which masculine forms are intended to include women as well as men. We call this generic or implicit inclusivity. In many Latin liturgical prayers, inclusivity was indeed expressed in this generic or implicit way.

Explicit inclusivity: There is a significant body of Latin liturgical texts, however, which go beyond generic inclusivity to name women as well as men in an explicit way. Because these go beyond the minimum rules of Latin grammar, they are especially noteworthy. Some of these texts are pointed out here.

Orate, Fratres

Addressed to fellow priests: In his history of the eucharistic liturgy, Joseph Jungmann tells us that since the eighth century the priest, after receiving the gifts, "turned around and, stretching out his arms, asked the other priests to pray for him." From the ninth century, however, this petition was addressed to the people and not just to his fellow clergy. When addressed to priests, it was quite appropriate for this text to be worded, Orate, fratres – pray, brothers (brethren). ¹

Addressed to all: Jungmann goes on to tell us, however, that in the later period this text was most commonly worded, Orate, fratres et sorores – pray, brothers and sisters. This explicit reference to women as well as men is found in many manuscripts from England, France, The Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and occasionally also in Italian and Hungarian manuscripts. Jungmann explains, "the unrestricted addition of sorores corroborates the belief that the medieval liturgists were in agreement with us in extending the word to include everyone, men and women."

Fratres alone remained the rule in monasteries of men, and in many Italian and Spanish manuscripts. Jungmann explains, “The present-day wording of the formulas used by the priest [with fratres only] first appears in Italian Mass ordines of the twelfth century and after.”

In German: It may be added that the earliest translation of the ordinary of the mass into German used Schwestern (sisters), based on a Latin version which read, Orate, fratres et sorores. ²

Roman Canon

The commemoration of the living in the Roman Canon is explicitly inclusive: Memento, Domine, famulorum famularumque tuarum (literally, Be mindful, O Lord of your male servants and your female servants; the latter part used to be translated, “your servants and handmaids”). This is also true of the commemoration of the dead: Memento etiam, Domine, famulorum famularumque tuarum. The commemoration of the living has probably been a part of the Roman Canon since the time of Pope Innocent I (early fifth century). ³ The commemoration of the dead is more recent, dating (in different manuscripts) between the ninth and eleventh centuries. These texts remain in the version of the Roman Canon included in the present Missale Romanum of 1970.

Prayers for the Dead

Women and men: Prayers in the plural for all the dead or simply for more than one dead person have explicitly named women as well as men for many centuries. The Vatican Gelasian sacramentary (seventh century)⁴ and its successors have used the explicitly inclusive form, animabus famulorum famularumque tuarum (the souls of your servants and handmaids, or male servants and female servants) consistently in plural prayers for the dead. Other equivalent forms were also used. This was true of the Gregorian sacramentary, many other medieval sacramentaries and missals, and the missal of 1570, used down to 1969.

The Missale Romanum of 1970 has discontinued this usage and now refers to the dead in the plural using masculine grammatical forms such as famulos tuos and familis tuis. The Latin funeral rite, Ordo Exsequiarum, however, uses the older formula in at least two places (numbers 200 and 201).

Other Inclusive Texts

Still in use: The present Missale Romanum of 1970 still uses the explicitly inclusive formulas famulorum famularumque tuarum twice outside of the Roman Canon and texts intended to be interpolated into that eucharistic prayer.

⁴ Leo Cunibert Mohlbert, with Leo Eizenhofer and Petrus Siffrin, eds., Liber Sacramentorum Romanae Aeclesiae Ordinis Anni Circuli (Roma: Herder 1960)
Sisters and brothers: Latin prayers, which are of course addressed to God, usually refer to human persons as "your servants," that is, "God's servants." A few examples have been identified, however, in which persons are also referred to in relation to those who are saying the prayer. These say, fratribus et sororibus nostris — our brothers and sisters. Such formulas are found in the prayers for the sick and for the dead in the Rheinau sacramentary, the Missale Gothicum, the sacramentaries of Fulda and of Monza, and the Bobbio Missal.

Feminine Grammatical Forms

Emending the text: It is also interesting to note that one manuscript of the Sarum Missal (widely used in medieval England) is reported to contain feminine grammatical forms that have been written above the "official" masculine forms." Thus "amī" is written above the "umī's" in famulum tuum, and hanc and quam are written above hunc and quem. This occurs in the order of visiting (and anointing) the sick and in some prayers for the dead. One wonders if this manuscript had been used in a community of religious women.

