national bulletin on Liturgy

Litanies and General Intercessions
National Bulletin on Liturgy
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Litanies and General Intercessions
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S
ome years ago a Catholic magazine carried an article in which the author described how her personal
prayer life had changed over time. One area she made it a point to mention was what she prayed for in her intercessory
prayer. She used to pray for her own personal needs and what she saw as the immediate needs of those around her, her family
and her friends. But she was beginning to pray for more universal needs, for peace in the world, the mission of the Church in
the world, and so on. She was no longer focusing only on the needs of those in her immediate circle.

This shift had happened, she said, because the needs of the whole world were what she heard expressed each Sunday in her
parish church. The general intercessions in the eucharistic liturgy had begun to shape her own personal prayer.

This important part in the liturgy has a challenge all its own. It has a shape and content that has been given; yet the text is
not given. Each community must, more or less, fashion its own text week after week. But this is the point in its favour; the community identifies those on whose behalf it wishes to plead.

Yet these prayers are much more than a "gimme" list. The first article in this issue reminds us that no community in the Church prays its liturgy on its own. Christ, the Head of the Church, his body, is present, and not only is he present; it is he
who offers to the Father the prayer of this Church.

The second article explores the extensive use of litanies and intercessions in the present liturgical books. A third describes the intercessory prayers of medieval times, called "bidding prayers"; one sees that the content of these prayers is remarkably similar to that of our own. Another article discusses the general intercessions as they are used in the Eucharist and provides some guidelines regarding their composition. In the article comparing liturgical prayer and devotional prayer, the author gives some practical suggestions how one can create a personal (and spontaneous) litany in one's own prayer.

Another article deals with a quite different aspect of prayer, on adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. It gives some background on the development of this devotion, the tenets of a theology of adoration, and some of the challenges the practice presents.

The series on liturgical music begun in the last issue continues in this issue. The final article will be of interest to all who are called on to preside at the Church's liturgy, clerical and lay; the article explores the theology of the ministry and the practical issues that flow from it.
The Church Prays: “Through Him, with Him, in Him....”

William Marrevee, SCJ

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council contains a few celebrated phrases that have had a significant impact on the liturgical renewal we have witnessed in our Church over the last thirty years. Their impact is due to the fact that they capture some foundational liturgical-theological insights that will continue to be of great benefit if we allow them to be the governing principles in the care we give to the liturgical life of the Church. One of these phrases is found in no. 14 of this document: “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’ (1 Pt 2.9; see 2.4-5) is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.”

The principle articulated here has done much to seeing our liturgical celebrations evolve from being the activity of the priest for the sake of the people present towards being the corporate activity of the assembled community of baptized-confirmed men and women presided over by the ordained minister. That evolution has not been easy, and it is not yet complete because it requires a major shift in thought, discourse, and symbol system. Yet, the consistent application of this principle is making our liturgical celebrations once again into the communal activities of a priestly people.

The recovery of the assembled community as the subject of the Church’s liturgical celebrations is very much part of that required shift. It has made us see that, when assembled for worship, the community that is gathered in Christ exercises its baptismal priesthood. This does not make the ministry of the ordained minister in the assembled community superfluous. Nor does it reduce that ministry to one of sociological necessity in the sense that there has to be someone who co-ordinates, facilitates, animates the various ministries that together make the community of believers into a worshipping assembly. On the contrary, in the midst of the assembled community one ministry has to embody the fact that this community has not assembled on its own initiative or by general agreement, but on the initiative of Jesus Christ who in the power of the Spirit is the real presider of this worshipping assembly.

This principle, the full, conscious, and active participation of all the faithful, must be given the widest possible range. But, on the other hand, we must be careful not to use it in a reductionist sense. That would be the case, for example, if we were to limit the significance of the principle to the activating of the various ministries that together make the community of believers into a worshipping community. However necessary that is, the intent of

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the full, conscious, and active participation of all reaches further. As the assembled-in-Christ worshipping community we are Christ's body, and as such we participate in the worshipping and saving activity of our Head, Jesus Christ. When as Christ's body we engage in liturgy, we are being drawn into something that is not our own, but Christ's, whose members we are.

What is articulated in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 14, must be linked to and is, in a sense, secondary to what is even more basic to all Christian liturgy: It is the work of Jesus Christ that we are privileged to participate in fully, consciously, and actively. Another paragraph of the same document, no. 7, says it all and says it very well:

- "To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in his Church, especially in its liturgical celebrations."
- "Christ always truly associates the Church with himself in this great work wherein God is perfectly glorified and the recipients made holy."
- "Rightly, then, the liturgy is considered as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ."
- "Every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the Priest and of his Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others."

It is to our peril when, in our legitimate and necessary efforts to get our liturgical house in order, we simply presume that all are fully aware of this basic given or when we allow it to become the forgotten truth about our liturgical celebrations. It comes down to this: When as Church, when as Christ's body we engage in liturgical activity, we really engage in the activity of Jesus Christ the High Priest. When the men and women, whose faith in Jesus Christ has been sealed in baptism-confirmation and who, on this basis, are grafted onto Jesus Christ, come together for the purpose of worship, they engage in an activity that is not their own; instead, it is an activity of Jesus Christ. It is in Christ's worshipping and saving activity that we participate inasmuch as in the Church's liturgical activity; it is Jesus Christ who is the principal actor. What occurs in Christian liturgy is totally shaped, defined, and owned by Jesus Christ. And it is in the exercise of his priesthood that we as a priestly people participate.

This applies, in principle, to the entire range of the Church's liturgical-sacramental activity. For our purpose it may suffice to see this principle especially at work at two strategic places in the celebration of the Eucharist and in two privileged modes: in the eucharistic prayer in the mode of offering praise and thanks to God and in the general intercessions in the mode of intercessory prayer.

Even if the eucharistic prayer is a presidential prayer, it is still very much the corporate prayer of this assembled community in which the presiding minister gives voice to the community's disposition of praise and thanks. The introductory dialogue, the acclamations, and the concluding Amen clearly underline that the assembled community is very much part of this presidential prayer. Here is where the priestly people exercises its priesthood in the mode of praise and thanksgiving, of offering to God its sacrifice of praise, not on its own initiative, or by its own power, but as the doxology reminds us: "Through him, with him, in him...."

The assembled community exercises its priesthood in the intercessory mode in the general intercessions. Here is where the priestly people intercede on behalf of a humanity that stands very much in need of the salvation proclaimed and celebrated in the Church's liturgy. The re-introduction of these prayers after many centuries of absence from the Mass is more than the simple retrieval of an ancient practice. It reflects a significant change in the way the celebration of the Eucharist is perceived. When the Mass was popularly understood
as the sacrifice which the priest offers and which the faithful attend, the absence of the prayers of intercession was for a part compensated for in the form of having the Mass offered for various intentions, often linked with a stipend. The section in the sacramentary entitled “Masses and Prayers for Various Occasions” is still in many ways a leftover and a reminder of that phenomenon. Praying for particular persons or for specific concerns tended to get translated into the form of having the priest offer a Mass with such an intention.

The recovery of the celebration of the Eucharist as a corporate activity of the assembled community where the priestly people exercise their baptismal priesthood also provides an appropriate place for the persons or concerns that this worshipping community may wish to include in its priestly care of interceding: the general intercessions or the prayer of the faithful. It is the concrete application of the Church’s priestly ministry of interceding for all humanity, a priestly ministry which the Church has from its Lord. It is Christ’s body which prays through him, with him, in him, as is so well expressed in one of the concluding prayers for the general intercessions in the Order of Christian Funerals: “Hear the prayers of the Redeemer Jesus Christ, and the voices of your people.”

In the Church’s liturgical activity full, conscious, and active participation is not simply desirable. Rather, it is a prerequisite for letting the Church’s liturgy become a corporate act for which the interaction of the various ministries is necessary. But it is a corporate act by means of which God’s priestly people participate in the worshipping and saving activity of their Lord, for they can only glorify God authentically and intercede for humanity salvifically through, with, and in their Lord.

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The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross


The feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, which in 1997 coincides with the twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, will allow communities to rediscover and to celebrate not only the passing from death to life, but also the definitive victory of Christ already inscribed in the scandal of the cross: The tree of the Redeemer’s cross leads to life.

Many ways can be found in order to express the glorious sense of the cross. For example, a beautiful cross can be carried in procession through the church and incensed at the beginning of Mass. Inspiration may also be taken, even for a celebration outside of Mass, from a particular rite proper to this feast in the Christian East. For the universal prayer the cross is brought from the altar into the middle of the assembly and, after each intention, is lowered and raised towards each point of the compass while Kyrie eleison is sung and while the assembly kneels and stands up. It is a gesture which expresses the blessing of the universe through the cross of Christ as well as the cosmic dimension of salvation.
The extensive use of litanies and intercessions is one of the significant characteristics of the renewed Roman Catholic liturgy. By litany we understand a prayer composed of a number of short verses or phrases said or sung by a leader—typically a deacon, cantor or assisting minister rather than the presider—with a constant response said or sung by the rest of the assembly. These may be preceded by an invitation to prayer and concluded with a short prayer, both said by the presider.¹

Intercessions are prayers said for the needs of other persons, and much of the intercessory prayer of the renewed liturgy takes the form of litanies; however, not all litanies are intercessions. In practice, this distinction is not always made, and the term intercession is occasionally used for a litany that is not actually intercessory in content.

In this article the litanies and litanic intercessions of the renewed Roman Catholic liturgy are identified and analyzed; an attempt is made to classify them according to form, content, liturgical use and function.

Benefits
Several benefits have been realized by the increased use of litanies and intercessions in the liturgy.

- Participation: Litanies are highly participatory, as the people respond to each verse.
- Response to the word of God: Most frequently, intercessions closely follow the proclamation and preaching of the word of God; hence they serve as liturgical ways of responding to the word.
- Concern for others: Intercessions are ways in which, often in response to the word, we can express in prayer our concern for the needs of others—the wider church and the whole of society.
- Tradition: The use of litanies and intercessions goes back to the early centuries of Christian liturgy, and it is good to recover this tradition.
- Flexibility: Litanies and intercessions are highly flexible and can be adapted to present needs and circumstances. In some cases specific texts are not provided in the liturgical books, and it is up to local communities to compose these as needed. When specific texts are given, in most cases these are regarded as models which may be adapted and added to as seems appropriate. For example, the Sacramentary² includes the following rubrics:

Sample formulas are given...
(General Intercessions, Order of Mass);

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2 Sacramentary (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops 1983).
The priest (or other appropriate minister) makes the following or other invocation.

(Penitential Rite, Order of Mass);

In the litany some names of saints may be added, especially the titular of the church, the local patrons, or the patron saints of those to be baptized.

(Litany of the Saints, Easter Vigil).

Similar rubrics accompany most litanies and intercessions.

Kinds of Litanies and Intercessions

Our liturgical books include several different kinds of litanies and intercessions. For example, the Sacramentary shows us the following three types:

• General Intercessions.
• Verses with “Lord, have mercy,” Penitential Rite, third form.
• Litany of the Saints at the Easter Vigil.

Other types of litanies are found in the Rite of Penance, in the Liturgy of the Hours, and elsewhere.

Intercessions

The intercessions form the largest group of liturgical litanies and have several distinct characteristics. They will be considered according to their placement and function in the liturgies, their structure and length, the person of the Trinity to whom they are addressed, and their content and intention.

Placement and Function

The placement of intercessions within the overall structure and flow of individual liturgies tells us much about their liturgical function or purpose. Titles that are given to the intercessions may also be helpful in this regard. Intercessions occupy two types of position in the rites:

• Following the word of God;
• Following some liturgical action.

Following the Word of God

The largest number of intercessions follow the scripture readings and homily, or follow a profession of faith that comes after the homily. After all, this is the position of the general intercessions of the Sunday eucharist. These intercessions therefore function as one of the liturgical responses to the proclamation and preaching of God’s word.

A list of this type of intercession in several liturgical books is given here. The name of the book is given, with the number or page at which the intercession is placed, the name of the particular rite in which it is used, and in parentheses the title given to the intercession. “A, B” indicates that two intercessions are included under the same number.

Sacramentary
Page 423: Order of Mass (General Intercessions).
Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

65: Rite of Acceptance (Intercessions for the Catechumens)
140 A, B: First Scrutiny (Intercessions for the Elect)
154 A, B: Second Scrutiny (Intercessions for the Elect)
161 A, B: Third Scrutiny (Intercessions for the Elect)
264: Rite of Acceptance (Children) (Intercessions for the Children)
275: Scrutinies (Children) (Intercessions)
365: Christian Initiation In Danger of Death (Intercessions for the Candidate).
Rite of Baptism for Children (BC)

47: Baptism for Several Children Outside Mass (Intercessions)

3 Page 423, plus appendix, nos. 578-588.
4 Pages 418-420.
5 Pages 261-262.
7 Rite of Baptism for Children (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops 1989).
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90: Baptism for Several Children within Mass (Intercessions)
129: Baptism for One Child Outside Mass (Intercessions)
168: Baptism for One Child within Mass (Intercessions)
202: Baptism for Several Children by a Catechist (Intercessions)
234: Baptism for One Child by a Catechist (Intercessions)
258: Baptism for a Child in Danger of Death (Intercessions)
277: Bringing a Baptized Child to the Church outside Mass (Intercessions)
302: Bringing a Baptized Child to the Church within Mass (Intercessions).

Pastoral Care (PC) 
121: Anointing Outside Mass (Litany)
138: Anointing Within Mass (Litany)
191: Viaticum within Mass (Litany)
205: Viaticum outside Mass (Litany)
245 B: Continuous Rite of Penance, Anointing and Viaticum (Litany)
284: Christian Initiation for the Dying (Litany)

Order of Christian Funerals (OCF) 
107: Vigil for the Deceased A (Prayer of Intercession)
124: Vigil for the Deceased B (Prayer of Intercession)
141: Vigil for the Deceased C (Prayer of Intercession)
158: Vigil for the Deceased D (Prayer of Intercession: Litany)
175: Vigil for the Deceased E (Prayer of Intercession)
192: Vigil for the Deceased F (Prayer of Intercession: Litany)
209: Vigil for the Deceased G (Prayer of Intercession: Litany)
225: Vigil for the Deceased H (Prayer of Intercession: Intercessions)
242: Vigil for the Deceased I (Prayer of Intercession: Litany)
279: Vigil for the Deceased with Reception at the Church (Prayer of Intercession: Litany)
289: Transfer of the Body to the Church or to the Place of Committal (Litany)
336: Funeral Mass (General Intercessions)
364: Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass (General Intercessions) as for 336
445: Vigil for a Deceased Child (Prayer of Intercession: Litany)
476: Funeral Mass for a Deceased Child (General Intercessions)
499: Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass for a Deceased Child (General Intercessions).

Book of Blessings
Most of the liturgies offered in the Book of Blessings include intercessions used as responses to the word of God. These are not listed individually here because of their large number.

The only blessings that do not include intercessions are “shorter” versions of blessings whose longer versions do so, meal blessings, and the blessing of water outside of Mass.

Following a Liturgical Action
A smaller number of intercessions follow some liturgical action rather than following the word of God. These actions themselves come after the scripture readings and homily, but so many elements intervene between the word and the intercessions that their relationship is distant.
Alternatively and more simply, they come toward the end of a distinct part of a liturgy. Here the sequence of liturgical elements is given to show clearly the placement of the intercession.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

121: Rite of Election (Intercessions)
Sequence: Scripture readings, homily, presentation of catechumens, affirmation by godparents, invitation and enrollment of names, act of admission or election, intercessions, prayer over the elect

409: Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church (General Intercessions)
Sequence: Scripture readings, homily, invitation, profession of faith, (Confirmation), sign of welcome, general intercessions, sign of peace.

Rite of Confirmation

30: Confirmation within Mass (General Intercessions)
Sequence: Scripture readings, presentation of candidate, homily, renewal of baptismal promises, laying on of hands, anointing with chrism, general intercessions, collect, liturgy of the eucharist

47: Confirmation outside Mass (General Intercessions)
Sequence: as above, except that the collect is followed by the Lord’s Prayer.

Rite of Marriage

29: Celebrating Marriage During Mass (General Intercessions)
Sequence: Scripture readings, statement of intentions, exchange of consent, blessing and exchange of rings, general intercessions, liturgy of the eucharist

49: Celebrating Marriage Outside Mass (General Intercessions)
Sequence: as above until general intercessions; then nuptial blessing immediately as part of a single prayer

64: Celebrating Marriage Between a Catholic and a Nonbaptized Person (General Intercessions). Sequence: as for 49.

Order of Christian Funerals

394: Rite of Committal (Adults) (Intercessions)
Sequence: invitation, scripture verse, prayer over the place of committal, committal, intercessions, Lord’s Prayer

519: Rite of Committal (Children) (Intercessions)
Sequence: as above.

Book of Blessings

873: Blessing of a New Baptismal Font Without the Celebration of Baptism (Concluding Rite)
Sequence: Scripture readings, homily, blessing of font, renewal of baptism, sprinkling of people, intercessions, Lord’s Prayer

981: Blessing of a New Cross for Public Veneration (Concluding Rite)
Sequence: Scripture readings, homily, blessing of cross, censing and song, veneration, intercessions, Lord’s Prayer

1133: Blessing of a Cemetery Outside Mass (Intercessions)
Sequence: Scripture readings, homily, blessing of cross and land, censing the cross and sprinkling the ground, intercessions, Lord’s Prayer.


12 Rite of Marriage, in The Rites, 529-570.
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Structure and Length
Intercessions typically consist of four elements: an invitation to prayer, the intentions, the response, and a concluding prayer. All the texts studied have an invitation to prayer, and of course intentions and responses. The intercessions conclude in several different ways, however; these are indicated here.

Collect: Several intercessions, especially in the Order of Christian Funerals, conclude with a traditional type of collect.13

Prayers over candidates: In the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, prayers over the candidates14 or exorcisms15 follow the intercessions and take the place of the typical concluding collect.

