

Word on Worship

Newsletter of the Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark, NJ

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“Lord, teach us to pray.” That request made of Jesus by his first disciples is still made by his followers today. As Christians, we realize that prayer is essential in our spiritual lives. Yet many Christians are not really sure how, or when, or for what they should pray. And most who do pray would like to be better at prayer, better at resting in the heart of God.

We can learn about prayer by reading books on the subject, by participating in spiritual retreats and conferences, by learning from the example of men and women versed in prayer and by following the guidance and advice of spiritual directors and guides. Yet there is another way we can learn to be better at prayer and that is by “enrolling” in the school of prayer called the Mass. In the Mass we find various types and modes of prayer. In this article we will consider what the Mass can teach us about prayer: how the Mass can help us to learn how to be better at prayer and how the Mass can be “our school of prayer.”

KINDS OF PRAYER

First of all consider the kinds of prayer present in the Mass. Generally, there are four recognized types of prayer, namely, adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, and supplication. Each is present at various times during the celebration of Mass. In fact, we are continually moving among these types of prayer as we go from the opening song to the concluding rite.

Adoration, giving glory and praise to the Holy One, the creator and sustainer of all that exists, can be found throughout the Mass. The *Gloria* is an example of such a prayer of adoration, as is the *Sanctus*, the doxology that concludes the Eucharistic Prayer and the acclamation of praise that follows the Lord’s Prayer.

Contrition, admitting our sinfulness and recognizing our need for the mercy of God, is present in the act of penitence, in the petition for forgiveness in the Lord’s Prayer, in the plea for mercy found in the *Agnus Dei* and in our response to the invitation to Communion, namely, “Lord, I am not worthy...”

Thanksgiving, proclaiming our gratitude to God for all His gifts, can be seen above all in the Eucharistic Prayer, in which we give “thanks to the Lord, our God” for the gift of salvation and new life that is ours through the passion, death, resurrection, and

glorification of Jesus Christ.

Supplication, bringing our needs before the heart of God, can be discovered in the collect or opening prayer, in the general intercessions, in the supplications for the living and the dead and for all the Church in the Eucharistic Prayer and in many other places throughout the liturgy.

These various types of prayer found in the Mass teach us that prayer should be varied in nature. We should not simply come before God, as we most often do, telling God of our needs and desires, our worries and concerns. Prayer should also lead to praise the God of love, beauty, light and life. Prayer should bring us to recognize that before the Holy One we are sinners in need of mercy and compassion. Prayer should lead us to conclude that all we have, even our very desire to pray, is a gift. In response, all we can do is proclaim our praise and thanks to the source of all good gifts.

In addition to providing experiences of various kinds of prayer, the Mass, “our school of prayer,” also gives us experiences of different modes or methods of prayer that we can use when we pray outside the liturgy.

LIFTING OUR BODIES IN PRAYER

The Mass teaches us that prayer is not just lifting up our minds and hearts to God. Prayer is lifting up our bodies

OUR SCHOOL OF PRAYER

as well. During the celebration of Mass, we do not sit still waiting to be moved by the Spirit of God. We move! We stand. We sit. We kneel. We process. We trace the cross on our bodies. We shake hands. We lift our hands to the heavens. We eat. We drink. We anoint. We bow. We genuflect. We splash water.

When we celebrate the liturgy we pray with our bodies as well as with our minds and hearts. This physical movement directs our attention to God. It also moves our spirit and it keeps us alert to the words we are saying. Such bodily prayer can also be used outside of the Mass, yet often our private prayer involves taking one position for an extended period of time. In our private prayer, we might kneel as we seek forgiveness. We might stand as we express our petitions to God. We might lift our hands in the *orans* position as we say the Lord's Prayer. We might "process" through the neighborhood as we praise God for the wonders of creation that come into view.

PRAYER IS LISTENING

The Mass teaches us that prayer is not just the words that we speak to God, but prayer is listening to the words that God speaks to us. During Mass, God speaks as his word is proclaimed from the Scriptures by the lector, deacon or priest. As those words are announced to the assembly, the God who talked with Adam in the cool of the evening, the God who spoke to Moses from the burning bush, the God whose voice announced Jesus as his beloved Son, speaks to us.

The proclamation of God's word at Mass teaches us that

in our private prayer we should make time for the word of God. By reading the Scriptures we open our hearts to the God who continues to speak to his people. The passages we read can be chosen in many ways, but perhaps the best method to use is to follow the cycle of readings determined by the Church. By reading the selections chosen for Mass, we join our fellow Catholics throughout the world in focusing our attention on the word of God chosen for a particular day.

WORDS AND MODELS FOR PRAYER

The Mass, "our school of prayer," teaches us words and models that we can use when we pray outside of the liturgy.

- For example, the *Gloria* can be our words of praise during a time of private prayer.
- The prayer of the faithful provides a simple structure that can be used to lead a group of people in prayer. It can also remind us that our prayers of supplication should not just be for our needs, but for the needs of the wider world around us.
- When we gather for a meal, the prayers said by the priest at the preparation of the gifts can serve as a model for our words of blessing. For example, "Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation, through your goodness we have this food that graces our table, food that earth has given and human hands have made, it will be nourishment for our body." All can then respond "Blessed be God for ever," as they do at Mass.
- The preface of the Mass can be a beautiful prayer for a special feast day, especially when praying with a group of people. For example, on the Solemnity of Saint

Joseph, the leader can begin with the preface dialogue and then continue with the words of the preface for Joseph, the Husband of Mary, and all can conclude with the *sanctus*.

- When we pray the Lord's Prayer alone or with a group, we can continue with the embolism (Deliver us Lord...) and then conclude with the doxology (For the kingdom...). The words of the embolism, which embellishes the last petition, are especially appropriate in this age of terrorism and violence.

