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Sunday Celebrations of the Word
The Bulletin is printed on recycled paper. This reflects our concern for the environment and the conservation of our natural resources.
This issue describes a new liturgical book to be used for Sunday Celebrations of the Word, offered to deacons, lay people and parish communities when it is not possible to celebrate the Sunday eucharist because no presbyter is available.
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Sunday Celebrations of the Word

John G. Hibbard

John Hibbard is a presbyter of the Archdiocese of Kingston, Ontario. He has served as Director of the National Liturgical Office for the last four years, and is now pastor in Brockville, ON.

The national edition of the ritual book, Sunday Celebration of the Word and Hours, will be published in 1995. This is a delay from the expected date of late 1994, due in part to the process of consultation on the pastoral notes and texts and the delay in some ICEL material.

The work on a ritual for Canada has been in progress for the past five years. In 1990, a survey was conducted by The Reverend Martin Moser, OMI, of Newman Theological College, Edmonton, through the National Liturgical Office in order to determine the frequency of Sunday celebrations of the word. With an analysis of the declining number of clergy in Canada by region, the study projected the increased need for Sunday celebrations of the word in the future. Later in the year a process of consultation with diocesan directors of liturgy was initiated in order to learn from the experiences of those who have conducted Sunday services of worship when the eucharist could not be celebrated.

In 1991, the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy established a national editorial committee to prepare a ritual. It consisted of Sister Zita Maier, OSU, diocesan director of liturgy in Regina, Saskatchewan, The Reverend Edwin Gale, director of liturgy and pastor in the diocese of St. George’s, Newfoundland, and The Reverend John G. Hibbard, director of the National Liturgical Office of the CCCB. This committee began the work of a ritual based on foundational work of The Reverend Martin Moser and The Reverend Murray Kroetsch, former director of the National Liturgical Office.

The experience of Sunday celebrations of the word is not uniform across Canada. For the past twenty-five years or more in parts of the North of Canada the absence of clergy for long periods of time has been a normal situation in many small and isolated communities. The practice and teaching of the faith has been preserved by local lay leaders and catechists. The pastor, more of a missionary, visits these communities on a circuit that covers thousands of miles. The eucharist may be celebrated a few times during the course of the year when the pastor or bishop is able to visit. Baptisms, reconciliation, marriages are celebrated at this time, although more recently baptisms and marriages may also be celebrated at other times with delegated lay leaders officiating.

The experience of liturgies of the word led by lay people in many communities across Western and Atlantic Canada and Northern Ontario is a little different. Most communities are privileged to celebrate the eucharist every other
Sunday, and on the alternate Sundays the community gathers for a Sunday celebration of the word. This experience has been fairly common for at least the last fifteen years, and the future foresees increased celebrations of the word. In only a few places would there be regular celebrations of the word due to the absence of a pastor.

The experience of the southern parts of Ontario is largely devoid of Sunday celebrations of the word. The closest experience of most Catholics in this region might be liturgies of the word or communion services on weekdays when the pastor takes a day off or is away on a diocesan retreat or study session.

The varied experiences of Catholics in Canada presents a challenge for the preparation of a national ritual. One ritual must meet so many needs and tie together so many varied experiences. At one point in the past it was not even evident or welcomed that there should be a national ritual. Diocesan rituals have been in existence and in use for at least fifteen years. Most notable are the rituals of the dioceses of Regina and Edmonton. In the last five years, most dioceses of Western and Atlantic Canada and Northern Ontario have had to draw up rituals to meet local needs.

When the first ritual was drawn up in Regina in 1981, as a project of the Western Liturgical Conference, there were no models to draw from.* Communities without a priest had to meet to preserve their identity and worship as members of the body of Christ. The Regina "Red Book" became a standard for many communities not only in Canada, but throughout the United States and beyond. The Regina Red Book has undergone two revisions under its editor, The Reverend Leonard Sullivan of Regina, a former director of the National Liturgical Office (1969-1978); these editions were produced under the auspices of the archdiocese.

Drawing on the experience of the Regina Red Book and further theological reflection, the Liturgical Commission of Edmonton issued its own ritual in 1988. This ritual offered some refinement and showed the development that was now in progress. The Edmonton ritual has also undergone a second draft.

Recognizing the shortage of clergy throughout the world, the 1983 Code of Canon Law (no. 1248, paragraph 2) strongly recommended that the faithful participate in the liturgy of the word when it is impossible to celebrate the eucharist. In 1984, the Congregation of Divine Worship issued the Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest. This directory offered some general direction for episcopal conferences. Conferences of bishops were expected to draw up more detailed or particular guidelines for their territories as well as publish a ritual for use within their jurisdictions. The directory added some further refinements for the development of a ritual. Canadian guidelines were published in 1992.¹

In 1992, the Diocese of St. George's, Newfoundland drew up a ritual which took the Sunday celebration of the word a step further by emphasizing the centrality of the word by means of an enthronement of the word that took the

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* (Editor's note: In fact the Regina ritual was based on an extensive study of liturgical practices around the world, carried out in 1980 by this Editor.)

place of the entrance procession. This ritual also reveals another step in the evolution of the prayers of praise. This development is discussed in the article on the proclamation of praise.

With the growing practice and necessity of Sunday celebrations of the word and the proliferation of diocesan rituals, the diverse practices of regions and dioceses was becoming evident. Liturgy by its nature is repeated ritual behaviour. It cannot change too radically from week to week if it is expected to be the prayer of the people of God. In a society of high mobility and with the interest of liturgists (and others) in what others are doing, the various orders of services and different patterns of worship were disconcerting, and in some cases, jarring to worshippers. The need for a national ritual was becoming more evident.

The introduction of the national ritual book, *Sunday Celebration of the Word and Hours*, will not be without its problems. The recent pilot study has confirmed that particular patterns of the celebration of the word are already deeply ingrained in many communities which have been worshipping on Sunday in the absence of their local pastor. The introduction of the national ritual will require much time and energy in preparing, planning, explaining and demonstrating. Some of the articles in this edition of the Bulletin will explain some of the theological issues that have resulted in changed patterns of prayers or order of service. Others will deal with the content and texts of the Ritual.

**Terminology**

Throughout the country different names have formally and informally been used to designate Sunday celebrations of the word. One hears terms such as *lay-led celebrations, or priestless Masses*. The Roman Directory used the term *Sundays celebrations in the absence of a priest*, which is sometimes used. Some importance should be attached to whatever name is used to designate the Sunday worship of a community without its normal leader. For names have a power to form or convey a basic truth. The basic element in Sunday celebrations of the word is the people of God who have gathered to celebrate their faith and give praise to God.

With the exception of the term *Pontifical Mass*, the names of celebrations in the Catholic tradition are not taken from the person who presides, but rather from the nature of the celebration itself. This tradition recognizes that liturgy is the celebration of the whole assembly and church. When the eucharist cannot be celebrated in a community, the community can still gather to listen to the word of God, sing the praise of the Most High and intercede for the salvation of the world and the good of all. Thus even when a priest is not available, the name of the celebration should reflect the nature of the celebration and not the person who leads it or, worse yet, the person who is absent. The name *Sunday Celebrations of the Word and Hours* honours this tradition, and therefore, has been chosen for this ritual.

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2 The reason for this one exception is that in the Catholic tradition the bishop is the ordinary minister of presiding at the eucharist. The local church is gathered around the bishop. Our experience does not support this fundamental principle, for our experience of the eucharist is leadership by the presbyter as the pastor who presides over the life of the parish.
The Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest uses the term leader to designate the ministry of those lay persons who lead the prayer in the absence of a priest. In many places the word presider is used as well. For the sake of consistency this ritual uses the noun leader of prayer or lay presider and the verbs lead and preside.

Mixed Blessing

It is not uncommon at meetings on this subject to hear speakers speak of the dangers of Sunday celebrations of the word, and the threat that this poses to the tradition of celebrating the eucharist on the day of the Lord. No doubt these comments are well taken. But at the same meeting it is also common to encounter people who have had positive experiences of Sunday celebrations of the word. It is disconcerting to people who have had such a positive experience to hear the critical comments of others. Yet both realities exist side by side. Positive experiences of community worship in Sunday celebrations of the word do negate the centrality of the celebration of the eucharist or the importance of ordained ministry. It is making the best of a difficult situation. On the other hand, the inability of a community to celebrate the Sunday eucharist must not deter that community from accentuating the positive, that it is still able to gather on the Lord's day to listen to the word and sing God's praises.
Development and Consultation

John G. Hibbard

At its first meeting in October 1992, the editorial committee for the ritual book, *Sunday Celebrations of the Word and Hours*, attempted to name some of the issues that needed to be addressed in Sunday celebrations of the word. Some of these issues were raised in a Preliminary Report which sought to present a rationale for a proposed order of the Sunday celebration of the word, to raise some questions of a theological nature and to invite the comments of theologians, liturgists and liturgical officers of dioceses. In addition, during the year, the members of the committee reported to and sought the opinions of the three regional liturgical conferences.

Throughout the committee’s work cooperation with the French sector Liturgy Office was a factor. The episcopal commissions for liturgy of both the English sector and French sector had worked together on a joint pastoral letter on Sunday celebrations of the word. In conjunction with the directors of both national liturgical offices it was agreed that for Canada there should be a single order of service for the Sunday celebrations of the word in the French and English language rituals. This would greatly aid bilingual dioceses. It was left to the two directors to coordinate the activities of their respective committees.

In the Fall of 1993, the National Liturgical Office issued a pilot project in order to test some of the committee’s theories. It was the intention of the committee that the pilot would be used enough times in a parish for the assembly to become familiar with the order of service that was proposed. The pilot ritual included no penitential rite; however, it contained a procession and enthronement of the Lectionary, a proclamation of praise which was placed immediately after the reflection, the intercessions, and finally, the profession of faith (the Creed). After a period of trial, parish leaders and members of communities were asked to complete an evaluation form.

The results of the evaluation can be divided into three groups:

- a small group who looked at the order of service, decided not to use it, but completed the evaluation;
- a larger group who used the pilot ritual a few times and evaluated it;
- a majority who used the pilot five or more times before completing the evaluation.

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1 See previous chapter, note 1
The results of the evaluation differed significantly with each group. In the first group there were few positive comments. In the majority of cases, the virtues of the diocesan ritual in use in the parish were favoured over the pilot. In some cases, the evaluators enumerated the benefits and rationale for the diocesan ritual, which standards the pilot did not meet. On a positive note, these evaluations revealed the thorough job of preparation that had been done at the diocesan, regional or parish level to prepare communities for Sunday celebrations of the word. Parishioners had been very well prepared in some dioceses.

In the second category, the relatively few times that the pilot ritual was used provoked a mostly negative reaction to the new order of service. This reaction formed the majority of the comments offered. Nevertheless, helpful, though general, comments revealed the major weaknesses of the pilot.

The third group of communities who used the pilot for a significant period of time offered the most detailed and helpful comments to the National Liturgical Office. Most communities remarked that once the initial negative reaction was overcome, they could appreciate the dynamic of the celebration. More particular observations and suggestions were forthcoming from this group to help fine tune the ritual.

Penitential Rite

In the pilot project significant changes to the introductory rite had been suggested. Most diocesan rituals had employed the introductory rites from the Order of Mass. It was felt by the committee that the penitential rite is characteristic of the celebration of the eucharist. Moreover, since liturgists have often commented that the introductory rites of the Mass are too long, are of a more recent composition and innovation, reflect a private and devotional spirituality and run the risk of distracting the attention or energy of the worshipping community from the liturgy of the word, the committee omitted the penitential rite from the pilot project. It was planned that the procession and enthronement of the Lectionary would be a preparatory rite for the liturgy of the word.

In order to mark the distinct character of a Sunday celebration of the word, it was proposed that the liturgy should open with the liturgical greeting (sign of the cross and greeting) and proceed immediately to the opening prayer. It was hoped that this proposal would help the assembly to focus on the word of God immediately without the distraction of lengthy introductions which focus more attention on secondary elements rather than primary ones.

Although this proposal received some support from liturgists and a few communities, in practice it was too radical a change for most communities. The rapid movement from the introduction to the word did not appear to give the assembly sufficient time to focus on its mission or purpose. It was pointed out that, in those communities which are able to celebrate the eucharist only a few times in the year, there was a pastoral need for a preparatory or penitential element for the worship of the community. In the absence of a priest for long periods of time and the impossibility of celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation, some communities see great significance in a penitential preparation.

For these reasons, and as a result of discussions with the French language committee of the Office national de Liturgie, it was decided that a form of
introductory rite was needed. A simplified form which uses one of the elements of the penitential rite for Mass was proposed. This involves using one of the following elements:

- The Sprinkling of Holy Water
- The Confiteor (I confess)
- The Litany of Praise (third form of the penitential rite)
- The sung Hymn of Praise (Gloria)
- The sung Kyrie (Lord, have mercy)

The choice of one of these would allow more emphasis to be placed upon the liturgical season at the beginning of the celebration. The ritual will provide a recommended form for each liturgical season. The length of Ordinary Time will invite a variety of forms.

Procession and Enthronement of the Lectionary

Generally well received was the proposal for the procession and enthronement of the word of God. In the pilot it was recommended that this be accompanied by the use of incense and candles; however, the use of incense is optional. The procession and enthronement of the word needs to be carefully planned and balanced with the opening song in order not to overload the introductory rite with too much music. The music for the procession and enthronement of the word of God will have a bearing on the music chosen for the entrance procession. This element remains unchanged from the pilot ritual.

Position of the Proclamation of Praise

The position of the proclamation of praise within the liturgy of the word has received a lot of discussion at various levels of consultation. The committee felt that the basic format of the liturgy of the word in the eucharist should remain largely intact with the first reading, responsorial psalm, second reading, gospel acclamation, gospel and homily (reflection) following in order. Two changes were suggested: that the prayer of praise be placed immediately after the homily-reflection, but before the intercessions; and that the profession of faith be placed after the collection.