Lord’s Prayer: Other intercessions, especially in the Order of Christian Funerals, lead to the Lord’s Prayer.16

Litany of the Saints plus prayer: In the Rite of Baptism for Children many intercessions lead to the litany of the saints, which in turn is followed by prayers of exorcism17 or prayers for the child,18 or (where there is no exorcism) to an invitation to the prayer over the water.19

Action: Finally, some intercessions in Pastoral Care are followed by actions, either the laying on of hands20 or the sign of peace.21

Number of intentions
Most commonly, the intercessions have six or seven intentions. A few intercessions in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and Order of Christian Funerals have nine, ten or eleven intentions, however.

Intercessions said with sick or dying persons often include fewer intentions than others; this is sometimes also the case with those in liturgies with children. The intercessions of confirmation are few, but each intention is quite long.

Address
Another point of interest is that some intercessions are addressed to God (the First Person of the Trinity) and some to Christ.

God: Most intercessions of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults are addressed to God, as are some of those in BC, PC and OCF.22

Christ: Most intercessions of the Rite of Baptism for Children and Order of Christian Funerals are addressed to Christ, as are some of those in PC.23

Content and Intention
Finally, we may ask if all the litanies designated as intercessions, or found in the place usually occupied by intercession, are indeed prayers for the needs of others. It needs to be noted that even when an intercession is primarily for catechumens, for example, some intentions are for the community as a whole, parents, sponsors, and for the entire church and world.

Intercession: All of the intercessions of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Rite of Baptism for Children, Pastoral Care of the Sick, Confirmation, and Marriage, and many of

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13 OCF 336 ABC, 364 ABC, 476 AB, 499 AB; PC 284.
14 RCIA 65, 121 AB, 264, 365.
15 RCIA 140 AB, 154 AB, 161 AB, 275.
16 OCF 107, 124, 141, 158, 175, 209, 225, 242, 262, 279, 289; PC 205.
17 BC 47, 90, 129, 168.
18 BC 277, 302.
19 BC 202, 234.
20 PC 121, 138, 245.
21 PC 191.
22 RCIA 65, 121, 140, 154, 161, 264, 275, 356, 409; BC 277; PC 121, 138, 245 B; OCF 476 A, 499 A.
23 BC 47, 90, 129, 168, 202, 234, 258, 302; PC 191, 205; OCF 107, 124, 141, 158, 175, 192, 209, 225, 242, 262, 279, 289, 336, 364, 445, 476 B, 499 B.
those in *Order of Christian Funerals* are indeed prayers of intercession.

**Praise of Christ:** Other litanies do not pray for others but are statements of praise referring to Jesus Christ, even though they may be titled intercession. These are especially common in the *Order of Christian Funerals*.

**Thanksgiving:** One litany in the *Book of Blessings*, corresponding in form and position to other intercessions, is designated as a prayer of thanksgiving.

**Litany of the Saints**

The litany of the saints consists of the naming or addressing of a number of saints, followed by "pray for us" or a similar response. The invocation of the saints is completed by litanic intercessions for the worshipping community, wider church, and particular members of the community, for example, those being ordained.

**Variant Forms**

The litany of the saints is printed in our liturgical books in several forms.

**Long forms:** Extended lists of saints and other intercessions are printed in place in several liturgies:

- *Sacramentary*, pages 261-262: Easter Vigil
- *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 214: Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation
- *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Appendix I, 426;
- *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, 219 A.
- *Book of Blessings*, 845: Blessing of a New Baptismal Font Joined with the Celebration of Baptism

Appendices in several liturgical books also offer a variety of extended litanies of saints:

- *Rite of Baptism for Children* (Canadian edition), 343:
- *Rite of Baptism for Children*, in *The Rites of the Catholic Church*, pages 276-283;

**Short form:** Brief beginnings of litanies of saints are provided in several liturgical books, especially *Rite of Baptism for Children*; such texts are also included in *Pastoral Care*.

All forms of the litany of the saints are considered to be models and the basis for adaptation as seems appropriate for the occasions on which they are used. For example, the rubric following the printing of a short version reads as follows:

> The names of other saints may be added, especially the patrons of the children to be baptized, and of the church or locality. A more complete form of the litany may be used. (See no. 343.)

**Position and Function**

The litany of the saints is positioned differently in different liturgies, and seems to have several functions.

- **To accompany a procession:** In the medieval liturgy, it was common for the litany of saints to be sung during processions, especially the processions to and from the baptismal font.

*Entrance procession:* Book of Blessings 845: Blessing of a New Baptismal Font
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Joined with the Celebration of Baptism.

Procession to the font: Sacramentary: Easter Vigil; RCIA 214: Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation
Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Appendix I, 426.

• To follow and extend intercessions: As already considered above, in the Rite of Baptism for Children it is common for litanic intercessions to lead directly to the litany of saints.30

• To lead up to a prayer of consecration: In addition to accompanying the procession, the litany of the saints at the Easter Vigil and Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (cited above) immediately precedes the prayer over the water, an important consecratory text.

In other liturgies the litany of the saints leads to prayers of consecration of persons. This is the case in the following rites found in the Roman Pontifical: Ordination of Deacons, Priests and Bishops; Blessing of Abbots and Abbesses; and Consecration to a Life of Virginity. The litany of the saints is also used in this way in the solemn profession of religious.31

• Prayers for the dying and after death: Finally, the litany of the saints is also included in the Commendation of the Dying and Prayers after Death.32

Though the litany of the saints may have specific functions in individual liturgies, as considered above, it always serves to identify the community and particular members of the community with the larger community of saints.

Litany of the Saints and General Intercessions

The litany of the saints and general intercessions or other intercessory litanies have different relationships in individual liturgical books.

• Some liturgies include both the litany of the saints and general intercessions, but there is no special relationship between them. These include the Easter Vigil and the Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

• Some liturgies closely link the two litanies. As already considered, this is the case in the Rite of Baptism for Children.

• Some liturgies include the litany of the saints but explicitly exclude the use of the general intercessions. This is the case in most of the rites of the Roman Pontifical.

Penitential Litanies

The several litanies of the Rite of Penance33 serve penitential functions. They are variously entitled General Confession of Sins, Penitential Intercessions, and Acts of Repentance.

54: Several Penitents with Individual Confession / Rite of Reconciliation / General Confession of Sins; pages 20-24;
204: Penitential Intercessions 1, 2;
205: Penitential Intercessions 1, 2;
Appendix II: Sample Penitential Services. These services follow a common sequence: word, homily, examination of conscience, act of repentance. Some of these acts of repentance are litanic in form.

30 See note 28.
32 PC 219, 229.
33 Rite of Penance, in The Rites, pages 335-445.

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29: Sin and conversion
35: The Son Returns to the Father
41: The Beatitudes
50: God Comes to Look for Us
60: Renewal of our Lives According to the Christian Vocation.

Liturgy of the Hours
Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours include intercessions following the psalms and gospel canticle; the intercession precede the Lord's Prayer and collect. These liturgies in the course of a year contain a great number of individual texts.

The General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours describes these intercessions in this way:

The general intercessions, restored in the Mass of the Roman Rite, have their place also at evening prayer....

Since traditionally morning prayer puts the whole day in God's hands, there are invocations at morning prayer for the purpose of commending or consecrating the day to God.

These intercessions may be used in different ways. When the minister says or sings the whole of each intention and the rest of the assembly says or sings a constant response, then these prayers are litanies.

In the Order of Christian Funerals, Vigils for the Deceased J and K are versions of evening prayer and contain this type of intercession.

Verses with "Lord, have Mercy"
The third form of the penitential rite in the Order of Mass uses a brief litany in which short verses are said by the minister,

with the rest of the assembly responding, "Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy." The verses themselves refer to the person or ministry of Jesus Christ and are not explicitly intercessory in content. This form of litany may also be called a "troped Kyrie." The same form of litany is also used in Pastoral Care 245 A: Continuous Rite of Penance, Anointing and Viaticum.

Other Litanies
Finally, several other liturgical prayers use the litany form, though they are discrete texts and are not open to the usual principles of litanic flexibility considered above. They include the prayer, "Welcome your servant," in Pastoral Care 220 C: Commendation of the Dying (a very ancient liturgical prayer).

The Blessing of Water, forms B and C, in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and Rite of Baptism for Children, are arranged as litanies. This is also true of the closely related texts in Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, the Thanksgiving over Water already Blessed.

Conclusions
The restoration to our liturgies of a large number and wide variety of litanies and intercessions has enriched the liturgy, provides an opportunity to express our creativity and sensitivity, and aids our full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations. 

36 DOL 3610.
37 DOL 3611.
The Bidding Prayers of Medieval England

J. Frank Henderson

General intercessions: The prayers that we today refer to as the general intercessions or prayers of the faithful were in medieval England called the "bidding prayers." They are sincere and devout, and we today can learn from their breadth and inclusiveness. They also provide a remarkable picture of the medieval church and society.

Concerns of the local church: The bidding prayers were composed to reflect the needs of each local church; hence they differ one from another in naming parishioners, clergy, and various levels of the civil government. As church and society varied from time to time, the prayers changed to reflect this. As a result, the bidding prayers were not permanent liturgical texts, but variable. We may think of them as snapshots taken on a particular occasion, showing us the concerns of that local church or that priest at a certain time and place.

Each distinct: The bidding prayers were not written into the body of the liturgical books but were written on loose pages or at the ends of books; as a result, most have been lost. From medieval England, for example, we possess only about twelve bidding prayers, dating from the tenth to the sixteenth century. The same basic form of prayer was also used across Europe, and we have another fifty or so texts from France, Germany, Iceland, Poland, Spain, Catalonia and Italy. Though their basic shape and approach are similar, each is distinct in its exact formulation.

Vernacular: As the bidding prayers were to be said by the people, most are in Middle English or in the corresponding vernacular languages of other countries. When they were used for gatherings of clergy or were written down as guidelines for priests, they were written in Latin.

Many uses: Though the most common use of bidding prayers was at Sunday Mass, they were sometimes also used as night prayers in hospitals, at parish guild meetings, and on occasions when there was preaching separated from Mass. In the last case, the bidding prayers might follow the sermon or might be integrated into the preaching.

At Mass, bidding prayers in England might be used in two ways. In cathedrals and large monasteries, they preceded Mass proper. The Sunday liturgy began with the blessing of salt and water and a procession (of clergy and choir) in which the church — especially the side altars — was sprinkled with the newly blessed water. At the end, the procession entered the space called the

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1 For the largest collections of these prayers, see J. B. Molin, "L’Oratio Communis Fidelium au Moyen Age en Occident du Xe au XVe siècle," in Miscellanea Liturgica in Onore di sua Eminenza Il Cardinale Giacomo Lercaro, vol. 2 (Roma: Desclée 1967); and Werner Muller-Geih, Das Allgemeine Gebete der sonn- und feiertäglichen Pfarrmesse im deutschen Sprachgebiet: Von der Karolingischen Reform bis zu den Reformversuchen der Aufklärungszeit (Altenberge: Oros Verlag 1992).
chancel (or sanctuary), which was separated from the people’s space (the nave) by the screen. The presiding priest stayed at the doorway in the screen, turned to the people, and led them in saying the bidding prayer. At the end he entered the chancel and began Mass.

In parishes and other smaller churches, the procession was shorter and less formal, or simply unnecessary; the priest could sprinkle the church without leaving the chancel. In these cases the bidding prayers were said following the sermon, more or less as we do today.

Structure

The typical bidding prayer was read out by the priest, but addressed to the people; it was theirs to pray. It began with an invitation to prayer, and thereafter was divided into a series of prayers for the living and a series of prayers for the dead. Those for the living were divided into prayers for the church, for the civil government (the nation), and for the members of the parish. The intentions for the dead were divided into family members, benefactors, those with connections to the parish, and others. In addition to the living and the dead who were specifically identified, prayers for all Christian people, living and dead, were also included. In actual practice, specific names of individuals might be added each time the prayer was said.

One prayer has been selected as an example. It was prayed in a parish church in the city of London around 1360. The Few lines will first be given in the original Middle English. Then the entire prayer will be given in a partially modernized version. A brief commentary has been added.

Ze shall knell down on your kneis and prai devoutle and mekle to the Fader, the Son, and the Holi Gost, thre persons and o Gode: To ye holy made and moder seymt Marye, and to all the holy courte of hevene, specialy for the state and pees of all holy churche and all Crysten kyngdoms and especiall for the kyngdom of Yglond, that Jhu Crist of heven kynge and prync of pees graunte rest, unite and pees amongst all Cristen pepyll.

Invitation: The priest invites the people to join in prayer, here specifying that they kneel. The overall intention of the prayer is peace for church and country.

You shall kneel down on your knees and pray devoutly and meekly to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three persons and one God; To the holy maid and mother saint Mary, and to all the holy court of heaven, especially for the state and peace of all holy church and all Christian kingdoms and especially for the kingdom of England, that Jesus Christ king of heaven and prince of peace grant rest, unity and peace among all Christian people.

The Holy Land: All pray that Christians regain control of the holy land and possession of the holy cross. Note that the Patriarch of Jerusalem is mentioned in the next section.

You shall pray also especially for the holy land and for the holy cross upon which our Saviour Christ Jesus suffered pain and passion for our redemption, that he by his might and mercy bring it out of the hands of unbelievers.

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into the royal governance and respect of Christians, when it is his will and the sooner for prayer.

Prayer for Church – The Hierarchy: All pray for the pope and cardinals, for the archbishop and bishop who minister to this church, and for all bishops; priests and religious are also mentioned, though they are the special focus of other prayers as well.

You shall pray also for the pope of Rome especially and all his cardinals, for the Patriarch of Jerusalem, for our lord and father the archbishop of Canterbury and for our father and lord the bishop of London and all other archbishops and bishops, especially of this land, that Jesus Christ give them might and strength to maintain the state and law of holy Church, and to rule well himself to serve and please Jesus and after that priests and clerks and all men and women of religious orders and all Christian people.

Prayer for the Church – Religious: All pray for superiors of communities of religious, and for all members of religious orders.

Also you shall pray for abbeys and priors, abbesses and prioresses; for monks, canons, friars and nuns and for all other men and women of religion, that Jesus Christ give them grace to serve him and to keep their rule well, and to end life in purity.

Prayer for the Church – Parish Clergy: All pray for the person or monastery who owns the church building and land, for the priest in charge (the parson, also called the rector), for other priests (who may serve chantries and chapels), and clerks (nonordained parish staff).

Also you shall pray especially for the patron and for the parson of this church and for all the priests and clerks which serve God in this church or in any other, that God of his great mercy help and maintain them to his honor and grant them grace so to act in this world, that it may be the salvation of their souls and of all Christian folk.

Prayer for Parishioners – A: The next two sections of the prayer logically should come later, with other similar prayers. All pray for those who support the parish with their tithes (supposedly, every adult) and who support the parish with voluntary gifts of money or land.

Also you shall pray especially for true tithers and devout offerers, who truly pay their tithes and devout offerings, that God of his goodness increase them spiritually and bodily.

Prayer for Parishioners – B: All pray for those who donate or leave in their wills items that are used in the parish’s liturgical life (or the money to purchase these).

Also you shall pray for those who give or bequeath unto this church any ornament, as book, bell, chalice, vestments, lamp or light, or any thing, that God reward them spiritually and bodily.

Prayer for the Civil Government – The Nation: All pray for the royal family, the nobility (listed in hierarchical order), and all citizens.

Also you shall pray heartily for our leige lord, King of England,
for our lady the Queen, and for our prince,
whom Christ save spiritually;
for dukes, earls, barons, knights, squires,
and for all good commoners of this land,
that God give them all grace
to act and legislate so that it be greatly pleasing to them
and to the benefit and salvation of this land.

Prayer for Parishioners and Others: All pray for pilgrims to local shrines, to Rome and elsewhere. Those who go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the holy land are called palmers, for the palm branch that they receive. Those who stay at home pray for those who travel, and in return receive some of the pilgrims' grace.

You shall pray also for all palmers and pilgrims,
for all manner of men and women which any good journey have gone, goeth, or shall go,
that God give them grace well to go and well for to come back and give unto us part of the merits in return for our actions and prayers.

Prayer for the Civil Government – The City: All pray for the city of London, its civic officials, and all its citizens.

You shall also pray specially for the welfare and prosperity of this worshipful city of London, for my right worship and reverent master our mayor, with all my masters his brother aldermen;
for the sheriffs and all other officers and dwellers in the same.

Prayer for Parishioners – C: All pray for those who are present at the liturgy, for those who are involuntarily absent, and those who should be there but are not, and especially for our parishioners here present, each one prays for the other and for them which be absent and would be present and may not; and for them that may and will not, that God amend them.

Prayer for Parishioners – D: All pray for the sick of the parish.

and especially for the sick and all that are diseased in body or in soul, that God of his goodness comfort them spiritually and bodily.

Prayer for Parishioners – E: All pray for women who are pregnant, for safe delivery and return to the worship life of the church through the liturgy of purification or churching. All pray as well for the sacramental initiation of their children.

and for women that be with children, that God grant to them a good deliverance and purification, and to their children baptism and confirmation.

Prayer for Parishioners – F: All pray for farmers and for those who make or repair bridges or roads; travel was difficult in those days.

Also you shall pray for all tillers of land and those who plough the earth;
and for men and women who build or repair bridges and roads.

Prayer for Parishioners – G: Logically, this should be connected to the previous prayer for farmers. All pray for the good growth of crops.

Also ye shall pray for the fruit that is in the earth, and that which is to be planted, that God grant it fructification unto Christian folk's sustinance.

Prayer for Parishioners – H: Though most lay people received holy communion only once or a few times a year, each Sunday all
shared bread provided by parishioners and blessed after Mass; this was called “holy bread.” Parishioners who could afford to do so took turns providing it, and here all pray for these benefactors.

Also you shall pray for the good man and good wife that this day brought or sent bread unto the church, of which holy bread is to be made.

Prayer for Parishioners – G: This phrase is obscure; some think it refers to those who come to Mass on time and stay until it is over, while others think it refers to the oldest persons in the parish.

and for them that first began and hold on the longest.

