



Word on Worship

Newsletter of the Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark, NJ

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Editor's Note:

The first article is an edited reprint of a talk given in April 2001 on Ordinary Time at the last of a series of workshops entitled "Preparing the Seasons" hosted by the Worship Office of the Archdiocese of Newark.

This is the last of a series on *Preparing the Seasons*, and I know that many of you have been at all of our workshops while some have only attended a few and still others may even be here for the first time. I can imagine the draw for the Advent – Christmas workshop: it was a new liturgical year and you probably had questions like, Where do I begin? Sarum blue or royal purple? *O Come, O Come Immanuel* or something by Marty Haugen? Of course, at the Lenten workshop, I am sure you came to hear the answers to questions like: Do we use more Gregorian Chant? Do we empty the font? Do we use cycle A readings? What's a scrutiny? And the Triduum – I can't imagine any liturgical planner not wanting to get some advice – musically, liturgically, environmentally – on how to tackle that giant! Yet tonight, here you all are, and I cannot help but think that maybe you are here with a somewhat more perverse question like: "I wonder how they are going to fill two hours talking about Ordinary Time."

That is a very good question because often times the one and only topic that is conjured up during a discussion of

Ordinary Time is the color green, and unlike other colors of the Church's seasons, there is not even a controversy over which *shade* of green you decide to use. Kelly green is acceptable, forest green is okay, light green is approved and even olive green is perfectly acceptable for liturgical use. Still, there is more to the season of Ordinary Time than choosing a shade of green.

As part of my preparation for this talk, I looked in a book, which we have probably sold to many of you, called *Word and Worship Workbook for Year C*. When I found the overview section for Ordinary Time, I discovered it was thirteen pages long and my first thought was, "Great – plenty of material here!" However, it turned out that only two pages were dedicated to Ordinary Time and the other 11 talked about the RCIA. The justification for this was that the RCIA is a model for the whole life of the parish and since we spend most of the year, 34 weeks, in Ordinary Time, we should be using this RCIA model throughout the year. That is actually very sound advice. Let's face it, whether we are welcoming, dismissing, exorcising, scrutinizing, or in fact initiating catechumens, they are a consistent part of the entire liturgical year. They are the glue, if you will, which holds it all together, and hopefully the process of formation used with them is also the model for all liturgical and catechetical formation done in a parish.

While seasons like Lent and Easter have very distinct characteristics, Ordinary Time seems to be all over the place. What exactly are we to grasp at in our relationship with God during this "ordinary" season? Taking some of my own advice, I went directly to one of the sources - the *Sacramentary* - to find an answer to my question. Scanning the prefaces of the Eucharistic Prayer during Ordinary Time, I found these quotes: "all things are of your making;" "man refused your friendship but a man himself restored it;" "he humbled himself to be born of the Virgin;" "You gave your Son as our redeemer;" "By suffering on the cross he freed us from unending death;" "Through his cross and resurrection, he freed us from sin and death;" "you came to our rescue by your power as God;" "by his rising from the dead we rise to everlasting life;" "In his return to you in glory, we enter the heavenly kingdom;" "your gift of the Spirit is the foretaste of the paschal feast of heaven;" "you call us to be your people."

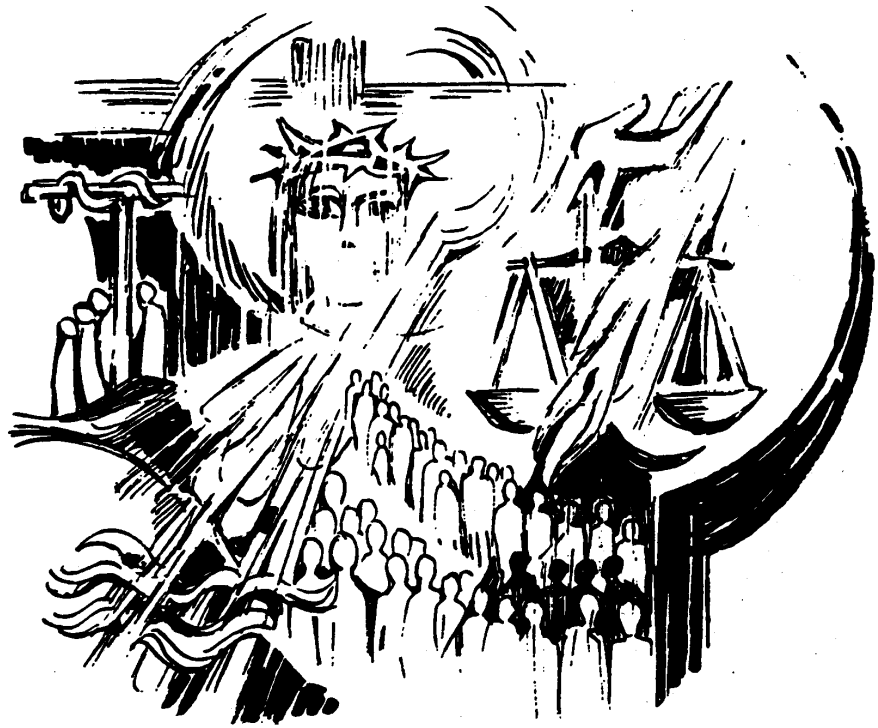
Well, it seems to me that it is all there, isn't it? From creation to the fall; from the Incarnation to the death, resurrection, ascension, sending of the Holy Spirit and establishment of the Church; the entire paschal mystery is represented in the prayers of this season. That is what we are celebrating in this season of Ordinary Time and mercifully we have thirty plus weeks to do it. It is finding God's full presence and activity wholly in our lives

ORDINARY TIME?

during the off times – the warm weeks of summer and the cold weeks of winter.