It was thought that the succession of the profession of faith, general intercessions and prayer of praise, as three separate and unconnected prayers, might create too long a segment of the spoken word without a change of posture on the part of the assembly. This might invite a rushed approach or the melding together of three important, yet distinct, liturgical acts. Given that there is no change in the posture of the assembly from the homily to the collection, it was decided to reposition one element. One might naturally assume that the profession of faith and intercessions would form a natural unit as in the Mass. However, the committee has proposed otherwise. There were three considerations:
• At the regional liturgical conferences and at the National Council for Liturgy, concern was expressed over the purpose and position of the prayer of praise. In light of the concern expressed both in the Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest and by liturgists that the prayer of praise not resemble (and be confused with) the eucharistic prayer, it was felt that this prayer should be placed closer to the proclamation of the word of God and be a thanksgiving for the action of God as revealed in the word.

• The Roman tradition of prayer moves from praise and thanksgiving to petition. This is witnessed in all the prayers of blessing (water, oil, churches, altars, people) including the eucharistic prayers. Thus it seems more appropriate to move from a prayer of praise to the prayer of intercession, rather than from intercession to thanksgiving. Generally, thanksgiving provides the motive and context for our supplications rather than vice-versa. Even if these are two separate liturgical units of prayer, nevertheless, they are placed next to each other.

• Very often parallels rightly have been drawn between the contents of the profession of faith and the eucharistic prayer as affirmations of the faith of the Catholic community. It was felt that if the profession of faith were the last element of the liturgy of the word, it would be a fitting climax or focal point of the Sunday celebration of the word.

In the pilot project the following dynamic was proposed: after the proclamation of the word of God, the assembly gives thanks to God for the word, then in confidence asks for what is needed for the mission of the church in the world. Having listened to the word and responded in praise and intercession, the community joins in the climatic act of professing its faith and the faith of the universal (Catholic) church. Since the Christian community continues to gather, even in the absence of priestly ministry, its central act is the affirmation of its faith in a common statement voiced by all.

This new order was not well received. Many pointed out that the order of these prayers in the eucharist was so familiar to all that this revised order disrupted a natural and familiar flow. Moreover, discussion with the Office national de Liturgie also added another component in arriving at a decision. In the end it was agreed that the proclamation of praise should be the concluding prayer of the intercessions.

Sign of Peace

A question that remained unresolved through much of the consultation was the position of the sign of peace. Originally, the sign of peace was the ritual action that concluded the common prayer of the assembly (the prayer of the faithful). After the eighth century, it was moved to its present place in the communion rite of the eucharist. As a sign of a reconciled community, the sign of peace fits both places. However, it is not a rite of welcome or friendship, and therefore suggestions of placing it in the introductory rite were not considered. Since the focus of the celebration is the liturgy of the word, and since this part contains no ritual action, the committee had placed it at the close of the intercessions for both the celebration of the word and the hours. This ancient tradition of sealing the common prayer of the assembly with the sign of peace seemed appropriate in a liturgy of the word.
Collection

In the celebration of the eucharist, the collection forms part of the one of the four basic acts of the eucharist: taking bread and wine. Since the people no longer bring bread and wine to be used for the eucharist, their gifts are contributions of money. In the Sunday celebration of the word, any semblance of the four actions of the eucharist is to be avoided. Thus it seems inappropriate to leave the collection in place before the proclamation of praise, or before the communion rite. Therefore, in conjunction with the Office national de Liturgie, it has been agreed to place the collection in the concluding rite, at the time of the announcements.

Format of the Ritual Book

In the evaluations from the pilot project of 1993, it was clear that the ritual had to be “user friendly.” Comments ranged widely in view:

• there should be no options but only one form of any prayer, all of which follows page to page.

• there needs to be more options, but in a loose leaf edition so that the options chosen can be placed in the proper order.

• a ritual should not be simplistic, which insults the intelligence of lay people.

• make the book simple and straightforward because lay people will be using it.

Under these circumstances nothing is going to please everyone. But a few explanatory comments are needed to explain the thinking of the committee.

Anything new is going to be different and look strange and complex at first sight and use until people get to know it. Familiarity with the ritual by means of adequate training and preparation is going to be important. Those who lead the worship of their communities will have to become totally familiar with the instruments and tools of worship. The ritual is one of these instruments.

Publishing a ritual in two, subsequent versions will not work. Some have suggested that a simple edition be printed first, and after leaders of prayer have become used to the order of service, a second edition of a ritual with many options could follow. Leaving aside the issue of cost, experience at the national level has shown that people, priests and laity both, will grumble and complain when any new ritual comes out. It is part of the learning experience and the process of letting go of former ritual books with which they have become familiar. It is better to learn with one new book than to go through the experience and process of dealing with two successive editions of a ritual.

Lay people are at no greater disadvantage than the clergy in learning and finding their way through ritual books. For both it takes time and energy.

Providing one option for each element of the liturgy of the word may work for a short period time, but the ritual, Sunday Celebrations of the Word and Hours, must last a long time. The history of liturgy shows that there are many forces working against each other, hopefully to provide a balance. Liturgy by nature is conservative: it requires an unchanging form in order that people will know what is happening and what comes next. There is a corresponding
desire for a plurality of expression within the fixed form: people yearn for a little variety within the set forms over a longer period of time. Thus the order of service needs to be unchanging, but the proclamation of praise or the general intercessions, to take two examples, may change in their wording.

An interesting observation that comes from the evaluation concerns people's experience of the celebration of the eucharist. Where liturgical principles are not understood or observed at the eucharist, it will be difficult to train lay people in the proper procedures. A proper manner of presiding will appear to be deviant behaviour. In a number of cases some evaluators commented that there was discrimination against lay people in the directions of the pilot ritual because the lay leaders were not permitted to preside from the ambo or altar for the introductory rite and the liturgy of the word as priests were. In truth the same principle applies to priests as well as to lay people.\footnote{General Instruction of the Roman Missal, n. 86} The liturgy has one focal point at a time. The focal point for presiding is the chair, the focal point for the liturgy of the word is the ambo, the focal point of the communion rite is the altar. This same principle applies at the eucharist.

The training of lay people to lead the prayer of their communities will require some planning and effort at the diocesan level to ensure a good standard of liturgy. Experience shows that when training is left to the pastor only, the laity will be taught what the priest knows or does not know. This is a common situation that has emerged from the consultation. This is one reason why the pastoral notes of the ritual are so extensive – almost a course on liturgy itself. A spinoff of the ritual, \textit{Sunday Celebrations of the Word and Hours}, may be an increased awareness of liturgical principles, and perhaps a move to improve the way we celebrate the eucharist.
Content and Structure

John G. Hibbard

The ritual book, *Sunday Celebrations of the Word and Hours*, is designed mostly for those occasions when lay people or deacons will lead the Sunday worship of their communities. Nevertheless, the ritual can also be used for any liturgy of the word and celebrations of morning and evening prayer.

Word and Hours

Four forms of celebration are included in the ritual: Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Word with Communion, Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer. Naturally, a liturgy of the word will be the main celebration of most communities in which the three scripture readings of the Sunday will be proclaimed in the assembly. Nevertheless, morning and evening prayer are provided for those times when these may be celebrated in addition to the Sunday celebration of the word or the eucharist, or for the times when a liturgy of the word is impossible or not pastorally suited to the occasion.

The format of morning and evening prayer will not contain provision for the proclamation of the three readings from the Sunday Lectionary or for a communion service. In other words, neither a liturgy of the word nor a communion service will be joined to the format of the liturgy of the hours. The scripture reading for morning or evening prayer might be either the first or second reading from the Lectionary, but not the gospel, since the gospel canticle serves this function.

Morning and evening prayer utilizes a different dynamic than a liturgy of the word. The dynamic of the liturgy of the hours is the praise of God ascending from the gathered community. In this model the hymns and scriptures, (psalms, canticles and readings) are vehicles for praise or eliciting praise. On the other hand, the liturgy of the word is a dialogue between God and the community: God speaks to the community, who then responds in silence, word and song. To mix these two different dynamics defeats the purpose of each and produces a complex format unfamiliar to both clergy and laity. In its deliberations, the committee felt that it is best to preserve the integrity of each order of service.

The liturgy of the word, by its nature, allows other rites to be joined to itself in a way that the liturgy of the hours does not (with the exception of the office of readings). Therefore, a communion service is better added to the liturgy of the word than to morning or evening prayer. Since a liturgy of the word is part of every sacramental and ritual celebration, it can form a better union with other rites such as a communion service.

Since the *Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (nos. 35, 36, 41b) lays great emphasis on the proclamation of the Sunday readings from the Lectionary, it is recommended that a liturgy of the word be the normal
order of Sunday celebration of the parish community. This does not rule out the possibility that the community may also gather to celebrate morning or evening prayer on the Day of the Lord or during the week.

The content of the ritual book is:

• The *Directory of Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* of the Congregation for Divine Worship.
• The Pastoral Letter of the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy, *Sunday Celebrations of the Word: Gathered in Anticipation of the Eucharist*.
• Pastoral Notes for Sunday Celebrations of the Word and Hours
• Opening Prayers with Seasonal Introductory Rites
• Celebration of the Word
• Rite of Communion Outside the Eucharist
• Seasonal Prayers after Communion
• Celebration of Morning Prayer
• Celebration of Evening Prayer
• Model Formularies for the General Intercessions
• Seasonal Prayers of Thanksgiving for the Light at Evening Prayer
• Alternate Psalm Prayers
• Baptismal Form of the Profession of Faith for Use on Easter Sunday

**Celebration of the Word**

The ritual in its format will attempt to provide for simplicity and yet offer a wide choice of options. One way that this will be attempted is to provide a seasonal introductory rite placed just before the opening prayers of the same season. For example, the complete introductory rite for Advent will be on the two facing pages before the Opening Prayers for the four Sundays of Advent. In addition there will be the standard Opening Prayer (a revised translation of the Latin) and an alternate prayer that corresponds to each of the cycles (A, B, C) of the Lectionary for each Sunday of the year.

The order of service for a celebration of the word is as follows:

**Introductory Rite**

Gathering of the Community
Introductory Remarks
Gathering Song
Liturgical Greeting
Preparatory Rite
Opening Prayer
Liturgical Text:

**Liturgy of the Word**

- Procession and Enthronement of the Word of God
- First Reading
- Responsorial Psalm
- Second Reading
- Gospel Acclamation
- Gospel
- Reflection
- Profession of Faith
- General Intercessions
- Proclamation of Praise
- Lord's Prayer (omitted if communion is to be distributed)
- Sign of Peace

**Concluding Rite**

- Announcements
- Collection
- Blessing/Prayer over the People
- Dismissal

When the rite of the distribution of communion outside the eucharist is added to the liturgy of the word, the communion rite follows this order:

**Communion Rite**

- Lord's Prayer
- Invitation to Communion
- Communion
- Prayer after Communion

**Liturgy of Hours**

The format of the liturgy of hours (morning and evening prayer) follows the same order found in *Catholic Book of Worship III*. It is envisaged that *Sunday Celebrations of the Word and Hours* will also be used as a presider's book for the celebration of morning and evening prayer.

**Morning Prayer**

**Introductory Rites**

- Gathering of the Community
- Introductory Remarks
- Invitation to Prayer
- Morning Hymn

**Psalms**

- Morning Psalm
- Psalm Prayer
- Second Psalm
- Psalm Prayer
- Canticle of Praise
Word of God
  Reading
  Reflection

Praise and Intercession
  Gospel Canticle (Canticle of Zachariah or Hymn of Praise)
  Intercessions
  The Lord's Prayer
  Concluding Prayer

Concluding Rite
  Announcements
  Collection
  Blessing
  Sign of Peace

Evening Prayer

Service of Light
  Gathering of the Community
  Introductory Remarks
  Procession
  Opening Verse
  Thanksgiving for the Light
  [Invitation to Prayer]
  Evening Hymn

Psalms
  Evening Psalm
  Psalm Prayer
  Second Psalm
  Psalm Prayer
  Canticle of Praise

Word of God
  Reading
  Reflection

Praise and Intercession
  Gospel Canticle (Canticle of Mary or of Simeon)
  Intercessions
  The Lord's Prayer
  Concluding Prayer

Concluding Rite
  Announcements
  Collection
  Blessing
  Sign of Peace
Basic Liturgical Principles

John G. Hibbard

All liturgy is the celebration of the whole church, thus in any liturgical action, whether the eucharist or a celebration of the word, the liturgical assembly is the primary celebrant of the liturgy. This fundamental principle of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy is an important orientation for all those who are called to preside or lead the prayer of the community. In the words of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, "Liturgical actions are not private functions but are celebrations of the church, the sacrament of unity, namely the holy people united and ordered under the guidance of the bishops. Liturgical actions, therefore, belong to the whole body of the church . . . though they involve individual members in different ways, according to the diversity of orders, functions and levels of participation."

This teaching of the church has two main implications for those who prepare and lead the prayer of the church. First, in the liturgy the celebration is larger than the community that comes together to celebrate; it is a celebration of the whole church. By its union with the bishop, the community is united with the whole church in assembling on the Day of the Lord. Second, the liturgy that is celebrated is not the property of the community nor of the leader, but the official worship of the church. In this sense the community gathers in and continues the tradition of the church, and its ritual actions and prayers express in a universal language the faith of the whole church.

Communities which are deprived of the eucharist and ordained ministers are not cut off from the church or its tradition of worship. A challenge to those who lead the prayer of the community will be to impart and foster this vision of the whole church at prayer within their communities.

Celebration of the Paschal Mystery

Any and every liturgy is a proclamation of the paschal mystery and the remembering the saving acts of God accomplished through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the sacred readings the saving deeds of God are recalled in order that the faith of the community may be affirmed and strengthened and that the assembly may respond in joy and gratitude. Although the eucharist is the prime celebration of the paschal mystery, the liturgy of the word and hours also celebrates God's activity among the assembled people and calls forth a renewed response to the mission of the gospel.

The Sunday celebration of the word and hours also celebrates the paschal mystery and the passing over of the church in Christ from death to rising by its gathering on the Day of the Lord. The importance of Sunday as the Day of

1 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, n. 26
Light, the Day of the sending of the Spirit and the Day of the New Creation calls God's people to assemble even when they cannot celebrate the eucharist.

Ritual Prayer

The liturgy is first of all ritual prayer, that is, the structured, repetitive pattern of prayer of a community carried out in word, silence, gesture and symbol. The public prayer of the community is possible only when the repetitive pattern of prayer is respected. For familiarity with the ritual is necessary if the community is to enter into the prayer. The leader of prayer serves best by respecting the ritual of the liturgy, by becoming totally familiar with the structure and all of its elements, and understanding what adaptations are needed for a particular community. Choices can then be made that truly enable the assembly to pray.