Conclusion

A long history: Most Latin liturgical prayers were implicitly or generically inclusive in that masculine grammatical forms were intended to include women as well as men. The examples given here, however, show that a small but significant body of texts were explicitly inclusive in that they actually named women as well as men. One would like to know more about why people used such explicitly inclusive language in some cases and why it was not used in other cases. Unfortunately, such information is now hidden from us.

We may, however, draw the following conclusions:

• The tradition of Latin liturgical prayer clearly did not oppose explicitly inclusive language.

• Explicitly inclusive language has been used in the liturgy for a long time: probably since the fifth century.

• Explicitly inclusive language has been used in the most central prayer of the church: the eucharistic prayer.

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Prayers for Pentecost

Readers are invited to reflect prayerfully on the prayers and readings for the great feast of Pentecost.

Collects

Almighty and everliving God,
you fulfilled the Easter promise
by sending us your Holy Spirit.
May that Spirit unite the races and nations on earth
to proclaim your glory.
Grant this...

*Roman Catholic, Opening Prayer 1 (Vigil)*

God our Father,
you have given us new birth.
Strengthen us with your Holy Spirit
and fill us with your light.
Grant this...

*Roman Catholic, Opening Prayer 2 (Vigil)*

Father in heaven,
fifty days have celebrated the fullness
of the mystery of your revealed love.

See your people gathered in prayer,
open to receive the Spirit’s flame.
May it come to rest in our hearts
and disperse the divisions of word and tongue.
With one voice and one song
may we praise your name in joy and thanksgiving.
Grant this...

*Roman Catholic,
alternative Opening Prayer (Vigil)*
Gospel of the Vigil

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water;' Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

John 7:37-39 NRSV

God our Father,
let the Spirit you sent on your Church
to begin the teaching of the gospel
continue to work in the world
through the hearts of all who believe.
We ask this...

Roman Catholic, Opening Prayer

Father of light,
from whom every good gift comes,
send your Spirit into our lives
with the power of a mighty wind,
and by the flame of your wisdom
open the horizons of our minds.

Loosen our tongues to sing your praise
in words beyond the power of speech,
for without your Spirit
man could never raise his voice in words of peace
or announce the truth that Jesus is Lord,
who lives and reigns...

Roman Catholic, alternative Opening Prayer
Gospels for the Feast

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

*John 20: 19-23 NRSV*

"When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

*John 15:26-27; 16:12-15 NRSV*

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

"Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

"I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you."

*John 14: 23-26 NRSV*
Let us celebrate Pentecost,
and the coming of the Spirit,
and the appointed day of promise,
and the fulfillment of hope,
and the mystery which is as great as it is precious.
Wherefore unto thee, O Lord, the Maker of all things,
do we cry: Glory to thee.

Almighty and everliving God,
who fulfilled the promises of Easter
by sending us your Holy Spirit
and opening to every race and nation
the way of life eternal,
keep us in the unity of your Spirit
that every tongue may tell of your glory;
through Jesus Christ...

*Book of Alternative Services, Collect*
*Anglican Church of Canada*

Father,
you have filled your people with the Spirit
who rested first on your Son
and united us in your Church;
open the channels for your Spirit
that we may freely work together,
and your kingdom and your rule increase.

*A New Zealand Prayer Book (Anglican), Collect*

Almighty God,
you kindled this day the light of your Spirit
in the hearts of your faithful people;
may we by the same Spirit
have a right judgment in all things,
and evermore rejoice in your love and power;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour...

*A New Zealand Prayer Book (Anglican), Collect*

Living God, eternal Holy Spirit,
let your bright intoxicating energy
which fired those first disciples
fall on us
to turn the world again.

*A New Zealand Prayer Book (Anglican), Collect*
Almighty God,
at the feast of Pentecost
you sent your Holy Spirit to the disciples,
filling them with joy and boldness
to preach the gospel;
send us out in the power of the same Spirit
to witness to your redeeming love
and draw all people to you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord...

_A New Zealand Prayer Book (Anglican), Collect_

Almighty and ever-living God,
you fulfilled the promise of Easter
by sending your Holy Spirit
to unite the races and nations on earth
and thus to proclaim your glory.
Look upon your people gathered in prayer,
open to receive the Spirit’s flame.
May it come to rest in our hearts
and heal the divisions of word and tongue
that with one voice and one song
we may praise your name
in joy and thanksgiving;
through your Son...

_Lutheran Book of Worship_
_Prayer of the Day (Vigil)_

God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
as you sent upon the disciples
the promised gift of the Holy Spirit,
look upon your Church
and open our hearts to the power of the Spirit.
Kindle in us the fire of your love,
and strengthen our lives for service
in your kingdom;
through your Son...