Conclusion to the Prayer for the Living: Here the priest invites everyone to pray the Our Father and Hail Mary silently for everyone who has been mentioned, for all present, and for all Christian people. He pauses for a moment while they do this.

for them and for us and for all we are to pray for especially or generally, and for all Christian folk each man and woman for charity say devoutly: (a Pater Noster and an Ave Maria).

Prayers for the Dead – A: All pray for dead relatives and godparents.

You shall pray also for your fathers’ souls, and your mothers’ souls, for your godfathers’ souls, and your godmothers’ souls, for your brothers’ souls, your sisters’ souls, for your uncles’ souls, your aunts’ souls and for all your elders’ souls.

Prayers for the Dead – B: All pray for dead persons who provided them with gifts or bequests.

And you shall pray especially for the souls from whom you have received any good by gift or bequest, whereby you have your living and your sustenance.

Prayers for the Dead – B: All pray for dead persons who have provided the parish with gifts or bequests.

You shall pray also for all the souls which have given or bequeathed any good to this church, wherefore it is better maintained.

Prayers for the Dead – C: All pray for those whose memorial masses (especially one year after death) are celebrated in the parish church, and for those buried in the church or church yard.

Also you shall pray for all the souls whose anniversary masses are said, kept and held in this church yearly; and for all the souls which bodies and bones resting in this church or in this church yard or in any other.

Prayers for the Dead – D: Parishioners pray for all who are in purgatory.

Also you shall pray especially for all the souls that be in the pains of purgatory, that God for his mercy bring them out thereof to the bliss that ever shall last.

Prayers for the Dead – E: This refers to dead persons whom the living might have promised to pray for or for some other reason feel an obligation to do so.

Also you shall pray especially for all those souls for whom you and I be bound and held to pray for,

Conclusion to the Prayers for the Dead: Here the priest invites everyone to pray the Our
Father and Hail Mary silently for all those previously mentioned and all Christian people who have died.

for them and for all Christian souls each man and woman for charity say a Pater Noster and a Ave Maria.

The length, careful construction and expansive language of the medieval English bidding prayers show that this part of the Sunday liturgy was taken very seriously; these prayers of the people were important! They show a desire to include every Christian woman and man, both locally and in the wider nation and entire Christian world. They are devout and sincere, and take a realistic approach to life. In their own way they set standards that we might wish to emulate today.

The General Intercessions: Prayer of the Faithful

The re-introduction of the general intercessions into the liturgy is one aspect of the renewal of the liturgy that seems to have been easily accepted by "the faithful." It is a part in which the community can add its own touch to a liturgy that for many is generally quite formal and remote. And these prayers respond to people's need to pray for their concerns and for those close to them.

This kind of general prayer of the Church was, according to Joseph Jungmann, considered important from earliest times. In the writings of Justin Martyr, in the second century, one can read how those present all stood up and recited prayers after the sermon by the bishop.1 Jungmann refers to other writings of the early Church Fathers in both the West and the East who speak of common prayer following the sermon. The pattern was consistent: The assembly listened to the word of God and then responded by interceding on behalf of the whole world. He also believes that the form of these prayers as is still used in the Good Friday liturgy is the form in common use in the Roman church in the third century.2

People will usually remember the general intercessions of Good Friday not because of their content but because of their length. This undue length was also a problem in the early Church, and already in the fifth century church leaders began to replace them with a shorter form borrowed from the East, a form which consisted of a statement of the petition and the people responding with "Lord, have mercy." This shortened form is the litany form common today, but a significant element was lost: the time to pray silently. Also, it became common for the deacon to state the petitions, something which would be a natural function for a deacon, since his principal ministry was to take the eucharistic bread to those who could not be present.

2 Jungmann, 482.
and to look after the needs of the community. He would therefore be knowledgeable about the needs in the community.

Several centuries later the general intercessions as such almost disappeared. Prayer on behalf of the community never entirely disappeared, however; new forms were developed, especially the “prone,” which took place after the gospel and included announcements, a list of prayer intentions ranging from the Church and clergy to the sick and the departed, and included the Lord’s Prayer and the Hail Mary, recited in common.

Another point about this ancient practice of common prayer is worth keeping in mind. In the writings of these early Church Fathers, mention is made of the fact that once the catechumens were baptized at the Easter vigil, the first action of the baptized in which they participated with the community was the prayers of intercession. Up to that time they had been dismissed from the assembly before the time came for these prayers; early Christians held these prayers, and the eucharistic memorial which followed, in such high esteem that only the fully initiated members, “the faithful,” were allowed to participate: hence the name, “prayers of the faithful.” They saw themselves as called to intercede on behalf of the whole world, to exercise their priesthood as the baptized, as members of the body of Christ, to place before God in union with Christ the needs of all humanity.

**Characteristics of General Intercessions**

Believers will usually include intercessory prayer in their own personal prayer and in groups that gather for devotional prayer. This prayer will arise out of their own personal needs, and obviously they hope that God will respond to these needs in a personal way. However, the general intercessions in the liturgy are not the same, not just a collection of individuals’ various personal needs and of those close to them. These intercessions are the prayer of the Church, the prayer of the community of the baptized.

When the general intercessions were reinstated into at least every Sunday Eucharist in the renewal of the liturgy following the Second Vatican Council, the *General Introduction of the Roman Missal* was quite clear regarding the purpose, the scope of the intercessions, and the structure of this rite (nos. 45-57). The prayers belong to the people, who exercise their priestly function, interceding as an advocate on behalf of all humanity (no. 45). The scope of these prayers includes the needs of the Church, of public authorities and the world, of those oppressed by any need, and of the local community.

The general intercessions are, first of all, a rite of the liturgy; in other words, they are genuine liturgical prayer. As such they are the prayer of a community, of an assembly, of a gathering of the body of Christ, and not simply a collection of the private prayers offered by the individuals who are present. It is first of all in this sense that they are general or universal — the prayer of the whole Church. They are general also in the sense that they are the prayer of the baptized who share in the mission of Christ, who is the mediator on behalf of all people. It is with the eyes of Christ that the Christians see the pain and agony of the world and give voice to those who sometimes cannot even speak for themselves.

The general intercessions bring to a conclusion the liturgy of the word in the eucharistic liturgy. Not only are they the conclusion but they are also the climax of

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the entire liturgy of the word, the fruit, in a way, of God's word working in the hearts of the hearers of that word. It has been compared to sacramental communion being the conclusion and at the same time the climax of the liturgy of the eucharist.

It is not that God has to be told about these needs of the world. Giving voice to these needs is not really telling God what to do, but it is rather an acknowledgement of our dependence on God, on the one who can answer all the world's needs. Giving expression to these needs also helps Christians to stretch their compassion to include the whole world. When they are dismissed to go forth and serve the Lord, they will be moved to take action in whatever way they can for the people in the world who are oppressed, without peace, without enough to eat, or hungering for God's mercy. What Christians pray for also becomes their mission.

At the same time the general intercessions make a connection between the Eucharist and the daily lives of Christians. In order that the intercessions relate to the genuine needs of the community, they must flow from the day-to-day lives of people in the community, a community which is also sensitive to what is happening in the universal Church and in the world. It has been said that those who preach should have the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other. The same can be said about those who prepare the general intercessions for the Sunday Eucharist in the parish. True participation by the people is going to be more likely if the people's needs at that time, the concrete dilemmas and crises they face, are included in the petitions they are invited to make their own.

The scope of these intercessions is comprehensive and inclusive, as one can see by the categories that make up the intercessions of Good Friday. The GIRM suggests a sequence, an order that moves from the universal to the particular. The document also mentions that in particular celebrations the petitions may refer more specifically to the occasion (no. 47). The thrust is always outward, not self serving nor turned inward. It might be said that one does not find a petition that sounds like: "For our own personal intentions..." in our tradition nor in models presently provided in liturgical books.

The Christian community first hears the words, "Let us pray," in the eucharistic liturgy at the opening prayer. This invitation is to be followed by a time of silence during which those in the assembly enter into their hearts to bring to mind their needs and to formulate them for themselves (GIRM, no. 32). The prayer that follows "collects" these personal needs in a very general sort of way and leads the community into the celebration. The problem is, the silence is often too short or nonexistent, and that kind of interiorization does not happen.

The Form of the General Intercessions

The GIRM also outlines the form of the rite: a brief introduction by the presider to invite the assembly to pray, intentions announced by the deacon, cantor or another person followed by the whole assembly's prayer of petition or a time of silence, and a concluding prayer. The rite as a whole is a three-part unit. To maintain its unity visually some parishes ask the person who is to proclaim or sing the petitions to be in place for the presider's introduction and to stay there until the final Amen has been said.

The introduction is described as brief, and it is addressed to the people, not to God. It is simply a way of saying: "Let us pray." The emphasis here is on brevity; it is not a

5 DOL no. 1894.
6 See the Sacramentary (Ottawa: Canadian Catholic Conference, 1974, 1993), page 1040 ff.
place to interject a mini-homily or to “pre­
view” the petitions. It is a call to the
assembly to pray; the community does not
take the initiative.

The petitions themselves have two parts, the
statement of the petition and the whole
assembly's response of prayer, which can be
either a voiced prayer of supplication (not of
praise or thanksgiving) or a period of silence.
It must be kept in mind that the prayer is
expressed by the assembly's response, not by
the petitions themselves. The petitions are
statements of the need presented to the
assembly for prayer, and they are addressed to
the people, not to God. They finish with a
cue to the assembly to pray, and this can be
something like “Let us pray” or “We pray to
the Lord.” The assembly's response is also
short, such as “Lord, hear our prayer” or
“Lord, have mercy” (a translation of the tra­
ditional Greek response, Kyríe eléíson). Other
formulas of petition can be used: for exam­
ples, for seasons such as Lent. Obviously the
same cue and the same assembly's response
should be used throughout the intercessions
for a given celebration.

The petitions themselves can be struc­
tured in several ways. Four possibilities will
be offered here. Again, using the same pat­
ttern for a set of petitions within a celebra­
tion is helpful.

• For ... (cue), assembly's
response
• That ... (cue), assembly's
response
• For ... that (cue), assembly's
response
• For ... period of silence.

A period of silence may also be interjected
before the cue for the assembly's response
in the first three formulas given.

The GIRM does not suggest from where
these petitions are to be presented. In many
parishes, the person presenting the peti­
tions comes to the ambo (lectern), but
another place in the assembly might also be
appropriate, as long as the person is easily
heard and preferably visible as the one lead­ing
this particular part of the rite. Some
ministers may need a reminder to put the
list of petitions in an appropriate binder or
folder rather than simply carrying a piece of
paper.

Singing highlights the significance of this
prayer; the assembly's response can be
sung, or the cue (which engages the can­tor)
and the response, or the whole peti­tion can be sung by a cantor. (See the Na­tion­al Bulletin of Liturgy, vol. 22, no. 118, September 1989, pages 159-190, for
more on singing the general intercessions
as well as other aspects.)

The concluding prayer of the general
intercessions belongs to the presider, and
simply asks God to hear the petitions just
presented, but it does not repeat the peti­tions nor add new ones. The samples pro­
vided in the sacramentary (pp. 1040-
1052) end with "through Christ our Lord"
or some other formula indicating that
these petitions for the Church and the
world are being offered to God in union
with Christ. This ending is a reminder to
the community that it does not pray on its
own but that it prays with Christ their
Head, and it is he who offers these prayers
to God the Father.

Anyone considering replacing this con­
cluding prayer with some other prayer, such
as a devotional prayer recited by the assem­
by, will want to give this latter practice sec­
ond thought; should the community be
deprived of this reminder of Christ's pre­sence among them by replacing the prayer?
Sometimes a diocese or a region will request
that parishes pray for a particular need, and
a prayer may be provided. It is better to
fashion a petition, or set of petitions, and
include it in the general intercessions on a

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7 Catholic Book of Worship III (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1994) has a number of
settings, nos. 266-275. See also the Sacramentary, p. 1066.
regular basis rather than replacing a liturgical element with such a prayer.

Preparation of the Petitions
Those who are called on to prepare the petitions have a task that is not an easy one. As far as who writes them, practice varies. It could be a subcommittee of the liturgy committee, a group of readers, or a group involved in various ministries in the parish. A smaller group will obviously be able to get the task done more easily than a larger group. Only one set needs to be prepared for a weekend, so that all the Masses on a particular Sunday use the same set of intercessions. It is usually better that the same group compose the intercessions for a given period of time, such as a liturgical season, so that there is a certain consistency in the content and style.

The best place to begin is to read the Scriptures of the celebration; after all, the general intercessions are a response to the word of God, and the writer(s) will want to be in touch with God’s word in order to make this prayer an authentic response by the community. Reflection on the scripture readings should lead to some questions: What is the community being called to do? How is it being challenged? Where is there need for conversion, change? Where is the darkness in the world, the Church, the community? The Scriptures may bring to light some needs that can be included in the petitions, but they may not. What is likely going to be more helpful is the language and the images that can be used to fashion the intercessions – always avoiding the temptation to “sermonize.”

Five or six petitions is a good average number; writers need to be sure to include at least one from each of the categories suggested by GIRM. Just as the sequence in GIRM moves from the universal Church to the local community, each petition can move from the universal to the particular: for example, “For the sick, especially for (those in the parish).” It is not a small challenge to keep a balance between universal needs and the needs emerging from the life and ministry of the parish.

These petitions are also framed in a way that conveys our relationship with God, with an attitude that we stand empty before God, that we do not have all the answers. We do not have to tell God what to do nor give God a script for what should happen in a situation. If the “For … that” formula is chosen, the “that” clause should flow out of the Scriptures.

The petitions are meant to be simple, to be short, and to lead the community to prayer.
A few more guidelines might helpful:

- The prayers are petitions, with no exceptions, and not prayers of thanksgiving. “In thanksgiving for the fine weather ...” is not a petition. The eucharistic prayer that follows is the community’s prayer of thanksgiving.

- The general intercessions are not the place for an update on the latest crisis in the world or in the community. Needs should be presented simply, without comment.

- The petitions are not bulletin boards; all the details of the funeral arrangements need not be included in a prayer for someone who has died recently. The parish bulletin or a real bulletin board is the place for these details – or the questions regarding these details can be “conversation starters” after the liturgy.

- The petitions should be for classes of people, and if desired, move from there to specific individuals: for example, for all catechumens, especially for those of the parish.

- Pray for people, not against them (such as: “For those who do not come to church on Sundays”), and do not pray for objects.

- Be sure the petitions are respectful toward all people, that they are inclusive, and that all in the assembly can identify with them and “own” them. Prayer should never be divisive or judgemental.

- The petitions need not be completely new each Sunday. Some that refer to the needs of season (for example, for those preparing for baptism) can be repeated for the whole of the season. Good petitions bear being repeated often, even Sunday after Sunday.

- The petitions are more easily assimilated by the assembly, especially when they are sung, if they are shorter rather than longer. Texts that are brief and to the point are characteristic of the Roman rite. In liturgical prayer, every word counts.

- Liturgical prayer is never meant to teach; therefore, avoid a didactic tone in the petitions.

- Prepared petitions, such as those found in missalettes and in published collections, are intended to be used as models only. The general intercessions are the prayer of the community, and no prepared sets will provide everything that pertains to the life of a given parish and that concern those actually making up that local community.

- Making the petitions so general that they are vague does not inspire prayer. The needs described should be specific – and God does not need polite language.

- Be creative. Aim for language that has the power to uplift the spirit, to be inspiring, to move people beyond what is trite and casual.

Some parishes encourage the participation of the parish at large in the content of these petitions by providing a book of intercessions in which people can write their requests for prayer, or people may have a petition box into which they can deposit their petitions. These are then summarized and included in the petitions prepared for the parish. Inviting spontaneous petitions from large assemblies usually does not work very well, but smaller communities may use this format.

The general intercessions that have been discussed here are those that are part of the eucharistic liturgy. Such intercessions also have a place in other liturgical prayer: that is, after every celebration of the word of God, even if the eucharistic prayer does not follow. They are also a part of the Liturgy of the Hours, and here they have their own particular form. Intercessory prayer has a place also in devotional prayer; various litanies have found their way into the repertoire of these prayers. But the general intercessions have a power that goes beyond simply presenting the world’s needs before God; they have a power not only to shape our own personal prayer but also to move us to reach out where the hand of Christ is needed, to bear one another’s burdens.
When Do We Pray What?

On the Relationship of Liturgical and Devotional Prayer

Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S.

Recently someone approached me with a challenging question: “My sister is getting married this spring and she wants some secular music before the wedding Mass, but the parish music director said ‘no’; you’re the expert, is he correct? What’s so wrong with this?” This question got me thinking about other pastoral liturgy questions often put to me: Why can’t we pray the rosary immediately before or after Mass? What happened to all our novenas? Why don’t we have Benediction anymore? Why can’t we have perpetual adoration and exposition; after all, parish X does it? What’s so wrong with opening up the general intercessions to anyone in the assembly for us to say aloud our needs? Why can’t we bring up our recently-won basketball trophy at the presentation of gifts?

These questions are really not easy ones to answer and shouldn’t be taken lightly. All of the pastoral issues they raise have a common thread lying beneath them: the similarities, differences, and relationship of liturgical and devotional prayer. We have centuries of praying experience to guide us. We have directives from church documents to direct us. We can draw on liturgical theology to challenge us, help us sort out the data, and open up for us new avenues of ecclesial and private prayer. We can try new things and pray together for guidance. Above all, we must remember that we are in a period of liturgical change, and we won’t have all the solutions to all our pastoral struggles in a few years. Or even in a few decades.

I do not propose in this article to “answer” those questions I raised. I do believe that — although there are general principles to guide us — each pastoral situation must be examined individually. What I do wish to do is begin a discussion on the relationship of liturgical and devotional prayer. Misconceptions about this issue are at the heart of many of our pastoral liturgical “battles.” So, let’s begin our conversation …

Pastoral Issues

What does/ought a parish prayer life look like? This would have been a relatively easy question to answer prior to Vatican II, and most parishes would have fit into a similar description with only minor variations: weekly Mass (during which individuals prayed their own prayers), monthly confession, monthly holy hour before First Friday which included Benediction, yearly forty hours, and a healthy sprinkling of novenas and litanies in between for those so inclined to these devotions. It is fair to say that what characterized all of this was an intensely personal (and sometimes privatized) prayer during which individuals could adequately place their needs and expectations, hopes and desires before their God. On the whole it was a full, satisfying prayer life for the pious (who usually did much more than the minimum required) and an adequate prayer life for...
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the not-so-pious. Let’s give credit where credit is due: For centuries many people developed a deep, loving relationship with God through this prayer regime and became astounding holy.