In the course of the liturgy, the leader speaks in two different modes: addressing God in the name of the assembly, as in liturgical prayer; and addressing the assembly in the name of God, as in a greeting. This calls for a sensitivity to the language that is used in the liturgy. As ritual prayer the liturgy uses a language that is called restrictive, that is a language formal in one sense, yet familiar to the members of the community. It is a language that opens the door to the mystery of God present in the community. Ritual language also sets boundaries: it marks the sacred character of the celebration as opposed to other activities; it marks the beginning and ending of the celebration; and it defines the membership of the community as the holy people of God who exercise the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

The leader of prayer must be conscious of the movement of ritual language and action and not attempt to shift between the language of the liturgy and the language of everyday activity. This shifting is often done by comments which seek to integrate or replace a liturgical greeting with one from another setting. Greetings such as Good Morning after the liturgical greeting creates a need to begin again in establishing a sacred character to the celebration and resuming the language of the liturgy. Such remarks move outside the parameters of the leader of prayer, who speaks to God in the name of the assembly or to the assembly in the name of God and not in his or her own name.

Liturgical Prayer

Liturgical prayers include the presidential prayers: the opening prayer, the prayer of praise, the prayer after communion, the preparatory rite, the general intercessions and the communion rite. The structure of liturgical prayer is diverse and involves both the assembly and the leader of prayer, and both silent and verbal prayer.

- **Invitation**: The prayer begins with an invitation to the assembly to pray.
- **Prayer of the assembly**: The most important element is the prayer of the assembly. This may be silent or verbal prayer or both. The leader of prayer must respect the silence that is part of the rite.
- **The Collect**: After the prayer of the community, the leader gathers the prayers of the community into one in a verbal prayer that is addressed to God
the Father, through his Son, Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. The conclusion of the prayer is an important Trinitarian expression of divine activity and the mystery of our salvation: therefore, it should be prayed with conviction and deliberateness.

• The Assent: The final element of the prayer is the assent expressed by the assembly in the acclamation: Amen.

Focal Points

A liturgical celebration has only one focal point at any one time: the chair, the ambo, the altar, or the assembly. When these places are used only for what they were intended, the meaning and symbolism of the rite is then evident to the community.

The altar is reserved for the gifts of bread and wine during the eucharist and for the rite of communion. Even when it is not used the altar stands as the table of the Lord. Therefore, the altar is never used as a bookshelf or desk. Only the ritual needed for the communion rite is ever placed on the altar.

The ambo is reserved for the proclamation of the word of God and the intercessions of the community.

The presidential chair expresses the pastoral care that the bishop or pastor exercises in the midst of the community; it is for this reason that the Directory states that lay people should not use the presidential chair. Nevertheless, the presidential chair is also associated with the function of leading the prayer, therefore, the leader of prayer should conduct the liturgy from a place close to the chair where he or she can be seen by all and can sit for the readings in a prominent place to model listening to the word. In other words, another chair may be placed in such a way that the leader of prayer is visible at all times and is the focal point when leading the assembly’s prayer. The rites are led from the chair, which should be a simple but dignified piece of furniture. Whether at Mass or the Sunday celebration of the word the altar or ambo are not used for presiding.

Symbols, Gestures and Movement

Liturgy is incarnational and uses symbols, gestures and movement. The rites of the Church make evident to the community the meaning and symbolism surrounding the objects when they are used only for what they were intended. The use of gestures at liturgy are not restricted to the ordained ministers of the Church, for they are used for the benefit of the ritual action and the prayer of community. They are not indications of status within the community. Thus, everything the leader of prayer does is an expression of the prayer of the community, including every posture, movement, action and gesture; therefore a leader of prayer uses symbols, walks and carries out actions and gestures in a deliberate, unhurried, reverent manner, visible to the community as expression of their own prayer. When a leader of prayer’s role is not the focal point, such as during the reading of the scriptures, the leader of prayer’s focus is toward that action. Liturgical objects, books, vessels, candles, the cross, are handled with reverence; carrying an object with both hands gives a
better sense of reverence and dignity. Thus the role of the leader of prayer "must be guided by the meaning, symbolism and laws of the liturgy which apply to all presiding." 

Gestures add dignity and beauty to a liturgical celebration. These include signs of reverence, such as bows, genuflections and the sign of peace, and posture during the liturgy. Gestures are expressions of faith and a recognition of the presence of the Lord in the assembly, in the word, and in the sacred symbols.

Other gestures used are those of greeting and praying: the positions of the hands during prayer, the making of the sign of the cross at the beginning and end of the celebration and at the proclamation of the gospel, the use of incense as a sign of respect and honour, and silence; all these continue to be used in a Sunday celebration of the word and hours.


Next Year's Issues

**Weekdays of Lent:** Bulletin 140, Spring.

**Liturgies in the Home:** Bulletin 141, Summer.

**Marginalized Persons and Liturgical Celebration:** Bulletin 142, Fall.

**The Revised Sacramentary:** Bulletin 143, Winter.
Having considered the new liturgical book in general terms in the previous articles, it is now considered in greater detail in the next few chapters.

The introductory rites of the Sunday celebration of the word include the introductory remarks, the sign of the cross, a liturgical greeting, a preparatory rite and the opening prayer.

The purpose of the introductory rites is to unify the assembly as a priestly people and to prepare the community to listen to the word of God. Since they are preparatory, the introductory rites are of secondary importance and, therefore, are to be brief. In order to mark the distinct character of the Sunday celebration of the word, the liturgy contains an abbreviated preparatory rite, which helps the assembly to focus on the word of God immediately and emphasizes that this is a celebration of the word. A form of the introductory remarks helps to situate this celebration within the larger context of the whole church.

The introductory rites were never intended to be a welcoming rite for the assembly. The welcoming of the assembly properly belongs to the gathering of the community and to the ministers of hospitality. The transformation of these preparatory rites into a rite of welcoming, or the addition of personal remarks or greetings, blurs the role of the presider, lay or ordained. For it is God who has called the assembly to worship, and the church building is the place of gathering and worship for all the baptized; it is not the house of the presider who welcomes others as guests. It may be appropriate, nevertheless, for the presider to welcome, in the name of the assembly, guests who are present.

Gathering of the Community

As usual, the celebration begins with the gathering of the assembly, who by cordially greeting one another express the fellowship of the Spirit and the love of God that binds all into the one body of Christ. The members of the community may also be greeted and assisted by ministers of hospitality.

The members of the community take their places in the assembly, as do the ministers. One of the lectors and the ministers who carry the candles and incense gather in the foyer or near the entrance, ready to begin the procession of the word at the appropriate time.

Central to the Sunday celebration of the word is the procession of the Lectionary, accompanied by ministers carrying candles, which takes place after the opening prayer and before the first reading. This procession takes place after the Introductory Rite and at the beginning of the liturgy of the word. During this procession the community sings a song or acclamation, the Lectionary is carried in procession and is solemnly enthroned at the lectern (ambo). In order to emphasize the importance of this procession, it is suggested that the
traditional procession of the ministers carrying the Cross and Lectionary, accompanied by candles with the other ministers, including the person who leads the prayer of the community, not be held. Nevertheless, three options are possible, depending on local custom.

- **Gathering Song without a Procession:** In this option the gathering song begins the celebration, but there is no entrance procession of the ministers. Except for the ministers who will carry the candles (and incense) and a lector who will carry the Lectionary at the Procession and Enthronement of the Word, all the ministers take their places in the church beforehand. At the designated time, the leader of prayer goes to the place from which he or she will preside and begins the celebration with the introductory remarks. All stand and join in the song, psalm or acclamation.

- **Gathering Song with a Procession with the Cross:** In this option there is a simple procession of the Cross, accompanied by candles, but there is no procession of ministers. Except for a lector who carries the Lectionary at the Procession and Enthronement of the Word and the ministers who will carry the Processional Cross and the candles (and incense), the ministers take their places in the church beforehand. At the designated time, the leader of prayer goes to the place from which he or she will preside and begins the celebration with the introductory remarks. All stand and join in the hymn, psalm or acclamation. During the gathering song, the processional Cross is brought in procession through the church to the sanctuary, accompanied by two ministers carrying candles.

- **Gathering Song with Procession of the Ministers and the Cross:** In this option there is a procession of ministers, accompanied by the processional Cross and candles, during the gathering song. The lector who will carry the Lectionary and the servers who will accompany the Lectionary, carrying candles, do not join in the entrance procession but remain near the entrance of the church. At the designated time, the leader of prayer, or preferably another minister, begins the celebration with the introductory remarks. A leader of song introduces the song. All stand and join in the hymn, psalm or acclamation. The leader of prayer and the other ministers join in the procession, led by a server who carries the processional Cross.

**Introductory Remarks**

The introductory remarks, which are optional and which may be made before or after the greeting, serve to prepare the community to listen to the word and, if necessary, to inform any members who were not aware that the eucharist will not be celebrated. These remarks are especially appropriate when a Sunday celebration of the word is not celebrated on a regular basis. It also functions to remind the congregation that this celebration is a true liturgy of the Church and is celebrated in union with the pastor of the community, the diocesan bishop and the universal church. Where the Sunday celebration of the word is celebrated Sunday after Sunday, the remarks may be adapted or omitted.

The introductory remarks may be made by the leader of prayer or by another minister and may precede the gathering song, as suggested in the ritual. In this way they do not inhibit the flow of the rite which leads the assembly to prayer. For pastoral reasons, the introductory remarks may be made after the
liturgical greeting. Care must be taken that they are not made in an off handed manner, but in a way that leads the community to prayer.

Greeting

The liturgical greeting consists of two parts, the sign of the cross and the scriptural greeting itself. In the ritual the form of scriptural greeting used by lay leaders is not identical to the form used by ordained ministers. The changing (you to us) or addition of a word (May the Lord be with you . . .) seems to be rubricism or legalism at its worst. A completely new formula of greeting which also evokes a different response from the assembly is proposed. The greetings will reflect the nature of the liturgical season; nevertheless, following the Roman tradition, they will remain scriptural in content.

In consultation with the committee of the Office national de Liturgie it was decided that the response would be: Blessed be God forever. This response will be cued by the last line of the greeting which will always be: Let us bless the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

This dialogue has been placed in Catholic Book of Worship III, no. 11B to facilitate the response of the assembly.

Some sample greetings include:

Advent:
Blessed be Jesus Christ, who was, who is, and who is to come.
Let us bless the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Christmas:
Blessed be God, who has spoken through his Son, born for us of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Let us bless the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Lent:
Blessed be God, who has reconciled us through Christ and calls us to new life by his grace.
Let us bless the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Easter:
Blessed be the God of life, who broke the bonds of death by raising Jesus from the dead through the power of the Holy Spirit.
Let us bless the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Ordinary Time:
May the God whom we glorify with one heart and voice enable us, through the Spirit, to live in harmony as followers of Christ Jesus.
Let us bless the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
The greeting is a reminder that Christ is present among the assembly. It is a prayerful expression that the assembly may realize the presence of Christ in its midst and act as the body of Christ.

Preparatory Rites

Many options are provided for the introductory rites as a preparation for the liturgy of the word. Only one form is used at each celebration. These may be used to highlight the liturgical season, thus the following recommendations are made:

The Rite of Thanksgiving and Sprinkling of Water reminds the assembly of baptism. As such it is appropriate particularly during the Easter season. During the sprinkling an appropriate hymn or acclamation is sung and the leader moves throughout the assembly. The sprinkling of water is intended to touch all the members of the assembly. This is best achieved when the leader uses a generous amount of water while moving through the assembly. If the liturgical space allows the assembly to see the baptismal font, the rite of thanksgiving and sprinkling of water may take place from the baptismal area.

The Penitential Rite prepares the assembly for celebration by way of a confession of sin and is most appropriate for the season of Lent. Two forms are provided. The first, known as the Confiteor or I confess, originates from a private preparation for the eucharist. The second form consists of verses from penitential psalms in a dialogue form.

The Litany of Praise acknowledges the power of the risen Lord active in the midst of the church. It is suitable for all seasons and occasions, especially Advent and Ordinary Time. Although the Lord, have mercy and the Season of Advent are sometimes seen as penitential, the character of both is not directly penitential. The ritual provides a number of models for the acclamations in the Ordinary and in the Proper of the Seasons. Other invocations may be used, provided they are addressed to Christ and acknowledge his saving power and priestly ministry. The invocations or acclamations may be announced by another minister other than the leader of prayer; they may also be sung. The acclamations should never focus on the community or its sinfulness. Inappropriate are formulas which ask forgiveness for the times when . . . .

The Kyrie or Lord, have mercy is an ancient chant acclaiming the Lord and his loving kindness. The Roman Church adopted it from the litanies of the Eastern liturgies. It may be used in its English or Greek forms. This rite is most appropriate during Lent. When sung as a litany the assembly repeats the acclamation of the cantor. This rite is always sung.

The Gloria or Glory to God or Hymn of Praise is an ancient hymn of joy, expanded from the song of the angels at the birth of Christ. Originally its use was restricted to the most solemn of celebrations. In the Eastern liturgies it is used as the hymn at morning prayer. This rite is particularly appropriate during the Christmas season. The Gloria is by nature a hymn and is always sung. The assembly may sing it in its entirety or by repeating a refrain. When it is not sung as part of the preparatory rite, the Glory to God may be used as the sung acclamation during the procession and enthronement of the Lectionary outside Advent and Lent.
Ordinary Time: The use of the Litany of Praise is recommended in this season, but due to the length of this liturgical season, a variety of options is suggested.

Other rites, although rare at a Sunday celebration of the word, may be part of a ritual celebration that provides its own opening rite. At a funeral or baptismal liturgy, rites of reception are held near the entrance to the church and replace the usual introductory rite.

Opening Prayer

Immediately following the preparatory rite, the leader invites the people to pray. All pray silently for a short time, then, with hands outstretched, the leader, in words of the opening prayer, collects or sums up the prayers of the members of the assembly. The opening prayer is the most important element of the introductory rite and so should be the strongest element of the rite. The structure of liturgical prayer involves both the assembly and the leader of prayer, and both silent and verbal prayer. The most important element of the prayer is the prayer of the assembly which takes place in silence. Therefore, the leader of prayer must respect the silence that is part of the rite.

