

LITURGICAL GUIDELINES
for the
DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

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ABBREVIATIONS OF FREQUENTLY QUOTED
CHURCH DOCUMENTS

CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CCEO	<i>Codex Canonrum Ecclesiarum Orientalium</i> – Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches
CCL	Code of Canon Law (1983)
CSL	Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy
DMC	Directory for Masses with Children
GIRM	General Instruction of the Roman Missal
GNLY	General Norms for the Liturgy Year and Calendar
IOM	Introduction to the Order of the Mass
LM	Lectionary for Mass
LMC	Lectionary for Masses with Children
NSC	National Statutes for the Catechumenate (USA)
OCF	Order of Christian Funerals
PS	<i>Paschalis Sollemnitatis</i> - Preparation and Celebration of Easter Feasts
PSC	Pastoral Care of the Sick
RBC	Rite of Baptism for Children
RC	Rite of Confirmation
RCIA	Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
RM	Rite of Marriage
RP	Rite of Penance
STL	Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship

I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebration which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy...(CSL #14).

The purpose of these guidelines is to examine the liturgical elements of the celebration of each of the sacraments. They are part of the wider context of sacramental celebration which includes involvement with the Christian community, sacramental catechesis and integration with life experience. The process of liturgical celebration relates to the whole of the human journey. It is not simply a matter of preparation for or celebration of single events.

Based upon the universal documents of the Church, these liturgical guidelines are intended to encourage parish ministers to provide liturgical catechesis for their people and to bring more energy, more enthusiasm, and more care to the celebration of the liturgy. This celebration is vital to our lives as Catholic Christians.

The guidelines are to be understood as fundamental principles which, when implemented, will lead to prayerful, energized liturgies, which will give praise to God and strengthen the diocesan Church.

Realizing the great diversity that exists among our faith communities in terms of personnel, financial resources, and other variables, it is expected that the guidelines will be of service on many different levels. However, it is intended that they be normative for all communities as they work toward the ongoing development of the liturgical life of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

An appreciation of liturgy and its intimate relationship to the life and mission of the Church leads directly to the conclusion that preparation for its celebration is essential if we are to understand what we are celebrating and what our response is to be. It is in light of this need that these guidelines have been prepared.

The development of liturgical guidelines is a dynamic endeavor. As with all mysteries of Christian faith, a better understanding of the sacraments and appreciation of their ritual celebration is always possible. For this reason, these guidelines are to be seen as a step for further growth rather than as the end of a process. These guidelines reflect current conciliar, postconciliar documents and diocesan policy. Theological reflection and pastoral practice will continue to contribute to the understanding of the sacraments and the manner in which they are celebrated.

A. QUALITY OF LITURGICAL CELEBRATION

Perhaps the single most important factor influencing the well-being of our spiritual lives is the quality of our liturgical celebrations. Through prayerful liturgy our faith communities can be led to a deeper union with Christ and a fuller realization of their identity as the Body of Christ. For this reason the quality of the liturgical celebrations in every parish deserves priority attention.

1. REVERENCE

Reverence is a recognition that God is infinitely greater than ourselves. It is a feeling of profound respect often mingled with awe and affection which is absolutely fundamental to the worship of believers.

Reverence has much more to do with the "how" than with the "what" of liturgy. Creating and maintaining a sense of reverence is the first responsibility of all who plan liturgies and of all who minister in public roles.

2. NOBLE SIMPLICITY

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy emphasizes the need for simplicity and authenticity in all liturgical celebration (CSL #34). Special care must be exercised in areas of music, environment, special symbols and ritual action.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF SYMBOLS

Symbols are an important aspect of our faith experience. They must be used appropriately and reverently. The celebration of the liturgy involves the use of the outward signs that foster, strengthen, and express faith.

- a. Attention to sacramental symbols applies not only to the "things" used at liturgy, but to the full ritual action which is the Church's liturgy. Minimalism in ritual and an unyielding concern for practicality thwart the liturgy's fruitfulness.
- b. Primary symbols of the liturgy, i.e., the assembly, the architectural focal points of altar, ambo, and chair, and the elements of bread, wine, water and oil are to appear primary. In the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, altars are to be constructed of natural stone or marble. Care should be taken that each part of the liturgy is executed at the properly designated focal point.
- c. Church designs are to reflect the primary place of baptism in Christian life. Parishes need to give careful attention to the importance the Church places on the baptismal symbolism of immersion.