So why all the changes after Vatican II? Why didn’t we leave things alone? The century of prayer, thought, and study that constituted what we now call the “liturgical movement” and culminated in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy opened up for us new insights, new depth, new and exciting possibilities for praying better, both liturgically and devotionally. Certainly one hallmark of Vatican II liturgical renewal is the call for full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgy by all. What this means on a practical level is that liturgy can no longer be a time for us to pray our private devotions. And so we have a dilemma: When do we pray what?

The average present liturgical situation reflects a decided emphasis on liturgical prayer, especially the Eucharist. If the pre-Vatican II era was marked by devotional prayer, our post-Vatican II era is certainly marked by liturgical variety: we have home Masses and clown Masses, variable general intercessions and choice of eucharistic prayers, Liturgy of the Hours and heightened awareness of the distinctions in the liturgical seasons. All of this has brought us a liturgical richness, punctuated by our active participation.

Yet, the desired liturgical renewal is hardly a general reality in the Church. In fact, Sunday Mass attendance is declining, and it is naive, to say the least, to blame it all on “secularization” of our society, especially when there is also much evidence of a deep spiritual hunger among people. Some are choosing to be fed by various popular “movements” (for example, evangelicals, charismatics, the so-called “mega-churches”). Others are simply searching and feeling mighty hungry in the meantime.

Many issues contribute to this liturgical malaise: church structures and authority, inculturation of Church and liturgy, relationship of the secular and the sacred, equality and inclusivity, Tradition and orthodoxy versus renewal and plurality, popular religion, to name but a few. Although all these issues affect the quality of all our prayer, in this article I would like to focus only on the relationship of liturgical and devotional prayer. To this end, next I wish to look at select church documents to direct our discussion.

What Church Documents Tell Us

No church document has addressed exclusively the distinction between liturgical and devotional prayer. In fact, there are only a few references to this distinction at all. The most important single statement (and the one oft quoted in other documents) is found in The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium) of Vatican II.

In paragraph 13 we read:

Popular devotions are to be highly endorsed, provided they accord with the laws and norms of the Church, above all when they are ordered by the Apostolic See ... But these devotions should be so fashioned that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy, are in some way derived from it, and lead the people to it, since, in fact, the liturgy by its very nature far surpasses any of them.

We can detect in this reference seven criteria for making judgments about authentic and healthy popular devotions. First, and perhaps most important, the statement begins by unequivocally stating that “popular devotions are to be highly endorsed.” The first criterion doesn’t clarify the relationship of popular devotions and liturgical prayer, but it does make clear that we can’t do without them. This suggests that those parishes that have indiscriminately done away with all devotional prayer must re-evaluate and once again
introduce parish-level common devotional prayer as well as encourage individual and family devotional prayer.

Second, no devotional prayer can discount or go against the “laws and norms of the Church” nor can we ignore official statements concerning them. For example, some popular blessings are given in the Canadian A Book of Blessings; the introduction states that “in the Mass, blessings may be celebrated after the homily ...” The “may” indicates that it is appropriate to celebrate blessings during Mass; the directive is clear, however, in that we don’t insert these blessings just any place, but after the homily. But above all, this criterion suggests that devotional prayer – no matter how satisfying – can never take the place of liturgy nor become more important than liturgy. This leads us to a third criterion, that “the liturgy by its very nature far surpasses” any devotional prayer, whether communal or private. The mind of the Church here is to unequivocally assert liturgy’s primary place. On the one hand, devotional prayer is endorsed and encouraged; on the other hand, we are precluded from ever replacing liturgy with devotions.

The next four criteria all point to the relationship between liturgical and devotional prayer. So, the fourth criterion indicates that our devotional life is drawn from and supported by the liturgical seasons (some practical suggestions for this are made in the final section of this article). Fifth, popular devotions are to “accord with the sacred liturgy,” which means that they must be consistent with the spirit of the liturgical renewal. Any kind of devotional prayer that may promote a return to a pre-Vatican II kind of liturgy or that discourages any of the benchmarks of that renewal (for example, “full, conscious, and active participation” by all the faithful) would be neither authentic devotional prayer nor healthy. The sixth and seventh criteria: Popular devotions lead us to the liturgy and are in some way derived from it. Some devotions have a structure actu-

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ally based on a type of liturgical prayer; for example, popular litanies follow the ancient structure of intercessory prayer, perhaps now best liturgically exemplified by the litany of all saints; the 150 Hail Marys of the ever-so-popular rosary parallel the use of the 150 psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours; popular processions emulate various liturgical processions. These structural parallels underscore the liturgical basis for all Christian prayer.

Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation, Marialis Cultus, February 2, 1974, adds what we might count as an eighth criterion when in paragraph 30 it states that "Christian devotion everywhere requires the incorporation of biblical content and themes." Essentially, then, the content of even our devotional prayer is the great salvation themes of Sacred Scripture and that we celebrate in liturgy. A good example of devotional prayer faithful to this criterion would be a "scriptural" rosary that incorporates passages from Scripture referring to the particular mystery attached to each of its fifteen decades. In this praying of the rosary the primary goal is meditation on those scriptural events of salvation; the relationship to liturgy is quite clear.

Paragraph 31 of the same document outlines two common attitudes among pastoral leaders with respect to popular devotions: Some pastoral ministers reject devotions altogether and others combine liturgy and devotions. It then goes on to give the conciliar norm: "Popular devotions must be subordinated to the liturgy, not intermingled with it" (cf. the third criterion above). As unpopular as the stance may be, adding devotions to liturgy or appending them at the beginning or end is not endorsed. Practically speaking, this means that the rosary cannot be said immediately before or after Mass; prelude music before a wedding that is not connected with the religious nature of the service is to be discouraged; exposition of the Blessed Sacrament during Mass is not permitted.

Paragraph 67 of Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium) provides a caution at the same time that it suggests the root of our popular devotions: "... for their part, the faithful must be mindful that true devotion does not consist in sheer, passing feeling, or in mindless credulity, but that it issues from an authentic faith ..." (emphasis added). A number of things call for comment. Often the popularity of some devotions rests precisely in the good feelings or "religious high" that is experienced. Although this isn't condemned, we are urged to go beyond these feelings to a deep faith that underlies any authentic and healthy devotion. The goal, then, of our devotional prayer isn't the feelings that may accompany it but the deepening of our relationship with God, self, and others. Nor can our devotional prayer remain unchanged. As we grow spiritually, our devotional prayer will necessarily grow and change. A mindless or rote fidelity to saying certain prayers when we've perhaps long since outgrown them does not indicate a healthy approach to devotional prayer. Further, the kind and depth of our devotional prayer can be something of a barometer of our spiritual growth; if we find exactly the same prayer satisfying us for many years on end, then perhaps we need to examine our growth in faith.

These documents offer a sound basis for a reflection on the relationship of liturgical and devotional prayer: Liturgical prayer is primary, devotional prayer is endorsed. Our task now is to briefly describe what it is that makes prayer liturgical and what it is that makes it devotional so that we can understand more clearly their distinction.

Liturgical and Devotional Prayer
From the outset, let's make sure we understand that both liturgical and devotional prayer are essential and intensely personal for every Christian. Having said that, let's look at what distinguishes each kind of prayer.

Liturgical prayer is always the prayer of the whole body of Christ, the Church. When we gather locally to pray liturgically, we
join our prayer with the whole Church; liturgical prayer unfolds in time and space, but always transcends time and space. Liturgical prayer is the ritual anamnesis (remembering) of Christ’s great acts of salvation. More specifically, when we pray liturgically, we are enacting the paschal mystery. That is, we are participating with Christ, the Head of the body, in those great acts of salvation that invite us into God’s holiness and during which we give praise and thanks to God for being a redeemed people. Liturgical prayer always is an action that transforms us ever more perfectly into being the body of Christ. It is prayer that shapes us by our very participation in Christ’s salvific act. Its ritual form is given through and by the Tradition of the Church and bears the marks of the wisdom of the years. And although the external ritual form has and will continue to change as we gain more insight into the dynamic of this prayer, its fundamental structure to make present the paschal mystery remains unchanged throughout the Church’s history. Liturgy calls us to surrender ourselves to God’s salvific action within us and so be transformed.

Devotional prayer is shaped by us, that is, we are free to change existing prayer forms and create new ones that better suit our needs. Devotional prayer gives us an opportunity to directly express our individual affective needs in our praying. It creates space for God to be present and inform all dimensions of our lives. It can be spontaneous, carried in our hearts as we drive to work, do our daily exercises, or clean the house. It opens up in us a hunger for liturgical prayer and is an important preparation for liturgical prayer. Our “practice” in encountering God during each moment of our everyday is the most wonderful way for preparing for that paschal mystery encounter so endemic to liturgy. Devotional prayer also affords us time for reflection and application of liturgical prayer; it can be a moment of “rumination” on the divine mysteries.

A summary of these aspects of liturgical and devotional prayer are listed on the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liturgical Prayer</th>
<th>Devotional Prayer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• ecclesial (body: whole Church)</td>
<td>• individual (member of the body)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• enacts (remembers) paschal mystery</td>
<td>• draws us to live the paschal mystery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• flows from and to mission of Christ</td>
<td>• flows from and to liturgy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• it shapes us (pours us into the heart of Christ)</td>
<td>• we shape it (pouring out our hearts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• objective (subject is enacted upon)</td>
<td>• subjective (subject acts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• always communal, with Jesus as Head</td>
<td>• usually private, may be communal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• exercise of priesthood of Christ</td>
<td>• share in priesthood of Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• given by and through Tradition</td>
<td>• changed or created by individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• universal</td>
<td>• local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• transcultural</td>
<td>• cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• rhythmic (follows cycle of days, weeks, seasons)</td>
<td>• sporadic (meets individual needs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• bigger than present moment</td>
<td>• determined by the present moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• action that enacts mystery</td>
<td>• person/object focused</td>
</tr>
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Respecting Similarities and Differences

The best way to respect the similarities and differences between liturgical and devotional prayer is for each one of us to develop a healthy balance between both kinds of prayer. To do this, we must recognize certain truths: that a wholesome prayer life is primarily the responsibility of each one of us and that no one else can take responsibility for seeing that all the prayer needs of an individual are met; that going to Mass on Sunday simply isn’t enough to grow more deeply into our relationship with God, self, and others; that we are all called to be “professional” prayers by our baptism.

One very practical way to express the relationship between liturgical and devotional prayer is to parallel the daily, weekly, yearly rhythm of liturgy with personal devotional prayer and practices that meet individual needs. Let’s look at some examples of how this might take shape.

Liturgically, this threefold rhythm unfolds as daily morning and evening prayer (there are numerous formats available, from the very simple – the Canadian missalette, Living with Christ, always includes one setting of each – to the more complex and official Liturgy of the Hours), weekly celebration of Christ’s Resurrection at the Sunday Eucharist, and the yearly marking of the paschal mystery during the various liturgical seasons.

A good habit of daily devotional prayer might include, first of all, special emphasis on meal prayers. These can be short and spontaneous, including a blessing on the food that is to be eaten, praise and thanks giving for God’s bounty, and remembrance of those less fortunate. This helps us connect our daily bread with God’s blessing of eucharistic bread, and also reminds us that when we eat and strengthen ourselves we help to build up Christ’s body. Another easy daily devotional prayer practice is to keep a running litany of praise and thanks giving and begging for God’s mercy throughout the day: God, I praise you (for the sunny day, for my co-worker’s bright smile, for the beauty that surrounds me); God, I thank you (for the convenient parking place, for good health, for finding the lost article); God, forgive me (for my unkind remark, for not seeing another’s need, for placing myself above others).

One of the blessings of the aged and homebound is that they often have both the time and adequate health to develop a more extensive daily devotional prayer life. Many parishes now have “prayer circles” whereby members call each other when a special prayer request surfaces; this practice has the added advantage of creating a “telephone chain” that assures contact and socializing for senior members of the parish. Favorite daily prayers and intentions typically include prayers to favorite saints and prayers for vocations.

A weekly devotional prayer rhythm would help the individual focus on each weekend as a “mini Triduum” that celebrates the Easter mysteries. The Church relaxed the Friday abstinence law but not the requirement to do some form of penance on Fridays; regaining the habit of doing penance on Fridays (traditionally, Christian penance included the three practices of prayer, fasting, and giving alms) will help us keep Friday as the day of the cross and already begin our preparation for the Sunday celebration of Eucharist. We might want to focus on Saturday as “preparation” day for Sunday; as much as possible, our weekly shopping and chores could be relegated to this day. Sunday should be celebrated as the “day of the Lord.” The day might begin with a more festive breakfast (I always make sure I have sweet rolls for Sunday breakfast instead of toast, and put whipped cream in my coffee!); Eucharist (Saturday evening Masses are for those who can’t possibly get to Mass on Sunday; they were never meant to be a “convenience,” especially if that means “getting it out of the way so I can plan Sunday to suit myself”); and recovering Sunday as a day of rest and rejuvenation. With these simple practices,
the week (and, hence, our devotional prayer) flows to and from the Sunday celebration of the Resurrection.

The rich seasons of the liturgical year pose many opportunities for creative and traditional devotional prayers that help us enter more fully into the mystery being celebrated. Advent (especially the last two weeks) is a wonderful time for special Marian devotions. The joyful mysteries of the rosary could be supplemented by the daily Gospel readings. The Advent wreath prayers could be recast with a Marian focus. The Jesse tree helps us key into major Old Testament salvation people and events and invites us to relate them to God's own working of salvation within us. Seasonal psalms could be prayed over and over again until they are committed to memory, and be repeated throughout our Advent days as we anticipate the celebration of the birth of the Messiah.

During Lent we might focus on the Scripture passages that break open the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary. Creatively celebrating the stations of the cross a different way each week of Lent can help us to walk the way of the cross in a new light, especially when we incorporate Scripture into our prayer. Praying over the texts of our baptismal promises or the scrutinies that are used with the baptismal candidates on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent can help us to recognize that our baptism is an ongoing entry into the paschal mystery. Using "Lord, have mercy" as a mantra (that is, repeating the phrase many times over) throughout the days of Lent can help us focused on our journey with the One who was crucified. Writing a litany – beginning with our parents and godparents – of all the people who have helped us grow in our spiritual lives can make us aware of the communion of saints.

The fifty days of Easter is a glorious time for being celebrative and playful in our devotional prayer. Writing a litany of the many "resurrections" in our own lives can help us to be grateful for all God's gifts to us. Singing a favorite melody of an Alleluia over and over can lighten our hearts. Paralleling the glorious mysteries of the rosary with similar events in our own lives can help us to relate better to the new life that Jesus' resurrection brings. Making for our homes an Easter candle and decorating it with resurrection symbols and lighting it frequently during these fifty days can help us relate Easter to Christmas and recall that Jesus is truly the Light of the world.

Ordinary Time is characterized by an incourse (sequential) reading of one of the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, or Luke). This might be a good time to focus on Scripture during our devotional prayer, and challenge ourselves to come to know more fully what it means to walk with Jesus from birth in Bethlehem to death in Jerusalem to ascending into glory. We might shape our prayer around the seasons as they change and let that ease any anxiety about liturgical changes that we harbor.

My purpose in making these daily, weekly, and yearly prayer suggestions isn’t to lay out a blueprint for anyone’s devotional prayer. Rather, they are examples that might help us see how our devotional prayer derives from and leads to liturgical prayer. These examples suggest that even our devotional prayer must not be the same all the time, but change with the rhythm of the liturgical year and the rhythm of our own spiritual needs.

Ultimately, devotional prayer must be intensely personal, respect our cultural traditions and differences, and meet our own affective prayer needs. When this kind of healthy devotional prayer takes its place in our daily schedule, then it opens us to a hunger for God that naturally leads us to liturgical prayer. Moreover, when our affective prayer needs are satisfied by our devotional prayer, then liturgy doesn’t need to be reshaped to satisfy these needs. Instead, liturgy can be God’s shaping us to the likeness of the Son. What more could we ask?
A Blessing in Disguise?
On Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.PP.S.

At first glance, the title of this article may perplex some people. How can eucharistic adoration be anything less than an appreciable, tangible, wondrous blessing? Rightly understood, these three adjectives - appreciable, tangible, wondrous - and just about every other good adjective we apply can never do justice to the blessing the mystery of the Eucharist is for us. To spend time pondering ... savouring, delighting, appreciating ... the Eucharist is one of the most enjoyable and fruitful activities a Christian seeking to grow in spiritual depth can undertake.

And yet it might really be a blessing “in disguise” if we confuse privatized contemplative activity with what Eucharist is in its fullness: the communal activity of the worshipping assembly who emulates the command of their Lord, “Do this in memory of me.” Blissfully gazing at the Blessed Sacrament might be more satisfying for some than participating in the eucharistic action itself. When this displacement happens, then rather than full blessing, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is only a blessing in disguise.

Eucharist-centered spirituality is a growing phenomenon among many members of the Roman Catholic Church, and one of its special manifestations is the desire for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, often coupled with exposition in a monstrance. Many pastors and bishops have received requests for “perpetual” adoration in their parishes or other places of worship. On the one hand, this is an encouraging sign of spiritual hunger in a society that often seems to lack any sense of value beyond self-gratification. On the other hand, a desire for adoration that merely heralds a desire to go back to some peoples’ perceived liturgical “good old days” is not to be encouraged.

Two issues must be sorted out before we can adequately address a sound theology of eucharistic adoration: How is Christ present in both the Eucharist and under other modes? and, What do we mean when we say that Eucharist is an action rather than an object? After these two reflections we are in a position to lay out a theologically sound understanding of eucharistic adoration and discuss some of the challenges this presents for us today.