The ritual provides two prayers for each Sunday and Solemnity. The first is translated from the Latin. The second, which is proper to each cycle of readings (years A, B or C) is an alternative prayer inspired by the readings of the cycle of the particular Sunday.

I Lie Down This Night

I lie down this night with God,
And God will lie down with me;
I lie down this night with Christ,
And Christ will lie down with me;
I lie down this night with the Spirit,
And the Spirit will lie down with me;
God and Christ and the Spirit
Be lying down with me.

Celtic Prayer No. 327; see page 255.
A unique characteristic of the Sunday celebration of the word is the procession and enthronement of the word of God. It is accompanied by the use of incense and candles. The use of incense is optional in any liturgical service; nevertheless, its use adds to the incarnational dimension of liturgy which appeals not only to the mind, but also to the senses. The sight of the incense rising and its pleasant scent help to envelop the whole person in the liturgical action.

Procession and Enthronement of the Word

Immediately after the opening prayer, the assembly remains standing; an appropriate song or acclamation is sung by the community. During the hymn the Lectionary is carried in procession, accompanied by ministers carrying candles and incense, if it is used. After the song or acclamation is completed, the reader places the Lectionary on the ambo and incenses it. Then the leader of prayer speaks to the assembly, using the formula provided in the ritual:

May the Word of God always be heard in this place,
as it unfolds the mystery of Christ before us
and achieves our salvation within the Church.

Readings

Ideally, two readers will proclaim the readings before the gospel – the same procedure as at the eucharist. Naturally the readings should always be proclaimed from the Lectionary. A moment of silence is observed after each reading, before the responsorial psalm or the gospel acclamation is sung.

Gospel

The first inclination of most communities is for the leader of prayer or the preacher to proclaim the gospel. This springs from the fact that at the Sunday eucharist, the priest who presides or gives the homily reads the gospel. This practice arises from the absence of deacons in the Church, for the presider and/or the preacher are not the normal ministers of the gospel. The ancient tradition of the Church is to assign this ministry to a separate minister, the deacon. The purpose for this was to enable the presider/homilist to be the first listener of the word in order to proclaim the word in the homily. This principle should be observed in Sunday celebrations of the word. Therefore, a third reader, not the leader of prayer or the preacher (homily reader), proclaims the gospel at the ambo. Candles may be carried by servers to the ambo for the proclamation of the gospel.
As the minister of the gospel, a deacon, even if he is presiding, proclaims the gospel. However, if another deacon is present, the latter should proclaim the gospel even if he is not to give the homily.

When the gospel is proclaimed by a lay reader, the greeting: The Lord be with you is omitted, and the reading begins immediately with: A reading from the holy gospel according to . . . . The signs of the cross and the conclusion of the gospel are made as usual.

Homily or Reflection

A person authorized to preach by the bishop then gives the homily or reflection on the readings. If no one is authorized, another person, but not the person who has read the first or second reading or the gospel, reads the homily prepared for the day by the pastor or diocese. This may be done by the leader of prayer. The homily or reflection is given from the ambo.

Profession of Faith

The profession of faith, in addition to calling to mind the truths of the faith as a response to the word proclaimed in the assembly, is an affirmation of the faith in the Lord that binds the community together as one and unites it to the universal church. Either the Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed may be used. An optional introduction is provided. The Apostles' Creed in question form and the baptismal profession of faith are provided for occasional use, especially on Easter Sunday.

General Intercessions

After the profession of faith the leader of prayer immediately invites the assembly to pray for the needs of the Church and the world. The invitation to prayer is addressed to the community and not to God. The invitation is not a summary of the readings or homily, but an invitation to prayer.

In the general intercessions the community exercises its priestly role of interceding for the good of the church and all humanity and the salvation of the world. The structure of the prayer follows the pattern of liturgical prayers. The invitation to prayer is addressed to the community by the leader of prayer and not to God. The prayer of the assembly is expressed in a verbal response, such as Lord, hear our prayer. Ideally a person other than one of the readers should announce the intentions from the ambo.

The petitions are statements of intercession, and not reasons for praise and thanksgiving. They should not be moralistic or didactic, but express the concerns of the people of God in a direct manner. The petitions should be in simple sentence form and not too complex or long. They should be universal in scope, reflecting the needs not only of the local community, but of the universal church and the world. In the absence of the celebration of the eucharist, it is recommended that there be a petition for vocations to the priesthood.
The prayer of the faithful is a litanic prayer, and as such may be more effective when sung. Suggestions and music, contained in *Catholic Book of Worship III*, are recommended. When the intercessions are sung, the singing is led by a cantor from the stand or from the ambo (lectern).

Model invitations and petitions are offered in the ritual.

**Proclamation of Praise**

The proclamation of praise gives thanks for all that God has done, especially for the word of God that was proclaimed in the assembly and for the greatest of all gifts, the eternal and saving Word, Jesus Christ. The purpose of the prayer of praise in the Sunday celebration of the word is to be a response to the word of God heard in the readings and in the lives of the people of God. Thus the content of the proclamation of praise is directly related to the proclaimed word and the saving activity of God in Christ. (This part of the liturgy is considered in greater detail in the next article.)

**The Lord's Prayer**

The Lord's Prayer concludes the proclamation of praise when a communion service does not follow the liturgy of the word. Two versions of the Lord's Prayer are provided, each with their own distinctive introduction. In the Sunday Celebration of the Word and Hours, the doxology: *For the kingdom* . . . is always used.

**Sign of Peace**

The purpose of the sign of peace is to express the love, unity and reconciliation that Christ has bestowed on the community of faith. By it the members of the community recognize the presence of Christ in each other and in the community assembled in love. It expresses in a visible way the unity of the body of Christ which was manifested in the prayer of the community. The rite is meant to be brief, yet cordial. It is not a hierarchial greeting that is passed on from the leader of prayer downward to the other members of the community, but a sincere greeting to those nearby. It is not necessary for the leader to personally share the sign of peace with all the members of the community.

It is inappropriate that a song or music prolong this rite, or overshadow its meaning.
Proclamation of Praise

John G. Hibbard

A characteristic of a Sunday celebration of the word is the proclamation of praise, sometimes referred to as the prayer of thanksgiving. In order to avoid confusion between the eucharistic prayer which is the church’s solemn and great prayer of thanksgiving, the editorial committee for the preparation of the ritual has recommended the use of the terms *proclamation of praise* and *prayer of praise*. The general title of this section of the liturgy of the word is called proclamation of praise; the element of praise is not always conveyed by a prayer but may be a song, canticle or psalm of praise. Thus there are several modes by which the assembly may voice its praise in response to the word of God: a prayer, a song or a psalm.

Content of the Prayer of Praise

As was discussed above, the purpose and content of the prayer of praise and its relationship to the celebration as a whole had not been critically examined in the past. Some prayers were placed in the liturgy of the word, others in the rite of communion, some between the liturgy of the word and the communion rite. It was felt that this prayer should be seen in its relationship to the proclamation of the word of God as an act of praise for the action of God, revealed in the word. To make this obvious the proclamation of praise is placed closer to the proclamation of the word and draws its content and themes from the celebration of the word and not from the eucharist.

Some earlier forms of the prayer of praise were patterned on eucharistic prayers, some incorporating some or all of the eucharistic acclamations, others containing petitions for the unity of the church and for the living and the dead similar to those of the eucharistic prayer. Still others were eucharistic in content, which led to an ironic situation of either giving thanks for the eucharist which was not celebrated or confusing the reception of communion with the celebration of the eucharist.

Most prayers contain a number of sections in order to allow an acclamation to be repeated several times by the assembly. However, some prayers contained little or no development of thought from one section to another, but merely repeated the same thought or theme in different words in order to allow for several acclamations. Such prayers, however, proved to be tedious with extended use.

The position of the prayer of praise to a large extent determines its interpretation and meaning. In some places the proclamation of praise was placed after communion. Such a position presumed and necessitated the distribution of communion at the liturgy of the word, and prayers in this position become a thanksgiving for the reception of communion. Positioned after communion, the prayer emphasizes the communion rite over the celebration of the word and blurs the already confused relationship of the celebration of the eucharist to the reception of communion.
It was determined at an early date that the proclamation of praise must not resemble the eucharistic prayer, must not utilize eucharistic acclamations, and must not contain eucharistic references, especially as a thanksgiving for the celebration of the eucharist or the reception of communion. The repositioning of the prayer of praise to the liturgy of the word conditions a shift in the nature and purpose of the prayer. The content of the prayer must now reflect its connection to the word of God and to salvation history rather than to eucharistic themes. This removes the danger of confusing the prayer of praise with the eucharistic prayer by giving it a more clearly defined purpose. Thus, at the request of the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy, most prayers of praise are scriptural in origin or basis.

Forms of the Proclamation of Praise

Twelve options are provided in the ritual book for the proclamation of praise. Eventually it is envisaged that these will be varied from time to time, according to the spirit of the liturgy of that day. At first, it is recommended that the chosen form or prayer should be used a number of times in order that the community may become familiar with the prayer. The same may be said concerning the acclamation: an acclamation should be used a number of times so that the assembly may learn it by heart. Only one acclamation should be used with a prayer of praise. All the prayers, litanies and psalms of praise use a sung acclamation, which should always be sung by the whole assembly. On the other hand the song of praise should be sung by the whole assembly. Only one form of the proclamation of praise is used at a celebration.

- Prayer of Praise (Te Deum)
- Prayer of Praise (Ephesians 1, adapted)
- Prayer of Praise (Original composition)
- Prayer of Praise (Daniel 3, adapted)
- Prayer of Praise (Colossians 1, adapted)
- Prayer of Praise for Easter (1 Cor 5; Rom 6; 1 Cor 15; Phil 2; Rev 5)
- Prayer of Praise
- Prayer of Praise (Clement of Rome)
- Prayer of Praise (Based on Psalms 135-136)
- Prayer of Praise (original composition)
- Litany of Praise
- Song of Praise

Acclamations

In selecting and fashioning prayers to be used in the prayers of praise, natural cue lines that invite the response of the assembly were considered an important element of each prayer. For the prayers contained in the ritual, most use the same cue line to facilitate the acclamation of the assembly: (as) we voice our praise and sing.
The development or consideration of future prayers by the National Liturgical Office may use other cue lines, but it was felt that for the immediate future, those contained in the ritual should use an invariable formula.

The sacramentary committee of the National Liturgical Office has also been working on a project of additional acclamations for use in the eucharistic prayers. After considerable discussion of the nature of acclamations by this committee it was felt that acclamations in the eucharistic prayers and in the prayers of praise should be addressed to God. They may refer to the saving action or presence of Christ, that is, be christological in content. They should be expressions of praise. These acclamations are always to be sung by the whole assembly. Some suitable acclamations are given in the ritual and are listed below. Other similar acclamations addressed to God can be selected by those planning the liturgy, keeping in mind the context of the particular prayer used and suitability for singing by the whole community. In order to be effective the acclamation must be short, unchanging and sung. The acclamations from the eucharistic prayers (the Holy, holy, holy and the memorial acclamation), should never be used. Most acclamations can be used with any of the prayers:

- Alleluia! (or triple Alleluia!) (Outside Lent)
- All the ends of the earth have seen the power of God. (David Haas & Marty Haughen, refrain) (CBW III, 29B, 548).
- It is good to give you thanks, O Lord. (CBW II, 252; CBW III, 143)
- Give thanks to the Lord, his love is everlasting. (CBW II, 263; CBW III, 91, 92, 146)
- Forever I will sing the goodness of the Lord. (CBW II, 265; CBW III, 27, 64, 148, 448)
- Give the Lord glory and honour. (CBW II, 96; CBW III, 196)
- Strong is God's love for us. Alleluia! (CBW II, 428; CBW III, 546) (Outside Lent)
- How great is your name, O Lord our God, through all the earth. (CBW II, 409; CBW III, 553)
- Glory to God in the highest. (Various settings) (Outside Lent)
- Glory and praise for evermore. (CBW III, 684)
- Glory to you, O God. (CBW III, 584, antiphon 2)

The litany of praise: The litany offers a unique challenge for it demands a short invocation and response without a spoken or musical introduction or lead-in, thus the inflection of the leader's voice is important to provide the proper invitation for the community's response. One method is for a cantor to use a sung introduction. As in other forms of the litany, it is better when the invocations as well as the response are sung. However, the use of this form of praise is new and there is little musical repertoire or experience in its use. There is much room for development of this form of praise by musicians.

The song of praise: An appropriate song of praise addressed to God the Father may be chosen as the proclamation of praise. Careful selection is required to ensure that the song is one of praise, is sufficiently long to
establish an atmosphere of praise, is appropriate to the celebration in terms of its content and theme, and is not a eucharistic hymn. Some suggestions are provided in the ritual.

**A psalm or canticle of praise:** A psalm or canticle of praise may be chosen. The psalm is sung in the same manner as a responsorial psalm. The gospel canticle used at morning or evening prayer is not recommended, as these have a unique relationship to the liturgy of hours.

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**The Mother’s Blessing** (excerpt)

The face of God be to thy countenance,
The face of Christ the kindly,
The face of the Spirit Holy,
Be saving thee each hour,
In danger and in sorrow;
Be saving thee each hour
In danger and in sorrow.

Celtic Prayer No. 294; see page 255.
Concluding Rite

John G. Hibbard

The concluding rite is meant to be brief and mark the close of the celebration. It consists of some practical items, the announcements and a collection. It concludes with the blessing and dismissal.

Announcements

Brief announcements, if any, may be made at this time by the leader of prayer or another member of the assembly. The temptation to read or repeat announcements contained in the parish bulletin should be avoided. The announcements should be so brief and to the point that it will not be necessary to invite the congregation to be seated. The announcements should not be made from the ambo, as this is reserved for the proclamation of the word of God.

Collection

Following the announcements, a collection for the needs of the poor and the church may be taken up. It is recommended that at this time instrumental music be played, or the choir sing a liturgical selection.