SINGING OUR PRAYER

"Our school of prayer" also teaches us the importance of sung prayer. As we read in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM):

the Christian faithful who gather together as one to await the Lord's coming are instructed by the apostle Paul to sing together psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col 3:16). Singing is the sign of the heart's joy (Acts 2:46). Thus Saint Augustine says rightly, "Singing is for one who loves." There is also the ancient proverb: "One who sings well prays twice." (GIRM, 39)

We can "pray twice" in our prayer outside of the liturgy as well. The words of the *sanctus*, the refrain from a responsorial psalm, a Gospel acclamation or the verse from a hymn can be part of our prayer. We can sing to God, not just when we are gathered with the assembly for Mass. We can sing to God when we are alone in prayer, or when we gather with a small group for a parish meeting or with our family at the supper table.

Perhaps some Catholics are

hesitant to participate in sung prayer at Mass since sung prayer is not part of their prayer experience outside of the liturgy. Just as it is hard to engage in public prayer when we do not engage in private prayer, the same might be said of sung prayer.

PRAYER IS SILENCE

The Mass, "our school of prayer," instructs us that prayer is not just a matter of sung or spoken words. Prayer is also a matter of silence. In fact the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* uses the term "sacred silence," reminding us that silence in the liturgy is not the absence of something, but rather the presence of something, the presence of someone sacred.

The liturgy has designated times of silence. We are silent during the act of penitence to recall our sinfulness but even more importantly to remember God's mercy made present in Jesus Christ. We are silent before the priest prays the collect in order to bring our personal needs before the Lord. We are silent after the readings to let God's word echo in our mind. We are silent after the homily so that what we have heard may be taken to heart. We are silent before the Eucharistic Prayer to consider the personal reasons we have to lift our hearts in thanks to God. We are silent after holy communion to reflect on our oneness with Christ and with each other — we are a "holy communion."

"Our school of prayer" teaches us that in our private prayer we need to be silent for all the reasons given above. We also need to be silent so that we might experience the healing, peaceful presence of God. We also need to be silent so that

we might hear the God who, as Elijah discovered, often speaks "in a tiny whispering sound." (1 Kings 19:12)

PRAYER LEADS TO SERVICE

The Mass teaches us that prayer has to lead to action. That is wonderfully brought before us in the dismissal rite when we are told to "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord." We who have experienced the presence of Christ in word and sacrament are sent to be the presence of Christ in our society. We who have prayed for those in need, especially in the general intercessions, are now sent to be the instruments that God uses to answer the petitions we have voiced. The same should be true in our private prayer. We should end our prayer with a concrete action in mind that will help bring about that for which we have prayed. In this way, we allow ourselves to be instruments that God uses to answer our prayer. For example, after having prayed for the sick, we might resolve to visit someone who is ill.

THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

"Our school of prayer" also brings before us the Paschal Mystery. This central mystery of our faith proclaims that by his passion and cross Christ conquered sin and death and became the source of resurrection and new life. Each time we pray the Mass we are taught that we have to empty ourselves, we have to let go, we have to give ourselves in service to those in need. We have to die so that we might be filled with new life. We have to live the Paschal Mystery.

This is brought before us at many times in the liturgy, particularly as our gifts of bread and wine are presented. Those gifts represent our self-

offering to God. As those gifts are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ during the liturgy, so what we give to God is transformed and made new.

The Paschal Mystery should also be part of our private prayer. That happens each time we take time to pray in the first place. We give of our time so that we may learn to give more freely of other aspects of our life. We lose time in prayer so that we might gain a deeper relationship with God. We die to constant work and busyness so that we might live more conscious of the God who fills the space we have opened in our day. By our daily giving of time and attention to God through prayer, we learn to give more fully of ourselves to the God who transforms what we give and returns it transformed and raised to new life.

TEACH US TO PRAY

"Lord, teach us to pray." That was the request made by the disciples. It was a request that Jesus himself answered when he taught them the words of the Our Father. Today, the Lord is answering our request "teach us to pray" through the celebration of Mass. The Mass is to be "our school of prayer."

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DECODING THE CALENDAR

The world of fiction often includes the Church in secret plots and activities involving obscure codes and symbols. It makes for intriguing bestsellers, but often it is more fiction than fact. However, this does not mean that some of the Church's logic is not difficult to follow. This would certainly be true of the liturgical calendar.

Over the centuries, the Church, like Christ himself, has made use of time as a means of teaching people about God and forming them in faith. One can hardly imagine being a Christian without making special recognition of Sunday as a day of worship. Just think of the feelings and associations you experience when you hear the names of days and seasons like "Christmas" or "Ash Wednesday" or even "St. Patrick's Day." If these names stir something in you, then you have been "formed" by the Church year.

Keeping track of the seasons and the feasts of the liturgical year is no easy task. Sooner or later we all open the *Sacramentary* or the *Lectionary for Mass*, look at the options and think "Huh? Now what do I do?" This is quite understandable since there are many variations of occurrence and concurrence which need to be applied to the calendar each year. Some of these affect the whole Church, some particular dioceses and still others pertain only to individual parishes.

Although this can be a little confusing at times, it truly shows the genius behind the reform of the liturgical calendar. By providing for options and variations, it offers flexibility in particular situations for local churches throughout the world. However, this does not mean that everything is up for grabs! When we adhere to the liturgical times and seasons of the Church's calendar, we allow ourselves and the people we serve to be shaped through sacred time into the Body of Christ.

Below are several of the most frequently asked questions about the liturgical year. Although the questions are specific, the answers are actually helpful for a wide variety of calendar questions.

1. TODAY IS DECEMBER 6, THE OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF ST. NICHOLAS; WHAT PRAYERS CAN I USE AT MASS?

Even though it is officially listed as an optional memorial, once it is decided that St. Nicholas' memorial will be celebrated, all of the rules of an obligatory memorial apply. On the optional memorial of St. Nicholas, all of the presidential prayers for the Mass of St. Nicholas may be used from the proper of saints and the common of pastors as found in the *Sacramentary*. Since this memorial occurs during Advent, the preface of pastors or of Advent may be used. The preface of the season may always be used on a memorial during the seasons of Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter. Either the readings of the day or the readings for St. Nicholas found in the *Lectionary* under the proper or common of saints may be used, but the weekday readings should always be given priority.