Modes of Christ’s Presence

Paragraph 7 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacro sanctum Concilium; hereafter, SC) is perhaps one of the best known sections of this important document for liturgical renewal. After saying that Christ is present in the Church, it points to four presences of Christ in liturgical celebrations in the person of the presiding priest, in the Eucharist under the species of bread and wine, in the Word, and in the assembly. No doubt, the Council Fathers wished to underscore the sublime presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, for they spoke about Christ being “especially” present in the eucharistic species.

Other church documents have underscored this special presence in the Blessed Sacrament; for example, see paragraphs 96-99 of Pius XII’s encyclical, Mystici Corporis (June 29, 1943).
and paragraph 19 of his Mediator Dei (November 20, 1947). The language of Christ's presence used here is "real presence." This is to be understood not over and against the other modes of presence (as something less real), but in terms of a "physical" presence quite distinct from the other modes of presence. It has always been our Catholic belief that Christ is present in the Eucharist as long as the species of bread and/or wine remain intact. This is to say that Christ doesn't cease to be present when Mass is over, but that "real" presence continues in the reserved Blessed Sacrament. In other words, there truly is a kind of enduring "objectivity" with respect to the Eucharist. (We'll come back to this point in the next section, below.)

This having been said, there is always a danger that we so focus on the eucharistic presence that we forget about the importance of the real presence of Christ under other modes. We noted above that paragraph 7 of Vatican II's liturgy constitution mentioned three other modes of presence: in the presiding priest, in the Word, and in the assembly. A perusal of two of Pius XII's encyclicals (Mystici Corporis and Mediator Dei; hereafter, MC and MD, respectively) uncovers a number of other rich references to different modes of Christ's presence.

As might be expected, the most frequent references are to Christ's presence in the Church (or "mystical body," to use the earlier language): see MC paragraphs 1, 18-23, 41 (where the Church is called Christ's "spouse"), 54, 66, 110, and MD, paragraph 18. This latter reference is particularly interesting, for it refers to Christ's body, the Church, as "a great temple." No surprise, either, is that there are frequent references to Christ's presence in the sacred ministers: MC, paragraphs 21, 49, 52, and MD, paragraphs 19, 44, 73, 96. Further, there are several references to Christ's presence and action in the sacraments: see MD, paragraphs 24-28, 67 (when the Church baptizes, teaches, rules, looses, binds, offers, sacrifices, nourishes, sustains) and MD, paragraph 19.

Even more interesting and rich for our reflection are some of the other references to modes of Christ's presence: see MC, paragraph 46 (when the Church teaches, governs, or leads), paragraph 48 (when Christ's spouse, the Church, is "sorely tried"), paragraph 62 (in Councils), paragraphs 104-105 (in both public and private prayer; note Jesus' remark about where two or three are gathered in his name), paragraph 110 (in the weak, the mean [an interesting phrase, indeed!], the wounded and sick, anyone in need, in children, in the poor), paragraph 118 (in parents), and paragraph 130 (in Mary); MD, paragraph 19 (in prayer and praise offered to God) and paragraph 176 (in the liturgical cycle of Christ's mysteries).

When we look at all these references, we readily conclude that Christ is all in all. If we simply count numbers of references, we observe that there is a preference for Christ's mode in the Church, in the eucharistic species, and in the Church's ordained ministers. But there can be no doubt that these three modes of presence are counterbalanced by a number of references to various other rich modes of Christ's presence in the Christian community, for Christ is present whenever and wherever Christ's body is living the gospel (cf. MC, paragraph 22). In actuality, our appreciation for the eucharistic presence is deepened when it is complemented by our recognition of many other "real" modes of Christ's presence in and acting through the members of his Body.

**Eucharist: Action or Object**

Both Tradition and faith underscore the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist under the species of bread and wine.
Nevertheless, in both the past and present that reality is always understood to derive from the eucharistic action as celebrated at Mass (cf. MD, paragraph 137 and the Sacred Congregation for Rites' May 25, 1967, Instruction Eucharisticum Mysterium (hereafter, EM) paragraphs 50, 60; also, a whole section of the June 21, 1973, decree of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship's Eucharistiae Sacramentum (Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass) is entitled “The Relation Between Communion Outside of Mass and the Sacrifice” (see paragraphs 13-15). Further, that eucharistic action is manifold: the fourfold action during the Liturgy of the Eucharist in which we take, bless, break, and give; and the communal action of sharing a meal, during which “communion” in the body of Christ refers both to the consecrated bread and wine in which we partake as well as our own identity as baptized persons.

The earliest known adoration of the Blessed Sacrament took place within the shape of the celebration itself (the presiding minister genuflected in adoration after the consecration and before receiving communion, two gestures which remain in our eucharistic liturgy even to this day) or, paralleling the actions of Mass, took place just before distributing viaticum (communion for the dying). Later (from about the thirteenth century) Corpus Christi processions became popular as a way to extend the adoration endemic to the celebration itself.

By the fourteenth century medieval spirituality had shifted from focus on eucharistic action to focus on the object (the consecrated bread). Fundamental to this spirituality was a sense of awe at the tremendous mystery being celebrated as well as a sense of personal unworthiness to participate in that mystery by eating and drinking the body and blood. Medieval liturgy rarely included the faithful receiving communion. “Spiritual communion” with their Lord (especially by being able to “gaze” at the host) replaced eating and drinking; eventually Christians desired to share in longer periods of spiritual communion, and so the consecrated host was placed in a monstrance for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and thus available for adoration outside of the celebration of Mass itself. Blessing the people by making the sign of the cross over them with the monstrance (Benediction) originated as a way to enhance devotion during the singing of a Marian hymn, which had become the customary way to conclude evening or night prayer, and later was separated from the concluding prayer of the day and became a ritual unto itself.

This brief historical account makes two points clear. First, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is a fitting gesture that has been promoted from the very beginning and even takes place within the eucharistic action itself. Adoration, then, is an instinctive part of and continuation of the eucharistic action. Our sense of mystery and awe at the reality of God's tremendous gift of Self to us prompts such reverence and worship. Adoration is a clear expression of our belief in the real presence (see MD, paragraph 139) as well as our response to that presence. A second point: the shift in focus from action to object – from adoration as part of the eucharistic action to adoration as an absolute apart from Mass – takes place during a shift in eucharistic spirituality from participation in a shared meal to observation of a transcendent reality. We expand on these two points in the next section.

**Toward a Theology of Adoration**

*Mediator Dei* lists at least four devotional practices with respect to Eucharist (paragraph 140): visits to the
Blessed Sacrament, the celebration of Benediction, solemn processions (especially at Corpus Christi), and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Precluding any contemporary confusion with or continuation of medieval piety, the very next paragraph clearly takes us beyond any limited focus on an object to a focus on the eucharistic action itself. Paragraph 141 admonishes us to join our “perpetual” adoration with the perpetual adoration of the whole Church. The context suggests what is meant by “the perpetual adoration of the whole Church” is the unending celebration of the one Eucharist that takes place everywhere and always. In other words, our eucharistic adoration outside of Mass is joined to the eucharistic action that is the continual action of the entire Church. Further, the relationship of our eucharistic adoration with the eucharistic action of the celebration of Mass derives from our self-identity and solidarity with each other as the body of Christ (cf. EM, paragraph 3a: We are to be Christ’s body and this is connected to the sacred banquet and communion in which we share). A first tenet of an adequate theology of adoration is that our adoration derives from and leads us back to the actual celebration of Eucharist (cf. SC, paragraph 10: Liturgy [Eucharist] is the source and summit of the whole Christian life).

Another basic tenet is that adoration – whether within the shape of Mass itself or outside Mass and related to it – produces fruits for the sake of building up the Kingdom. Paragraph 197 of MD cautions that adoration does not mean simply a multiplicity of different prayers and devotions but always leads to the deepening spiritual growth of the adorer. Eucharisticum Mysterium includes (in paragraph 38) the marvelous admonition that the union with Christ we seek during the eucharistic action is to be prolonged into and by the way we live our daily life, sustained by prayer. The most forceful statement in this regard comes from Pope Paul VI in his September 3, 1965, encyclical, The Mystery of Faith (Mysterium Fidei): All “social” love is impelled by worship of the Eucharist (paragraph 69). WHATSOEVER we do to our sisters and brothers springs from our appreciation of the eucharistic mystery and our genuine relationship to each other as members of the body of Christ. The Eucharist nourishes the body – as food shared and adoration rendered – in order that all members of the body might grow in their own dignity and spiritual strength.

We are now in a position to return to our reflection on the modes of Christ’s presence and generate a third tenet for a theology of adoration, which is this: An essential grasp of the mystery of real presence in the Eucharist leads us to a greater appreciation for the real presence of Christ in the actions of the Church (baptizing, teaching, ruling, loosing, binding, offering, sacrificing, nourishing, sustaining, etc.) and in all the actions of the body of Christ on behalf of others (including the weak, the “mean,” the wounded and sick, those in need, children, the poor, parents, Mary, etc.). Ultimately, a deepening sense of the real presence in the Eucharist also deepens in a concrete way our respect for others and affects all our relationships – with God, self, and all others.

The substantial (“physical”) and enduring real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is primarily for the sake of taking, blessing, breaking (pouring out), and giving to members of the body so that they might be nourished during their earthly journey toward sharing perpetually in the heavenly banquet. Our adoration (both during and outside Mass) draws us deeper into this immense mystery as well as thrusts us outward to others we meet in our daily life.
Adoration implies a double direction toward action: toward the eucharistic celebration itself during which we are nourished and sanctified and toward others in which we make present God's Kingdom. Any eucharistic adoration that does not lead to action—eucharistic celebration or good on behalf of others—is simply a misdirected, outmoded, empty spiritual practice.

The eucharistic ritual flows from the introductory rites during which we recognize ourselves as an assembly before our God into the liturgy of the word during which we are confronted with God's prophetic words that urge us to live more fully the gospel through the liturgy of the eucharist during which we are transformed into being ever more perfect members of the body of Christ to the concluding rite during which we are sent forth to live as Christ. Our own personal needs and desires during this ritual flow are subsumed under the communal action. We hardly have time to contemplate this great mystery and gift. Adoration—especially outside the flow of the eucharistic ritual—affords us the luxury of time to bask in God's manifold presence to us and others. Adoration provides us with an opportunity to reflect and evaluate how well the eucharistic action and presence is taking hold in us and our lives. Adoration cultivates in us a hunger for God and a desire to spend ourselves on behalf of others especially those close to us. Both approaches are truly expressions of adoration, and we might choose one or the other at differing times. In either case, we must always be on guard that our adoration doesn't turn inward into ourselves. Adoration that supports any notion of "privatized" religion is to be discouraged. All adoration must always turn us outward toward the eucharistic action which is its source and toward others who receive its fruit. Herein is a challenge of meeting needs.

We have brought out several times and in several ways during this reflection that adoration has its practical consequences: care for and service of others. We must also be cautioned that our actions on behalf of justice and peace don't replace our need for genuine contemplation of Christ in his mystery and God in the fullness of presence among us. Nor are the two to be confused; adoration is one necessary Christian response while another is concern for others that leads to relieving the plight of the unfortunate. Adoration and action on behalf of others are related, not in competition with each other for our time and attention. We must find room in our lives for both. Herein is a challenge of priorities.
Since eucharistic adoration always leads us to eucharistic celebration, it should also lead us to greater participation in that celebration. If we find ourselves annoyed or distracted by the singing and responses, by the change of posture and gestures of offering and peace-giving, then we must assess our understanding and practice of adoration. One challenge of wholesome adoration is that our greater penetration into the mystery ought to lead us to better celebration of that mystery. Herein is a challenge to surrender to the ritual action.

Furthermore, since Eucharist ultimately transforms us into ever more perfect members of the body of Christ, adoration should predispose us to surrender to that transformative action. In real and practical ways this means that we wholeheartedly embrace change. Neither the eucharistic action nor our adoration of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament leaves room for us to be the same person day after day, week after week, year after year. And, let’s admit it, none of us likes to change. This is so partly because openness to change reminds us that we aren’t perfect, that we still must grow in our ability to live the gospel, that we still can grow ever more deeply in our relationship with God, self, and others. Herein is a challenge to admit our human weakness and beg God’s mercy and strength.

The adoration of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is as multifaceted as are the many rich modes of Christ’s presence. One final challenge: to see in Christ in the Blessed Sacrament also the Christ in others. In this way can a blessing in disguise be unshrouded and be for us the rich blessing of Christ’s abiding presence to us, a blessing whereby our very lives proclaim the mighty deeds of God’s salvation.

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Choosing “Good” Music

II. Rhythm

Della Goa

This article continues a series on liturgical music that began in the last issue of the National Bulletin on Liturgy.

When, to exalt our praise, we set words to music, we should also strive to make their meaning more fully comprehensible. As I noted in an earlier article, both music and language rely on rhythm and accent to accomplish their purpose. Since the natural rhythms and stresses of language are an important part of the expressive content of what we speak, when the rhythm of music and speech are well integrated, our musical settings bring to our worship an immediacy which helps us

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become more fully present to the mystery of love and life that we celebrate.

Regular Metrical Settings

Every language has its own patterns of rhythm. These patterns, when discussed in the study of poetry, are called "feet." The basic, or most common, "foot" in English is the iamb, a pattern where the first syllable is unaccented (or short), the second accented (or long). Words like "refer" and "exalt" are self-contained iambics. Articles and prepositions such as "a" and "of" frequently combine with single-syllable words or longer words to create iambics:

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  a peo - | ple of | the Word
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Feet of ordinary language may be grouped to create patterns of verse. Rhythm and accent govern the choice of words. It is not difficult to come up with several sentences written in iambic feet and to organize them in groups:

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  She wants | to have | a lit­tle nap.
  The fore­castle calls | for rain.
  I hope | you like | your birth­day gift.
  I lost | my keys | a­gain.
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The iambics that make up these ordinary English sentences are grouped no differently, rhythmically, than:

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  O God, | our help | in a­ges past...
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(ST. ANNE, CM, CBW III, no. 664)

These sentences can be sung to this grand hymn tune because they have the same iambic metre. Corresponding lines are all the same length. This is a "regular" metrical setting because the shape of both the melody and the text are governed by the pattern.¹ There is, of course, no good reason to set these mundane, unconnected sentences to music. The point is, there is nothing particularly unusual in the rhythms of many hymn texts. The natural and comfortable patterns of stress make them easy to sing.

Music also has its own patterns of rhythm that can be similarly grouped. Good and singable melodies are as much defined by their rhythm as by the balanced arrangement of pitches. In the last few centuries most music of the non-aboriginal Western world has been governed by metre, that is, organised by measured beats. Any piece of music that is divided by bar lines is metered, whether it boasts a time signature or not. Naturally, if the rhythm of music is governed by predictable stresses, any text set to the music will be governed by these same stresses.

Two main factors contribute to stress or accent in metered music. The first, and most significant, is the strength of the beat, the second is the duration of the pitch. In 3/4 time, for example, where there are three beats to a measure, the first beat is strong, the second and third are weak:

```
3/4  | • • • • • • | • • • • • • •
  S  w  w  S  w  S  w  w
```

Because the first and third lines of this hymn are eight syllables and the second and fourth have six, this pattern is described as 86 86, or "CM" for common metre. The numbers indicate the number of syllables, not the number of metric feet. All of the CM tunes in CBW III are iambic, except "Joy to the World" (ANTIOCH, CM extended, CBW III, no. 328) that begins with two stressed syllables and "Forgive Our Sins" (DUNFERMLINE, CM, CBW III, no. 620) where the rhythm of the iambic word, "forgive," is altered by the initial strong beat in the music. I believe that in this case the alteration adds urgency to the plea. Both hymns make up the remaining feet of the lines with iambics.

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If one compares the grouping of iambic feet with the grouping of beats in music, a fundamental incompatibility occurs. The conventional stresses at the beginning of a foot and of a measure are at odds with each other. The most common solution is to begin the music with what is known as an anacrusis or an upbeat, that is, on a weak beat of an incomplete measure to match the unaccented syllable of the iamb:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\
\hline
w & S & w & w & S & w & w & S
\end{array}
\]

When Jesus comes to be baptized, He leaves ....

I was surprised to discover that I rather liked the WINCHESTER NEW melody when I sang it to the alternate text. I was even more surprised to find that the words of “When Jesus Comes to Be Baptized” are satisfactory, too. But because the first syllable of the word “baptized” is the accented one, its placement on a weak beat between two strong beats is particularly awkward. This text would work better with a 3/4 tune such as ROCKINGHAM, LM (see above reference). And if, in that setting, the first syllable of “baptized” is placed on the first weak beat of the measure (on the second beat rather than the third) and held for two beats, the awkwardness all but disappears despite the iambic context.

Lengthening duration adds emphasis in other contexts as well. Many long notes, that is, half notes and dotted quarter notes, give “Forth in the Peace of Christ We Go” (LLEDROD, LM, CBW III, no. 514) an expansiveness that proclaims the great commission to be Christ and to preach Christ in the world. A note of long duration on a strong beat supersedes a note of the same duration on a weak or weaker beat. The “of” does not detract from the emphasis on the word “peace” that precedes it.

This is not the case in the setting of the hymn, “O Radiant Light, O Sun Divine” (LM, CBW III, no. 14G). In the third line, “O image of the light sublime ...,” the word “of” is on a strong beat and held for three times the length of any other word in the line. The musical phrase also falls to this brief caesura or pause, a convention that usually indicates a point of emphasis or the end of a phrase. The result is an interrupted line that reduces a great text, the third-century Phos Hilaron, to a faint echo of its

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2 A two-syllable foot consisting of an accented syllable followed by an unaccented syllable (a reversed iamb) is called a trochee. Trochees are difficult to accommodate gracefully in the context of an iambic metre, especially when set to strophic hymn tunes.
Choosing “Good” Music • Della Goa

meaning. Fortunately, this same text is set much more satisfactorily in CBW III, no. 669, and can also be sung to the chant tune, JESU DULCIS MEMORIA, LM (CBW III, no. 434).