The collection should avoid the appearance of the presentation of gifts as at Mass. The collection may be brought forward by the collectors and placed in a suitable place, but not on or near the altar. Neither should it be received by the leader of prayer. No other objects, such as candles, should be brought to the altar at this time or accompany the collection.

Blessing

The blessing takes the form of the simple blessing. Formulas are provided in the ritual. As in the other forms of greeting in the celebration, a lay leader omits the greeting: The Lord be with you. However the formula, Let us bow our heads . . ., may be used in all forms.

The blessing employs the first person pronoun us, rather than the second person you, which is used by a deacon or priest.

Dismissal

The dismissal is more than the end of the celebration, it is the commissioning and sending forth of the community to proclaim the mighty deeds of the Lord in their daily lives. In this sense, it is the continuation of the Christian life celebrated in God's word.
The joining of the rite of communion to the liturgy of the word, although a common experience, is not without its problems. The first problem is understanding what is happening: the problem is not that there is something wrong with receiving communion outside the eucharist; the problem is that most Catholics do not understand the difference between the reception of communion and the celebration of the eucharist. To most, the eucharist is the reception of communion and vice versa.

The intimate link of communion to the celebration of the eucharist has already been weakened in the Mass by the custom of distributing communion from the tabernacle rather than from the eucharistic banquet and sacrifice. This separation of communion from the celebration is widened in the custom of distributing communion on a Sunday to the assembly outside the celebration of the eucharist. This means that there is now a separation for the whole community, first of all, from the action of taking bread and wine, giving thanks over the bread and wine, breaking the bread and pouring out the wine, and secondly, from these four actions occurring on the Lord's Day. In many cases the distribution of communion is linked to a celebration of the eucharist that takes place outside the community and most likely not on the Lord’s Day.

The unfortunate element is that many people do not see the issues involved. Without denying the real presence of Christ, communion outside the Sunday eucharist is in danger of being reduced only to the static presence of Christ while losing sight of the dynamic activity of God in Christ within the assembly. In other words, the eucharist is in danger of being reduced to a thing rather than an action of Christ and an action of the eucharistic assembly. The confusing of the distribution of communion with the celebration of the eucharist is one dimension of this problem that eventually will affect even our perception of the celebration of the eucharist.

While in the past the few members of the community who could not be present at the Sunday eucharist could be linked to the eucharist and the community through the reception of the Body of the Lord, now the whole community is separated from the Sunday eucharist and from its true identity as a eucharistic community. For it is in the celebration of the eucharist that the community is actualized and truly becomes the church, a visible sign to the world. The community can be a visible sign in the celebration of the word or the hours (that is the official liturgy of the Church), but it is not actualized as a eucharistic community.

Sunday celebrations of the word challenge all communities to understand what they are celebrating in the eucharist and to celebrate the eucharist well. In the eucharist, the community is one with Christ in remembering and making present the paschal mystery of Christ who has offered himself to God for all time; the community is one with Jesus in eating and drinking the pledge of future
glory and of the kingdom feast; the community is one with Christ in praising God in the power of the Holy Spirit; the community is one with Christ in being renewed in its mission of service and prayer for the glory of God and the salvation of the world; the community is one with Christ in celebrating and actualizing the union of all the baptized with God. This active participation in the eucharist is more than a personal and devotional union with Christ which is the perception of many who celebrate the eucharist and receive communion.

When it has been decided that the rite of communion outside the eucharist is to be celebrated, the above issues need to be addressed and effective catechesis is called for within the community. It is only with this proper understanding that the assembly will come to appreciate and long for the celebration of the eucharist.

Leading the Communion Rite

Only one person acts as the leader of the assembly's prayer. However, because the rite of distribution of communion is a distinct part of the celebration, and because the rite provides for a separate minister of communion, it is possible that a communion minister would exercise this ministry. In this case, it must be understood that there is not a second person presiding. As in the case of the proclamation of the gospel, one person exercises a ministerial function (proclaiming the gospel or giving communion) while another person presides at the celebration. It is recognized that conducting the rite of distribution of communion will call forth more from a minister of communion than the act of giving communion. The minister of communion must be adept at public speaking in addressing the assembly in the invitation to the Lord's Prayer and communion. When a minister of communion does not possess the ability to do this, it is wise for the leader of prayer to conduct the rite of distribution of communion.

- When the leader of prayer leads the communion service, he or she remains at his or her place, until the ministers of communion have transferred the vessels containing the holy eucharist to the altar.

- When a minister of communion conducts the communion service, the leader of prayer remains at the place of leading the prayer of the community and continues to preside over the celebration.

- Whoever leads the communion service, concludes it with the prayer after communion, the minister of communion from the altar or the leader of prayer from the place of presiding.

In light of what has been said above, a communion service should be held only when eucharistic bread (hosts) can be brought from a neighbouring parish the same day as the Sunday celebration of the word, at least the day before, or the pastor can leave consecrated bread from an earlier Mass, recently celebrated in the community, in order that there may be some connection between the receiving of communion and the celebration of the eucharist from which communion proceeds. When hosts are consecrated so long in advance of their use by the community that the link between the celebration of the eucharist is unclear, a communion service should not be joined to the Sunday celebration of the word.

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Preparation of the Altar

After the sign of peace the servers prepare the altar by placing the ritual book and a corporal on it. Candles at or near the altar may be lighted or brought to the altar.

Bringing of the Blessed Sacrament to the Altar

After the altar has been prepared by the servers, as many ministers of communion as are needed go to the tabernacle, or the place where the Blessed Sacrament has been properly reserved. They transfer the eucharistic bread to as many vessels as are needed for communion at the tabernacle, or before the celebration. Then these are brought to the altar. The leader of prayer and the other ministers of communion approach the altar at this time and take their places at the side of the altar or behind it with those who brought the eucharistic bread to the altar. However, only the leader of prayer or the communion minister who is to lead the communion rite stands at the altar; the others stand to the sides or slightly behind the altar.

Invitation to Communion

The breaking of bread does not take place, nor is the Lamb of God sung or recited. The minister receives communion and then gives communion to the other communion ministers. They may also receive communion after the communion of the community. The communion ministers then go to their stations and give communion in the usual manner.

Reposition of the Blessed Sacrament

After communion, the communion ministers return the eucharistic bread to the tabernacle and the servers remove the candles from the altar.

Period of Silence

A period of silent prayer then follows communion. While a psalm or hymn of praise is permitted, it is preferable to respect the silent prayer of the community.

Prayer after Communion

The communion rite concludes with the prayer after communion, which follows immediately, before any announcements. Since it is a part of the communion rite, it may be led by the communion minister, if he or she led the prayers of the communion rite. The minister stands at the altar or at the usual place of the leader of prayer. The community stands, and the minister invites the community to pray as usual. The prayer is taken from one of the seasonal prayers after communion that are provided in the ritual. The prayer after communion is not a prayer of thanksgiving but is a prayer asking that the effects of communion may be fruitful in the lives of the members of the community. Although a time of silent prayer may have preceded the prayer, the communion minister allows a brief moment of reflection between the invitation to pray and the prayer.

After the announcements and the collection, the leader of prayer blesses and dismisses the assembly as usual.
Special Occasions

John G. Hibbard

The ritual book, *Sunday Celebrations of the Word and Hours*, also contains pastoral notes to assist liturgical planners in a number of special occasions when the celebration of the eucharist is not possible. Due to the special nature of some celebrations it may not be appropriate to celebrate a liturgy of the word, or to celebrate the ritual occasions of initiation outside the eucharist. The following is a sampling of the pastoral notes.

Passion (Palm) Sunday

The celebration of Passion Sunday may be observed in the following manner. The community may celebrate Christ's entry into Jerusalem to accomplish his paschal mystery by a procession (first form) or solemn entrance (second form). The simple entrance (third form) does not fit the order of the Sunday Celebration of the Word and is not used. The essence of the procession or solemn entrance is that the whole community (or those who wish) join in the procession. When the community cannot join in the procession, the commemoration of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem is not celebrated and the celebration begins in the usual way.

The community assembles in a suitable place distinct from the church (first form) or, if the procession cannot be held outside the church, the community gathers in front of the church doors or inside the church in a place distinct from the sanctuary (second form). In all cases all members of the assembly hold palm branches. The leader of prayer, ministers carrying the processional cross, which is suitably decorated, and candles and incense, if it is used, and the other ministers, gather with the community.

The leader of prayer addresses the people, using the introductory remarks given for Passion Sunday, then continues with the sign of the cross and the liturgical greeting. Next follows the invitation to the celebration of the entry into Jerusalem. The blessing of the branches does not take place unless a deacon presides; therefore, the lay leader of prayer uses the second form of the prayer.

A gospel reader then comes forward to proclaim the gospel, the account of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem. The ministers with the candles stand on each side of the reading stand for the proclamation of the gospel. Incense may be placed in the censer and the Lectionary is incensed before the reading.

After the gospel, the leader invites the community to join in the procession. The procession proceeds to the church or to the sanctuary, or around the church to the sanctuary. The minister with incense leads, followed by the cross-bearer accompanied by ministers carrying lighted candles, then a lector carrying the Lectionary; the community, including the leader and the other ministers, follow. A hymn in honour of Christ the King, such as *All Glory, Laud and Honour*, is sung during the procession.
The assembly takes its place in the church, and the procession is concluded with a prayer led by the leader of prayer. Since the prayer is an integral part of the procession and concludes it, no other elements should intervene. The enthronement of the Lectionary is not held, although the Lectionary is carried in the procession.

The ministers carrying the cross, candles and incense, and the Lectionary enter the sanctuary as usual and place the cross and candles in their places. The enthronement of the word of God is not held after the opening prayer, rather the lector places the Lectionary on the ambo immediately, then stands nearby for the prayer. The first reading follows immediately after the prayer.

The passion narrative may be read in parts as usual. The gospel reader, and not the leader of prayer, takes the part of Christ, unless the leader is a deacon.

If a song of praise is chosen for the proclamation of praise, the hymn should be addressed to God the Father and not to Christ.

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**The Easter Triduum**

The Easter or Paschal Triduum is the centre or heart of the liturgical year and the life of the Church. The Paschal Triduum is to the liturgical year what Sunday is to the week. "The Easter Triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper, reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil, and closes with evening prayer on Easter Sunday."1

The central mystery of faith that is celebrated is the life-giving death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the Easter Triduum is one great feast and should not be seen as three separate days or celebrations. Each celebration highlights one dimension of the Paschal Mystery within the larger context of the mystery of our salvation and the ongoing saving reality of God’s action in the world. For this reason, if the Triduum is celebrated, all these elements must be celebrated within one community.

The celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus links the Easter Triduum in a unique manner to the celebration of initiation and to the eucharist. The assembling of a Christian community deprived of celebrating the eucharist and initiation removes the heart of the liturgy of the Triduum. Through no fault of its own, the community attempts to observe the paschal mystery without celebrating those sacramental rites which embody the paschal mystery: initiation and eucharist.

It is for this reason that, if at all possible, several communities should assemble as a larger community to celebrate the Triduum.2

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1 General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, n. 19
2 See Eucharisticum mysterium, nn. 26 and 27; and the Congregation for Divine Worship’s Circular Letter Paschalis solemnitas, 16 January 1988, nn. 43 and 94.

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Evening Celebration of the Lord's Supper (Holy Thursday)

Most of the elements in this celebration centre on the eucharist: the solemn celebration of the eucharist itself, communion under both kinds directly from the eucharistic table, the solemn transfer of the eucharist to a chapel of adoration, and prayer before the blessed sacrament. According to the church's ancient tradition, and to emphasize the unity that springs from the eucharist, the only Mass that can be celebrated, other than the diocesan chrism Mass, is the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper.

When it is impossible for the eucharist to be celebrated, and the community is unable to celebrate with another community, it may gather to celebrate evening prayer in a more solemn form. The celebration of the liturgy of the word on Holy Thursday presents special difficulties, since the prayers and readings presume the context of the eucharist and the union of the community in celebrating the self-offering of Jesus in the sacred meal and sacrifice of the eucharist. Since the celebration on this night commemorates the institution of the eucharist and its saving reality, any celebration without the eucharist must be well planned and prepared. Any and every attempt to imitate the rites of the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper must be avoided.

Since the prayers and readings of the eucharist refer to the church's participation in the action of the eucharist, which is the mystery of the Lord's death and resurrection, their use outside Mass is problematic and is not recommended. The celebration of evening prayer may be the best way to begin the celebration of the Triduum. The reading and prayer from the Liturgy of Hours is recommended.

On Holy Thursday, communion outside the eucharist may be given only to the sick and dying. On this night the tabernacle of the church should be empty and communion should not be given outside Mass. Therefore, the eucharist should not be reserved beforehand for distribution at any celebration.

Although the Blessed Sacrament is not reserved for the adoration of the community when the eucharist is not celebrated, the community can gather to pray and observe a vigil and begin the paschal fast. If desired, appropriate readings may be proclaimed and psalms and hymns be sung for an extended period of time in the form of night prayer or a vigil.

Since the washing of feet is dependent upon the presence of the community's leader and the leader's relationship of service to the community, the washing of feet is not an appropriate gesture in all circumstances. Bringing gifts to church for the poor or the collecting of the community's contribution to the Share Lent campaign may express the Church's concern for and service to others.

Celebration of the Passion of the Lord (Good Friday)

At first thought, it seems that the celebration of the Passion of the Lord may be an ideal celebration for a community without a priest since it is a celebration of the word with holy communion. However, the distribution of holy communion on this day is tied to the celebration of the eucharist on the preceding evening. In the absence of a priest and the celebration of the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, there is no reserved sacrament to receive. While it may
be possible to receive consecrated hosts from another parish, communion from another community cannot unite the community to a eucharistic celebration it did not celebrate. Since the Triduum is one celebration, the unity of the great feast would be fragmented. If the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper was not celebrated within the community, the distribution of communion at the Celebration of the Lord's Passion is not to take place even if a priest presides.

In this case, the order of the celebration of the Lord's Passion would consist of two parts: the liturgy of the word and the veneration of the cross. The prayer after communion would be omitted and the liturgy would close with the prayer over the people. A prayer of praise would not be used.