As you probably know, Ordinary Time begins the day after the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, breaks off on Ash Wednesday and resumes again the day after Pentecost and finally ends the Saturday before the first Sunday of Advent. Some of the Sundays of Ordinary Time have the distinction of being Solemnities of the Lord, most notably the two Sundays after Pentecost which are Trinity Sunday and The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. The last Sunday of Ordinary Time ensures us that the liturgical year ends with a flourish on the Solemnity of Christ the King.

It is true that Sunday itself ought to be the primary focus of the entire liturgical year, and Ordinary Time allows us to make that focus sharper. We should be extremely mindful of the fact that Sundays in Ordinary Time are not blank slates waiting for us to write upon, but that they carry with them a definite, marked focus: the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ, and it is that very mystery which we come to celebrate on those dark, cold Sunday mornings in the dead of winter as well as on those hazy, hot and humid summer Sundays. It is a good time to recall the importance of Sunday, the day on which, yes, Jesus rose from the dead, but also a day when Christ made other resurrection appearances like when he appeared to the disciples on the Road to Emmaus. Sunday, the first day of the week, is the same day in Genesis when God created light, and in the acts of the apostles, it was the



first day of the week when the church was gathered on Pentecost and received the Holy Spirit. Not only the first day, but Sunday is the eighth day as well, a day that reaches into the next world giving the day an eschatological yearning for the Christ who will come again. It is a day which unites us to the heavenly banquet and joins us with the saints in glory and all those who have gone before us and are one with God. There is plenty to extrapolate from the Sundays of Ordinary Time without our having to invent themes or topics other than those which are inherent in the scriptures and prayers of these Sundays.

Of course, the sanctoral cycle is in full swing during Ordinary Time and perhaps these weeks offer us a better opportunity to celebrate the feasts and memorials of the saints (not to mention the Solemnity of All Saints and the Commemoration of All Souls in November). The weekdays of seasons like Advent and Lent take precedence over saint's feast days but in Ordinary Time the

feasts of the saints allow for the use of color and commons to celebrate their days.

Normally when a saint's feast day falls on a Sunday it is not observed unless it is a Sunday during Ordinary Time and it is the patron saint of the parish or community. But during Ordinary Time, there are certain feast days which, even if they fall on a Sunday, are still observed like the Triumph of the Holy Cross or the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul.

Another primary source for rediscovering the "green" season is found in the opening prayers of the Masses of Ordinary Time. Every Sunday Mass has its own opening prayer which follows a basic format of praising an attribute of God (e.g. Almighty God, God our creator, God of love, etc.) and then, having satisfactorily praised the Lord, we ask for something. In the prayers of Ordinary Time, these petitions give us some insight into what we are celebrating. For example: "help us to know your will; show us the way to peace; help

us to love you and one another; keep us safe; help us to live in your presence; help us to be like Christ; guide the course of world events; keep us from danger; teach us your truth; keep us always in your love; free us from darkness; free us from sin; guide us; hear the prayers of all who praise you; increase your Spirit within us;" etc.

Most of the areas in which we need God's help are in the day-to-day living out of Ordinary Times and moments, and indeed, don't these opening prayers from Ordinary Time sound like the maintenance prayers of life? "Free us from sin, keep us from danger, guide us, fill us with your Spirit." The liturgies of Ordinary Time ought to speak very much to the on-going, day-to-day maintenance of our lives in the Spirit. Certainly as Christians we are called to carry our faith burning within us every moment of every day, but oftentimes we find ourselves not pondering the deeper questions of the universe but rather facing those inevitable

mysteries which can eat away at us over time like, “God, why do I have to work here?” Or “Is the computer down again?” Or worse yet, “What’s for dinner?” On a more serious note, there are always the day-to-day effects of original sin on our world which can show up without warning at any time like death, war, famine, and the pain that comes from unjust systems found in governments, economies, and even religions. Still, just like doing that homework every night or plugging away at that job which may seem to have unending low points, or keeping the life of the family in motion, or working as the people of God to make our world a little more Christ-like, we know that in the end there will be, after all of that sowing, much reaping. Sundays, including the Sundays of Ordinary Time, transform us so that we can in turn transform the world into a place where the real presence of Christ is more evident.

No liturgical planning could ever be complete without a good hard look at the scripture readings of the season. This is also true of Ordinary Time which, although not as focused as seasons like Christmas, nevertheless follow a pattern. Right after Christmas the *Lectionary for Mass* begins with stories of the early part of Jesus’ ministry and at the end of the liturgical year near Advent we hear about the last things, the end of time and the end of the world. In between we get lots of parables, miracle stories, and teachings of Jesus. This is Year C, so most of the Sundays in Ordinary Time will take their gospel readings from Luke with Year A going back to Matthew and then Year B Mark and then repeating again. Christ’s life of healing and teaching sets a good example

for our lives as Christians in our day to day calling to follow Jesus.