Good regular metrical settings will be sympathetic to the metrical accents of the text without creating such a dead regularity that both the text and the music become a monotonous drone. “In poetry the mechanical pattern may be thought of as an expectation. The metric performance of any line happens in the way it works its variations against the established expectation.” We may wish to expand or accent the rhythms in order to punctuate certain important elements in a text. However, the rhythm of the words should not be so altered that the meaning is lost, nor should musical effects diminish the importance of the words we express.

Irregular Metrical Settings

Most of the irregular settings listed at the end of CBW III, no. 700, conform to a pattern that is unique to that hymn, but they are generally strophic, that is, the irregular pattern repeats for several verses. But I include in this “irregular” category all metrical (that is, measured music, music with bar lines) through-composed and free-style settings as well. Modern hymnodists, especially within the Roman rite, show an increased interest in setting texts from the Bible. The great benefit of bypassing an established metrical pattern is the freedom to set a full text without compromising or abridging the meaning or poetic elements. The great challenge is to set the text without resorting to awkward rhythms and peculiar phrase structures.

“The Light of Christ” and “Like a Shepherd” (CBW III, nos. 394 and 409, respectively) are very singable free-style settings. “Paise to the Lord” (CBW III, no. 568) is straightforward and unambiguous. I would also be interested in seeing how “Sing Out, Earth and Skies” performs as a congregational hymn. These selections share many features that make them good for congregational singing. All four use the same pace in the refrain as in the verses; if there are instrumental interludes, they are short and predictable; two make limited use of rests, the other two do not require any.

By contrast, “Forever I Will Sing” (CBW III, no. 448) and “Eye Has Not Seen” (CBW III, no. 482) are disappointing because although the refrain sets up a fairly spacious, almost contemplative tempo, the notes of the verses seem hurried and crowded together as if one were afraid that all the words won’t fit. Written in the same general style, “Be with Me, Lord” is much better. The pace quickens a bit at the first measure of the verses, but the rhythmic patterns of the refrain are repeated in the verses: |○••| and |•••| (Incidentally, this psalm setting is a paraphrase and may be used as a congregational hymn but should never be substituted for the responsorial psalm in the liturgy of the word.)

If words dictate the form our music takes, it does not necessarily follow that any setting of a good text is a worthy part of our celebration. Poor or pretentious musical settings that demonstrate a lack of regard for the text they carry or for the ability of the assembly to participate will do more harm than good. When we invite people to gather to sing the word, they should be able to do so with one voice and with a sense that their singing enhances our worship as a community.

4 Through-composed music provides a different musical setting for each stanza or for each line of text. The “Holy, holy” settings in CBW III are through-composed.
5 I have labelled “free style” any music that adjusts the rhythm or melody of a basic repeated musical phrase in order to accommodate variations in the rhythm and length of stanzas. “Be Not Afraid” (CBW III, no. 481) is a well-known example. The melody repeats, but the last verse drops the anacrusis to adjust to a dactyl rhythm in the text. The rhythm of each verse is related but different, again as an adjustment to the text.
Ex Opere Operantis:
The Role of the Presider in Liturgical Celebration

Gerald Wiesner, OMI

Introduction

It must be stated at the very beginning that this paper proceeds with some presuppositions. What is taken as a given is the significance of liturgy as one finds it spoken of in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, that "every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of his Body the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can match its claim to efficacy, nor equal the degree of it." Likewise, no effort is made to substantiate the statement that "the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows" (no. 10).

The primary focus of the reflections that follow will be the singling out of the role of the presider in the liturgy. Every community activity has someone who presides over the activity or serves the community in the enactment of the activity. A parallel is found in the community's liturgical activity. It is to be noted that what is being discussed is the role of the presider of the liturgy and not that of the celebrant. The reason for this distinction is that all the baptized who participate in liturgy are celebrants. The subject of discussion is a celebrant who is also the presider.

The parameter of the presider's position that is being reviewed is broader than the role in terms of "what to do." It is much more a question of the significance of the involvement of the presider in what is being done.

Because of its significance, the Sunday eucharistic celebration is the paradigm that is being used in this study. However, mutatis mutandis, what is affirmed here can be quite easily applied universally. Also, because the nature of the paradigm in its present form calls for a celibate male presider, most of what is affirmed is done with that in mind. Again, mutatis mutandis, what is said can be applied to any and all who preside at community prayer.

The starting point of this study is an affirmation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy:

They [the sacraments] do indeed impart grace, but, in addition, the very act of celebrating them disposes the faithful most effectively to receive this grace in a fruitful manner, to worship God duly, and to practice charity (no. 59).

In some ways these words reflect the traditional teaching of the Church: namely, that the sacraments have an ex opere

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operato effect. This affirms that in virtue of the “work being worked” an effect results. It is said that the signs produce grace, almost implying something automatic. In current theological terms it is likely more correct to say that resulting from the celebration of the sacramental sign, we have an infallible offering of divine life (grace). God’s life is a gift. A gift, however, is not fully a gift until it is received. Hence it is more correct to say that the sacramental celebration results in this infallible offering of life.

This teaching in the document reflects and gives emphasis to another aspect of traditional Church teaching, that is, the ex opere operantis dimension of sacramental activity. Literally, this means that the sacraments are also efficacious “in virtue of the work working.” This makes reference to other existing circumstances which have an influence or effect on the giving of God’s life. Thus we hear the council saying:

Because they are signs they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen and express it .... They do indeed impart grace, but, in addition, the very act of celebrating them disposes the faithful most effectively to receive this grace in a fruitful manner, to worship God duly, and to practice charity (no. 59).

In his commentary on the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Joseph Jungmann indicates that what this particular teaching does is dwell on the significance of the sign itself. The Council of Trent, basically reacting to the teaching of the Reformers, emphasized the efficacy of the sign together with its coming into being. The sign itself, however, received little attention, and even liturgically it remained stunted in many instances.²

In order to counteract a near magical attitude on the part of both the presider and the recipient, as well as to counteract a spirit of minimalism, there was need for renewal.³

The quality of renewal intended by this teaching was that the sign should open up, in its essence and in its liturgical shape, the grace-giving process to the minds of the participants. In doing so the sacramental sign itself would instruct, even apart from the catechesis that is to be added. Because the sacrament is a public occurrence in and through the Church, it should become a confession before people as well as achieve its cultic character, the glorification of God.⁴ It can quite truthfully be said that up to this time the actual preparation for the ritual moment, celebrating it with faith, participating prayerfully in the ceremony, as well as the living out of its consequences were not crucial issues. As a result of this teaching much greater responsibility is placed upon the individual presiding and those receiving the sacrament, including all the people who are participating.⁵

Liturgy: The Ritual Prayer of the Community

With the emphasis placed on the sign itself, it is logical to conclude that what is being highlighted in all of this is the “ritual-symbol” dimension of liturgy. For this reason it is deemed necessary to

⁴ Jungmann, 47.
⁵ Champlin, 141.
examine the reality of the liturgy, understood as the ritual prayer of the community.

The concise description given involves three elements: prayer, community, and ritual. It is quite apparent that in the liturgy we are dealing with a special kind of prayer, which is qualified by the aspects of "community" and "ritual." Further, liturgy is not just a matter of saying prayers but of praying. The distinction is important, because what is affirmed is that in praying one meets God. This is not necessarily true of saying prayers. Liturgy, which is prayer, evidently involves faith: faith in God who is transcendent, but also in God who is imminent, who touches people.

This prayer must also involve obedience. Prayer is primarily a matter of listening to God. Only after one has listened can there be a response. The fundamental human response to God is that of adoration: an attitude or disposition wherein one stands before God in total poverty and dependence. This basic stance of adoration can express itself in praise, thanksgiving, sorrow, or petition. Just a brief reference to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy is found to be beneficial here: "[T]he very act of celebrating them [sacraments] disposes the faithful most effectively ... to worship God duly.... The purpose of the sacraments is ... to give worship to God" (no. 59). The sign that is being celebrated is an act of adoration, prayer in its essence.

When "community" is being discussed in the context of the liturgy, the meaning is that of ekklesia. The immediate meaning of this is "gathered" or "assembled." It is a question of the people being gathered by God and gathered around the Word, Jesus Christ. A gathering is truly "community" when it carries out that which is essential to it. Gathering regularly to hear the apostles teach, to share common life, to break bread and to pray was central to the identity of early Christian communities (Acts 2.42). That which is essential to the Christian community is the proclamation of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Focusing on the role of the presider in liturgical celebration necessarily leads to ritual as a key factor. Looking at ritual in an abstract way, one could describe it as spelling out in action the meaning or significance of an experience that one is having or has had. The purpose of the action is to give expression to the experience and in that way to cause or deepen the experience. Ritual is an integral part of our daily lives; we use ritual constantly. In the ritual activity an attempt is made to reach back into the experience, to somehow grasp the core of the experience, and then to give expression to it.

It becomes quite apparent that there are two elements that are essential here. First of all there must be an experience. If there is no experience, it is evident that the ritual is hollow, empty, even hypocritical. Secondly, there must be "quality" ritual. If the experience is going to be caused or deepened, in some manner much of this will depend on the quality of the action which gives expression to that experience. We have all experienced handshakes of various kinds, and we all know whether a particular handshake is truly giving expression to and deepening a relationship, or if it is simply an empty formality.

The theological or liturgical word for ritual is sacrament (symbol, celebration, liturgy). In the context of this paper the particular concern is the quality and character of the ritual (liturgical sign),

resulting in greater assurance that the faith experience will be caused and deepened. According to the teaching of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the concern is to assure that the sacramental signs nourish, strengthen and express faith, that they dispose the faithful most effectively to receive grace in a fruitful manner, worship God duly and practise charity (no. 59).

Liturgy and the Role of the Presider

Experience and the very nature of liturgical celebration speak clearly to the fact that the one presiding plays a key (essential) role in the unfolding of good liturgy.

Pertinent Documents of the Teaching of the Church

There are several references in Church teaching which address the issue in point with both clarity and cogency.

Reference has already been made to no. 59 in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Paragraphs 14-18 of this document speak at length on the essential aspect of active participation in the liturgy. Jungmann, in referring to another author, and in true liturgical terminology, speaks of active participation as forming the “refrain” of the document.¹ What is highlighted by the document in these paragraphs is the necessary preparation of the clergy (presiders) in order to ensure that participation.

While the correct and orderly manner in which functions are performed is important, it is also important that the agents be deeply penetrated with the spirit of the liturgy (no. 29). One of the more forceful teachings pertaining to the issue is found in no. 11 of the document:

Pastors of souls must therefore realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated, more is required than the mere observation of the laws governing valid and licit celebration. It is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part knowingly, actively, and fruitfully.

This leads to serious and conscientious reflection on the quality of celebration that will foster greater participation of the faithful.

In the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, clergy are encouraged to cultivate an ongoing knowledge and facility in liturgy so that by their own liturgical ministry the Christian communities will be able to give greater worship to God.²

The General Instruction on the Roman Missal, in turn, underlines several points with respect to the president of the liturgy. It notes that in the celebration of Mass Christ is really present in the person of his minister.³ At times in the celebration the priest prays, not only as president and in the name of the whole community, but in his personal capacity so as to perform his functions with more careful attention and devotion (no. 13). The quality of service rendered by the presider is to be of such a nature that by his general behaviour and manner the faithful will recognize the presence of the living Christ (no. 60).

The Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, in the Third Instruction on the Correct Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, emphasizes deeper insight into the Word of God and the mystery being celebrated. Likewise, the president is cautioned against simplistic tampering with the rites; here it is affirmed

¹ Jungmann, 17.
² The Documents of Vatican II, Presbyterorum Ordinis, no. 5.
that the presence of Christ will be ensured by the presider following the rites of the Church rather than those inspired by the priest's individual preference.10

The Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, in its document, Music in Catholic Worship, makes rather specific and forceful statements regarding the importance of good celebration and the crucial role of the president in its realization. "Faith grows when it is well expressed in celebration. Good celebrations foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations weaken and destroy faith."11 Following this statement is another which very pointedly describes the role of the president: "No other single factor affects the liturgy as much as the attitude, style and bearing of the celebrant."12

In his commentary on the role of the priest at Mass and in giving suggestions for musicians, Ralph Keifer affirms that the two ministries that most effectively carry the liturgy for a congregation are those of presider and musicians. "If either the celebrant or musicians fail to assume their tasks responsibly, the result is liturgical disaster."13

The Purpose of the Liturgy

There is no intent to give a compete theology of liturgy at this point. However, to describe better the importance of good celebration and to single out the role of the president for the assurance of this, it may be beneficial to offer some reflections on what is to be achieved through the ritual of liturgy.

Liturgy is to lead into mystery. In the assembly of the faithful, everyday human words and gestures, like acts of washing and anointing, promises given and taken, and a simple meal of bread and wine, become saving events of eternal significance. The signs in the liturgy are there above all to impress on people the presence of mystery. Their main purpose is not to keep our attention for long. We are a pilgrim people on our way to a person. There is no thing or ceremony, however sacred, that can satisfy the deepest human desires. Meaningful signs do not give full understanding; there is a need to go beyond all signs. Liturgical signs are there to lead us into the ineffable presence of God.14

Ladislas Orsy observes that meaningful liturgy is not that which tires out the community by an infinite number of new forms that mind and heart cannot comfortably assimilate, nor that which delightfully excites beyond measure and captivates the pilgrim in their journey. On the contrary, it is "one that is composed of delightfully intelligent signs which communicate a sense of mystery... The most meaningful signs are those that lead us best beyond all signs: into the mysterious presence of God among his people."15

Above, when discussing liturgy as the ritual prayer of the community, it was noted that the object of liturgy is worship, adoration. Through worship expression is given to a story about the nature and destiny of all things. The story itself teaches us to regard all creatures in the world as belonging to God. Worship involves praising, giving thanks, blessing God; it involves recall-

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10 Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, 212.
12 Music in Catholic Worship, no. 21
15 Orsy, 98.
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ing and retelling – recalling who God is and what God has done. It likewise involves acknowledging who we are in the sight of God; from this follows the need for intercession. Human life is consecrated and brought to holiness by giving thanks to God for it.16

The object of worship is to give glory and praise to God because God is God. It needs to be added immediately that whereas God really does not need worship, humankind does – very much, in fact. The more pressing object of worship is to bring people to faith and commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. This work of worship is a joint venture of Jesus Christ and the Church. The risen Jesus is to bring people to faith, and he alone can do it. The Church's contribution in this co-operative effort is to make a good celebration which enhances the work of Jesus. Good celebrations do enhance this work; bad celebrations impede it. The evident conclusion to all of this is that as president of the liturgy, one cannot be neutral. As president one either does liturgy well or does it badly; how it is done makes a difference in the faith of the people.17

Carrying this one step further, one can say that liturgy must be a living experience. Liturgical celebrations are to help us realize every minute of life while we live it. They send us deep into the human moments of birth, reconciliation, married love, communion meal, sickness, and death to discover there the presence of the Lord offering life. It is through the experience of living liturgy that we are made aware that our stories (lives) do not exist in isolation but in communion with others, and especially that they exist in communion with the Other who is offering healing and hope. Liturgy as a living experience leads to the discovery not merely that God is, but that God is for us. It creates an awareness that God is partner to the human adventure and that life is God's gift.18

Liturgy that is authentic requires living symbols. A liturgy which does not provide the worshippers with language, action and song to express concrete human life to God fails to be in spirit and truth.19 In the liturgy, which is the work of people, we come with what we have, with our needs and gifts. It is possible to make a comparison with poetry and literature. The symbols used in living liturgy mean much more than they say. Whatever is said about symbols can never exhaust their meaning if they are celebrated as a living experience. As Don Saliers observes, "liturgy that is merely verbal – with perfunctory uses of sounds, signs, words, gestures, and space – will, in the long run, fail to satisfy the deeper hungers of response to God and encounter with truth."20

Solitude and reflection lead to a profound awareness that all is gift. Liturgy, as a living experience, brings all of this very clearly into focus. Made aware of this giftedness in and through liturgy, one senses that because of this gift the liturgy becomes a call to thanksgiving, to Eucharist for Good News. Seen in this light, liturgy is truly a call to celebrate all the ways in which God offers life to people. It is that act wherein people proclaim: "Father, all-powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord."21

19 Saliers, 40.
20 Saliers, 44.
21 Roman Missal, Easter Preface I.
The Role of the Presider

In light of what liturgy entails, it is only proper to reflect on the role of the presider in liturgical celebration. Aidan Kavanagh paints the picture well:

When it gathers, the assembly stands in worship before the Creator as sacrament and servant in Christ of a new-made world. This is serious business. The liturgical minister, being part of the assembly, must think and act accordingly.\(^\text{22}\)

Robert Hovda, likewise, speaks of the presider's role in very challenging words:

While it is true that ecclesial renewal depends, first of all, on the local congregation's awakening to and involvement in the meaning of baptism-confirmation-eucharist, on the whole Church's experience of initiation and commitment, there is no single office of servanthood within that community more important as a potential enabler and sustainer of renewal than the office of the one who presides in liturgy.\(^\text{23}\)

Statements similar to the above are made by Virgil Funk,\(^\text{24}\) Keifer (as mentioned previously) and Joseph Gelineau.\(^\text{25}\)

In order to unravel and offer some clarity to the role of the presider, attention can be directed to some particular aspects. To begin with, the presider is to lead. Etymologically, to preside means "to be seated before" (in front of). Presiding is basically a service of leadership in a common and participatory action called "liturgy," an action that with full intent and purpose is done in the presence of God.\(^\text{26}\) The quality of presiding that is called for in liturgy is that of serving. If in our language and culture the word has some regrettable connotations, we should simply recall how Jesus, presiding at the meal, made himself servant, helper — in washing the feet of his friends.\(^\text{27}\)

Any service of leadership presumes a relationship to the community. This leadership, being exercised in an action that is of a common and participatory nature, necessarily implies an action that is planned and one in which the leader is in contact with other ministers and with all other parts of the assembly at all times. The leader must know clearly and precisely where the action is going and must be able to anticipate what is coming next.