Celebration of the Lord's Resurrection – Easter Vigil

In accord with ancient tradition, this night is one of vigil for the Lord, consisting of prayer, readings and psalms. The entire vigil takes place at night. It begins after dark and concludes before daybreak. The form of this ancient service is essentially the celebration of hours called a vigil, and not a liturgy of the word.

The purpose of the Vigil is to celebrate the resurrection of the Lord in the sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation and eucharist. A problem arises in planning this celebration when the community cannot celebrate initiation: some parts of the Vigil are not appropriate to a celebration of the word.

The blessing of the fire and candle is omitted, but the community may gather in darkness to light a large candle and join in a procession to the church, carrying lighted tapers, in other words, to celebrate a form of the celebration of the light which is a part of evening prayer. The proclamation of Easter (Exsultet) and the liturgy of the word take place as usual.

The celebration of initiation cannot take place since the process of initiation cannot be completed with the celebration of confirmation and the eucharist.

As on Holy Thursday evening, the reception of communion is so tied to the celebration of the eucharist, that communion should not be distributed outside of Mass.

The renewal of baptismal promises may take place, but since water for baptism was not blessed, the sprinkling rite is omitted, since all holy water was removed from the church at the beginning of the Triduum. It would not be appropriate to use "old" water to express the "new" beginning of life in Christ on this most holy night.

The proclamation of praise may be used. A special form of the prayer of praise is provided in the Ritual.

Celebration of the Lord's Resurrection – Easter Sunday

A Sunday celebration of the word may be celebrated on Easter Sunday; however, communion should be distributed only if consecrated hosts can be brought to the church from the celebration of the Easter Vigil or an Easter Sunday Mass in a neighbouring parish.
The renewal of baptismal promises replaces the creed, and the sprinkling of the assembly is done only if water from the Easter Vigil can be used. The form of the baptismal creed is provided in the ritual.

Sacraments of Initiation of Adults and Children

The sacraments of initiation for adults and children of catechetical age are always celebrated in the context of the eucharist, with the celebration of the eucharist as the climax of initiation; therefore, baptism and confirmation cannot be celebrated in the context of a Sunday celebration of the word and hours.

Baptism of Infants

The baptism of infants is not normally celebrated in the absence of an ordained minister. If a community is without an ordained minister for a prolonged period of time and the bishop appoints an administrator or moderator for the parish and/or authorizes that person to perform the baptism of infants, the celebration of baptism of infants may take place within a liturgy of the word.

The rite outlined in the Rite of Baptism for Children is followed, using the “Rite of Baptism for Several Children by a Catechist When No Priest or Deacon Is Available” or the corresponding chapter for one child. The preparatory rites of the celebration are omitted and the reception of the child or children takes place at the entrance of the church.

If the opening prayer is prayed at the entrance of the church, the ministers carrying the censer, processional cross, candles and Lectionary may lead the family, sponsors and others in procession to the front of the church, where the family and friends of the child take their place. The enthronement of the word may take place as usual.

If the opening prayer takes place after the procession, the lector remains at the ambo. After the opening prayer, the Lectionary is placed on the ambo and the enthronement may take place as usual, or the enthronement of the Lectionary may be omitted.

The rite of baptism takes place after the homily or reflection, as outlined in the ritual, Baptism for Children. The proclamation of praise (the prayer over the water), the intercessions and profession of faith are part of the rite of baptism and are not repeated. Afterwards, the Sunday celebration of the word continues with the sign of peace.

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3 Code of Canon Law, nn. 866 and 883; Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, nn. 14, 198, 208; Rite of Christian Initiation of Children, nn. 280-284; Rite of Confirmation, n. 7b
If a communion service is held, the rite outlined in the ritual for Baptism or in the ritual for Sunday celebrations of the word is followed. When the rite in the ritual for Baptism is followed, a communion minister may conduct the communion service in place of the leader of prayer or a catechist.

Reception of Baptized Persons into Full Communion

The reception of baptized persons into full communion with the Catholic Church never takes place outside Mass, since the act of full communion can only take place by celebrating the eucharist. In addition, without a priest the sacrament of confirmation is unable to be celebrated at this time.

First Communion of Children

The reception of communion for the first time refers not just to the act of receiving communion, but to the act of fully participating in the celebration of the eucharist, which includes the act of joining the assembly in presenting gifts of bread and wine, giving thanks to God in the great prayer of the church, breaking bread, and receiving communion. For this reason, the first communion of children baptized as infants cannot be celebrated outside the Mass, except as Viaticum in the danger of death.

Prayer of Distress (excerpt)

In name of the King of life,
In name of the Christ of love,
In name of the Holy Spirit,
The Triune of my strength.

Celtic Prayer No. 239; see page 255.
Ministries

Ed Gale

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In a Sunday celebration of the word, as in the celebration of the eucharist, the various ministers, trained and prepared, should work and participate with the leader of prayer. The ministers should carry out the functions of their individual ministries and only those functions that pertain to their ministries. As in the celebration of the eucharist the variety of ministers is a fuller sign of the active participation and expression of faith on the part of the community. Therefore, lectors, cantors, other music ministers, ministers of hospitality, communion ministers, and servers all carry out their ministries in the liturgy of the word. Those who prepare the environment and any others who serve the community by doing their part to give dignity to the liturgy perform a ministry which is also needed when the community gathers for a Sunday celebration of the word.

All the liturgical ministers should prepare the liturgy as a team. “From the teamwork which is essential to a community preparing such liturgies can flow a new sense of the whole celebrating community as the primary subject of worship: the Body of Christ, united by him and animated by his presence and yet with its variety of persons and gifts.” Preparing as a team also helps bring about the communication necessary to celebrate the liturgy with reverence and dignity.

Presiders

The ordained ministers of the church have the responsibility of presiding over the prayer of the church. This prayer, addressed to God by the priest, is said in the person of Christ and in the name of the entire holy people of God and of all present. Where they exercise their ministry, deacons are also called to lead the prayer of Sunday assemblies. “Since he has been ordained for the nurture and increase of the people of God, it belongs to him to lead the prayers.”

In the absence of both a priest and a deacon the pastor may choose, according to the procedure set by the diocese, lay persons to lead the Sunday worship of the community. As is the case when a priest or deacon presides, the lay people who lead the assembly’s prayer should not assume the roles of other ministers.

1 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, n. 28
2 Sunday Celebrations of the Word: Gathered in Expectation of the Eucharist, n. 16
3 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, n. 33
4 Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest, n. 29
Those chosen to preside should be accepted by the community and should already be actively involved in the faith-life of the community. They should have an appreciation of the community’s need to gather on the Lord’s Day even when the eucharist cannot be celebrated. They should seek to deepen their desire to be nourished by word and sacrament. Leaders of prayer should have the qualities of leadership and the spirit of cooperation that will enable them to work effectively and sensitively with the pastor’s pastoral team and people.

Leaders of prayer should also have good public speaking ability, be somewhat at ease in praying in public, have confidence in addressing an assembly coupled with a bearing or body presence that would complement those gifts. They must be committed to their ministry and be able to integrate their ministry with their family and personal obligations.

Preachers

The preaching of the homily is part of most liturgical rites and is normally reserved to a priest or deacon. In the absence of ordained ministers lay persons may preach or lead a reflection on the word of God, provided they have been trained and authorized to do this by the bishop. The lay person delegated to preach may be a person other than the one who presides.

Lectors

The first and second readings are proclaimed by two separate readers, as in the liturgy of the word when the eucharist is celebrated. In a Sunday celebration of the word the gospel should not be proclaimed by the one presiding, but by a third lector. The general intercessions should be announced by a fourth person. In the event that the responsorial psalm cannot be sung by a cantor, the person reading the petitions could also lead the psalm.

Cantor

The role of the cantor is to facilitate the assembly’s sung prayer; the cantor may also be the psalmist who leads the responsorial psalm: The psalms are meant to be sung, and every effort should be made to train singers in a parish community to sing them. In order to facilitate the assembly’s singing the refrain, a seasonal psalm may be chosen according to the principles outlined for the celebration of the eucharist in the General Instruction for the Roman Missal, no. 36.

Other Ministers

If a communion service concludes a Sunday celebration of the word, the regular communion ministers in the community serve at this liturgy also. One of

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5 Code of Canon Law, Canon 766. See also Decree no. 6 of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, October 23, 1984.
these communion ministers may lead the communion rite, or at least lead the invitation to communion, as well as share the eucharistic bread during the communion procession.

During a Sunday celebration of the word the ministers of hospitality welcome the members of the parish family, make any strangers feel at home and assist those who are in need as they would when the eucharist is celebrated. Those who take up the collection during the eucharist do so also when the eucharist is not celebrated, but there is no presentation of gifts.

Servers also carry out their role in a Sunday celebration of the word, by carrying the candles, the cross and the incense and by assisting the leader by holding the ritual during presidential prayers.

In any liturgical celebration the role of those who facilitate the sung worship of the assembly and who create a prayerful atmosphere is important. In addition to the cantor, mentioned above, choirs, leaders of song, instrumentalists and music directors play an essential role. For more on the role of music in a Sunday celebration of the word, see the article on Music in this issue of the Bulletin.

Prayer to Jesus (excerpt)

But that I might find rest everlasting
In the repose of the Trinity,
In the Paradise of the godly,
In the Vine-garden of Thy love.

Celtic Prayer No. 241; see page 255.
Leading the Prayer of the Community

Zita Maier

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The role of the leader of prayer is first of all one of service: to enable the gathered community to pray together in praise and thanksgiving to God through Christ, the Head of the Body, the church, in the Holy Spirit. The leader of prayer, in facilitating the community's prayer, prays as one among equals, as a friend, not as one who in any way "lords it over" the community but rather who empowers the community's prayer.

The liturgy is first of all ritual prayer, that is, a structured, repetitive pattern of prayer, familiar to all so that the public prayer of the community is possible when the assembly has gathered for this purpose. Its repetitive nature leads to the community's familiarity with the ritual, thus enabling the community to enter into the prayer. In this way the liturgy belongs to the whole church, the community, and not to any individual, including the leader of prayer. The presider therefore serves best by respecting the ritual of the liturgy, by becoming totally familiar with the structure itself and all of its elements, and thus understanding what adaptations might be needed for a particular community in responding to pastoral needs. Choices can then be made that are truly the prayer of the assembly.

The service of leadership includes all aspects of the prayer of the community. Most obvious are those prayers spoken by the presider, such as greetings, invitations to prayer, the presidential prayers, and so on. Also part of the ministry of the leader of prayer is participation in and modeling of all aspects of the community's prayer: when the community sings, the leader of prayer sings; when the assembly listens to the scripture readings, the leader of prayer listens; when the assembly responds, the leader of prayer responds; and when the community reflects in silence, the leader of prayer also reflects in silence. Finally, the leader of prayer enables all other ministers to carry out their roles in the community's prayer.

To lead the church's worship is exercising a ministry in the name of Christ, who is the starting point of all our prayer. Those who preside must believe in Jesus and live according to his gospel in order to minister to the Body of Christ. Those who lead the prayer of God's people best are those who image the presence of God in their own lives and in the community.

Those parts that are directly the leader's concern in the Sunday celebration of the word are the introductory rites which include a greeting, preparatory rite and opening prayer, in many cases the shared reflection, the invitation to the creed, the invitation and the conclusion of the general intercessions, the
prayer of praise (or the introduction to the song of praise), and the concluding rite with the concluding prayer, blessing and dismissal.

Skills of the Leader

Formation, training and renewal should be taken for granted for those chosen by their communities to lead their prayer. Parish communities, therefore, must do long term planning so that prayer leaders are not only chosen but properly prepared when they are needed.

- Those who preside should have the qualities of leadership and the spirit of cooperation that will enable them to work effectively and sensitively with the parish team and the people. They need to be somewhat at ease in praying in public, have confidence in addressing an assembly coupled with a bearing or body presence that complements those gifts.

- Among the skills required is good speaking ability that allows them to proclaim the prayers, as do those who proclaim the word. A lector's workshop which develops these skills is basic; such a workshop includes good use of the voice, appropriate pacing and volume, breathing, using the microphone, good posture, diction and inflection, and above all good eye contact, which is essential for all leaders of prayer. Also needed are organizational skills, reverence for all assembled, for the ritual and liturgical objects, flexibility, ability to make all feel welcome, and the ability to inspire others. The leader does not apologize but does not dominate, and is always sensitive to the community and its strengths and weaknesses.

The leader of prayer keeps in mind that liturgy is above all a celebration by the people of God; liturgy is not meant to teach, though learning always takes place when it is celebrated well, nor is liturgy meant to entertain. The leader of prayer’s manner, therefore, is one of reverence and dignity, of service to the community, but without any sense that he or she is there to teach or entertain.

The ministry of leading the prayer of the community is a ministry of unity. The leader of prayer enables the community to be one. As an image of this unity, it is not proper to have more than one person lead in order to enable the community to enter into prayer. However, for pastoral reasons a community may choose one person to lead the liturgy of the word and another, a minister of communion, to lead the rite of communion. Even if one lay person leads the liturgy, having several persons to take their turn in this ministry is recommended.

Vesture

The alb is the white garment of all the baptized; however, it is the practice for the baptized to come for worship in street clothes. For this reason, many non-ordained leaders of prayer dress in the normal clothes of the community. It must be kept in mind that the manner of dress should show the dignity of the ministry but not attract attention; those present for the celebration should remember what the ministers said and did, not what they wore.

On the other hand, when the assembly is large, those presiding would be more visible as the leaders of the community's prayer if they were dressed in
an alb. If an alb is worn, the garment should be graceful and well-made from material that is of good quality.

Across Canada various customs prevail, and those involved should know what the diocesan guidelines are and observe them. The stole, and not the alb, is the garment that signifies the ministry of those ordained as bishop, presbyter or deacon and therefore it is used only by the ordained.

Chair

Since non-ordained leaders are directed not to use the chair normally used by a presbyter or a bishop, another chair should be placed in such a way that the one who gathers the community is visible at all times and is the focal point when he or she actually leads the assembly's prayer. The leader leaves the chair only during the rite of communion. All other rites are led from the chair, which is a simple but dignified piece of furniture. If the leader of prayer delivers the reflection on the word, it may be done from the ambo.