You could say that Ordinary Time plows the fields of our hearts in the hot sun and plants the seeds in the dry ground of our minds. It irrigates the fields of our souls so that the waters of our baptism can reach *all* the corners *all* the time and bring some divine meaning to all of those plain day-to-day times.

Let us remember that the life in which we ought to be interested is “daily” life. We can, each of us, only call the present time our own...our Lord tells us to pray for today, and so he prevents us from tormenting ourselves about tomorrow. It is as if he were to say to us: “It is I who gives you this day and will also give you what you need for this day. It is I who makes the sun to rise. It is I who scatters the darkness of night and reveals to you the rays of the sun.” (Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Lord’s Prayer*)

Concluding Thoughts

It is true that a lot of Ordinary Time occurs in the cultural “down time” of the summer season, but it is only a myth that you do not need to prepare for liturgy during this time. Obviously, the principle of progressive solemnity tells us that this is not a time to be pulling out all the stops as they say, but Sunday is Sunday and the respect we show the day by celebrating it with noble simplicity will send a clear message to our people that God is with us even and especially during our ordinary times.

Ordinary Time may also be the perfect time to re-evaluate the

overall quality of your parish liturgies. Perhaps it is time to reevaluate the quality of the intercessions or maybe it is time to add a new song to the parish repertoire, but how about those other liturgical celebrations like weddings, funerals, and communal baptisms? Do they need to be honed? This would be long term liturgical planning in the sense that you do not want to spring a new wedding policy on a June bride weeks before her wedding, but if you don’t plan for the next season now, when will you do it? Take advantage of this quieter season to step back and look at the entire liturgical life of the parish and see where it may be time to do some liturgical shaping up.

As I mentioned at the beginning, this is the last of our series in the planning of the liturgical year and we are very glad to have had you with us for the ride. I would just like to conclude with a little reflection on the planning not only of Ordinary Time but of the entire liturgical year. There is a popular song on the stage right now which asks an interesting question:

“525,600 minutes, 525,600 moments so dear - 525,600 minutes, how do you measure, measure a year? In daylights? In sunsets? In midnights? In cups of coffee? In inches? In miles? In laughter? In strife? 525,600 minutes, how do you measure, measure a year?”¹

The liturgical year helps us to measure the stories of our own lives as individuals and as a Church with the story of Christ’s. We measure our time as believers according to the life of the One who still lives among us, traveling through the centuries and giving meaning to all that happens to us.

525,600 minutes are how we measure a year, but how do we measure a life? “How about love?” says the song, “Measure in love. Seasons of love.” It is certainly our hope in the Worship Office that through careful planning, preparation, and celebration, you will help your people to measure their lives in the only meaningful way possible: in the knowledge and love of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Measure your lives in love — the love of God poetically lived out in the celebrations of the liturgical year.

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¹ Jonathan Larson, *Seasons of Love* (Rent Original Soundtrack, Dreamworks Records, Beverly Hills, CA) 1996.

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SUNDAY

A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

The parish where I serve as pastor is located in an area of Jersey City, New Jersey, populated by a large number of people between the ages of 20 to 40. These people work in New York City, only five minutes away by ferry or by train, or they work for businesses located in the nearby Hudson River waterfront area of Jersey City. A few months ago the parish staff invited ten of our young adult parishioners to meet with us to discuss our ministry to people their age. During the course of the meeting these young adults suggested that the parish initiate programs geared to people like them. The members of the group wanted programs that would help individuals meet one another. They wanted programs that would help persons new to the area become part of the parish community and part of the neighborhood. And they wanted programs that would give young adults opportunities to help others and to make a positive impact on the society around them.

While we were speaking about these three suggested types of programs, as well as other ideas that had surfaced, one of the members of the group, Carl, a young lawyer who joined the parish a year ago, said, "Father, use Sunday. Sunday is when people are around. Sunday is your window of opportunity."

USE SUNDAY

For me, Carl's comments were the most important thing I heard during that meeting of young adult parishioners and staff members. "Use Sunday."

With that in mind, imagine that as part of your parish's education program you were asked to give a half hour talk to twenty five adult parishioners interested in growing in their relationship with God. You would work very hard on your talk and probably spend several hours in preparation. If you were going to give that talk to one hundred people you would work even harder. You would be thrilled so many people wanted to attend such a presentation. You would feel your talks were meeting a need, you would be excited to think so many people wanted to grow spiritually. You would be anxious to share your success with your peers.

You and I already have large amounts of people showing up for our "talks," large amounts of people showing up because they want to grow spiritually. In fact we have hundreds, and some of us have one or two thousand people showing up at scheduled times in our parishes. Those people are coming for Sunday Mass. Yet we often don't see and appreciate those people as much as we should. Nor do we take full advantage of the opportunities that Sunday offers us. I would like to

consider ways we can use Sunday. It's a window of opportunity that we already have. A window of opportunity that we can use to do the things mentioned by those young adults, namely, help people meet one another, help people feel a part of the parish and neighborhood, and help people make a positive difference. It's also window of opportunity that we can use to help people and help our parish in many other ways as well.