Of course, being an optional memorial, it may be decided not to celebrate St. Nicholas' memorial in which case the prayers and readings of the day for Advent would be used.

CELEBRATING SAINTS IN ADVENT AND LENT

The answer to the question about the Optional Memorial of St. Nicholas seems simple, so why is it frequently asked? The reason is because this memorial occurs during the season of Advent. In some ways, Advent is similar to Lent, but the rules for celebrating a saint's memorial are different. During Lent,

when celebrating a memorial (or an optional memorial) of a saint, you may only use the opening prayer for the saint. All other prayers, including the preface, must be from the Lenten weekday. The color of the vestments worn – even on St. Patrick's Day – is violet.

The first part of Advent is more flexible than Lent when celebrating memorials. If there is an obligatory memorial or an optional memorial is chosen, it may be celebrated in its fullness; that is, with all of the proper prayers, prefaces and even readings if so desired. (It is preferred to use the readings of the day and the preface of the season). However, in the last days of Advent, stricter rules apply. From December 17 until December 23 (time of the "O Antiphons"), the Advent calendar takes precedence, and if any saint's memorial occurs during this time, only the opening prayer may be used as in Lent. During this time, all other prayers, readings and the color of the vestments are determined by the weekday of Advent.

SANCTORAL AND SEASONAL

The liturgical year really combines two calendars: the seasonal calendar which includes Advent & Christmas and Lent & Easter and the sanctoral calendar which marks the celebrations of the saints and other specific feast days. These two calendars are not parallel. Rather, they coexist in a relatively complimentary relationship, but for the most part, the seasonal calendar takes precedence over the sanctoral. This is definitely true of the Sundays during the major seasons.

2. CAN I CELEBRATE A FUNERAL MASS ON DECEMBER 8, THE SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION?

The short answer is no, you cannot celebrate a funeral Mass on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. However, the funeral ritual does contain a liturgy for just such occasions: the "Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass" (see *Order of Christian Funerals*, 177). Whenever this is used, however, it is good pastoral practice to celebrate a memorial Mass for the deceased at a later date.

The reason that you cannot have a funeral Mass on the Immaculate Conception is not because of its ranking as a solemnity, but because of its status as a holy day of obligation. Even if it falls on a Saturday or Monday, it is a holy day of obligation, and no funeral Mass is permitted. To keep it simple, remember that as a rule, a funeral Mass may not be celebrated on any holy day of obligation. Keep in mind, though, that holy days such as the Solemnity of Mary (January 1), the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15) and All Saints (November 1) are not obligatory if they fall on a Saturday or Monday, and therefore on those days a funeral Mass would be permitted.

FUNERAL MASSES ON HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION

The 2002 *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 380, sums up quite clearly the norms for funeral Masses on holy days of obligation:

Among the Masses for the Dead, the Funeral Mass holds first place. It may be celebrated on any day except for solemnities that are holy days of obligation, Holy Thursday, the Easter Triduum, and the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, with due regard also for all the other requirements of the law.

While funeral Masses may be celebrated on Sundays of Ordinary Time, it is not customary to do so **at a parish Mass** in the United States.

3. I HAVE A WEDDING ON PALM SUNDAY; CAN I SAY A NUPTIAL MASS?

On holy days of obligation and on the Sundays of Advent & Christmas and Lent & Easter, the Mass of the day must be celebrated; it cannot be replaced with a ritual Mass. Therefore, you cannot celebrate a nuptial Mass on Palm Sunday.

It is extremely important when booking weddings to look carefully at the date which the couple is choosing, not only to see if it is "free" in the **parish** calendar, but also to consider what may or may not be permitted in the **liturgical** calendar. So if, for example, a wedding is requested on a day such as Palm Sunday or a Sunday during Advent, Christmas, Lent or Easter, you need to explain to the couple before you even mark the calendar that on those days you will not be able to celebrate a nuptial Mass. If, however, it is necessary to have a Mass, it must be explained that it has to be the **Mass of the day**. They may be better off opting for the celebration of marriage outside Mass or better yet, choosing a different day.

WEDDINGS ON SUNDAYS

The only exception to this would be the Sundays of Ordinary Time on which it is permissible to celebrate a ritual Mass if it is not a regularly scheduled parish Mass. So for example, on the 20th Sunday of Ordinary Time, it is permissible to celebrate a nuptial Mass with all of the prayers and readings taken from the wedding options, as long as it is done at a time other than the regularly scheduled parish Masses.

It is permissible to celebrate a wedding at a parish Mass on a Sunday of Ordinary Time, but the prayers and readings of the day must be used with the following two exceptions:

- One of the readings, usually the second reading, may be replaced with a reading from the marriage options.
- the nuptial blessing may follow the Lord's Prayer.

Of course, the rite of marriage takes place after the homily.

4. WE ARE DEDICATING OUR NEW CHURCH ON THE SOLEMNITY OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST. WHICH PRAYERS DO WE USE?

The dedicating of a church is an extraordinary day in the life of a parish. The day of the dedication is always a solemnity in that church. Because the day of dedication is a solemnity, the prayers and readings from the *Rite of the Dedication of a Church* are to be used.

There are, however, days when it is not permitted to celebrate the dedication of a church as the rite itself states:

A day should be chosen for the dedication of the new church when the people can be present in large numbers, especially a Sunday. Since the theme of the dedication pervades this entire rite, the dedication of a new church may not take place on days on which it is altogether improper to disregard the mystery then being commemorated: the Easter triduum, Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension, Pentecost, Ash Wednesday, the weekdays of Holy Week, and All Souls. (*Rite of Dedication of a Church*, 7)

The anniversary of the dedication of a church is always a solemnity in that church and should be celebrated accordingly.

DEDICATING AN ALTAR

Regarding proper days for dedicating an altar, the rite says this:

A day should be chosen for the dedication of a new altar when the people can be present in large numbers, especially a Sunday, unless pastoral considerations suggest otherwise. However, the rite of the dedication of an altar may not be celebrated during the Easter Triduum, on Ash Wednesday, the weekdays of Holy Week, and All Souls.