- d. Liturgical art and appointments are to be characterized by quality and appropriateness.
- e. The value of personal and cultural devotions is to be maintained and encouraged. Yet, care should be taken that the placement and proliferation of devotional images do not diminish the central role of liturgical prayer.
- f. Silence is integral to good liturgy. Attention needs to be given to its importance at the times designated within the celebration of liturgy.

Liturgical silence is not a mere absence of words, a pause, or interlude. It is a stillness, a quieting of spirit, a making of time and leisure to hear, assimilate and respond to the Word of God (LM #28).

- g. Postures and gestures are significant aspects of the liturgy. “Attention should be paid to what is determined by the GIRM and the traditional practice of the Roman Rite, and to what serves the common spiritual good of the People of God, rather than private inclination or arbitrary choice. A common posture, to be observed by all participants is a sign of unity of the members of the Christian community gathered for the Sacred Liturgy. . .” (GIRM #42).

“In the dioceses of the United States of America, they [the faithful] should kneel beginning after the singing or recitation of the *Sanctus (Holy, Holy)* until after the *Amen* of the Eucharistic Prayer, except when prevented by reasons of health, lack of space, the large number of people present, or some other good reason” (GIRM #43). In the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, the local bishop has decreed that the faithful will stand during the Communion Rite, from the *Amen* until the beginning of the Communion Procession. Upon the return of each one from receiving communion, the members of the faithful are free to choose that posture which is best suited to their personal adoration of and devotion to the Body and Blood of Christ they have just received.

- i. Processions call members of the assembly to be an organic whole, not to disparate individualism. All processions, while different in many aspects, have one thing in common: they symbolize a pilgrim people on journey. They help to form a community at prayer. It is the Church that gathers for worship, that approaches the table of the Lord. If it is the Church, whether the entire assembly or a representative group of that body, the procession ought to look like, sound like and act like the Church.

4. PREPARATION FOR LITURGICAL RITUALS

a. Preparation in Consideration of the Worshipping Community

Liturgy preparation is a service — a service of and to the worshipping community. While liturgy preparation has something to do with the selection of texts and music and environment, these things must always be prepared with *this* assembly in mind. Each community is unique. Each has its own surroundings and attitudes. Each has its own history of liturgical celebration. Planners must keep sight of the nature and demands of both the liturgy and the particular assembly they serve.

b. Preparation in Consideration of the Entire Season

The emphasis at each step of the process is on an overall approach to the season through environment, ritual movement, music and texts. The planning team makes the basic decisions for the flow of all liturgies of a given season. This establishes a continuity throughout the season for the whole parish.

The rhythm and spirit of a particular liturgy are affected by the people who gather for that liturgy, the time of day and the particular ministers. The overall spirit and rhythm of the season is not to be interrupted by any particular liturgy.

c. The Order of the Preparation Steps Is Deliberate

Preparation begins with the broadest perspective on the liturgical season or event and gradually becomes more detailed. Planners begin with a study of all principal texts as they are contained in the lectionary, the *Roman Missal*, and other ritual books. Then specific texts are chosen when options are permitted.

Once scripture readings have been selected, appropriate music can be chosen and consideration can be given to liturgical environment and to ritual movement and gesture.

Liturgy is not linear, however, nor a series of texts. There may be occasions when a particular piece of music may inspire the environment, or when a phrase from one of the prefaces will inspire selection of the music. The environment, ritual movement, music and texts flow into one another and support each other in the action of the liturgy. Nevertheless, beginning with the broadest considerations and working to the more specific aspects is an effective way to prepare any liturgy. It respects the nature of the rites and seasons which are celebrated.

d. Preparation Demonstrates How the Seasons Keep the Church

The cycle of liturgical seasons calls for tradition. When planning for the seasons, it is not desirable to create something new each year. If an element of the ritual — a hymn, the manner of the entrance procession, a tapestry — has served well in the past year, continue that tradition, build upon it. The way in which a community celebrates the seasons contributes to a common memory and expectation of these holy times.

e. Immediate Preparation is Essential

Immediate preparation is an extremely important. Any special plans must be rehearsed by the ministers who will be involved in each liturgy. If the ministers are caught unaware or do not know what is expected of them, they cannot be blamed for the failure of even the best of plans.

f. Pastoral Adaptation

Further adaptation may be made at the parish level if for some reason a given practice would hinder the prayer of the community. An understanding of the basic principles of good liturgy always precedes the right to adapt any practice.

