



Word on Worship

Newsletter of the Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark, NJ

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After a priest died and went to heaven, he noticed that a New York cab driver had been given a more favorable place than he had. "I don't understand," he complained to St. Peter. "I devoted my entire life to my vocation." "Our policy is to reward results," explained St. Peter. "Now tell me, what happened when you preached each Sunday?" The priest confessed that some in the assembly were bored and that some even fell asleep. "Exactly," said St. Peter. "And when people rode in this man's taxi, they not only stayed awake, they even prayed."

Prayer is at the heart of all liturgical celebration. We raise our hearts and minds to God in prayer as we gather, listen to God's Word, draw nourishment from the sacraments, and then go forth to carry on the mission of the risen Lord in our lives and in our world. But prayer is risky business. As we open ourselves to the divine, we welcome God's transforming love into our lives. We invite the Spirit of God to kindle in us the fire of God's love that we may work to renew the face of the earth. This means that

prayer and the work of justice are intimately connected. Personal conversion and the commitment to communal transformation are natural results of authentic prayer.

This is especially evident in those parish communities where Sunday Eucharist is seen as the heart of parish life, where all activities flow from or lead to the celebration of Sunday Eucharist. Jesus' command to "Do this in memory of me" is not simply an invitation to imitate what Jesus did at table. Rather, it is an invitation to enter into the Paschal Mystery, the death and rising of Christ for the salvation of the world. In the Acts of the Apostles, we read: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' instructions and communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to prayers....Those who believed shared all things in common...dividing everything on the basis of each one's needs." Authentic worship leads the community from the table into the world as a sacrament of Christ's transforming presence.

Recent years have seen a renewed emphasis on the primacy of Sunday Eucharist. John Paul II's apostolic letter *Dies Domini* and Cardinal Roger Mahoney's *Gather Faithfully Together: A Guide for Sunday Mass* are two good examples which describe the intimate connection that must exist between the celebration of the liturgy and the life of the community. Both these letters

build solidly on the foundation laid out in the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* that the liturgy has a privileged position as the summit toward which the Church's activity is directed and the font from which the Church's power flows.

The *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* and subsequent liturgical documents suggest a number of principles that are the foundation for authentic liturgical celebration. These include:

- the thoughtful planning and careful preparation of the liturgy.
- the full, conscious and active participation by the faithful.
- the appropriate use of trained liturgical ministers.
- the use of liturgical music that fits the celebration.
- careful attention to the primary symbols of the liturgy.
- a sense of noble simplicity.
- the good use of liturgical space.
- a homily rooted in scripture and addressed to the local assembly.

Attention to these liturgical principles can help to foster and nourish the faith of the worshipping community. This is obvious in those communities where clergy and laity are committed to this process of conversion and transformation envisioned by Vatican II.

But the opposite is also true: poor celebrations weaken and

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

may destroy faith. After a recent experience of the liturgy while I was on vacation, I walked away thinking that the people of God deserve much better. There was no music, the reader stumbled through the readings mispronouncing name after name, the presider fumbled through the missalette looking for the prayers of the day, and communion was only offered under one kind. The people attending Mass said their prayers, went to communion and left rather hurriedly after the blessings and dismissal. I wondered why they kept coming back Sunday after Sunday. This seemed to be a place where the liturgical reform mandated by Vatican II was simply a matter of rearranging the furniture, resulting in cosmetic changes to the liturgy rather than the transformation of mind and heart envisioned by the Council.

Unfortunately, this experience seems to be more common than we might like to admit. A colleague who recently attended Mass in over 37 parishes in her diocese reported a list of over 33 liturgical “concerns”. One parish did not have hymnals or any kind of worship aid. Instead they listened to the four hymns which were pre-recorded and played by the presider using a remote control device to activate the music. Three parishes still used two pulpits for the liturgy of the word. In one of these parishes, the priest did all the readings and used both pulpits, one for the Old Testament reading and the Epistle and the second for the Gospel and the reading of parish announcements. In another parish, the pastor decided that the memorial acclamation is not to be said or sung since it was an interruption of the canon of the Mass. Over half the parishes

still did not offer communion from the cup. In another parish, the presider controlled the lighting from a special panel on the armrest of the presidential chair.

What explanation could there be for so many liturgical concerns some thirty years after Vatican II? How is it possible that so many people, clergy and laity, still do not seem to understand? Why does it seem that there is a loss of passion in the preparation for the celebration of the liturgy? I suggest several possible reasons.