_Lutheran Book of Worship_,
_Prayer of the Day_
God our creator,
earth has many languages,
but your Gospel announces your love
to all nations in one heavenly speech.
Make us messengers of the good news that,
through the power of your Spirit,
everyone everywhere may unite
in one song of praise;
through your Son...

*Lutheran Book of Worship,*
*Prayer of the Day*

Other Readings for the Vigil of Pentecost

**Four options** are given for the first reading:

- Genesis 11:1-9 It was named Babel because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth.
- Exodus 19:3-8, 16-20 The Lord God appeared before all the people on Mount Sinai.
- Ezekiel 37:1-14 Dry bones of Israel, I shall put my spirit in you, and you will live.
- Joel 2:28-32 I will pour out my spirit on all humankind.

**The second reading** tells us that the Spirit is the ground of all prayer:

- Romans 8:22-27 The Spirit pleads for us in a way that could never be put into words.
The Eastern Tradition

O Lord most pure, spotless,
who art from everlasting, invisible,
ineffable, unsearchable, unchanging, unsurpassable,
immeasurable, longsuffering:
who alone hast immortality;
who dwellest in light unapproachable,
who hast made heaven and earth and the sea,
and all that therein is;
Purify us by the operation of thy Holy Spirit.

Blessed art thou, O Christ-God,
who hast revealed fishers most wise,
sending down upon them the Holy Spirit,
and thereby catching the universe as in a net.
O Christ-God, who lovest mankind, glory to thee.

When the Most High confounded the tongues,
he dispersed the nations:
but when he distributed the tongues of fire,
he called all men unto unity.
Wherefore, with one accord,
we glorify the All-holy Spirit.

We magnify thee, O life-giving Christ,
and do homage to thine all-holy Spirit,
whom thou didst send from the Father
upon thy disciples divine.

O heavenly King, the Comforter, Spirit of Truth,
who art in all places and fillest all things;
Treasure of good things and Giver of life:
Come, and take up thine abode in us,
and cleanse us from every stain;
and save our souls, O Good One.

From the Liturgy of the Eastern Churches

The first reading is the story of the day of Pentecost:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered,
because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs – our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power."

Acts 2: 1-11 NRSV

Prefaces

Father, all-powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks.

Today you sent the Holy Spirit on those marked out to be your children by sharing the life of your only Son, and so you brought the paschal mystery to its completion.

Today we celebrate the great beginnings of your Church when the Holy Spirit made known to all peoples the one true God, and created from the many languages of man one voice to profess one faith.

The joy of the resurrection renews the whole world, while the choirs of heaven sing for ever to your glory.

Roman Catholic, Pentecost

Father, all-powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord.

He ascended above all the heavens, and from his throne at your right hand poured into the hearts of your adopted children the Holy Spirit of your promise.

With steadfast love we sing your endless praise; we join with the hosts of heaven in their triumphant song:

Roman Catholic, Holy Spirit-1
Father, all-powerful and ever-living God,
we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks.

You give your gifts of grace
for every time and season
as you guide the Church
in the marvellous ways of your providence.

You give us your Holy Spirit
to help us always by his power,
so that with loving trust
we may turn to you in all our troubles,
and give you thanks in all our joys,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Glory and honor are his
as heaven and earth, angels and archangels
cry out in unending praise:

*Roman Catholic, Holy Spirit-2*

It is indeed right and salutary
that we should at all times and in all places
offer thanks and praise to you,
O Lord, holy Father, through Christ our Lord;
who rose beyond the bourids of death
and on this day, as he had promised,
poured out your Spirit of life and power
upon the chosen disciples.
At this the whole earth exults in boundless joy.
And so, with the Church on earth and the host of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn;

*Lutheran Book of Worship*

Blessed are you, gracious God,
creator of heaven and earth;
we give you thanks and praise
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
In fulfillment of your promise
you pour forth your Spirit upon us,
filling us with gifts and leading us into all truth.
You give us power to proclaim your gospel to all nations
and to serve you as a royal priesthood.
Therefore we join our voices with angels and archangels,
and with all those in whom the Spirit dwells
to proclaim the glory of your name.

*Book of Alternative Services*
The Hymn of Pentecost: Come, Holy Spirit

Holy Spirit, God of light,
Fill us with your radiance bright;
Gentle father of the poor,
Make us, by your help, secure;
Come, your boundless grace impart,
Bring your love to ev'ry heart.