I believe the Sunday offers us three windows of opportunity. There is the time before Mass, the time during Mass, and the time after Mass. Let's consider each one.

THE TIME BEFORE MASS

The time before Mass is often just a time of last minute preparation. The liturgical ministers are setting out the items needed for the liturgy. The choir and music ministers are warming up, or rehearsing a new piece of music. The priest and deacon are making sure all the liturgical ministers are present, or perhaps they are in the rectory filling out a Mass card, or grabbing a quick cup of coffee. The members of the assembly are parking their cars and wandering into the church. There may be greeters welcoming parishioners at the doors of the church.

This is the usual scene before Mass. But if we think about it,

the time before the Mass is a window of opportunity that we can use to our advantage. Of course to do so, our Mass schedules have to be so arranged so there is breathing space between Masses. Mass times have to be at least 90 minutes apart, or even better, two hours apart. For example, Masses scheduled at 8:00 AM, 10:00 AM and 12 Noon, offer a larger window of opportunity than those scheduled at 9:00 AM, 10:30 AM and 12 Noon. And those scheduled any closer together than 90 minutes, slam closed the window of opportunity before and after the liturgy.

A NEW MIND SET

Of course, scheduling Masses with sufficient time between them to create windows of opportunity means changing our mind-set about the purpose of Sunday. If Sunday just means getting people in and out of Mass, then our schedule will be driven only by efficiency and the time necessary for cars to clear the church parking lot between Masses.

Having sufficient time before the start of Mass gives a window of opportunity. During that window of opportunity liturgical ministers have time to set out the necessary items for the liturgy, and to make sure the church building is neat and clean, especially the area for the assembly. Pews with hymnals properly arranged and clear of

bulletins and papers, say that those expected are important and welcome. Ministers also have time for any needed last minute rehearsals before the people begin to arrive. For example, having Masses scheduled two hours apart leaves at least twenty minutes for uninterrupted rehearsals, music warm-ups, etc.

The liturgical ministers can then assist in greeting the members of the assembly as they begin to arrive. While this task is usually left to the usher, greeter, or minister of hospitality, it can and should be shared. Sometimes there are not enough greeters to cover every entrance, and even if there are, the greeter usually has time only for a quick “hello” before he or she must greet the next person. Having all the ministers involved in greeting allows time for the ministers to move beyond just a word of welcome. A minute or two of conversation allows a sense of community to be nourished, it also gives the person greeted an opportunity for a question or comment. This is especially important when a minister encounters a newcomer or visitor to the parish.

Besides welcoming individuals as they enter the church, those greeting should also introduce people to their fellow parishioners. As we know, people have a tendency to attend the same Mass week after week. By introducing people to the other members of the assembly, greeters build community at that Mass and also within the parish.

PRESIDERS AND STAFF

The priest about to preside and the other members of the parish staff should also take advantage of this time before Mass to be available at the

doors of the church or in the gathering area. More members of the parish are present on Sunday than at any other time. Sunday is the time the staff needs to be available. For example, a school principal can do more to create a positive image of the parish school by being present between Masses on Sunday, than by all the announcements she or he puts into the Sunday bulletin.

By being present before Mass to greet and welcome people, the presider can encourage the response of the congregation during the liturgy. People respond better to those they know personally, than to persons they only see in formal situations. People are more enthusiastic and sincere responding “And also with you” to presider who knows them, than to an unknown functionary in a chasuble.

Having sufficient time before Mass allows parking areas to empty completely before people start to arrive for the next Mass. An experience of “Sunday road rage” can destroy the positive experience of those leaving Mass, and it can close the heart and mind of those arriving for the next Mass. The distress that can take place in the parking lot is easily missed by pastors who live next to the church or, if they do drive to the church, are the first to arrive and last to leave.

A TIME OF REFLECTION AND EDUCATION

Sufficient time before Mass also provides people an opportunity to take a few minutes of quiet reflection or prayer before the liturgy. In our hectic and noisy society, moments of quiet are hard to come by, and so can be much appreciated by parishioners

who find that quiet time between Masses.

This time could also be used by people to view more leisurely displays set up in the gathering area of the church building. These displays can be informal occasions of adult education and moral formation. For example, we would probably get very few people to come and hear a talk about the campaign against land mines that was endorsed by the bishops of the United States. But a display in the gathering area of photos and literature on the issue could impact hundreds of people between Sunday Masses. For that to happen people need to be able to stop, and look. That can’t happen if persons are pushed along by a wave of people exiting or entering Mass within a few minutes of time.

THE MINUTES BEFORE MASS

The minutes immediately before the start of Mass offer another good opportunity for religious education and for community building. Just before the start of Mass the presider, or another minister, could come forward to greet the people and then take a few moments to prepare them for the celebration of the liturgy and for listening to the scripture readings. I have been doing this for the past twenty years and I know it works.