The celebration of the Eucharist is inseparably bound up with the rite of the dedication of an altar. The Mass is the Mass for the dedication of an altar. On Christmas, Epiphany,

Ascension, Pentecost, and on the Sundays of Advent, Lent and the Easter season, the Mass is the Mass of the day, with the exception of the prayer over the gifts and the preface, which are closely interwoven with the rite itself. (*Rite of Dedication of an Altar*, 14-15)

There is no liturgical observance for the anniversary of the dedication of an altar.

5. OUR PARISH IS NAMED AFTER ST. AGNES, BUT THIS YEAR HER FEAST DAY FALLS ON A TUESDAY. CAN WE MOVE IT TO SUNDAY?

Many people are surprised to learn that the answer to this question is yes, but with certain restrictions. It was noted above that the anniversary of the dedication of a church is a solemnity in that particular church. This also applies to the celebration of titular saints of particular churches. In this example, the church named for St. Agnes celebrates January 21 as a solemnity, not merely an obligatory memorial as is its designation in the universal calendar.

Additionally, during Ordinary Time, a church may celebrate the Mass of its titular saint on the Sunday closest to the saint's feast day. This may be done as an "external solemnity" **at one Mass only**. If the titular saint's feast falls on a Sunday of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week or the Octave of Easter, it is not observed on that day, but it is transferred to the next available weekday.

What would happen on the day (January 21) of the actual memorial of St. Agnes if the church has an external celebration on Sunday? It is still celebrated since that is the actual day of the feast in the universal calendar.

CONCLUSION

Even in this simplified fashion, the Church calendar is still not easy to decode. Two extremely helpful secondary sources are *The Ordo* published by Paulist Press and the *Sourcebook for Sundays and Seasons* published by Liturgical Training Publications. What is important to remember is that the calendar of the Church shapes us in ways both subtle and profound. The more we respect it and adhere to it, the more we build up the kingdom of God, not only in this place, but at this time.

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CALENDAR RANKINGS

Solemnity – This is the highest ranking holy day of the Church. Solemnities contain their own prayers and prefaces; several are holy days of obligation. If they fall on a Sunday of Ordinary Time, they are still observed. If they fall on a Sunday of Advent, Christmas, Lent or Easter, they are transferred to the next available weekday.

Feast – Feasts rank lower than solemnities but higher than memorials. They have prayers of their own, and the preface for the feast is always used. Feasts of the Lord (e.g. Triumph of the Cross) take precedence over Sundays of Ordinary Time, but all others (e.g. James the Apostle) do not.

Obligatory Memorial – An obligatory memorial of a saint is always observed, but the weekday readings are ordinarily used. The opening prayer of the saint must be used; the prayer over the gifts and the prayer after communion may be taken from the saint, from the common or from the seasonal prayers. The preface is of the saint or of the season. On Lenten Weekdays and Dec 17-24, only the opening prayer of the saint is used.

Optional Memorial – As its name implies, an optional memorial may or may not be celebrated. Ordinarily the presider decides. If it is chosen, then all is as in the obligatory memorial. (If there is more than one saint to choose from on a given day, only one may be observed).

Seasonal Weekday – Some seasonal weekdays carry more weight than others. Lenten weekdays, the last week of Advent (Dec 17-24), Holy Week and the octaves of Christmas and Easter all take precedence over the saints in varying degrees.

OCTAVES

An octave is a period of eight holy days following both Christmas and Easter. Each day of the octave of Easter carries the rank of a solemnity! Memorials and feasts which occur during the Easter octave are not observed. Any other solemnities which fall during the Easter octave are transferred to the first available weekday. The Christmas octave does allow for the traditional feasts of Christmas week to be retained.

ARCHDIOCESAN CELEBRATIONS

The Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark was dedicated on October 19, 1954. In the cathedral church, its anniversary is observed as a solemnity. In the churches of the Archdiocese of Newark, the anniversary is observed as a feast.

PARTICULAR SOLEMNITIES

Both the titular feast and the anniversary of a church's dedication are solemnities in that particular church. They take precedence over the Sundays of Ordinary Time. If they fall on any other Sunday, they are transferred to the next available weekday.

Rev. Thomas A. Dente
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DOING IT RITE

MINISTERS OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

WHO CAN INITIATE:

Any priest in good standing who presides at the Easter Vigil may administer the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and first communion to a catechumen of the age of reason or older (7+). Delegation is given by law, and no further permission is required.

Any priest in good standing who presides at the Easter Vigil or at a Mass on the Sundays of Easter may receive into the church and must confirm (unless they are already validly confirmed as would be the case with the Eastern orthodox) a baptized non-Catholic of the age of reason or older (7+). Delegation is given by law and no further permission is required.

In the Archdiocese of Newark, delegation is given upon written request to **PASTORS only** to confirm on the Sundays of Easter, including Pentecost, adult baptized Roman Catholics (18+) who have participated in an RCIA process. Requests should be made in writing to the regional bishop or vicar.

PRESIDING AT THE EASTER VIGIL

There is only one presider at a given liturgy, and one and the same presider presides at the entire celebration. At Mass, for example, one priest would never preside over the liturgy of the word and another preside over the liturgy of the Eucharist. This is also true for all sacramental celebrations that occur within a particular liturgy.

Therefore, at the Easter Vigil, it is the presider at the Vigil who celebrates all of the sacraments of initiation which take place at that particular liturgy. The same priest who

presides over the liturgy of the word and the Eucharist also baptizes, confirms, and administers the Eucharist to all who are being initiated at the Easter Vigil celebration.

At the Easter Vigil, the practice of one priest presiding over the Mass while another priest or deacon baptizes the catechumens and another confirms them is not permitted. Or, for example, it is not permitted for one priest or deacon to baptize some catechumens and another priest or deacon to baptize others as if they were taking turns.