The presider leads the assembly in such a way that facilitates its experience of the Church, of the community of faith, and of Kingdom witness. What is to be facilitated is the assembly's experience as men and women coming together as sisters and brothers before God, without the distinction and roles and categories within which they operate in their daily lives. The leader is to be the focus for the community's prayer. Evidently the leader must know the liturgy thoroughly and be at home with its rhythm so that through the leader's presence the


\(^{26}\) Hovda, 9.

assembly is given confidence and inspiration. 28

When speaking of the leader as the one who brings unity to the celebrating assembly, Gelineau describes this role as both operational and mystical in its exercise. To begin with, it falls to the leader to guide the celebration in a way that the gathered assembly assumes, as fully as possible, the common liturgical action. At the same time the leader is a visible image of Christ, Head of the Church and Servant of his brothers and sisters, present and acting among his people. 29

In light of these observations one can readily understand this comment: “Nowhere does a lack of personal involvement, conviction, enthusiasm show more clearly and more damagingly than in the leadership of a worshipping congregation.” 30 The reason Hovda gives for this statement is that the liturgy is unique among human assemblies, since its direct concern is with ultimate issues and the totality of life. Every assembly requires a leader, but because of the nature of the liturgical assembly, defects in its leader are especially disheartening and even scandalizing for the whole group. 31

Jean Lebon makes an additional and interesting observation, describing the leader as a “link” between persons, and this is the case before, during and after the celebration. 32 When speaking of the link between the different parts of the celebration, he makes a comparison with the host/hostess at a reception. The leader arranges the different parts of the celebration and assists the people in making the connection between them, as well as helping them to grasp their dynamism and profound unity. All of this is to be realized less by additional comments and more by an intelligent way of leading.

A link is to be made between the different ministries and services. The leader is not the factotum of the liturgy, but rather the one who co-ordinates and harmonizes all the participants. Since liturgy is a living experience, there is to be a link between the celebration and daily life. Just as the host/hostess is concerned about the lives of those invited, so the leader shows the same concern through various apostolic contacts. The hospitality shown at the celebration will have its own consequences in this regard. Each individual assembly is to be linked with the universal Church. Ordinarily this is seen as the proper function of the ordained priest, which he in turn receives from the bishop.

Finally, there is to be a link between the assembly and “that which is to come.” The leader orients the assembly toward the future, the world that is to come:

Symbolizing Christ sent by the Father and returning to the Father, he reminds the faithful that all is given from above and must return to God through the mediation of the One who has come before us in order to draw us towards the Kingdom. 33

As leader, one presides over the assembly in the person of Christ. 34 In the case of the ordained this designation of leadership is

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30 Hovda, 10.
31 Hovda, 10.
32 Lebon, 53-54.
33 Translated from Lebon, 54.
34 Abbott, The Documents of Vatican II, Sacrosanctum Concilium, no. 33; Lumen Gentium, no. 21; Presbyterorum Ordinis, nos. 2, 6, 13.
not simply the result of the community's choice nor of human qualities, but of ordination. As a result, the leader carries out the role of Christ, and in so doing functions as a sign that the community does not assemble spontaneously but is convoked by the Lord in order to receive his word and gifts. As leader the president effectively directs the assembly in prayer, accomplishes the sacred actions, and breaks for the people the bread of the Word of God and of the Eucharist. 35

Very closely associated with and complementing the notion of leadership is that of service. It is becoming more and more appreciated among the faithful that the liturgy belongs to no one but to Christ's body, the Church. It is the Church which is both the subject and agent of every liturgical act. Since every liturgical act is an act of the Church, liturgical ministers - of whatever order - are servants of this act inasmuch as they are servants of the ecclesial assembly. What comes first is the community of faith, and the fundamental reality of ministry is the ministry of the entire servant Church. All specific offices of responsibility, all ministries, are expressions of the ministerial and servant nature of the entire community of faith, the whole local Church. Presiding as a service must be seen in this light. 36

In order that the group that is celebrating be served well, it is necessary that each ministry be carried out with exactitude and competence. The task to be fulfilled can never be reduced to the simple material execution of the rite. It is always an act engaging the whole person. Just as the offering of a gift or the serving of a meal implies an art, so the service rendered by the carrying out of ritual supposes an art of celebrating. Art, by its very nature, presupposes apprenticeship, training, experience and perfecting. This implies a knowledge of what is required to conform to the norms of liturgical books and traditions, together with a knowledge of the sense of rites. The service requires a savoir-faire whereby the cerebral knowledge about the rite expresses itself in the total comportment of the presider in its actual celebration.

Liturgical action presents itself as a public service that the members of the assembly render to God and to one another. Through the persons who provide this service and through their actions, it is the Servant of God, Jesus Christ, who acts. In this way, on the one hand, through the ministries of the assembly God is at the service of his people; on the other hand, the people are at the service of God and God's Kingdom. 37

Kavanagh comments on a further dimension of service. The service that liturgical ministry renders to the assembly goes beyond the specific function a given ministry regularly performs in the liturgy. The reader, for example, serves the assembly by reading a lesson. However, this service of the assembly goes beyond the time of worship by having placed before it a living example of one who is tangibly and publicly concerned with God's Word. The reader is someone who not only reads texts in public but embodies the Word for the assembly's benefit. A liturgical minister of whatever order thus performs the service which he or she has "become" as an enfleshed sacrament of some aspect of the ministerial nature of the assembly itself. Consequently, ministers make ministry concrete both in their function and in their own lives. Quality of function and quality of life cannot be separated in the liturgical minister without disservice to the assembly. 38

36 Hovda, 6.
37 Gelineau, Dans vos assemblées, vol. 1, 185.
38 Kavanagh, 38-39.
Ritual by its very nature is proclamation, a making present. To be made present it must have life. The verbal texts do have range, reference and emotional power to speak the mysteries of faith insofar as they grow out of and lead back to that which is beyond words. However, simply having the right words in the right order, accompanied by the right gestures and supportive music, is not enough. Life must be brought to the words and acts. The major question is not so much with the “what” of the signs causing grace as with the “how” of the signs becoming living symbols. No one wishes to deny that the signs of water, bread, wine, and oil are related to God’s life.

In the context of prayer and ritual action, how do the signs become focal points of the encounter between the human and the divine? Symbols are decidedly not things: they are crucibles of experience and places of epiphany. Uncovering the depth-language of the gestures of taking, blessing, breaking, sharing is absolutely essential to our Christian life.

Worship is a human experience, not a set of concepts. It is not a “head thing” but a “body thing,” a thing of beauty and warmth. Because of this, one cannot merely think oneself to be a good presider; one has to get it into one’s muscles and bones, like dancers, actors and ball players do.

Following naturally upon proclamation is the aspect of the liturgy as celebration. The presider must celebrate! To celebrate is to say who and what we are, and to do this in a delightful, joyful and meaningful way. It is to share with others through signs what we think and feel. Celebrating liturgy means to do the actions and perform the signs in such a way that the full meaning and impact shine forth in a clear and compelling way.

The essence of liturgy is that it is play. Liturgy is fantasizing the kingdom, doing apparently useless things with great solemnity, and engaging in the excess which belongs to festivity. It remains true that not every liturgical celebration can be an emotional peak, not even by the presider. Everyone grows weak and tired; enthusiasm becomes eroded. Nevertheless, people have a profound need to celebrate faith in sign and symbol and ritual play, and so they come together to worship. In such circumstances the presider, who is celebrating, becomes very important. “The presider who can lift us out of our lethargy by the warmth of welcome, by the sincerity of his faith, by the joy that he manifests in being with us and for us – this presider, through his human naturalness, his attitude and bearing, is a person we cannot do without.”

Looking at the ministry of Jesus, one could sum it up in the word “rejoice” (celebrate).

Rejoice – the coin is found, the sheep is home. Stop your toil – you’re invited to a banquet. Zacchaeus, get out of that tree – let’s have dinner at your place. Give thanks – all you late comers to the vineyard will be overpaid.... [M]y son, put on this ring, these sandals, this fine robe – let’s kill the fatted calf and throw a
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party. Jesus calls all Christians to celebrate all the ways in which God offers life to people.\(^44\)

Celebrating liturgy is a matter of celebrating life – celebrating life in its entirety. We know that life involves both death and life. Hence the presider who comes to celebrate should know both death and resurrection, pain and joy. Perhaps celebration speaks too softly of dying. In all circumstances of life there is a need to let go. Good ministers of celebration know this. Yet good ministers of celebration also know that the last word is resurrection.

Leaders of celebration who truly believe in Easter are essential. People who truly come with faith respond to both pain and joy with a desire to praise the God of healing and hope. Leaders who truly celebrate believe that the future has already begun in Jesus' resurrection. Believing that there is something new under the sun, they gather people in hope to strain toward the future. In celebrating they expose us to signs and symbols which tell us we are pilgrim people who can never capture our God in any liturgical celebration because God remains ahead of us, constantly beckoning into the future.\(^45\)

Qualities of the Presider

Having reflected on the purpose of liturgy and, in light of this, on aspects of the role of the presider, we now lead to a consideration of consequent qualities of the presider. This will be examined under two general categories: basic attitudes or dispositions and consequent practical issues.

Basic Attitudes or Dispositions

Saliers points out that true worship is that continual occasioning through time of the divine-human dialogue, the ongoing prayer of Christ in his people animated by the Holy Spirit.\(^46\) It is evident that presiders are not doing secular work; they are people of faith who are attempting to influence life from a faith perspective. The final justification for presidential action is a conviction about divine activity in human life and an understanding of what that activity is trying to accomplish. It follows that there is no theology-(faith)-free ministry.

Like all people, the presider exists in a living relationship to God. The faith convictions that energize ministerial action are partial articulations of that relationship. Through sacramental celebration and personal prayer, presiders cultivate the relationship with God and through that relationship their relationship with people. The presider's faith and theology deepen and change because they are in ongoing contact with the divine reality which faith and theology seek to express and communicate.\(^47\)

Liturgical gestures do speak. But merely to use the signs and words, to assist in some individualist act of personal reviviscence or recalled felt experience, is not sufficient. It is evident that faithful and attentive participation in the symbolic language depends upon commitment to the realities symbolized. The way in which one preaches, prays and celebrates the mysteries of faith is an expression and vulnerable exposure of what one believes about God and the world.\(^48\) Unless personal commitment to the belief system and symbolic structures of Christianity is evident in the way the leader of worship functions in the liturgy, all else is pointless.

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\(^44\) Dunning, 44.

\(^45\) Dunning, 81-82.

\(^46\) Saliers, 56.


\(^48\) Saliers, 44.
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Presiding, of its very nature, calls for a growth in one's theological vision and faith. Theological change is a reality of the day. In general a minister's theological vision is strengthened by educational contact with scholars, participation in the sacramental life of the Church and personal prayer, together with disciplined reflection on significant experiences. Greater integration of faith and life unfolds into greater creativity and ingenuity in helping the Church live out its ultimate identity in the saving love of God revealed in Jesus.

From what has been said regarding the liturgy as being primarily the possession of the community, it becomes increasingly apparent that the ecclesiology of the presider will be very important.

Louis-Marie Chauvet, in speaking of the Eucharist in the New Testament, affirms:

"The theological perspective is not that of a minister who celebrates the Eucharist and to which the community is simply united by faith; rather it is a matter of the community as a body (as "body of Christ") which celebrates the Eucharist, and the common action is symbolized as an action of Christ himself by the minister who presides." 49

In a similar manner Kavanagh states: "The liturgy belongs to no one but the Church, Christ's body, which is both subject and agent of every liturgical act." 50

Just one small step from the stance of ecclesiology is the presider's awareness that she or he is a member of the assembly. With a deep sense of awareness and conviction that one is a member of the group, the presider comes to praise and thank the Lord. As a member, the presider sings when the assembly sings, keeps silence, and listens with the assembly. The presider is in, of, by and for the assembly.

When authors discuss the more personal style of presiding, they affirm that it must be obvious to the worshippers that their leader is really praying, not simply in front of them but in their midst. It is only when the presider is part of the primary school of the liturgy, that is, the gathered assembly, that full participation of all can be fostered by creating a sense of community and an experience of genuine prayer. 51

The most fundamental experience upon which any summoning of the assembly to prayer is based is the personal commitment that the gospel and the liturgy are indispensable for the life of the Christian. This commitment will be most clearly manifested in the prayerful attitude of the presider. Clearly, one of the most basic dispositions of presiders is that they be prayerful. This attitude suggests a personal belief that is real, meaningful and operative, and a disposition to prayer, especially that of praise and thanksgiving. These qualities are, in turn, closely bound up with feelings of awe, mystery, the holy, reverence, which simply have to be present in the one who


50 Kavanagh, 13


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presents in liturgical celebration. The best of presiding techniques appear shrill, pretentious, self-assertive and empty without this qualification. The worst techniques are made bearable, if not delectable, by its presence.\textsuperscript{52}

In his usual synthetic form of expression, Robert Hovda situates well this disposition in the liturgical context:

In liturgical assembly we are striving to be at the height of our God-consciousness, and therefore our human-consciousness. It is an awesome thing to face the mystery of the Other and the mystery of ourselves with such purpose and intent. It is intolerable that such an assembly should be led by a person who has no apparent interest in proceedings, or by a person who seems to be using the situation to dominate, or to display, or to collect the plaudit of the crowd.\textsuperscript{53}

There is need to point out that while the presider must be prayerful, it is also a matter of being “more than prayerful.” The reason for saying this is that every believer is prayerful. However, since the presider presides at the common deed of the entire Church, it requires a modest prayerfulness that is heavy on awe and mystery and human limits while being light on answers and recipes for all situations and circumstances.\textsuperscript{54}

Authors speak of this essential disposition in an almost frightening manner. While the comments are generally directed to the ordained, with modifying adaptations they can be applied to all who preside. The following are but examples of what is being said:

True, the effectiveness of the sacramental ministry being done in the name of Jesus, the objective power of grace is there no matter what quality of ministry is given. Still the self-emptying disposition of the minister is part and parcel of being sacrament of the self-emptying leadership for unity and the priestly act of Jesus. The very person and disposition of the servant to the priesthood of Jesus and to the community as well, definitely affects the faith of the Christian community.\textsuperscript{55}

Certainly, it is the terrifying responsibility of the cleric to be a man close to God by grace. For woe to him who bears witness to what he does not himself possess, who is but a sounding brass, a tinkling symbol. The cleric is not one who by reason of office alone enjoys that intimacy with God that makes this dignity and his eternity....\textsuperscript{56}

The connection between the quality of ministerial function and ministerial life is not achieved automatically by ordination, commissioning, or designation. It is achieved under grace by constant prayer, reflection, self-discipline, and continuing practice on the minister’s part. This amounts to a fairly high sort of asceticism no less rigorous than that which secular audiences expect of musicians, scholars, dancers, and athletes.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{52} Hovda, 15.
\textsuperscript{53} Hovda, 15.
\textsuperscript{54} Hovda, 40.
\textsuperscript{56} Karl Rahner, Servants of the Lord (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 32.
\textsuperscript{57} Kavanagh, 38-39.
Sources speak frequently and clearly about the presider as a sacrament, symbol of the presence of Christ. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy itself and various subsequent instructions on its implementation speak of Christ being present in the presider (no. 7). In commenting on this paragraph of this document, Gelineau affirms that when the assembly gathers in the name of the Lord to celebrate the Lord's Passover, the actions that are posed become signs and sacraments of the mystery of salvation. He proceeds to affirm: "Those who carry out these actions become ministers of the New Covenant (2 Cor 3.6). They themselves are sacramental signs of Christ the Saviour." 59

Hovda addresses the same issue when he says:

The self-centred person, the ecclesiastical prince, the person who is out for privileges and status is opaque in this role. If, however, the presider is close to and part of the lives of all in the faith community, one of the people clearly the servant of all, then there is the possibility of being transparent to the presence and action of the Lord. 60

In reflecting on this aspect of the presider being sacrament of the presence of Christ, the words of the ritual for ordination to the presbyterate come to mind: "Accept from the holy people of God the gifts to be offered to him. Know what you are doing, and imitate the mystery you celebrate: model your life on the mystery of the Lord's cross." 61

Archbishop Francis Stafford of Denver offers matter for serious reflection on this particular aspect:

The challenge of priestly spirituality is that, by God's grace, the priest realizes in his consciousness, in his deeds, indeed in his entire life the graced transformation that occurs because he acts in the person of Christ. In other words, his life is an effort to embody the holiness of Christ himself, especially in those moments when the priest celebrates the sacraments so that the people of God may truly see Christ in him and experience through him the care which Christ has for the Church. 62

In The Soul in Paraphrase, Saliers suggests that one of the gravest defects within American churches today is the lack of focused spirituality in and through its ministers. It is in light of this observation that he comments and questions:

Unless ministries are shaped in the pattern of Christ and our lives are hid with him in God, all the activities and sincere piety in the world will not suffice for this "one thing most necessary." For how will we be able to show forth the ministry of Christ in the world unless we are formed into his life, passion, death, and resurrection — unless we comprehend in some way "the breadth and length and height and depth" of the love of God in Christ Jesus. 63

The words of Jesus, "You are the salt of the earth.... You are the light of the

58 See also General Instruction on the Roman Missal, no. 7.
59 Gelineau, Dans vos assemblées, vol. 1, 184.
60 Hovda, 65.
world” (Mt 5.13-16), strike a chord within us. The Dominican theologian J.M.R. Tilard uses the Eastern image of “icon” to picture who priests are to be. It is noted that icons are not simply flat pictures but images which somehow contain the very mystery they present. Priests are icons of Jesus as the one who serves unity and as the one and only High Priest. Bishop Daniel Buechlein speaks of the ministerial priesthood as being sacrament of the presence of Christ, pastoral priest in the midst of his people. He comments: “But when priests are blurred in their very lives in ministry, then the Body of Jesus is truly wounded. The blind and the lame and the deaf are left with a lifeless echo.”

Presiders need to ask the honest, soul-searching question: Does my conduct contribute to the apparent absence of Christ?