Four basic considerations must be given to any liturgical adaptation:

1) Documentation from the Holy See

- Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (CSL)
- General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)
- General and Specific Introduction to liturgical texts

2) Documentation from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

- approved English translations of Vatican documents
- approved adaptations for use in the United States
- Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship Newsletter

3) Diocesan Guidelines

4) Pastoral Practice

Only after all four considerations have been made can a pastoral adaptation be intelligent as well as theologically and liturgically sound.

5. EVALUATION OF LITURGICAL RITUALS

Every bit as important as good preparation is honest evaluation of liturgical rituals. Four questions are proposed for effective evaluation:

- 1) What did you find prayerful?
- 2) What did you find distracting?
- 3) Are there suggested recommendations?
- 4) Other comments?

To be of value, the responses to these questions are then carried over into the next preparation session. Gradually, rituals that are prayer and not mere formality can be celebrated by the faith community.

6. LITURGICAL MINISTERS

The relationship of the ministers to one another and of ministers to the assembly is of prime importance. Liturgy will be effective prayer only when these relationships are mutually supportive. Tension, lack of communication and disinterest are distracting, if not actually a hindrance to prayer.

Often ministers deal with one another only in terms of schedules, behavior and cooperation. Though all of these are important aspects of ministry, ministers are also called to bless and to challenge one another by reminding one another of who they are and who they are called to be.

Assembly — All the baptized share in the call to ministry. The assembly, itself, is a powerful sign of the presence and action of Christ in its midst. Each person in the assembly has a responsibility to minister according to his/her own gifts.

The assembly is a gathering of a holy people, God's chosen ones, a royal priesthood. They come together to share their faith, to hear and proclaim God's word, and to give fitting praise and thanks to God. The very act of gathering in the Lord's name is a public ministry and a public statement of faith.

Presider — As the leader of prayer, the presider must be well-prepared and be able to speak distinctly and fluently so that all can pray with him. The ordained priest is the ordinary presider for sacramental celebrations. For a variety of reasons, deacons and laity may also be called upon to preside at non-sacramental celebrations of liturgical prayer.

The presider's chief challenge is to call ALL to full, active and conscious participation in the worship of the Church.

The presider's gestures should be graceful but not over-exaggerated. Presiders are to take care that artificial gestures, movements, and mannerisms not call undue attention or change the focus of the prayer.

Deacon — The deacon assists the presider, proclaims the Gospel and offers the general intercessions (when not sung by a cantor). He also may participate in the penitential rite. It may also be appropriate for him to deliver a homily.

Ministry of Hospitality — The deepening awareness of the need to create and maintain a climate of hospitality within the liturgical assembly gives a new importance, new emphasis and new thrust to the role formerly known as ushers. While the ministry of hospitality includes ushering and all of its practical duties, it has been expanded to include greeters and welcomers. The art of welcoming, making people feel comfortable and giving them a sense of belonging is the role of the entire assembly.

Music Ministers — Ministers of music are to be competent in both music and liturgy. It is necessary to understand the flow and rhythm of liturgy so that parts of lesser importance are not prolonged and those of greater importance are not deprived of due emphasis. The liturgy can be distorted if too much or too little music is used at inappropriate times.

Cantors — The role of the cantor, by style or action, is to call the community to prayer. The cantor sings the psalm verses in the responsorial psalm. Cantors and song leaders must possess vocal talent and have a correct understanding of ministry and liturgy so that they can lead the assembly in prayer.

Choir — The choir sings those parts that are proper to it, and works to encourage full participation of the whole assembly.

Reader/Lector — The lector proclaims the readings from Scripture. To insure proper preparation and to empower the gifts of the community, it is preferable for larger parishes to have one lector for each reading. He/she exercises this function even though ordained ministers are present. Lectors must be truly qualified and carefully prepared.

Lectors must be trained to treat the Book of the Gospels with reverence. “When no deacon is present, wearing approved attire, may carry the Book of the Gospel, which is to be slightly elevated” (GIRM, #194).

Extraordinary Minister of Communion (*see separate section*)

Altar Server — Service at the altar represents a long liturgical tradition. The servers enhance the quality of celebration for the whole assembly by giving the presider freedom of movement, by insuring that all requisites for the celebration are available at the appropriate moment, and especially by being a role model for the assembly at prayer.