An exception to this might occur when such great numbers are to be initiated that it becomes necessary for other priests or deacons to assist by baptizing simultaneously. What is envisioned here is not a "taking turns" baptizing or confirming, but simultaneous baptisms at different stations throughout the church. The purpose of this is to not unduly prolong the service; it is not to give each priest an opportunity to baptize, confirm, etc. **This would seem a rare occurrence in the Archdiocese of Newark.**

CONFIRMING ADULT CATHOLICS

Since only the pastor is given delegation to confirm on the Sundays of Easter adult Catholics who have participated in an RCIA process, the pastor must be the one to preside at Masses at which the confirmations are to take place. **NOTE:** as stated above, *any* priest may receive into full communion and must confirm a baptized **non-Catholic**; but only a pastor may confirm an adult baptized Catholic.



WHAT ARE WE DOING FOR CHRIST'S SAKE

The first time I had the privilege of distributing Holy Communion was at the Mass of the Lord's Supper, Holy Thursday evening, 1973. I was two years away from being ordained a priest and had just received the ministry of acolyte. These many years later, I still remember how nervous and awestruck I was when I distributed Holy Communion. Since this was before Holy Communion in the hand was permitted, this meant that I was touching the consecrated host for the first time in my life.

Before the distribution of Holy Communion began, the priest celebrating the liturgy made the point of telling the congregation that I, the seminarian from the parish, would be distributing Holy Communion. The first person to receive the Eucharist from me was an elderly woman who, after receiving Communion, kissed my hand. That gesture humbled me and made me even more aware of the awesome thing I was doing.

I have now been distributing Holy Communion for more than 32 years and I can honestly say that while I have tried not to lose a sense of the awesome thing I am privileged to be doing, it is not quite the same as it was over 32 years ago. No one is kissing my hand anymore, and I certainly am no longer nervous. Distributing Holy Communion

over and over again can lessen its impact. It can make it ordinary and routine rather than extraordinary. That is true for priests, for ordinary ministers of Holy Communion, and it is equally true for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. Just think of the emotions you felt the first time you distributed the Body or the Blood of Christ and how you felt the last time you ministered Holy Communion at Sunday Mass.

In this article, I would like to consider ten things that extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion do for the sake of Christ when they distribute the Eucharist at Sunday Mass. These ten points come from my personal reflection and from my involvement in training men and women to serve as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion in the Archdiocese of Newark for more than 20 years.

By considering what they are doing for the sake of Christ and his Church, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (and ordinary ones as well) can grow in their appreciation of their ministry and their role in the liturgy. It can help them be more reverent and more attuned to what they are doing as they distribute the Body and Blood of Christ. It can help them to recapture some of that initial awe and wonder they felt when they said "The Body of Christ," or "The Blood of Christ" for the first time.

For the remainder of this article, I will use the term "ministers of Communion" rather than the more proper term extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to refer to those men and women mandated to distribute the Body and Blood of Christ. Not only is the term ministers of Communion less wordy, it can also include ordinary ministers of Holy Communion, namely, priests and deacons. What appears below can in most cases apply to them.

For the sake of Christ and his Church, ministers of Holy Communion do the following:

- **Ministers of Communion give public witness to their faith in Christ and their membership in the Church.** When a man or woman stands before the assembly to distribute Holy Communion he or she becomes known to the rest of the parish. The parish begins to know who that person is, and that knowledge is not restricted to Sunday Mass. That person is also recognized at the mall, in the supermarket and on the street as a minister of Communion, as someone who has a special role in the parish. That person becomes someone parish members expect to be holy, expect to be a good example of his or her Christian faith. Ministers of Communion who stand before the congregation become people who stand

out in the public square as well.

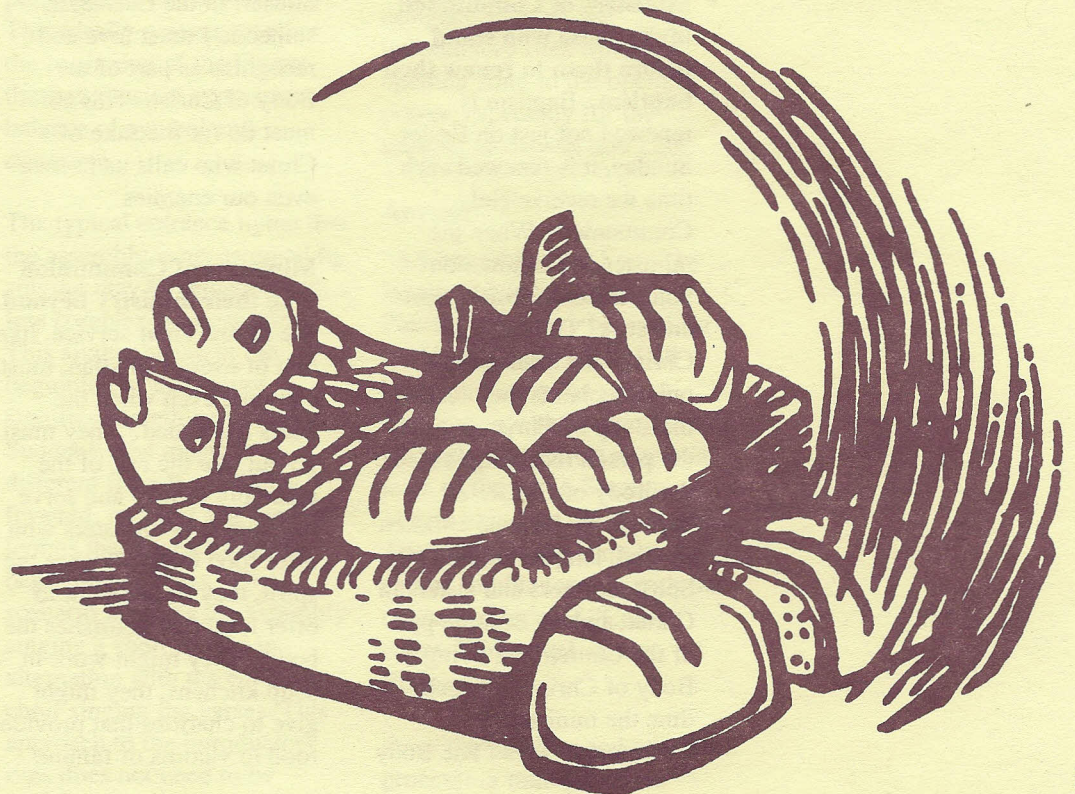
- **Ministers of Communion put themselves forward as examples of stewardship and service.** By distributing Holy Communion at Sunday Mass and bringing it to the sick, they share some of the time and talent they have received from God for the sake of their brothers and sisters. By giving of themselves in service they remind others of their call to stewardship and service as well. The Lord, who washed the feet of his disciples, did precisely that at the Last Supper. In washing the feet of his disciples Jesus gave an example of service that he told his disciples to follow.
- **Ministers of Communion help lead people in prayer during the Mass.** While they certainly do not preside at the liturgy, ministers of Communion lead others in prayer by their personal example of spoken and sung prayer, by their reverence and attention to what is taking place, and by their full and active participation in the liturgy at all times. For the sake of Christ, ministers of Communion assume a special role when distributing the Body and Blood of Christ; however, they also play an important role as engaged members of the assembly throughout the entire liturgy.
- **Ministers of Communion respond to Christ's command to give those following him something to eat.** As he once did when he fed the crowd with the loaves and the fish, so today Jesus takes, blesses, breaks and gives to his disciples the Eucharist so they in turn