At the scheduled time for Mass I come forward, vested in my alb. I welcome the people and then I take a few minutes to give some background to the day’s scripture readings. I sometimes say a few words about the origin and history of the feast being celebrated, or I explain some part of the Mass. I encourage the participation of the people and remind them

that Christ comes to others not only through word and sacrament but also through them. I mention anything special that might be taking place during the Mass, for example, the blessing of new eucharistic ministers. If there is a new piece of music that needs to be taught, I introduce the song leader and then remain next to her and take part in the rehearsal. After these comments or rehearsal, the people stand, I go to the doors of the church, finish vesting, and then join the opening procession.

This three or four minute warm-up increases the level of participation in the liturgy, and it gives an opportunity for a few minutes of religious education on the liturgy or the scriptures. This may not seem like much, but just two minutes a Sunday gives almost two hours of such education over a year. And that is two hours more than most people would have received, since most would never attend a special program during the week.

DURING MASS

The next window of opportunity occurs during the Mass itself. This does not mean adding comments or words of instruction or introduction once the Mass has begun. It means celebrating the Mass the best way possible. It means putting all the time and effort necessary into the liturgy to truly make it the source and summit of the Christian life. All too often, very little preparation goes into Mass. It is just another Mass, and we and the other liturgical ministers have done it all before. It’s interesting that that attitude does not prevail in the theater. Actors

rehearse, the show opens, and the actors continue to rehearse to perfect their performances and increase the impact of the play.

The Mass can change and transform people. During the liturgy people hear God's word — a message that changes lives, a message that brings consolation and challenge, a message that announces the presence of God in the lives of people and calls them to be the presence of God to others. That message can be lost if readers are not prepared, if a sound system is inadequate, if readers walk and carry Gospel Books as if they were phone books, if homilists string together platitudes and cute stories rather than serving up God's life-giving word in the language and images of today.

During the liturgy people give themselves to God as the bread and wine are carried to the altar, and God gives himself to his people as those gifts are transformed into his very body and blood. The impact of that holy exchange and wondrous transformation of gifts is lost if the actions and words of the eucharist are perfunctory, if communion is limited to small hosts, and the cup is not shared.

During the liturgy people give praise and worship to God in spoken and sung prayer, but that prayer can be weakened and destroyed by presiders whose lips mouth words, while their mind and heart seem to be somewhere else. That prayer can be weakened and destroyed by music ministers who choose music that the people are unable to sing, or who see themselves as performers and not as leaders of sung prayer.

During the liturgy people can experience the divine and the holy during the interplay of word, music, silence, ritual action, and the effective use of authentic signs and symbols. But without care and reverence, without attention to detail and respect for the liturgy as well as for the assembly, those things can become only a jumble of motion, a barrage of words, and a meaningless ritual that drains people of life and makes the holy boring and routine.

Of all the countless things we do in a parish, the most important thing we do is to celebrate the liturgy. That means the celebration of Mass should be getting the most of our attention, time, and effort. It cannot be just another thing we do, that we've done before. Yet that is often the case in our parishes. When, for example, was the last time liturgical ministers, including the presider, rehearsed the words and actions of Sunday Mass? When was the last time priests and other liturgical ministers read the appropriate documents of the Church dealing with their ministries and their roles at Mass?

OUR RENEWAL PROGRAM

We introduce all kinds of renewal programs into our parishes. Programs that demand a great deal of time and effort. We advertise, campaign, and pressure people to get involved in such programs. Yet we already have a program. One that people are coming to. One that has worked over 1,900 years. It's the liturgy. It's a window of opportunity that we already have and one that we need to use to our best advantage. A well celebrated liturgy changes hearts, it

brings people together, it transforms people, it challenges people, it makes people holy, it builds community, it makes God present, it hastens the coming of the Kingdom. And it does that better than any other renewal program we can bring into our parish.

The celebration of the Mass also offers us another window in the time for announcements following the prayer after communion. While the community is gathered is a perfect opportunity to encourage people to become involved in parish and community activities. Rather than simply having the presider make an announcement, I have found it very effective to invite members of the parish who have been involved in particular activities in the past to come forward and address the congregation. For example, each year our parish has a one-day street fair in the spring. This past year two members of the parish addressed the assembly at each Mass. The first spoke about the activity in general, while the second spoke about how being involved in this activity helped him make new friends and become a more active part of the parish community. People were given the opportunity to respond to the invitation they just heard by filling out forms that were left in the back of the church. Incidentally, all meetings of this street fair committee took place on Sunday following our last Mass. This brings us to our third window of opportunity on Sunday, the time after Mass. This is a great time for community building and religious education for children and adults, especially if the parish schedule allows for sufficient time between Masses

AFTER MASS

As people leave the liturgy, ministers should be present not only to hand out bulletins, but also to speak to parishioners, and to introduce newcomers to the parish staff and to other parishioners. Once the ministers of the Mass have processed to the doors of the church they should immediately assist the greeters in their tasks. The more ministers involved in this task, the less chance that someone will leave without having been spoken to. Also having many people involved in this task creates a gathering of people which can encourage others to stay and linger rather than quickly leave for home.