While it is evident that it is essential for the presider to have profound theological and spiritual attitudes, it is also necessary that the presider be natural. There needs to be a humanness present in those who preside. Much of this will be more apparent in the discussion on consequent practical issues. Here, in terms of attitude or disposition, it needs to be pointed out that liturgical gestures as body language are acts of communication within the assembly. As such they should have a naturalness appropriate to such communication and avoid appearing bizarre, overwrought, “precious” or humdrum. Liturgy is a human experience. Human experiences are most powerful when they are warm and beautiful. Kavanagh further specifies this sense of naturalness in presiders by saying that they should have a “sense of natural physical grace in deportment, a sense of simple dignity, a certain self-discipline with regard to personal idiosyncrasies translating into a general impression by the assembly of its being respected and completely served by its liturgical ministers. The minister at the liturgy, like a Zen master, should be as ‘uninteresting as a glass of cold, clear, nourishing water.’

Regarding the aspect of naturalness and presiding, Gelineau offers an interesting observation. He suggests that account be taken of a child who involves its whole being in an action, and who does so spontaneously. He suggests further that perhaps adults need to relearn the beauty of this way of acting.

It is perhaps in order to conclude this discussion of the need for the president to be natural with an element of caution. Simply because a presider acts in a manner that may seem natural to himself or herself does not mean that the result will not always be above reproach. What seems natural to the presider may well be perceived by the assembly as either too little or too much, as idiosyncratic and distracting. There is a danger of confusing personal style with individual self-indulgence. Kavanagh concludes that ultimately it is the liturgical assembly which decides what is natural in its liturgical servants and that the ministers must be attentive and obedient to this decision.

Some Practical Issues
The intent here is not to enter into metric detail as to how liturgical rituals and symbols should be fulfilled. Rather, the purpose is to touch upon significant practical pastoral dimensions of liturgy.

64 J.M.R. Tilard, quoted by Buechlein, 145.
65 Buechlein, 147.
66 Kavanagh, 53.
67 Gelineau, Dans vos assemblées, vol. 1, 186.
68 Kavanagh, 95.
It is good to be reminded at the beginning of these considerations that presiding does not begin with the practical details of techniques and mechanics. There is need, first of all, for a liturgical spirit, consciousness and awareness; without these, techniques are dangerous.

An issue that is quite broad, yet comprehensive and all-embracing, is the general comportment of the presider. While seemingly innocent in itself, in the liturgy general comportment is both significant and effective. More is said by comportment than by words. There is no gesture that is neutral. How the presider sits, walks, extends peace, blesses, offers communion, all can enhance the prayer of the community. This grace in movement and reverence in touch is not acquired just for liturgy; it is the honest reflection of a person's life and of one's sense for the presence of God in all creation, and it is expressed outside as well as inside the liturgical sphere. 69

Gestures always precede words. In the context of an attentive body posture, eyes are a principal means of communicating presence and exercising leadership. Various movements of the eyes, face, hands, and body all communicate instantly, long before words are spoken. Words should be an illumination of actions; often different messages are communicated.

Symbolic action is effective when it speaks for itself. Periods of silence, too, are liturgical actions and integral parts of a good celebration. At the same time, while words and gestures have power in themselves, they take on added meaning and exert a greater impact when spoken or executed with care.

The words of Hovda sum up well the significance of comportment:

In every sacrament, the presence of Jesus, of the Spirit, of grace, God-consciousness, must be communicated more by manner, gesture, style, than by words. So opening up the symbols, letting them be themselves, letting them speak, involves not only using the right materials, but also using them well.... 70

Hospitality has been referred to as the theological virtue of liturgy. It is the role of liturgy and, in many ways principally that of the presider, to transform an audience into a community of celebration. There is need for hospitality of space; there is need also for hospitality expressed by the ministers. The quality of hospitality in the liturgy need not be at odds with attitudes of reverence and a sense of mystery and awe. Likewise, it is not created by being careless with the form of liturgy or indifferent to people's need in ritual for the familiar. Being careless, vulgar, clumsy, unkempt is not being hospitable nor respectful of the Lord or the assembly. Liturgical hospitality requires style in its hosts, leaders and members of the assembly. It assures that the assembly's celebration and common prayer are uninhibited by feelings of isolation, alienation, estrangement, fear and suspicion. It creates that atmosphere where people are able to enter into the Kingdom-play that is liturgical celebration. 71

Gelineau offers an additional element to hospitality. To a great extent, the reality of hospitality depends on the intensity and profundity of oneness in the liturgical action. However, the liturgy in its turn instills hospitality. Consequently,

69 Huck, 47.
71 Hovda, Strong Loving and Wise, 56-57.
hospitality should be a fruit of the liturgical assembly following the celebration. Hospitality should be intensified among those gathered, and from them it should extend to all others. 72

Connected with and underlining an aspect of hospitality is the need for the presiders to be attentive to others. The assembly that is gathered for the liturgy is the most important environmental factor. The presider needs to be fully aware and conscious of this principle, as this focus will enhance all other elements in the celebration. Attention throughout the celebration, both to the congregation's readiness for participation and to the particular moment of the ritual action, is an essential dimension of acceptable ministry. These kinds of attention enable the congregation to feel that the whole assembly, and everyone in it, is important to the action and that the action itself is important.

As a community action, good liturgy seeks to utilize the different abilities represented in the congregation and to give space and attention to the various gifts of the Spirit in God's people. As a familiar ritual action, liturgy involves everyone, alternating persons and groups of persons, each with something special to do. 73 In the liturgy all are worshippers. When each person who celebrates offers himself or herself to be so personally involved as to be moved and changed by the celebration, then everyone becomes concerned about the whole celebration. Liturgy always remains a celebration of mystery. The holy must be almost tangible. It must be evident in the presider's attitude toward the other persons in the assembly, as well as in everyone's attitude toward everyone else. The presider's attentiveness to others plays an essential role in achieving this quality of personal involvement and sense of mystery.

Self-confidence is in some way linked to the style of presiding. In fact, there is no such thing as neutrality in style. To maintain that there is perpetuates the sometimes lamentable status quo. Proper self-confidence and style need to be worked on. This is a matter of recognizing the truth of the situation and responding to the needs of the situation with art and care. One needs to take the role of presiding seriously enough to really try to become good at it. 74

Two practical issues still to be discussed are related and yet distinct: spontaneity and creativity. Both of these issues imply some type of change. What needs to be kept uppermost in mind is that spontaneity and creativity (change) are being discussed in the context of liturgy, wherein stability and repetition are of the essence of ritual behaviour. Ritual or order of worship is the conditio sine qua non for spontaneity and congregational participation. The liturgy is the property of the assembly. The only way to secure the congregations's appropriation of worship is to celebrate the order of worship that is theirs and not lay on their already weary shoulders a spontaneity in which they have no part. People will be able to perceive liturgy as their own and participate in it when they know what is going to happen next. People cannot tolerate the change that happens every time the presider reads a new article or has a new idea. Hence, variety must be limited, and the spontaneity of the congregation, not that of the president, given pride of place. 75

Some liturgical authors are very critical of extensive spontaneity. One of the

73 Hovda, Strong, Loving and Wise, 20.
74 Hovda, Strong, Loving and Wise, 72.
The Role of the Presider... • Gerald Wiesner, OMI

scourges afflicting present-day liturgical celebrations is the pious notion of presiders that their random thoughts and expressions are worthy of universal attention. This hope may relieve the presider of much work, but it is quite unfair to the Church, which has a right to expect a liturgical celebration to be different from a parish council meeting. A totally impromptu spontaneity is contradictory to ritual action. The only spontaneity which can aid ritual is that which is enabled, nourished and disciplined by a strong and carefully prepared framework. It is the careful preparation of all parts of the liturgical celebration, including and especially the presider's parts, that keeps the celebration on track and offers public worship a guarantee that spontaneity will be helpful rather than hurtful. It happens frequently that the spontaneity offered by presiders is theologically unsound, liturgically inappropriate, and expressive of the personal whims of the presider rather than the prayer of the community. It has been said that good spontaneity comes with much practice. A golden rule to be constantly observed is that "in liturgy more is not necessarily better."

Eugene Walsh addresses the issue of presidential spontaneity with rather strong words: "One of the most pastorally insensitive persons is the celebrant who imposes his own unresolved hang-ups on a passive and captive audience. He has little or no regard for their feeling or needs, let alone respect for a living tradition of worship."

This being said, it must be affirmed that creativity is needed in liturgy. New creative activity is always limited and conditioned by the already existing heritage, and cannot proceed as if composing on a tabula rasa. Respect must be given to the centuries-long homework that has gone into the making of the present liturgy. Creativity within a tradition is one that is guided and limited by something more important than the creator.

Rituals that were created became liturgy only when they were received by the group. Liturgies were created not as monuments to human creativity but as acts of worship. There is need to allow the liturgy to speak for itself instead of trying to make it speak for the presider or of exploiting it as a means of self-expression. The object of worship is to be kept constantly in mind. The object of worship is not self-expression, not even self-fulfilment, but God.

Robert Taft speaks to the issue of creativity by saying:

Concrete experience proves that the overwhelming majority of our celebrants are not only incapable of improving them [official texts]; they are not even capable of taking them as they are and using them well. If you don't believe that, you haven't been to Church lately.

When discussing the elements of spontaneity and creativity in liturgy, and the tension that is present, consideration needs to be given to a universally valid principle: balance. There is need, on the one hand, to avoid "book liturgy" which no longer meets even the demands of the book or the rubrics, much less the needs of a living community. On the other hand, the danger to be avoided is allowing the traditional structures of the

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76 Hovda, Strong, Loving and Wise, 45.
77 Walsh, 40.
78 Taft, 320.
79 Taft, 321.
80 Taft, 321.
rites to dissolve into sentimental, undifferentiated and clergy-dominated hulla-baloo. Either extreme undermines the liturgy and the liturgical experience of the people of God.

Spontaneity and creativity are not to be identified with adaptations. The latter, carefully worked out and well prepared, are proper to the whole liturgical celebration.81

Conclusion
In some ways we have come full circle. A return to the beginning may now lead to further reflection and response. The words of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy may ring differently at this time: “They [the sacraments] do indeed impart grace, but, in addition, the very act of celebrating them disposes the faithful most effectively to receive this grace in a fruitful manner, to worship God duly, and to practise charity” (no. 59). “Pastors of souls must therefore realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated, more is required than the mere observance of the laws governing valid and licit celebration. It is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part knowingly, actively, and fruitfully” (no. 11).

In light of the reflections of this paper there is need to return to the document Music in Catholic Worship. There the reminder is given that faith is fostered and nourished or weakened and destroyed by the quality of its celebration in liturgy (no. 6). The sting of this document’s teaching for presiders is captured by the phrase: “No other single factor affects the liturgy as much as the attitude, style and bearing of the celebrant” (no. 22).

The challenge of the role of the presider, in light of these reflections, could lead people to cringe in fear. While this ministry is indeed challenging and demanding, it does need to be seen in the context of people’s appreciation of it. James Dunning describes this well:

Not only in Christianity but in all religions the priest is primarily regarded as the holy man. In every survey I have seen recently about people’s expectations of priests, top on the list were such qualities as: a man of God, a holy man, a spiritual leader, a man of prayer. That is akin not to the manager but to what religions often call the “mystagogue” – one who has entered the mysteries, who invites us into the mysteries, who has tasted the Lord, traveled with him through the mysteries of death and life, pain and ecstasy; in other words, the one who knows the Lord himself and us by heart. He also, like Jesus, is the one who in prayer and celebration is the poet who can find words to reveal mystery, not in the language of analysis but in the patterns and rhythms of story and gesture and movement and ritual. He is more like the shaman of primitive tribes than the executive of a large corporation.

Finally, the priest is more image symbol of God and Church than he is definition. Holy Orders is a sacrament, meaning not just the rite, but the people who enter the order of priests. They are chosen because we find in them symbols and sacraments of what we all should be – persons who know by heart.82

The words of Paul in the First Letter to the Corinthians are of lasting value: “People must think of us as Christ’s servants, stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God. What is expected of stewards is that each one should be found worthy of his trust” (4.1-2).

81 Hovda, Strong, Loving and Wise, 45.
82 Dunning, 58.

Nick Wagner, editor of *Modern Liturgy* magazine, answers, literally, 101 questions about liturgy, ranging from fairly theoretical topics such as liturgical theology to questions about practical issues such as the procession at a wedding and a eulogy at funerals.

The questions are arranged topically, beginning with what the author describes as “groundwork questions,” on the liturgy, the nature of ritual, the paschal mystery, among others. A few questions are devoted to liturgical books, a fairly major portion is devoted to the Eucharist, and others are on ministers, art and environment, the liturgical seasons, and the other sacraments. The material could be viewed as an introductory mini-course on the liturgy for the parish liturgy committee member who has no academic background in liturgy but is interested in learning more. The author includes bits of theological and historical background for many of the answers, but the answers are pastoral in nature and easily digested. A few of the answers are pastoral comments that are a matter of opinion, such as having the presider and the communion ministers wait until the end of the communion procession to receive. Other answers might provoke further discussion, such as the author’s comparison of memorial in the Eucharist to the Americans’ “remembering” their independence on the Fourth of July. Readers will also want to keep in mind that this book addresses questions for the American church, and thus his answer on the creed does not mention the Apostles Creed which the Canadian church uses but the American church at this point does not.

The question-and-answer format of this book makes it particularly useful for anyone looking for on-the-spot answers to practical questions. It will be helpful not only to parish liturgy committee members but also to parish musicians, parish council members, and for those responsible for religious formation in the parish. A short annotated bibliography is included.

Saving Signs, Wondrous Words, by David Philippart (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1996). Paperback; 90 pp., $10 US.

This book is offered as source for reflection and for preaching on some basic gestures, objects and words in the liturgy. Among the gestures are bowing, bringing gifts, lifting up of one’s hands, standing, offering the sign of peace, and walking. The objects discussed include the altar and the use of incense, and many of the key words and phrases used in the liturgy are explored. Among these words are “alleluia,” “The Word of the Lord—Thanks be to God,” “Body of Christ, Blood of Christ,” “Let us pray to the Lord,” “Let your Spirit come upon these gifts,” “Take and drink,” and “Go, you are sent.” One chapter is devoted to keeping silence, another to the Day of the Lord, and still another to singing in the assembly.

Each of the twenty-five chapters is written as a homily, and the author, who has worked as a liturgy co-ordinator, religious educator and pastoral associate, has pro-
provided a list of suggestions when during the liturgical year each of the chapters would be appropriate material. The contents of this book might be even more appropriately used by catechists and others responsible for religious formation in the parish as material for the newly baptized, high school and college students, liturgy committees, and others for reflection on things liturgical.

The style of this book is not academic, nor is it technical, but reflective and poetic, with some quite effective use of imagery. The chapters are not set up in a progressive order, and a reader can read each as interest might dictate. These chapters could be quite rewarding for anyone who simply wishes to gain some new insights into the experience of the Church's liturgy.


This book has four objectives, says the author: to focus on the call to ministry, to “nurture” the connection between everyday life and the liturgy, to emphasize the spiritual basis of ministry, and to give practical information on how to, or not to, serve at the liturgy.

The author devotes a few short chapters on call and response, the call to spirituality, the call to prayer, the call to service, and discernment. A few more chapters are devoted to reflections on the promises of baptism, on exploring faith through the liturgy, and transforming faith into action. For five of the liturgical ministries, readers, ministers of communion, ministers of music, ministers of hospitality, and servers, Cole provides information on preparation, practical considerations, and suggestions for spiritual reflection together with appropriate scripture passages and references to rituals of blessing.

The material in this book will be helpful to those who serve as liturgical ministers whether they are just beginning or whether they have served for some time and are looking for something to renew themselves. Reading this book should help all ministers realize how important their ministry is.

Mary in the Christian Tradition: From a Contemporary Perspective, by Kathleen Coyle (Twenty-Third Publications, P.O. Box 180, Mystic, CT 06355, 1996). Paperback; 160 pp., $12.95 US.

Kathleen Coyle, a professor of systematic theology at the East Asian Pastoral Institute in the Philippines, offers an overview how the Church has viewed Mary throughout the centuries. Beginning with a brief exploration of Mary in the scriptures, she draws on contemporary scholarship to broaden interpretation and give new insights appropriate for the Church of today.

She devotes two chapters to the dogmas, the first on Mary as mother of God (the title given to her at the Council of Ephesus in 431) and on her virginity, and the second on the immaculate conception (1854) and her assumption (1950). She gives the historical and social context for these dogmas and offers insights and new meanings that are appropriate for the Church today. She surveys Marian devotion throughout the centuries, noting how this piety nourished the faith of the people in spite of some of the bizarre expressions that occurred. She discusses also the theology of the chapter on Mary in Vatican II's Lumen Gentium (and the discussion leading to this inclusion rather than producing a separate document) and of later documents. She also critiques the traditional Marian symbols, particularly the Eve-Mary parallelism.

In a chapter entitled "Toward an Alternative Marian Theology" she suggests that what is needed is a new theology of God that restores to God the feminine attributes that Mary has borne, to use female metaphors as well as male to give a fuller expression of who God is. Then Mary can become a sister in faith, the
model disciple and champion of the poor. In an appendix she offers insights into the phenomena of Marian apparitions, including Guadalupe, Lourdes, Fatima and Medjugorje.

This readable book will be a valuable resource for anyone who is interested in a new perspective on Mary in the life of the Church.

A Singer's Companion to the Church Year: Cycle B, by Lawrence J. Johnson (Pastoral Press, Laurel, MD 20725, 1996). Paperback, 117 pp., $7.95 US.

This book is intended to help ministers of liturgical music, including choir members, to do more than just sing notes, to become motivated to be indeed ministers of the Church's song. For each Sunday in Cycle B of the liturgical year, from the First Sunday in Advent to the Feast of Christ the King, the author gives the responsorial psalm (NRSV translation) with a brief note on it, a few short paragraphs on musicians' ministry, a short informative section on either a well-known hymn or a liturgical element, and a short prayer.

This book will be helpful for choir directors who want something brief to include in their rehearsals that goes beyond the task of learning and perfecting their music. Unfortunately, the three celebrations of the Easter Triduum are not included, and there is no indication whether they might be found in a publication such as this for another cycle.

Next Issue

The topic for the fall 1997 issue of the bulletin is: Planning the Liturgical Year.

Articles in this issue will include:

- preparing for the liturgical year
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