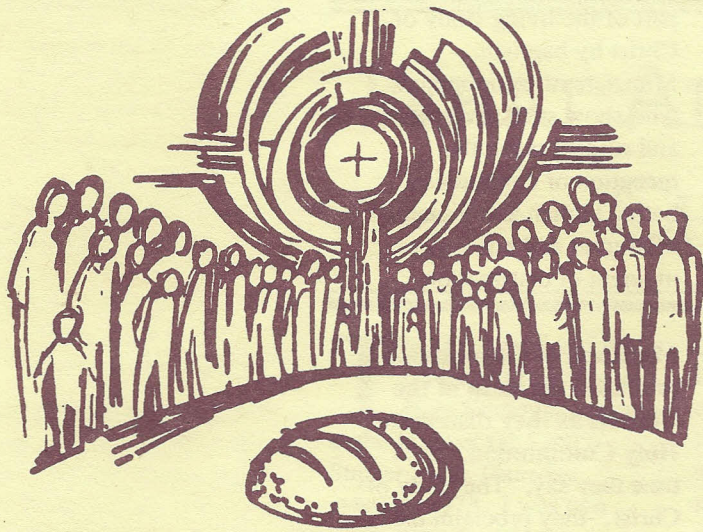
may give it to the people. Ministers of Communion receive the consecrated bread and wine that has been taken, blessed and broken by Christ through the ministry of the priest and they in turn give it to the assembled followers of the Lord.

- **Ministers of Communion mediate an encounter between Christ and the believer.** Christ the Lord desires to give himself as our food and drink so that we might become one "holy communion" with him and with his Church. The Lord does this through the flesh and blood of those who distribute the Eucharist. Consecrated bread and wine are not left on the altar for people to come and feed themselves. They are lovingly given by Christians to their fellow Christians. Ministers of Communion respect and reverence not only the consecrated bread and wine, but also the person standing before them, a person "consecrated" as

part of the living Body of Christ by baptism. Ministers of Communion who show such reverence and respect make the reception of communion both a human and a sacred encounter and not a mere moment of distribution.

- **Ministers of Communion proclaim the faith of the Church as they distribute Holy Communion.** Each time they say, "The Body of Christ," they proclaim the Church's belief that this consecrated bread is the very presence, the real presence, of the Lord who said, "Take and eat, this is my Body." Each time they say, "The Blood of Christ," they proclaim the Church's belief that the cup they hold contains the very presence, the real presence of the one who said, "Take and drink, this is my Blood."
- **Ministers of Communion challenge people to profess their faith.** They challenge those receiving Holy





Communion to look beyond mere bread and wine and see their Lord and God. They challenge those receiving to make the faith of the Church their own by their "Amen." As the risen Lord challenged Thomas to believe when he appeared to him the week after the resurrection, so ministers of Communion challenge those receiving to recognize the risen Lord before them, no longer in his glorified body but now present in the Eucharist.

- **Ministers of Communion invite those who stand before them to renew their baptism.** Baptism is renewed not just on Easter Sunday, it is renewed each time we receive Holy Communion. When the minister of Communion holds the consecrated host and says "The Body of Christ," the minister not only proclaims the bread is the Body of Christ, but that the person receiving is also the Body of Christ. At baptism we become children of God, temples of the Holy Spirit, brothers and sisters in Christ, and we become part of the Church, the living Body of Christ. So each time the minister of Communion says "The Body

of Christ," that minister calls upon us to remember who we are by baptism. We are the Body of Christ. We are the Church. By our "Amen" we say "Yes" to what we became when we were washed in the waters of baptism.

- **Ministers of Communion allow their love to extend beyond the circle of their family and friends.** The words they say challenge ministers of Communion to see every person before them as part of the Body of Christ. While it is easy to see those we love as loved by God, it is not so easy to see someone with whom we are having difficulty or someone who has hurt us as loved by God. Yet those kinds of people also come forward to receive the Eucharist. Those kinds of people stand before us, and we say to them, "The Body of Christ." We say this person too is part of the Body of Christ, someone for whom Christ died, someone to whom Christ gives himself in the Eucharist, someone I must love and recognize as part of the Body of Christ. This we must do for the sake of Christ who calls us to love even our enemies.
- **Ministers of Communion take their ministry beyond the altar.** Their service, like that of every Christian, must continue even when the Mass has ended. They must go out like the rest of the assembly to love and serve the Lord. As ministers who offer food that nourishes the spirit, they might work to offer food that nourishes the body. They might work in soup kitchens, they might give to charities that provide food to victims of famine

and drought, or they might feed those incapable of feeding themselves because of age or illness. As ministers who help to lead people in prayer, they might pray daily for those they have encountered at Mass or those they will encounter the coming week. Praying for others helps us to see them as God sees them. It helps us to love them as God loves them.