Lord of consolation come,
Warm us when our hearts are numb;
Great consoler, come and heal,
To our souls your strength reveal;
Cool, refreshing comfort pour,
And our peace of mind restore.

Light immortal, fire divine,
With your love our hearts refine;
Come, our inmost being fill,
Make us all to do your will;
Goodness you alone can give,
Grant that in your grace we live.

Come, our lukewarm hearts inspire,
Mold our wills to your desire;
In our weakness make us strong,
And amend our every wrong;
Guide us when we go astray,
Wash our stain of guilt away.

Give to ev'ry faithful soul
Gifts of grace to make us whole;
Help us when we come to die,
So that we may live on high;
Ever let your love descend,
Give us joys that never end.
Liturgy of the Hours

The Readings

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

_Romans 8: 9-11 NRSV_

Mak[e] every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

_Ephesians 4: 3-6 NRSV_

The antiphons of evening and morning prayer:

On the day of Pentecost they had all gathered together in one place, alleluia.

Tongues as of fire appeared before the apostles, and the Holy Spirit came upon each of them, alleluia.

The Spirit who comes from the Father will glorify me, alleluia.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of all believers and set them on fire with your love. Though they spoke many different languages, you united the nations in professing the same faith, alleluia.

O Lord, how good and gentle is your Spirit in us, alleluia.

Let streams and rivers and all creatures that live in the waters sing praise to God, alleluia.

The apostles preached in different tongues, and proclaimed the great works of God, alleluia.

Receive the Holy Spirit; the sins of those you forgive shall be forgiven, alleluia.

The Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world, alleluia.

Send us your strength, O God, from your holy temple in Jerusalem, and perfect your work in us, alleluia.

All were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak, alleluia.
Today we celebrate the feast of Pentecost, alleluia; on this day the Holy Spirit appeared before the apostles in tongues of fire and gave them his spiritual gifts. He sent them out to preach to the whole world, and to proclaim that all who believe and are baptized shall be saved, alleluia.

The intercessions begin:

When the days of Pentecost were complete, God sent the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. As we celebrate this great feast with joy and faith, let us cry out:

Send forth your Spirit and make the whole world new.

Christ the Lord has gathered his Church in unity through the Spirit. With sure hope let us ask him:

Lord, make the whole world new.

God the Father has gathered his Church in unity through Christ. With joy in our hearts let us ask him:

Send your Holy Spirit into the Church

The intercessions themselves:

In the beginning you created heaven and earth, and in the fullness of time you renewed all things in Christ, through your Spirit go on renewing the world with the gift of salvation.

You breathed the breath of life into Adam, send your Spirit into your church to be its life and vigor, that it may bring new life to the whole world.

By the light of your Spirit, enlighten the world and dispel the darkness of our times, turn hatred into love, sorrow into joy and war into the peace we so desire.

Water flowed from the side of Christ as the fountain of your Spirit, may it flow over all the earth and bring forth goodness.

You bring life and glory to mankind through the Holy Spirit, through the Spirit lead the departed into the love and joy of heaven.

Lord Jesus, when you were raised high upon the cross, streams of living water flowed from your pierced side, pour out on us your life-giving Spirit.

In glory at the right hand of God, you gave the Gift of the Father to your disciples, send forth your Spirit to renew the world.

You gave your Spirit to the apostles, with the power to forgive sins, destroy all sin in the world.
You promised us the Holy Spirit, 
to teach us all things and remind us of all you had said, 
send us your Spirit to enlighten our minds in faith.

You promised to send the Spirit of truth, to bear witness to yourself, 
send forth your Spirit to make us your faithful witnesses.

You desire the unity of all Christians through one baptism in the Spirit, 
make all who believe one in heart and soul.

You desire the whole world to be filled with the Spirit, 
help all mankind to build a world of justice and peace.

Lord God, Father of all mankind, you desire to gather together your 
scattered children in unity of faith, 
enlighten the world by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Through the Spirit you make all things new, 
heal the sick, comfort the distressed, give salvation to all.

Through the Spirit you raised your Son from the dead, raise up 
the bodies of the dead into everlasting life. □

This gifted storyteller retells familiar gospel stories in today's language and symbols.


A theological examination of atonement: what it means and what it does not mean. This book part of the Zacchaeus studies is based on the teaching of St. Paul.


An examination of the Matthew portrayal of forgiveness and reconciliation and sin and judgment is the subject of this volume, and how this affects the Gospel's view of Jesus as Saviour.