Some Practical Points

Presiding at liturgy begins long before the actual liturgy takes place. Preparation for the liturgy includes prayerful reflection, becoming thoroughly familiar with the whole liturgy and each of its parts, preparing all the details, rehearsing with the other ministers, and doing a “walk through” before one leads a celebration for the first time. Some points to keep in mind:

• Do not adopt a “church persona.” One comes before God in an honest way, true to oneself.

• Everything that a leader of prayer does is an expression of the prayer of the community, including every posture, movement, action and gesture; therefore a leader walks and carries out actions and gestures in a deliberate, unhurried, reverent manner, visible to the community as expression of their own prayer.

• A liturgical celebration has one focal point at a time; when a leader of prayer’s role is not the focal point, such as during the reading of the scriptures, the leader of prayer’s focus is toward that action.

• Be totally familiar with the space; plan each position and movement beforehand, and know exactly where to be positioned for each part of the liturgy.

• The leader of prayer knows the liturgical texts so well that he or she truly owns each prayer, so that each prayer comes from the heart. Greetings, other dialogues and introductions are memorized.

• Liturgical objects, books, vessels, candles, the cross, are handled with reverence; carrying an object with both hands gives a better sense of reverence and dignity.

• A leader’s warm and welcoming presence is evident in the manner of leading the liturgy rather than in adding or substituting colloquial greetings and dismissals for the liturgical texts. A liturgical greeting is indeed a greeting in the Lord, and a dismissal is a commission to live what the community just celebrated.
• All options are prepared ahead of time, and any explanations to be given at appropriate times are also thoroughly prepared. These are always brief and to the point.

• The altar is never used as a place for books or other articles, when they are not needed. A small stool beside the chair used by the leader of prayer might be needed for this purpose. The altar is used only during the communion rite, when the reserved sacrament is placed there. Only the ritual needed for the rite is ever placed on the altar. This same principle applies equally at the celebration of the eucharist.

Ritual Movement and Gestures

Walking in procession or from one place to another in the liturgy is ritual movement; such public movement is unhurried and reverent, slower than private walking. It signifies God's presence among a pilgrim people.

Gestures add dignity and beauty to a liturgical celebration. Bowing is a gesture of reverence toward the altar, (for example, at the entrance procession when the ministers reach the sanctuary area). Bowing is not done by those carrying a liturgical object: the lectionary, the cross, or candles. The genuflection is also a gesture of reverence, given to the reserved eucharist (for example, during the communion rite).

Other gestures are those of greeting and praying. These should be used only after careful rehearsal and when the one presiding is comfortable using them to enhance the meaning of the texts they accompany. The gesture of greeting is an extension of the hands and arms in welcome, used when the liturgical greeting is given. This gesture is done in a way that is inclusive of all present.

The orans or praying gesture is used during the presidential prayers (such as the opening and concluding prayers, the prayer of praise, and the Lord's Prayer). This gesture – which is not used when the leader says, “Let us pray” – consists of raising the forearms upward from the elbow, with open hands directed upward to show that the prayer is directed to God, and hands turned slightly outward (with palms toward the assembly) to show that the prayer of this community and the whole world is included. The size of these gestures depends on the size of the assembly. The hands are brought down and together, slowly, during the conclusion of the prayer, as an invitation for all to say “Amen.” The use of the orans gesture implies that an assistant holds the book (or that a small, unobtrusive stand is used).

Silence

The silence required in the presidential prayers, after the homily, and after communion are initiated and observed by the leader of prayer. The silence after the readings is observed by the one presiding, who sits in reflective meditation. These are not the times to turn pages, to prepare for the next part of the celebration, for movement or any action except the one at hand: reflection.

The silence that needs special attention on the part of the leader of prayer is the silent prayer that follows the words, Let us pray, in the presidential prayers.
This is a substantial time of silence, long enough for those in the assembly to formulate in their hearts their own prayers, during which the one presiding also stands in reflective prayer. Only afterward does the leader proceed with the spoken (or sung) prayer.

Incense

The use of incense in any liturgical celebration is optional. Nevertheless, its use, especially in the procession and enthronement of the Lectionary, is recommended and encouraged. To some the use of incense at a celebration led by a lay person would not be considered. However, the use of the rituals of the church is part of our Catholic heritage and is not reserved only to the ordained.

Good Wish (excerpt)

The arm of the God of life be thine,
The arm of Christ the loving be thine,
The arm of the Spirit Holy be thine,
To shield thee and surround thee.

Celtic Prayer No. 291; see page 255.
Ministry of Music

Zita Maier and John G. Hibbard

Singing is an essential and integral part of any liturgical celebration; it is a sign of love and joy, an expression of the heart as well as the mind. A text is always made more significant when it is sung. The assembly singing appropriate acclamations, responses, and hymns is considered normative for a gathering of the church for the purposes of worshipping God in ritual prayer, for it allows the assembly to be the subject of its own praise and not just a passive listener of a song of praise.

Music, both instrumental and choral, can also create an environment or atmosphere of prayer and meditation. Music can move and inspire us. The songs and refrains of the liturgy express our response to a loving Creator who sustains us in love and continues the work of redemption in the coming of Jesus into our lives. While singing in our culture is reserved for a few special occasions, the celebration of our unique relationship to God through Jesus should be the highlight of the week.

Music has practical applications as well. The hymns and acclamations accompany processions or ritual actions: the gathering of the community with the entrance of the ministers, the procession of the lectionary or gospel book, the procession to receive communion and the assembly's going forth to live the good news. Music is functional, but it also expresses the involvement of the assembly in what is happening, and opens up the meaning of the rites. In other words, song helps to unite the physical event to the spiritual significance: song makes the rites incarnational.

The Liturgical Action of the Assembly

Singing by the assembly is one way that the community expresses its faith and participates fully in the liturgical action. Never should the ministers of music so dominate the celebration that the assembly is reduced to spectators or listeners. There is a difference between a concert and liturgy.

At a Sunday celebration of the word the processional song, the refrain for the responsorial psalm, the gospel acclamation, the acclamation during the proclamation of praise, and the communion song always should be sung by the assembly, and these parts should have priority when the music for the liturgy is chosen. It is recommended that the selection of the music be done together with those who will preside at the liturgy, so that all concerned will know what choices have been made, especially in regard to the prayer of praise. Team work is essential for a good celebration of any liturgy.

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1 General Instruction of the Roman Missal, n. 19
2 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, n. 30
Ministry of Music

Musicians who lead the singing at a liturgical celebration are to be of service to the community; their role is to facilitate the sung prayer of the assembly, the primary agent in the common expression of faith and of worship. This is also true at a Sunday celebration of the word and at morning or evening prayer. Music has sacramental power, with the same capacity to serve as a vehicle of God's self-revelation. The music ministry therefore has an important role in these celebrations. A cantor, a leader of song, instrumentalists, and a choir (if there is normally a choir present at Sunday liturgies) should each do their part in facilitating the prayer of the assembly.

The role of the cantor as the song leader is to facilitate the sung prayer of the assembly. The cantor also may be the leader of song and the psalmist. The song leader's verbal invitation to the people to sing, a friendly and welcoming manner (but dignified out of reverence for Christ's presence in the assembly), and the modelling of energetic singing can do much to encourage the people to sing.

The organists and other instrumentalists have a ministry also to the prayer of the community. By playing appropriate music before the liturgy starts they can do much to create an atmosphere that is welcoming, since the music ministry, too, participates in the welcoming of the members of the Body of Christ. Instrumental or reflective music is most appropriate during the collection or transitional moments during the liturgy, such as during the preparation of the altar or if the communion procession continues after the communion song is finished. Instrumental music which is joyful and uplifting may be played after the assembly has been dismissed and gives expression to the aspect of celebration just experienced by the worshipping community.

Selection of Liturgical Music

Pastoral sensitivity is necessary in attending to the songs and the words of hymns for use in the liturgy. The words should reflect the nature of the community assembled and the ritual action, and they should help the assembly express their faith in God or connect what they are doing to the meaning of the rite. Music, melody and words are all servants of the liturgy. They must raise the community to an increased level of participation that is both spiritual and incarnational. Many old favourite hymns, while they are religious in content and are excellent pieces of music, are no longer appropriate for use in the liturgy of the eucharist or the liturgy of the word.

Procesional Songs

The entrance or gathering song moulds those assembled into a unified community and gives the first expression of the feast or season being celebrated. The song should be one that is familiar to the community so that all can participate,

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5 The Milwaukee Symposia for Church Composers – A Ten-Year Report, n. 13
4 General Instruction of the Roman Missal, n. 25
at least in the refrain; that reflects the celebration, which is often most evident in the gospel; and which expresses a sense of the community gathered to celebrate thanksgiving and praise to God.

The song during the communion procession likewise should be familiar so that the assembly can participate fully. If a through composed hymn (one without a refrain) is used, the words should be so familiar that people can sing it without carrying a book. The form that serves best is one with a refrain, which can be sung easily by memory. The verses can be sung either by a cantor, the choir or sections of the choir alternating. The text should reflect the ritual action or speak of unity and service. The communion song fosters unity by helping all to reflect on the meaning of the act of communion. Not only is the communicant in union with Christ, but with the whole body of Christ, represented by those gathered around, who journey together to the kingdom of God. The hymns chosen at this time should not concentrate on adoration, but on the act and meaning of communion.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm and refrain are sung in the same manner as at the celebration of the eucharist: the cantor sings the refrain and the assembly repeats it; then the cantor sings the verses of the psalm and the assembly sings the refrain after each verse. The choice of psalm is either the one given for the particular Sunday or feast or a seasonal psalm, as is suggested in Catholic Book of Worship III. Care must be taken that the psalm chosen is in keeping with the theme of the first reading.

The responsorial psalm is never replaced by a hymn or song, although the psalm may be sung by the whole assembly. A metrical version of a psalm should be used with caution to ensure that the text is faithful to the original.

Acclamations

Acclamations are “shouts of joy which arise from the whole assembly as forceful and meaningful assents to God’s Word and Action. They are important because they make some of the most significant moments of the [liturgy] . . . stand out.” In a Sunday celebration of the word these are the acclamation at the enthronement of the Lectionary, the gospel acclamation and the acclamation to the proclamation of praise. These should be sung even if nothing else is.

The acclamation at the enthronement of the Lectionary may be a song or well known acclamation, such as the Kyrie, or the Gloria, if these were not used as part of the preparatory rite. A short text is best so as not to prolong this part of the celebration or prove to be tedious.

The gospel acclamation consists of two parts: the acclamation and the verse. The cantor first sings the acclamation then leads the assembly in the

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5 Introduction to the Lectionary, nn. 19-20
6 Introduction to the Lectionary, n. 20
7 Music in Catholic Worship, n. 53
acclamation; next the cantor sings the verse, followed by the acclamation which is sung by cantor and assembly. The acclamation is the Alleluia which may be sung any number of times, usually two or three. In Lent the Alleluia is never sung but is replaced by Praise to you, Lord, King of eternal glory or an equivalent form. It is possible to sing the acclamation only and omit the verse. However, if the acclamation is not sung, the verse is omitted completely.

The response to the general intercessions may also be sung with a suitable acclamation.

Once the proclamation of praise has been chosen from the selection provided, an appropriate acclamation may be selected. The same acclamation should be used throughout the prayer of praise and should be familiar to the assembly. When a new acclamation is used, it should be used for a number of times so that the assembly may learn it. A cantor may sing the acclamation first and then invite the assembly to repeat it. In any case, a brief rehearsal of the acclamation before the liturgy starts is recommended, if the assembly does not sing it frequently. A song of praise may be chosen in place of the prayer of praise. The song of praise should be addressed to God and be one that the assembly knows well.

Silence

Of special concern to musicians should be the period of silence that follows the readings and homily. This most overlooked element of the liturgy of the word very often turns the liturgy of the word into a speed race, and perpetuates the attitude that the Word of God is unimportant and something to be done, rather than a means of communication between God and the assembly. The first response of the assembly, after hearing the word of God, is silent reflection before the psalm is sung.

Other Occasions for Music

At a Sunday celebration of the word, as well as in the celebration of the eucharist, music sung by the choir/cantor and instrumental music is more appropriate to accompany the collection and the recessional. These times of music do not properly belong to the assembly and hymns may be sung by the choir or cantor. At times instrumental music may be desirable. The pastoral decision of the liturgy committee should take into consideration the nature of the parish. Parishes in which the assembly loves to sing may choose to sing a congregational hymn at the recessional, especially to mark celebrations of greater solemnities. However, there should be sensitivity to the role of music to highlight the more important parts of the celebration. Singing at some parts of the celebration may diminish the emphasis placed on other parts of the liturgy.

Since the collection at a Sunday celebration of the word is placed in the concluding rite, it is even less appropriate for the assembly to sing at this point of the liturgy than at the eucharist.

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8 The General Instruction, n. 23, states: "at the conclusion of a reading or the homily, all meditate briefly on what has been heard."
Music in the Liturgy of Hours

Morning and evening prayer utilize a different dynamic than a liturgy of the word. The liturgy of hours contains two major elements: praise and intercession. Rather than the liturgy of the word which is a dialogue between God and the assembly, the liturgy of hours is the praise and supplication of a priestly people ascending to God. In the first part of this liturgy, the hymns and scriptures (psalms, canticles and readings) are vehicles for praise or eliciting praise. The general intercessions concluded by the Lord’s Prayer form the supplication of the second part of this liturgy. In choosing music for the hours, planners should be careful that the selection of music reflects and maintains the dynamic of the ascending prayer of the community and the balance between praise and intercession.

In the liturgy of hours, the psalms and canticles are vehicles for the praise of the community and not primarily for meditation. The use of psalms and refrains that are overly meditative should be avoided. As in the liturgy of the word, the psalm may be sung in various ways: the whole psalm may be sung by all; the verses may be alternated between the choir or cantor and the rest of the assembly; the verses may be alternated between one side of the assembly and the other; the psalm may be sung responsorily, with the cantor singing the verses and the whole assembly singing the refrain after each verse. Psalms chosen in the liturgy of hours should predominately be psalms of praise. A second psalm may be more seasonal in nature, for example, a penitential psalm may be used in Lent.

On most occasions, to show the importance of the intercessory character of the hours and to balance intercession with praise, the petitions, or at least the response of the assembly, should be sung.

Encompassing of Family (excerpt)

May the Being of life bless,
May the Christ of love bless,
May the Spirit Holy bless
Each one and all,
Every one and all.