The time after Mass is the perfect opportunity for parish breakfasts and other parish activities. It is also a convenient time for committee meetings. For example, we have our sacramental preparation programs for parents following our last Mass, as well as some of our committee meetings. People are already at the parish, a meeting after Mass simply means staying an hour longer. It does not mean, as it does during the week, making a special trip after a long day of work at the office or at home. This of course adds to the work of the parish staff on Sunday, but the staff should see Sunday as the primary day of parish spiritual and community activity.

Parish breakfasts and refreshments after Mass are wonderful community builders, but they work best if the staff can be present to speak with parishioners and to introduce people to one another. This is only possible if there is sufficient time between Masses for priests and

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WEEKDAY MASS: OFTEN CELEBRATED, OFTEN NEGLECTED

For the past five years I have taught the Liturgical Practicum Class at our archdiocesan seminary. This class prepares students in their final year of study to preside at the various liturgies of the Church, such as Sunday Mass, weddings within and outside of Mass, baptisms within and outside of Mass, communal anointing of the sick within Mass, communal penance services, eucharistic devotions, the various liturgies that are part of adult initiation, the liturgies of the Easter Triduum, etc. Three years ago, I realized that while I was covering the major liturgical celebrations at which these future priests would preside, I was neglecting the liturgical celebration at which they would most likely preside more than at any other, namely, weekday Mass. Therefore, three years ago I added a new session to the practicum course. This new session was entitled "Presiding at Weekday Mass - With and Without Other Ministers."

That session came to mind when I was considering a topic for this issue. I realized that in my years of writing I have never written an article on the celebration of weekday Mass. Nor have I ever read an article solely devoted to that topic. This article addresses that neglect.

A priest presides at many liturgical celebrations in the parish, but he presides at none more regularly than weekday

Mass. Many priests celebrate at least six weekday Masses each week, one each day, Monday through Saturday. Some priests celebrate twice as many, or more, if they are alone in their parishes, and the schedule includes two or more Masses each weekday. Generally, little time and effort go into preparing these daily liturgies. Sometimes, the preparation is as little as moving the ribbons of the Sacramentary to the proper pages for the day.

In this article I would like to consider how a weekday Mass should be celebrated; how adequate ministers might be recruited and prepared; what celebrations might take place within a weekday Mass; and finally, how a weekday Mass could be faithfully celebrated according to the instructions given us by the Church even if no other ministers were available to assist the presiding priest.

MINISTERS AT WEEKDAY MASS

A weekday Mass should be celebrated according to the directions given in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. This means, among other things, that the proper ministers should be present to assist the priest. These ministers include: servers, readers, gift bearers, special ministers of holy communion, a leader of song or cantor, and perhaps a sacristan or other minister to see that all is prepared for the liturgy.

While it may seem difficult to have the proper ministers present at a weekday Mass, it is possible if the pastor, and the other priests who preside at weekday Mass, make the effort to invite members of the assembly to fill those ministries. I was stationed in a parish for twelve years where each daily Mass had an altar server, who also acted as a sacristan; a reader; two eucharistic ministers; and a leader of song, who from her place in the assembly led the people in singing the antiphon of the responsorial psalm, the three eucharistic acclamations, as well as an opening and closing song. These ministers were recruited from among the congregation at daily Mass. Some of them also served at Sunday Mass, but others, such as the leader of song, limited their service to the more intimate and informal setting of weekday Mass.

The ministers were initially trained by me, but when a need arose for new ministers, those already trained and functioning would recruit new candidates and assist with their preparation. It obviously demands an investment of time on the part of the priest to recruit and train ministers, but it is well worth it. It not only adds to the importance of the celebration but it allows the priest to preside well during the Mass. It also builds community among the members of the weekday assembly.

When I was assigned as pastor

of my present parish, there were no ministers at weekday Mass, not even a server. Over the past three years I, and the other priest assigned to the parish, have recruited and trained women and men to function as Mass servers, readers, and eucharistic ministers. These ministers vary in age between 30 to 80. Some of these individuals had been coming to daily Mass for years, but had never been invited to serve at the liturgy. These weekday ministers exhibit deep devotion and pride in their ministries. They are wonderful examples of prayer, and a source of encouragement and support to the presider.

SINGING AT WEEKDAY MASS

While most parishes do not have music ministers available at weekday Mass, that does not mean that singing has to be absent from the liturgy. If a parish has a good music program at Sunday Mass some of what happens on Sunday can, with only small effort, be transferred to the weekday liturgy. For example, the simplest setting used by the parish for three eucharistic acclamations (Sanctus, the Memorial Acclamation, and the Great Amen) could be employed at the weekday liturgy. These acclamations could be started by the presider himself. If the presider feels unable to do this, a member of the congregation might start these acclamations from his or her place in the assembly.

During the liturgy of the word, the assembly might sing the gospel acclamation. This acclamation could be handled in the same way as the eucharistic acclamations. If a parish is employing a seasonal responsorial psalm at its Sunday liturgies, the refrain of that psalm might be sung by the weekday assembly while the reader proclaims the verses of the psalm.