This little but compact volume goes beyond an historical analysis to ask what we can learn from the past about the pastoral practice of reconciliation. The authors relate reconciliation to the mission of the Church to be community, to the process of initiation, and to the paschal mystery. The introduction is by Aidan Kavanagh, OSB.


This book is a collection of ten papers by noted authors in the field of liturgy which were given at a colloquium held at Georgetown University in 1988, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. The contributors include Aidan Kavanagh, Don E. Saliers, Gerard S. Sloyan, Ronald L. Grimes, John F. Baldovan, Monika K. Hellwig, and Kathleen Hughes.


A collection of essays by the faculty of the Catholic Theological Union at Chicago, in which the authors attempt to demonstrate the social implications of the liturgy and the ethical demands that liturgy makes on those who celebrate as the body of Christ.

The Liturgy Documents: A Parish Resource,


An excellent and readable explanation of the Mass which helps to explain the transition of the Mass from pre-Vatican II times to the present. Translated by Lucien Diess, C.S.Sp. and Michael Driscoll.


The entire span of Rahner’s writings is laced with observations on worship. Even when he did not make explicit mention of liturgy or sacraments, his theology is often implicitly related to the theology of worship. Michael Skelley explores the writings of Rahner that deal with the presence of God in the world and helps the reader relate this to a theology of worship, in other words how liturgy relates to life.


This book forms part of the series on the Message of the Sacraments, edited by Monika Hellwig. It seeks to answer the question “What does the Eucharist celebrate?” by examining the notion of celebration: celebrating the word, celebrating creation, celebrating the Christ story, celebrating communion and mission. This is a readable book which takes the inquirer into the depth of story and celebration.


Involved for many years in the Jewish-Christian dialogue, the author presents the Jewish liturgy in its “original freshness.” In doing so he hopes to enrich the Christian liturgy by showing the link between the liturgy and the prayer of Jews and Christians. This is not a comparison of the two, but primarily an explanation of the Jewish forms of prayer and the principal Jewish celebrations.


The 153 illustrations of this volume alone make it invaluable. The book deals with in a unique way by examining the theology of baptism by viewing the ways that fonts have been constructed: the font as womb; the cruciform font; the tomb-shaped font; the step-down font; the octagonal font; the hexagonal font; the font as tub; how to build a font; location of the font, etc.


The Pastoral Press continues its excellent series of collections of works on liturgy on specific titles or by author. It this case on initiation by Leonel L. Mitchell. Most articles have been revised for publication in this collection, however it does contain two new works. The book is divided into three sections: a look at the tradition of the church; an examination of the revised rites for Roman Catholic and American Episcopal Churches in particular and other churches in general; and particular questions.


Each year Liturgical Training Publications edits these superb resources for lectors, planners, designers and those who
prepare the art and environment of the worship space. The *Workbook for Lectors* gives the reading in place and background information for the reading. The present text for 1992 is the New American Bible, but in 1993, the text will be the New Revised Standard Version. *At Home with the Word* offers prayer for morning, evening and night, plus the Sundays. Readings with reflection for individual or group study and discussion.


This volume continues the series of commentaries (detailed) for the celebration of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours for the Liturgical Seasons. For those not familiar with this series, each volume is a sourcebook for the theological and liturgical themes of the scriptures readings, the prayers, antiphons and symbols used in the Eucharist and Hours.


The two volumes are helpful for parents who lack a sense of the community in the celebration of the sacraments of the Church. They represent a unique form of adult education for parents to understand the sacraments today and to celebrate them in the family setting. Companion videos entitled *Celebrating Sacraments* are also available.


A popular, easy-to-read history of the development of the liturgical year from utter simplicity of the first century to the Second Vatican Council. The Preface of the book is an excellent summary of the characteristic of the Roman rite. The rest of the book is equally insightful.


The liturgical celebrations of the rites of initiation for adults still need a lot of understanding. The volume of articles by nine well-known authors is a good basis for appreciating these rites.


This is a delightful story of one of the greats in liturgical renewal. Diekmann's contribution centred around Worship magazine and CEL. The author's style is both inviting and entertaining.


An architect's manual providing general background on the design or renovation of a "house for the church" which takes some account of recent liturgical initiatives and presents a step-by-step process for design development. Could assist church building committees in understanding the technical expertise required of the architect. The author's context is contemporary English church building but he strives for ecumenicity and an international scope. The examples and process highlight flexibility and multiple use. A useful tool although requiring greater use of liturgical consultation and theological analysis by the community than is indicated.
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