No distinction is to be made between the functions carried out in the sanctuary by men and boys and those carried out by women and girls. The term "altar boys" is to be replaced by "servers."

B. GUIDELINES FOR ALTAR SERVERS

1. ROLE OF THE ALTAR SERVERS AT MASS

Altar servers are lay men and women, girls and boys, who are designated to assist the priest celebrant and the deacon at Mass. Servers carry the cross, the processional candles and hold the book for the priest celebrant when he is not at the altar; carry the incense and censer; present the bread, wine and water to the priest celebrant during the preparation of the gifts or assist him when he receives the gifts from the people; wash the hands of the priest celebrant; and assist the priest celebrant and deacon as necessary. In general, they assist the priest celebrant and deacon when necessary. (*GIRM, #100*)

Altar servers participate not only in their distinctive ministerial functions but also together with the worshiping assembly by singing, listening, responding and through their posture and gestures.

2. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “INSTITUTED ACOLYTES” AND “ALTAR SERVERS”

In the Roman Catholic Church, “institution” to the ministry of acolyte is reserved to lay men, usually those preparing for Holy Orders. Most parishes do not have “instituted acolytes” but “altar servers.” The diocesan bishop may permit the liturgical functions of the “instituted acolyte” – except that of distributing holy communion and purifying the sacred vessels – to be carried out by “altar servers.”

3. CRITERIA FOR SERVING AT THE ALTAR

The diocesan bishop may permit the liturgical functions of the instituted acolyte to be carried out by altar servers that include men and women, boys and girls; these functions are listed in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. In the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, authorization has been granted by the bishop that females may function as altar servers in the liturgy. Altar servers are baptized Catholics, women and men, boys and girls, who are mature enough to understand and carry out their liturgical functions. They should have received their first Holy Communion and normally receive the Eucharist whenever they participate in the liturgy.

4. FORMATION

It should be spiritual and technical. Altar servers need to know the individual parts of the Mass and their specific meaning, the various objects used in the liturgy and their proper names, and the differing functions of the altar server during Mass and other liturgical celebrations, e.g., baptisms, funerals, weddings, morning prayer or evening prayer, and other devotions. They need to understand their functions as a generous service to God and God’s people. Formation of servers must emphasize the sacredness not just of vessels and books, but of the assembly itself. All the baptized who gather to worship the Lord stand together as equals unworthy of the ministry which they fulfill. We must foster in altar servers a love of

the liturgy and a deep desire to fully and actively participate in it. Many look to altar servers as an example of "what they're supposed to do." The principle of full, active, conscious participation is essential for servers to understand and enact throughout the entire liturgy. Finally, they should be prepared to exercise their functions with reverence and proper decorum. Like all ministries, this formation and training should continue throughout the period of service.

5. APPROPRIATE ATTIRE FOR ALTAR SERVERS

In the dioceses of the United States of America, altar servers and other lay ministers should wear the alb, or cassock and surplice. Servers should normally be vested. This is within the tradition of the Church and prevents difficulties regarding appropriate dress for these ministers. In those assemblies where ministers are vested one thing is clear: a simple white alb is the best choice for vesture, irrespective of age or gender, reflecting the baptismal roots of all ministry. Cassock and surplice may be used as well. Whatever is chosen, all servers should wear the same liturgical vesture irrespective of whether a male or female.

6. ADULT ALTAR SERVERS

Because many smaller parishes in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston often do not have enough young people as parishioners, adults may also be used for this ministry. It may also be helpful to have adults serve at funerals or other midday liturgies, when children may be in school. Likewise, many parishes have families functioning as servers and have found the practice fruitful for enhancing the principle of full, active, conscious participation. However, it is preferred if there is a significant population of youth in the parish, that they be encouraged to engage in the ministry of server.

7. BLESSING ALTAR SERVERS

Before altar servers exercise their ministry, they should be blessed using the ritual "Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers, Sacristans, Musicians and Ushers" found in the *Book of Blessings*, #1847-1870. This blessing is normally given by the Pastor.

RESOURCES

Serve God with Gladness: A Manual for Servers published by Liturgy Training Publications is an excellent workbook for training elementary age servers. The *Ministry of Servers* published by The Liturgical Press is also a helpful resource. A video entitled *Training the Mass Server* is also available from the same publisher. Contact the Office of Worship and Sacraments for other helpful resources.