Sometimes parishes sing only an opening and a closing hymn, but it is far more important, and actually far easier, to sing the acclamations which are of primary importance in the liturgy. "Singing should be widely used at Mass, depending on the type of people and the capacity of each congregation... Preference should be given to the more significant parts, especially those to be sung by the priest or minister with the people responding or those to be sung by the priest and people together." (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 19)

I would suggest that if a parish is not currently singing at weekday Mass, the easiest way to begin is to have the presider sing the final doxology of the eucharistic prayer ("Through him, with him...etc.") and have the assembly respond with a simple sung, "Amen." This allows the assembly to sing its most important response in the liturgy, and it also establishes the principle that singing should be part of every Mass, even weekday Mass.

OTHER AREAS OF PARTICIPATION

In addition to their official spoken and sung responses, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* also sees the weekday assembly being

involved in weekday Mass by taking part in the general intercessions, presenting the gifts, and receiving communion under both forms.

The people should be given the opportunity to fulfill their responsibility to intercede for all in need by responding to the invitations of the general intercessions. This means of course that the general intercessions should be part of weekday Mass, something envisioned by the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. "In the general intercessions or prayer of the faithful the people exercise their priestly function by interceding for all mankind. It is appropriate that this prayer *be included in all Masses celebrated with a congregation* so that the intercessions may be made for the Church, for civil authorities, for those oppressed by various needs, for all mankind, and for the salvation of the world." (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 45, emphasis added)

Various publishers provide general intercessions for use at weekday Mass, for example, the Diocese of Lansing, Michigan, publishes such intercessions on a quarterly basis. These intercessions can be used as printed, or serve as models. A parish might also provide one set of intercessions which could be used for a week, or for a longer part of a particular liturgical season. There is no need to change the intercessions each day, or for that matter even each Sunday.

After the general intercessions, members of the assembly should bring forward the bread and wine needed for the celebration. In other words, the presentation of the gifts should be part of weekday Mass, and not only part of

Sunday Mass. "It is fitting that the participation of the faithful be expressed by their offering the bread and wine for the celebration of the eucharist..." (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 101)

It should be noted that the *General Instruction* makes it clear that the bread and wine being presented by the people, are the bread and wine that will be consecrated, and returned to the people in holy communion. "It is most desirable that the faithful should receive the body of the Lord in hosts consecrated at the same Mass and should share the cup when it is permitted. Communion is thus a clearer sign of the sharing in the sacrifice that is actually being celebrated." (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 56h)

COMMUNION FROM THE CUP

This brings us to the third area of participation we are considering, communion from the cup. "The sign of communion is more complete when given under both kinds, since in that form the sign of the eucharistic meal appears more clearly. The intention of Christ that the new and eternal covenant be ratified in his blood is better expressed as is the relation of the eucharistic banquet to the heavenly banquet." (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 240) Since 1970 the National Conference of Catholic Bishops has authorized communion from the cup at weekday Mass. This permission may be found in the *Appendix to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 242, as well as in *This Holy and Living Sacrifice, Directory for the Celebration and Reception of Communion Under Both Kinds*, 20s.

The privilege to receive

communion under both kinds at weekday Mass was given to the people by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and confirmed by the Apostolic See. Unless that privilege has been specifically limited by the ordinary of a diocese, a presider should not take it upon himself to deny this option to the people. The members of the weekday assembly have the right to exercise their option to receive from the cup, as they have the right to exercise their option to receive communion in the hand. It is not the presider's right to grant or withhold either option from the assembly.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

The kinds of participation at weekday Mass that I have mentioned, namely, having the members of the assembly take various liturgical roles, sing certain acclamations, respond to the general intercessions, present the gifts, and receive from the cup, work best if the assembly has a sense of itself as a community and also if the members of the weekday assembly know one another by name and the presider knows them by name as well. We all respond better to those we know.

I have used two simple ways to build community among the weekday congregation. The first way takes some effort, the second takes very little. The first way is to invite the weekday congregation for an informal breakfast after Mass. This breakfast could take place in the gathering space, in a meeting room near the worship area, or even in the rectory. Since the number at daily Mass is usually small, a few dozen bagels or donuts, coffee, tea, and juice will usually do. This breakfast gives the presider a chance to meet

people by name, and it also gives people who have probably seen one another for months, or even years, to talk to one another and find out each other's names. Relationships form. The sense of being a Christian community grows.

The second way simply involves the presider recessing to the main door of the church after weekday Mass. Priests usually do this on Sunday, but few do it on weekdays. At the door of the church, the priest can learn names of the weekday assembly, invite people to become more involved, and just as importantly introduce people to one another.

OTHER CELEBRATIONS

Once a sense of community has been established among the members of the weekday assembly, and the liturgy has moved beyond the priest taking all the liturgical roles, other celebrations might take place at weekday Mass. For example, I have celebrated the anointing of the sick within weekday Mass. This is especially appropriate if one the members of the daily congregation is about to enter the hospital for surgery. I have also offered to celebrate funerals at the time of our weekday Mass for deceased parishioners who have few living relatives. This at least provides a small congregation of parishioners to pray for the deceased and it also provides the appropriate ministers for the funeral Mass.