LACK OF LITURGICAL KNOWLEDGE

In many parishes there seems to be a lack of knowledge about the liturgical rites on the part of both the laity and the clergy. It seems that after the Council, many changes were

instituted quickly without giving folks the opportunity to understand why the changes were being made. While the rationale for many of the changes is quite obvious to those who study the liturgy, there are still those who question the use of the vernacular in the liturgy and the use of an altar facing the people, since this only resulted in a loss of the sense of *mysterium tremendum* that the Tridentine liturgy inspired. Many still refer to the preparation of the altar and presentation of gifts as the offertory of the Mass. Others question the need for the sign of peace and the new ministry of greeters, which only disturbs their private prayer. Still others question the need to offer communion from the cup, when it is quite clear that whether one receives the Body or the Blood of Christ, one



receives the fullness of Christ, body and blood, soul and divinity.

Even some of the clergy do not seem to know or understand the directives from the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*. After 35 years, many presiders routinely go to the tabernacle for communion to distribute to the faithful. A neighboring pastor still has not purchased the new *Order of Christian Funerals* or the *Book of Blessings*. Many do not know what is permitted in the *Directory for Masses with Children*.

In a recent course on presiding at a local seminary, I was disturbed to discover that there were several seminarians, preparing to be ordained deacons, who were clueless about how to use the Sacramentary or Lectionary. Less than six months away from ordination, they had never read the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* or the Introduction to the Lectionary. Since they were scheduled to be ordained before the course was finished, there was no way to hold them accountable for learning even the basics.

LACK OF CONSISTENT LITURGICAL LEADERSHIP

Another issue that contributes to poor liturgical celebration is the lack of consistent liturgical leadership. Often when clergy transfers take place, newly assigned pastors can completely change at whim what a previous pastor had worked for years to accomplish. I know of one parish where the pastor worked diligently to instruct the people on the reasons for the changes of the liturgical reform. The entire life of the parish was characterized by full, conscious and active

participation of most of the parishioners. When the pastor was transferred, his successor discontinued communion from the cup and the use of special ministers of communion. He disbanded the art and environment group because they were spending too much money on needless decorations. In less than a month, the spirit of the parish was completely changed. When he finally transferred after four years, most of the people who had been active in the parish had moved to neighboring parishes. His successor is still having a hard time inviting the laity to become involved, because of their past experience.

LACK OF TRUST IN THE RITUAL

A third possible explanation for poor liturgical celebration flows from a lack of trust in the intrinsic power of the liturgy. Rather than allowing the ritual to speak for itself, some presiders feel the need to constantly explain what is happening throughout the liturgy: "Now I am going to wash my hands asking God to cleanse me from my personal sin as Pilate asked to be forgiven when he washed his hands after condemning Christ to death."

Some presiders and planners are uncomfortable with the rite and use the excuse that "it just won't work," or "the people won't like it." For example, the Sacramentary states very clearly that the liturgy for the Easter Vigil is to begin after nightfall and that the people are to assemble outside around a fire. Year after year, I listen to the complaints: "The people won't come if we have it later than we ordinarily have Saturday evening Mass," "We don't have a place for a fire," "The people won't go for it." I once concelebrated the Easter



Vigil in a parish where the pastor blessed the flame of his lighter, because it was too messy to have a charcoal fire in the back of the church! Needless to say, in many parishes where the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA) is not fully implemented, most of the rites with catechumens and candidates are completely ignored.

There are also times when those responsible for the liturgy misuse what they refer to as a "sense of pastoral judgment." When celebrating a baptism at Sunday Mass, a friend simply baptized the baby between the creed and the prayers of the faithful, omitting the blessing of water, the anointing with chrism, the presentation of the lighted candle, and the ephphetha rite. When I challenged him on this,

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he said that as pastor he had made a “pastoral judgment” that the Mass would take too long if he did all the extra stuff. A similar rationale is used to explain why we do not observe the times for silence in the liturgy, or why we always use the shortest number of readings or the shorter form of a reading or why a parish never uses the optional celebrations in the RCIA.

I also sense that there are those who feel that the liturgy is totally dependent on one aspect of the liturgy alone. When this happens, there seems to be a need for preachers or musicians to entertain the folks, to keep their minds busy so that the time flies quickly by. Good preaching alone or good music alone do not make good liturgy.