Ministers of Holy Communion do far more than just distribute consecrated bread and wine at Mass. They do so much more for the sake of Christ and the Church. The more they understand what they are truly doing, the more they will appreciate the extraordinary ministry that is theirs.

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RITUAL MUSIC, SEASONS AND THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Ritual music is a powerful and effective means of collecting and focusing the gathered assembly at the liturgy. Ritual music may be defined as music that embodies the liturgical text and musical affect thereby making it fully functional in the rite. Whether during Advent (expectant mood) or Lent (penitential mood), the songs and accompanying music reflect and express the message of the season.

The introductory rites are sensitive to the nature of the season and set the mood for the rest of the liturgy. The efficacy of ritual music used during the introductory rites may be measured by how the gathered assembly expresses and begins the liturgy. Well-crafted, yet simple approaches to ritual music can integrate the gathering song, greeting, act of penitence and opening prayer.

For a meaningful yet succinct expression of the introductory rites, consider the following: all elements of the rite; balanced musical participation of the assembly; appropriate use of musical resources. The use of the *ostinato* (i.e. continuously repeated) refrain, for example, evolves into a powerful conglomeration of musical expressions by virtue of simple repetition and variation. The musical elements wedded to the scriptural and seasonal texts become ingrained. Various combinations of instruments — handbells,

organ, guitar, other solo instruments or *a capella* singing are some possibilities that enhance the ritual music from week to week. Again, careful application of ritual music within the introductory rites helps set a particular atmosphere for a seasonal liturgy. It is more important to live the liturgy, that is, gather the worshipping assembly in heart, mind and spirit through music, than it is to merely sing an opening song to get people into place. This short article will focus primarily on ritual music for the introductory rites of Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter.

ENTRANCE SONG

In the introductory rites of Advent or Lent, ritual music can enhance the sung participation of the assembly. This ideally weaves together the beginning of the liturgy through musical expression, balance of symbol and discourse.

The typical entrance hymn that the assembly is accustomed to singing may be replaced with a less complex musical refrain. This slight change in the beginning of the liturgy signifies something different. Suddenly, the music is different from the straightforward, metrical and familiar hymns that characterize the beginning of Mass. One scenario involves the assembly singing a short refrain in alternation with the cantor or choir singing the verses. This approach to the introductory rites does not need to be elaborate — examples follow.

ACT OF PENITENCE

Ritual music is especially affective during the act of penitence. For example, the cantor (or deacon) sings the invocations to the “Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy” using a melody or tone related to the music of the procession. Numerous settings already exist in all of the major service books and hymnals. Whatever the approach to the act of penitence, it is important to balance silence, spoken word and sung prayer. Primarily, it is important to remember that the music should accompany and express the liturgy and the rite, not the reverse!

FROM OPENING SONG TO OPENING PRAYER

There are musical settings designed to carry the introductory rites from the opening song to the opening prayer, especially for the seasons of Advent and Lent.

ADVENT

“Advent Gathering Song” by James Chepponis (GIA Publications) may be used for the introductory rites of all liturgies during the season. This *ostinato* setting is set with the particular introit or related texts of the given Sunday. Verses based on the three-year Advent cycle are sung by the cantor simultaneously with the *ostinato* refrain of “Come, come, Emmanuel, come Emmanuel.”

Once the presider and other processing ministers have

reached their place, the instrumental music becomes softer and underscores the pause for the greeting to the introduction of the act of penitence. Then, the instrumental music grows louder and the cantor leads the assembly in the act of penitence singing the same refrain adding the "Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy..." as a descant to the refrain. After the presider says the opening prayer, the instrumental music concludes and the liturgy of the word begins. This scheme for singing the introductory rites creates ritual music and gives the liturgy cohesion. This cohesion expresses the liturgy as well as the mood and message of the season.

LENT

For the Sundays in Lent, "The Time of Fulfillment," also by Chepponis (GIA Publications), may be used for the introductory rites. This setting includes a refrain in alternation with verses for each Sunday in the three-year Lenten cycle based upon the day's Gospel.

This Lenten setting begins with a short refrain that is intoned by the cantor and repeated by the assembly. The first verse, sung by the cantor or choir, is the one written specifically for that day. The subsequent verses include the texts for all the other Sundays in Lent and are repeated as necessary. Therefore, the number of verses that would be needed would be determined by the time needed for the procession.

Once the presider and other ministers are in place, the refrain concludes with a short coda. The presider makes the sign of the cross and gives an appropriate greeting. Then, the presider invites all to be

mindful of sinfulness and God's mercy. After a pause, Form A of the act of penitence, "I confess to Almighty God..." is said by all and the *Kyrie* is sung. Each of the Sundays in Lent begins with the same music. Also, as the refrain or antiphons become second nature to the assembly, this familiarity and call to worship elevates the text and deepens the message of the season.

OTHER INTRODUCTORY MUSIC

Other considerations for ritual music include seasonal settings for the sprinkling rite and the *Gloria*. The *Gloria* for the Christmas season may be adapted from the popular carol "Angels We Have Heard On High" like the setting by Daniel Laginya (GIA Publications).

The sprinkling rite during the Easter season also warrants ritual music using sung acclamations or antiphons. For example, the antiphon, Blessed Be God (Alleluia) (cf. *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 222, D-E), may be sung after each of the brief invocations spoken by the presider while giving thanks over the water. Following the sprinkling rite, the Mass continues with the assembly singing the *Gloria*. Use of a seasonal melody or antiphons are only two possibilities for music in the penitential rite of the Christmas and Easter seasons.

WORD AND EUCHARIST

Ritual music is not limited to the introductory rites. Sensitivity to musical cohesion in the liturgy has been a topic of much discussion, especially in the past decades. The Gospel and eucharistic acclamations may use melodies or other musical devices that bind the text and

music to the rite.