ONLY THE PRESIDERS

After having said all this, I know there are times when a priest has no assisting ministers at weekday Mass. This can happen when the usual ministers are away, or it can happen in parishes when

the people have not yet come to understand their call to ministry, or perhaps when the congregation is extremely small, or sickly or very elderly. But even then, with care and planning, the presider can celebrate weekday Mass without other assisting ministers, and celebrate it in a way that is largely faithful to directions given in *the General Instruction of the Roman Missal*.

I suggest that a priest who must celebrate Mass without any assisting ministers consider following this pattern, which largely observes the directions given in the Sacramentary.

BEFORE MASS

- The altar should be clear except for the altar cloth. It may be helpful if the presider places the corporal on the altar before the start of the liturgy.
- The Lectionary should be at the pulpit and open to the appropriate page.
- The Sacramentary should be near the presidential chair. The ribbons at the appropriate pages.
- The wine and bread should be put in the appropriate place for those who present the gifts.
- The presider should move the credence table closer to the altar if it is far from it. However the table should not be immediately next to the altar.
- The chalice, purificator, water, towel, (and corporal if not already on the altar) should be placed on the credence table.
- The altar candles should be lighted.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

- The presider should process

in as usually done at weekday Mass. If he is able to lead song, he might lead the assembly in an opening song. However, it is more important that the assembly sing the acclamations of the Mass.

- The Introductory Rites should take place at the presidential chair, not the altar.
- The sign of the cross, greeting, and penitential rite can be done without the Sacramentary. If the presider needs the Sacramentary for these prayers, he can hold the Sacramentary in his own hands. A lectern for the Sacramentary should not be placed near the presidential chair; doing so creates competition with the pulpit.
- At the time for the opening prayer, the presider picks up the Sacramentary in his own hands, opens the Sacramentary to the page with the appropriate prayer, then says Let us pray, pauses, then prays the prayer.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- The presider moves to the pulpit for the readings.
- When he bows to say the prayer before the Gospel, the presider bows to the word /pulpit, not the altar. (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 96)
- After the gospel, he preaches the homily. A homily is strongly recommended at all weekday Masses. (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 41 & 42)
- After the homily, the presider returns to the chair and sits down for a time of reflection. He then stands and leads the general intercessions.
- If necessary the presider

uses a book with the petitions. He does not use a book for the prayer that concludes the intercessions since this prayer is prayed with extended hands.

PREPARATION OF GIFTS AND ALTAR

- The presider places the Sacramentary upon the altar and then goes to receive the gifts.
- If the corporal is not on the altar from the start of Mass, he places it on the altar before he goes to receive the gifts.
- At the presentation of the gifts he takes the bread and wine from the people. He places the wine at the credence table as he passes it, then takes the bread to the altar, says the required prayer and then places the plate of bread on the altar.
- The presider goes to the credence table, prepares the chalice by pouring in wine and a little water, then goes to the altar, says the required prayer and then places the chalice upon the altar.
- He goes to the credence table, and there he washes his hands.
- He returns to the altar and continues the Mass by saying "Pray brethren, that our sacrifice...etc."

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

- As usual.
- The presider should at least sing the concluding doxology, "Through him, with him..." It would be good for him to also lead the people in the other two eucharistic acclamations, namely the Sanctus, and the memorial acclamation.

COMMUNION RITE

- The presider should not go

**Sunday - A Window of Opportunity
continued**

Other staff members to spend time with people. Simply stopping by to say a quick "hello" is a missed opportunity. Refreshments and parish breakfasts after Mass also offer other possibilities. Different groups or organizations can host the breakfasts. In this way the hosting group or organization can become more known in the parish and members can invite those present to take part in their activities. Such times after Mass also offer opportunities for religious education not only for children but also for adults. Adults are much more likely to come to a talk or discussion right after Mass than they are to come later in the week, especially if they hear a word of invitation at the end of the liturgy they have just celebrated.

Sunday offers us a wonderful window of opportunity. The people are already present, all we need to do is to take advantage of their presence. We need to offer them well celebrated liturgies with thoughtful homilies. We need to take advantage of the time before and after Mass to meet them, to introduce them to their fellow parishioners, to offer them opportunities for religious education and for participation in activities that build up the parish and encourage them to grow in their faith.

Sunday is our window of opportunity. It's already open, let's take advantage of it!

Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski
Pastor, Our Lady of Czestochowa
Jersey City

Weekday Mass continued

to the tabernacle for hosts; he consecrates the amount of bread and wine needed for communion.

- The presider first distributes the hosts, then ministers the chalice to the people. Communion should be distributed under both forms. This can be done if the presider first gives the hosts, and then has those who wish to receive from the chalice stay toward the front of the church after receiving the host. The presider places the bowl of hosts on the credence table, then takes the chalice from the altar and ministers it to the people.
- After distributing communion, the presider goes to the credence table where he consumes any remaining consecrated hosts and consecrated wine. He

purifies after Mass.

- He removes the corporal from the altar. He then returns to the chair. As he does so, he takes the Sacramentary from the altar, and brings it near the presidential chair.
- After a time of silence, he stands for the prayer after communion. He holds the Sacramentary for this prayer.

CONCLUDING RITE

- The presider puts the Sacramentary in its place by the presidential chair, and then continues with the concluding rites as usual.
- He recesses to the doors of the church, where he bids farewell to the people.

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