LACK OF RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP

A further area of concern that contributes to liturgies of poor quality is the lack of responsible stewardship when it comes to liturgical training and celebration. If, as we profess, Sunday Eucharist is at the heart of parish life, then a substantial part of the parish budget should be allocated to provide for adequate training and ongoing formation of liturgical ministers and for worthy celebration of the liturgy. Yet, in many instances, parishes continue to provide meager stipends to non-professional musicians and expect them to provide music that rivals the beautiful harmony of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Outdated hymnals and worship aids of poor quality litter the pews of our churches. Presiders continue to wear vestments that are worn out and use liturgical books that are not worthy of the Word they contain. The budget for

flowers and “decorations” for Christmas and Easter is frequently more than what is spent on the other elements of the liturgy for the remainder of the year. In some places, more money is spent on redecorating the rectory or on providing the latest technology in our schools, while ignoring the need for better sound systems or lighting in our worship spaces.

While it is true that the quality of liturgy depends on much more than the external elements of the liturgy, there is a need to make a real investment of money in providing what is needed for worthy and prayerful celebrations of Sunday Eucharist. It is here that the Church has the greatest impact on the prayer life of the faithful, and the preparation of the budget needs to reflect this as a high priority.

A SENSE OF WEARINESS

Another issue that contributes to the experience of liturgies that are less than life-giving is a sense of weariness that can result when efforts at renewal are continually met with resistance and complaint on the part of both laity and clergy. There are many educated laity who want to help promote a sense of renewal in the liturgy and in all aspects of parish life. But when they feel that their dedication and their knowledge is always secondary to the whim of every new pastor who comes to town, it is very easy to become discouraged. Clergy who must continually do battle with those who are unwilling to change also feel great frustration. Often the time and energy spent trying to explain things to those who don't want to understand can drain the lifeblood and energy from the important tasks that still lie ahead. With the

psalmist, we cry out, “How long, O Lord?”

The dawn of a new millennium is a time of great hope and provides a good opportunity to recommit ourselves to the task of liturgical renewal. The bishops of the United States have issued a Jubilee Pledge for Charity, Justice and Peace. Since the Eucharist is the great sacrament of charity, justice and peace, perhaps we need to pray for the courage to live the Jubilee Pledge from a Eucharistic and liturgical perspective:

- Pray the liturgy and especially the Eucharist, as the Lord's own prayer for justice and peace.
- Learn more about how the liturgy challenges all to conversion and transformation.
- Reach across walls that separate, and celebrate opportunities for reconciliation.
- Live as people of the Eucharist, aware of who we are and whose we are.
- Serve others in response to the Lord's call to do all things in memory of him.
- Give generously of ourselves as the Lord has given to us.
- Advocate liturgical celebrations where all are welcome.
- Encourage others to pray the liturgy and to live as faith-filled disciples.

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TAKING A STAND: ARE WE SITTING TOO MUCH AT OUR LITURGIES?

Have you ever been in one of those awkward situations when nobody knows whether to sit or stand? You get partway up, see that nobody around you is moving, you bounce up and down once or twice, then sheepishly sit back down. As a church, we seem to be stuck in a similar situation. On one hand, strong emotions surround the issue of kneeling or standing at certain parts of our liturgical celebrations. On the other hand, almost no one has noticed how much sitting has crept into our ritual life. To be sure, there are times when sitting is prescribed or appropriate to the action of the assembly. Yet one can't escape the growing suspicion that sitting has become our default ritual posture, regardless of how suitable sitting may be at any given moment. Further, planners and presiders are taking it upon themselves to seat the assembly even when the rite clearly specifies a different posture. While so much consideration is being given to the comfort of our poor, tired assemblies, little thought seems to be going into the effect that all this sitting has on people's active engagement in the liturgical celebration.

Some brief illustrations of the sitting phenomenon may be in order. Perhaps the example that has attracted the most attention and comment is the Passion

proclamation on Palm Sunday or Good Friday. Many will argue that sitting is the "pastoral" thing to do because these gospels are so long. While there are good arguments pro and con, I simply point out that there is no formal provision within the rite to permit any posture other than standing. On Good Friday one year, I witnessed one man who chose to stand during the Passion proclamation even though everyone else in the church was seated. While one might question a choice of a posture that differs from that of the rest of the assembly, perhaps his instincts were more on target than ours. If we were more accustomed to standing at other times, the Passion proclamations wouldn't seem so much of a burden.