The eucharistic acclamations for Advent from "Missa Emmanuel" by Richard Proulx are based on the popular Advent hymn, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." A seasonal Gospel acclamation, such as the "Christmastime Alleluia" by Chepponis (GIA Publications), is melodically based on the refrain of "O Come, All Ye Faithful." The use of familiar pre-existing melodies is most common in making seasonal associations in the liturgy. During the ninety days of Lent and Easter, the "Good News Acclamation" by Chepponis is another way to link the two seasons. This Lenten acclamation, "Praise and honor to you, Lord Jesus Christ," becomes "Alleluia" in the Easter season. By using one melody for the two different texts, continuity is given to the seasons and the Gospel message.

CONCLUSION

These various approaches to ritual music provide much musical leeway in structuring the ritual without sacrificing liturgical correctness. With discernment, these approaches are quite doable in parishes where resources are great or small. Ritual music enhances the prayerful actions of the rites. Repeated from one liturgy to the next, from one Sunday to another and throughout the whole season, ritual music becomes an expression that grows, blossoms and gives deeper meaning to a seasonal liturgy, bringing God's people closer to Christ.

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WORLD WIDE WORDS

ON WORSHIP

- **Scenario 1:** You start to plan the next liturgical season and realize you don't know exactly which readings are the focus.
- **Scenario 2:** A parishioner asks you a question about a Church document she heard reported on a news service this morning, but you haven't read it yet.
- **Scenario 3:** You have to prepare evening prayer and you're not quite sure what psalms you should use. Is there a model?
- **Scenario 4:** A parent asks you about the "best" age to receive the sacrament of confirmation. Where can you find some good documentation?

Are you concerned that your liturgical library is lacking the resources to deal with these situations? By simply using your computer and following the links given below you too can have at hand most of the resources used by the scholars at renowned liturgical centers.

www.osb.org/liturgy This liturgy site compiled by the Benedictines is a good starting point. From this organizational site are links to other sites containing liturgical texts, commentaries and general liturgical sites that reference the calendar and seasons, architecture, music and publishers. As you move from link to link, you'll want to bookmark your favorite sites so you can return to them often. Below are some highlights to get you started.

www.liturgy.slu.edu (Center for Sunday Liturgy) at St. Louis University. When you select a Sunday on this web site, there are links to help you prepare for the readings, with commentaries from the early church, connections to spirituality, prayer, justice issues and discussion questions and historical cultural context. There are music suggestions from various parishes, including a link to the NPM and Notre Dame Music Planner. There are also ideas for general intercessions. There is even a link where you can hear previous homilies given on campus.

www.usccb.org/liturgy (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Liturgy). This site lists the members of the committee and provides the latest liturgy documents. Also included are the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, questions and answers, and resources on the Eucharist, including prayers. You can also download a liturgical calendar for the year. The main web page (**www.usccb.org**) also provides a link to the New American Bible. "Readings of the Day," organized monthly, are accessible, or the "Books of the Bible" can be accessed in alphabetical order. Other resources available are the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, news topics, communications, social justice, church life and ministries, publications, etc.

www.liturgyhours.org Liturgy of the Hours Apostolate offers morning and evening prayers which can be printed in booklet form.

www.turning.to/digital.liturgy (Digital Library) This site collates comments, questions

and answers and resources of interest for those who help prepare liturgy.

www.webelieve.cc We Believe! provides the newsletter, analysis and commentaries of this volunteer organization for Roman Catholic liturgical reform.

www.creighton.edu/~rocsj (Liturgy Home Page) This web site offers methods, direction and articles to support liturgical planning for the Church year.

www.theology.ie/liturgy.htm This compilation of sites by the Irish Theological Association is divided into general liturgical sites, practical liturgical guides, and hymns and music. Here you can find helpful articles on lecturing, preparing liturgies, Gregorian chant, midi files and more.

http://centerforliturgy.georgetown.edu/Links.htm The Georgetown Center for Liturgy provides a listing of links of liturgical interest, including organizations and publishers

such as:

- Oregon Catholic Press (OCP), www.ocp.org
- GIA Publications, Inc. www.giamusic.com
- World Library Publications www.wlp.jspaluch.com (music and worship materials)
- Liturgy Training Publications (LTP) www.ltp.org
- Liturgical Press www.litpress.org (liturgical materials)
- Ministry and Liturgy Magazine (ML) www.rpinet.com/ml

These sites offer their own products for sale though they do offer occasional free resources.

www.fdlc.org/liturgy.htm
(Liturgy Resources) The Federation of Diocesan

Liturgical Commissions offers catechesis, web resources and links to sites with documents and articles assisting liturgical planning and understanding.

www.liturgy.nd.edu (Notre Dame Center for Liturgy)
Besides providing information pertinent to the college and the center, NDCL offers two interesting links:

- www.liturgy.nd.edu/links provides links to other programs as well as publications where further searches can unearth articles of value on most liturgical topics.
- www.liturgy.nd.edu/dailyprayer/index.shtml provides links to prayer experiences such as:

Liturgy of the Hours
www.universalis.com,
daily prayer based on the

Book of Common Prayer
www.oremus.org,
Orthodox daily worship
www.oca.org, and
Daily Ignatian meditation
based on the Roman
Catholic lectionary
www.sacredspace.ie.

www.rcan.org/worship
(Archdiocese of Newark,
Office of Divine Worship)
This site provides more than
just a schedule of workshops
and events for the calendar
year. Here you will find
scheduling reminders for
liturgies, guidelines and liturgy
notes, including bulletin
inserts and catechesis for the
GIRM. Seasonal information
is also available as well as past
issues of *Word on Worship*.

If you take some time to
explore these sites, you will
notice that a lot of the liturgy

links lead to other liturgy links
which lead to well, it's
easy to lose all sense of time.
But you will expand your
horizons in liturgy as well as
your resources without adding
bookshelves to your library.
Happy surfing!

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