Celtic Prayer No. 336; see page 255.
Preaching for Today

What do people today seek from their preachers? What are their expectations? What touches them, moves them, helps them live their Christian lives well?

Ordained and lay preachers — and their hearers — might reflect on the following questions. Can you think of an occasion when people obviously were touched, fed, moved, by the homily? Why was this? What happened? Why was that homily different from others?

Here are a few observations and suggestions on effective preaching today. We need to start with the fact that liturgical assemblies today often are extremely diverse. If there are people present who say, “I really liked this homily,” there will be others who feel just the opposite. When some are happy with the preaching, others will be dissatisfied. This can be frustrating for preachers and assemblies alike, but it is simply a fact of life.

No matter how good a homily is on a given occasion, some people are not able to hear it. They may not have had enough sleep the night before; they may not be feeling well; they may be worrying about serious problems in their lives. These factors are out of the preacher’s control. Preachers need to be sympathetic to such persons, but will not take their lack of response as personal criticisms.

Here are six qualities that many hearers desire in those who preach.

Authentic Humanity

Lay people appreciate preachers who obviously are warm, intelligent, caring human beings — persons who live life fully, who do good things and make mistakes as well; who have fun and experience difficulties and sorrows too.

It is important for hearers to be able to see the real person of their preachers; masks, false fronts, pious facades are not appreciated or valued.

The authority and credibility of ordained preachers today depends less and less on their seminary education, ordination and pastoral appointment — though these are not unimportant — and more and more on the authenticity of the person and their personal lives. For lay preachers, their personal authenticity is an even more important qualification.

To reveal oneself in the preaching situation admittedly might be threatening. It is also necessary not to overdo it; not to confuse one’s personal life with the good news of the gospel.

Real Spirituality

Lay people also value a sense of the preacher’s spirituality. They want to see something of the preacher’s personal relationship with God, with Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit. Is Jesus really the focus of one’s preaching? Is it apparent that Jesus Christ really is central in the spiritual life of the preacher? Lay people want to know that preachers pray and are spiritual persons.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – the paschal mystery – that is supposed to be the focus for all liturgical celebrations should obviously also be foundational for the personal spiritual life of the preacher. This too might be threatening.

**Good News**

Lay people want to hear preaching that is good news – not nagging or pessimistic, or the giving of orders, or a guilt trip, or a notice of excommunication. They appreciate preaching that is eucharistic – full of blessing and thanksgiving; that is positive and encouraging; that supports them and enables them to live Christian lives. Of course this does not exclude challenge as well.

Preachers need to watch their language when they want to say “the Church teaches . . .”. Be careful not to, at least implicitly, “excommunicate” persons who, after all, are also members of the Church.

**Respectful**

The preacher should obviously care both for the gospel and for the baptized people to whom he or she is preaching. Lay people do not appreciate preachers who are patronizing or condescending, or who put them down. Preachers should like people, and, when applicable, be conscientious and effective pastoral ministers. They should know the real needs and concerns of the people.

Respect also means that preachers will try to convince their hearers, not try to force something down their throats. Raising questions often is more respectful than insisting that the preacher’s personal point of view is the only answer.

Respect also means that lay hearers are accepted as whole persons, with feelings as well as minds.

**Connected and Helpful**

Lay people want to hear their own stories, they want preaching that connects with their lives. Preachers, again, need to know their hearers and listen carefully to the stories that come up in pastoral ministry.

Academic exegesis of the scriptures is not enough; the homily is not a time for bible study. Preaching must include contemporary application as well as exegesis. Lay people appreciate preaching that refers to and helps them deal with contemporary issues, especially the many difficult issues found in our society.

When speaking of or referring to issues that are controversial, it is helpful to say what questions are, explain any principles that might apply, and state one’s own views – but in such a way that there is still room for views other than the preacher’s own. In addition, it is well to provide opportunities outside the liturgy when people can discuss and debate difficult issues.
Among other things, people need to become aware that Catholic Christians – all Christians – are a minority in a pluralistic, post-Christian society. How is the Christian life to be lived in these circumstances? How are individuals, parish communities and the wider church to be countercultural? How are we all influenced by the non-Christian values that are so prevalent in our society?

Another area which needs much attention is the weekday religious lives of families and households.

For Everyone

Preachers need to speak to the entire liturgical assembly, not just to educated Canadian-born adults, for example. They need to speak to teenagers and to children, and to their parents. They need to speak to women, realizing that they are diverse and that the lives of many include more than child-raising and housework; stereotypes are to be avoided. They need to speak to members of ethnic groups and cultural minorities. They need to respect both a healthy individualism and a healthy pluralism, being alert to the fact that both can go to unhealthy extremes as well.

Inclusive preaching can mean naming members of particular groups, speaking to them for a moment, using language most appropriate for them, and including examples and stories that will be especially meaningful to them.

Well Constructed

Lay people appreciate preaching that is carefully constructed and skillfully delivered. There needs to be a good beginning, to catch their attention and carry them quickly to the heart of the matter. A good ending is important as well; nothing spoils a homily like being finished but not stopping promptly. It is important as well to make sense, and not to wander around too much.

The preacher, whether ordained or lay, has an important ministry. It is also a particularly challenging ministry, as the scriptures, the people who are awaiting the word, and the world in which we live, change from week to week. Yet, when one is truly led by the Spirit, preaching can also be an exciting adventure.
The Parish Liturgy Committee

It’s sometimes frustrating to serve on the liturgy committee. What are liturgy committee members supposed to do? What is the function and purpose of the liturgy committee?

Sometimes members are quite uncertain about their role. Sometimes they have firm opinions — five or six quite different firm opinions. Some may want to sit around and talk. Others want to do things. Still others would rather study. Some want to do the priest’s job. Others feel that the priest never listens to them.

Most often the North American functional mentality predominates — what are we supposed to do? This can turn the liturgy committee into those who move chairs and pass out papers, or those who take over as ushers, readers, and communion ministers.

Here is an alternative vision of the liturgy committee. It is only one possible view, of course, and only a partial view at that.

This vision begins with the question, who are we as liturgy committee members supposed to be, rather than what are we supposed to do. It includes some doing, but puts action into a different context. But if we are not movers of chairs, handers-out of papers, or the doers of various liturgical ministries, who are we?

This vision begins with premise that a parish committee like the liturgy committee has both leadership and service roles. But what kind of leadership and what kind of service?

This vision suggests that the liturgy committee members are to provide leadership by being especially good worshippers. And that their service is to be baptismal and eucharistic people, within the context of the worship life of the parish.

This does not imply that liturgy committee members are better than other members of the parish, or that they are more “spiritual” or “holy.” Not at all. It does mean, however, that liturgy committee members should be especially focused, especially intentional, especially reflective, in their worship.

It means that they should study about liturgy and apply their learnings. They will ask questions: Why are we doing this? What does this mean? They will seek to discern the connections between liturgy and the rest of life. They will evaluate and seek to improve parish liturgies: How well did we worship today? Could our worship be even better than it already is?

Baptism

Liturgy committee members will be especially conscious of the meaning and consequences of baptism. They will pay special attention to the words of the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Liturgy:
The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations called for by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people' is their right and duty by reason of their baptism. (n. 14)

Parish liturgy committee members who wish to express their ministry baptismally will do everything they can to foster the full participation of every member of the parish – including those who do not regularly participate in the Sunday eucharistic liturgy. The agenda of every meeting should include "Full participation: how are we doing?" Committee members can then report good experiences of participation, as well as problems that have come to their attention. Solutions will then be sought.

Members will be alert to see if there are any in the assembly who do not seem to be participating fully. They may be able to discern the problem immediately, for example, a person in a wheelchair finds the aisles too narrow and always has to be at the back; an elderly person obviously cannot hear well. In other cases the committee member will try, through gentle and sensitive conversation, to find out what the problem is. Perhaps a person is grieving or has serious personal problems and cannot summon the energy to sing; perhaps parents of small children feel that others disapprove if their children make the slightest noise; perhaps women feel excluded because of the language that is used; perhaps teenagers find the music not to their taste.

Parish liturgy committee members will then try to do what they can to foster better participation. This includes being hospitable to all, even if there are already other, "official" ministers of hospitality. They will see if there is anything they can do to help persons with disabilities; they will try to make small children and their parents feel genuinely welcome; they will listen while teenagers try to explain why the liturgy is "boring."

At committee meetings members will share their observations and conversations, and try collectively to make things better.

**Eucharist**

Liturgy committee members will also be especially conscious that they are eucharistic people.

This means engendering an attitude of thankfulness – in themselves and in the entire parish community. It also means being aware that all they have is a gift from God, and that God's gifts are to be shared broadly. The people of the parish are God's gift for one another and for the world. They gather in the name of God's very special gift – Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

A eucharistic approach to life and to liturgy committee membership will be expressed, among other ways, by thanking all who have particular ministries in the liturgy – artists, readers, ushers, babysitters, preachers and presiders, ministers of hospitality and of communion, janitors. And this will be done on a regular, ongoing basis, not just once a year.

They will also thank persons who might be finding it difficult to attend – small children and their parents, teenagers and their parents too. (Be very thankful
to and for every teenager who comes to church!) Persons with disabilities, elderly persons, persons in mourning, persons who are adversely affected by economic setbacks, deserve our thanks for participating.

Eucharistic living on the part of liturgy committee members also includes smiling, being positive, and sending thank you notes when appropriate.

Liturgy committee members who are living eucharistically will also discern and foster God's gifts in other members of the parish; these may be in need of encouragement and development. Parish members will be encouraged to use their gifts in various liturgical — and nonliturgical — ministries. They will be trained, supported and encouraged, and given ongoing help and development.

Another area of eucharistic liturgy committee ministry is to pay close attention to the central eucharistic symbols — the bread and the wine — and be sure that they are as authentic and meaningful as possible. Bread that looks and tastes like bread, and communion from the cup — at every eucharistic liturgy — should be supported and encouraged, at least as a conscious goal to strive for.

Finally, as persons especially conscious of — and thankful for — God's gifts, liturgy committee members will promote the sharing of gifts with others — with persons outside the local parish community. This may mean supporting the food bank and local soup kitchens; it may mean making sure that ample funds are set aside in the parish budget for ministry outside the parish. It will mean being conscious of needs in the surrounding community that the parish should be helping with. It will mean supporting the work of Development and Peace and similar agencies as a way of sharing with the wider global community. It will mean composing general intercessions that are conscious of the wider world community.

If parish liturgy committee members are consciously and energetically baptismal and eucharistic persons, their time on the committee will surely be rewarding and helpful to their parish community. Think about being before you deal with doing.
The Trinity in Celtic Devotional Prayers

For many centuries in Western Europe, private or devotional prayers — that is, nonliturgical prayers — tended not to be trinitarian in nature. Instead, they were often addressed to the Blessed Virgin, to the saints, or to Jesus; they tended not to end with a trinitarian conclusion. A noteworthy exception to this common pattern was the devotional prayers of Celtic Christians of Scotland and Ireland. These often were trinitarian, and usually were quite creative in language and imagery. They possess a charming piety. A few examples are given here.¹

Rune Before Prayer

I am bending my knee
In the eye of the Father who created me,
In the eye of the Son who purchased me,
In the eye of the Spirit who cleansed me,
in friendship and affection.
Through Thine own Anointed One, O God,
Bestow upon us fullness in our need,
    Love towards God,
    The affection of God,
    The smile of God,
    The wisdom of God,
    The grace of God,
    The fear of God,
    And the will of God.
To do on the world of the Three,
As angels and saints
Do in heaven:
    Each shade and light,
    Each day and night,
    Each time in kindness,
    Give Thou us Thy Spirit.²

¹ An extensive and wonderful collection of prayers from the Scottish Highlands and Islands may be found in Alexander Carmichael, Carmina Gadelica: Hymns and Incantations (In Gaelic, Ortha nan Gaidheal: Charms of the Gaels). References here are to the one-volume edition, Hudson NY: Lindisfarne Press 1992. This work was originally published in six volumes, 1900, 1928, 1941, 1954.

² No. 1, p. 35
The Gifts of the Three

Spirit, give me of Thine abundance,
Father, give me of Thy wisdom,
Son, give me in my need,
Jesus beneath the shelter of Thy shield.

I lie down tonight,
With the Triune of my strength,
With the Father, with Jesus,
With the Spirit of might.³

The Three (excerpt)

God make me holy,
Christ make me holy,
Spirit make me holy,
Three all-holy.

Three aid my hope,
Three aid my love,
Three aid mine eye,
And my knee from stumbling.
My knee from stumbling.⁴

The Three

The Three Who are over me,
The Three Who are below me,
The Three Who are above me here,
The Three Who are above me yonder;

The Three Who are in the earth,
The Three Who are in the air,
The Three Who are in the heaven,
The Three Who are in the great pouring sea.⁵

Encompassing

The compassing of God and His right hand
Be upon my form and upon my frame;
The compassing of the High King and the grace of the Trinity
Be upon me abiding ever eternally,
Be upon me abiding ever eternally.

May the compassing of the Three shield me in my means,
The compassing of the Three shield me this day,
The compassing of the Three shield me this night
From hate, from harm, from act, from ill.
From hate, from harm, from act, from ill.⁶

³ No. 30, p. 54
⁴ No. 235, p. 208
⁵ No. 245, p. 217
⁶ No. 248, p. 200
Prayer to Mary Mother (excerpt)

Count me not as naught, O my God,
Count me not as naught, O my Christ,
Count me not as naught, O kind Spirit,
And abandon me not to eternal loss.7

Prayer (excerpt)

The mild grace of the Father be thine,
The loving grace of the Son be thine,
The loving grace of the Spirit be thine,
Laving thee with the graces.8

The Mother’s Blessing (excerpt)

Be thine the compassing of the God of life,
Be thine the compassing of the Christ of love,
Be thine the compassing of the Spirit of Grace,
To befriend thee and to aid thee.9

Going to Rest (excerpt)

Be the peace of the Spirit mine this night,
Be the peace of the Son mine this night
Be the peace of the Father mine this night
Each morning and evening of my life.10

7 No. 255, p. 230
8 No. 290, p. 271
9 No. 295, p. 274
10 No. 329, p. 300
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