Another illustration occurs at baptismal celebrations. Often the assembly is told to sit in order to see better. Then the baptism unfolds as a tableau before us, and we watch as we would a movie or a play. A third example takes place at prayer services. Perhaps because of our desire to be less stuffy and more informal, physical involvement is totally disregarded as we sit indiscriminately for hymns, gospel readings, intercessions and the Lord's Prayer. While a variety of postures may feel awkward and actually be unnecessary for a handful of people gathered around a table for a meeting, the larger the

group the more it needs the unifying and engaging trappings of more formal prayer, including postures other than sitting.

What difference does posture make? In our Western culture, sitting carries with it a connotation of passivity or of receptivity, rather than active engagement. While some may argue that one can be just as involved sitting as standing, the perception of sitting as passive is a strong one. We say, "Are you going to take that sitting down?" and "She was sitting down on the job." By contrast, we are told to "stand up" for something in which we believe and to "take a stand." Has "take a seat" ever been a rallying cry for action? Has anyone ever sung "Sit down, sit down for Jesus"? Good choral directors know that standing is the best posture for singing because (among other things) it allows the singer's whole body to be involved in the act of singing.

If we carry these observations into the arena of ritual, the implications become clear. By their very nature, certain actions demand a posture of standing. Gathering hymns call for us to commit our whole selves to the act of worship. Will standing or sitting accomplish this better? Intercessions demand our active involvement in asking God's help for the needs of the world. Do we stand or do we sit? By tradition, we stand for

the proclamation of the gospel – giving it the utmost honor and dignity.

Standing or sitting?

But what about more complex ritual actions like baptisms? It seems that in these instances we learned the lessons of the 1970s and '80s too well.

After a period in our history when baptisms were done privately and the priest celebrated much of the Mass with his back to us, we felt we needed to see everything to be involved. Seeing became an absolute. Today, with a more sophisticated understanding of ritual action, we have learned that it is more important to gather in solidarity around the font, actively engaged in the actions of blessing, responding, singing and so forth than it is to simply see the action. We have learned that seeing, while still a value to be promoted, is not the only value necessary for our participation. Then the question becomes: Do we sacrifice the value of active participation brought about by standing in solidarity and engagement with the ritual action for the value of visibility allowed by the posture of sitting?

There is also the matter of the communion procession. *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* indicates that standing is the posture during communion, yet most of our parishes sit upon hearing the first note of the communion song. During this sharing of the sacrament of unity, we disengage ourselves from the action by sitting until our pew can join the procession. Would it not be better for the whole assembly to stand and sing in full-throated unity until every member has joined the procession and shared in the eucharistic banquet? Then we

can sit in profound silence and thanksgiving after all are done. How might this change – a change which simply implements an existing instruction – impact our common perception of the communion rite as an action of the entire assembly rather than a time for private devotion?

More important than the degree of our engagement with any particular ritual is the attitude toward engagement in the Christian life that we rehearse in these ritual celebrations. Is our penchant for sitting a subtle indicator of the approach we take to our commitment outside the church building? Does a passive posture form us unconsciously into passive

Christianity? What link is there between “pew potatoes” and “couch potatoes”?

In the pastoral, *Dies Domini* Pope John Paul II has issued a challenge to all Catholics to fully participate in the celebration of Sunday Mass. What better way to approach the Jubilee year than literally standing up for our rites!

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SUGGESTED BLESSINGS AND PRAYERS FOR THE JUBILEE DAYS

The following suggestions are provided in order to encourage the use of appropriate prayers and blessings on the Jubilee Days. The suggestions are taken from the *Book of Blessings* and the *Roman Missal*, including the *Sacramentary* and *Lectionary for Mass* along with references to other books of the Roman Ritual. Care should be taken to observe the liturgical calendar and the provisions of liturgical law which encourage the appropriate use of these treasuries of prayer.

The rich resources of the *Book of Blessings* should be used generously. The blessing of persons, places and articles meant to foster the devotion of Catholics (rosaries, scapulars, etc...) can help to bring special meaning to the Jubilee Year. Likewise, the use of blessings related to feasts and seasons (See Part V of the *Book of Blessings*) helps to create a sense of God's presence in our midst in every time and place and season.

References to the *Book of Blessings* are given as the "paragraph number," not the page number, which differs in each edition. "Paragraph numbers" usually appear as red print before the beginning of a prayer, rubric or section of the *Book of Blessings*.

No prayers, even prayers from the *Book of Blessings*, should be introduced into the Mass unless an order for that

blessing "during Mass" is provided. When no form for a blessing "during Mass" is provided it may be used in a variety of settings such as parish meetings, special assemblies, school or other groups.

Particular care should be taken to respect the liturgical calendar. Masses for Various Needs and Occasions or Votive Masses should be used only when the liturgical calendar as described in the Ordo permits such use.

MARCH 2000

Sun March 12
First Sunday of Lent
Request for Pardon /
Worldwide Penance
Readings: Gn 9:8-15/ 1 Pt 3:18-22/ Mk 1:12-15 (LFM 23)
Notes: Pastors might consider using the time between today and the National Day of Reconciliation (April 8) for a catechesis and outreach to those who have not been to confession in some time.

Sat March 25
Solemnity of the
Annunciation of the Lord
Jubilee of Women
Readings: Is 7:10-14; 8:10/ Heb 10:4-10/ Lk 1:26-38 (LFM 545)

APRIL 2000

Sat April 8
Lenten Weekday
National Day for
Reconciliation (USA)
Readings: Jer 11:18-20/ Jn 7:40-53 (LFM 249)

Notes: A parish celebration of the *Rite of Penance* would be most appropriate on this day. Where possible and pastorally desirable, several parishes might join together to celebrate the sacrament with multiple confessors available.
Masses: The Mass for the Forgiveness of Sins might be appropriately celebrated today.

Th April 27
Easter Thursday (Solemnity)
Jubilee Day for Single People (USA)
Readings: Acts 3:11-26/ Lk 24:35-48 (LFM 264)

MAY 2000

Sun May 14
Fourth Sunday of Easter
Jubilee of Mothers (USA) /
World Day of Prayer for
Vocations
Readings: Acts 4:8-12/ 1 Jn 3:1-2/ Jn 10:11-18 (LFM 50)
Blessings: The Order for the Blessing of Mothers (*Book of Blessings* 1724-1728) may be appropriately used today.

Th May 18
Easter Weekday
optional memorial of Saint John I, pope and martyr
Jubilee of Clergy
Readings: Acts 13:13-25/ Jn 13:16-20 (LFM 282)
Masses: The Mass for Ministers of the Church might be appropriately celebrated today.

Th May 25
Easter Weekday
optional memorial of Saint Bede the Venerable, priest and doctor of the Church; Saint

Gregory VII, pope; Saint Mary Magdalene de'Pazzi, virgin
Jubilee of Scientists
Readings: Acts 15:7-21/ Jn 15:9-11 (LFM 288)

Sun May 28
Sixth Sunday of Easter
Jubilee of the Diocese of
Rome
Readings: Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48/ 1 Jn 4:7-10/ Jn 15:9-17 (LFM 56)

Mon May 29
Easter Weekday
Jubilee of Military (USA)
Readings: Acts 16:11-15/ Jn 15:26-16:4a (LFM 291)

JUNE 2000

Sun June 4
Seventh Sunday of Easter¹
Jubilee of Journalists /
Media / Communications
Readings: Acts 1:15-17, 20a, 20c-26/ 1 Jn 4:11-16/ Jn 17:11b-19 (LFM 60)
Blessings: The Order for the Blessing of Centers of Social communication (*Book of Blessings* 817-833) may be appropriately used today.

June 11
Pentecost Sunday
(Solemnity)
Day of Prayer for
Collaboration Among
Religions
Readings: Vigil: Gn 11:1-9 or Ex 19:3-8a, 16-20b or Ez 37:1-14 or Jl 3:1-5/ Rom 8:22-27/ Jn 7:37-39 (LFM 62); Day: Acts 2:1-11/ 1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13 or Gal 5:16-25/ Jn 20:19-23 or Jn 15:26-27; 16:12-15 (LFM 63)
Prayers: The Prayers for an

Interfaith Gathering (*Book of Blessings* 570-573) may be appropriately used today.

**Sun June 18
Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity**

Jubilee of Fathers (USA)
Readings: Dt 4:32-34, 39-40/
Rom 8:14-17/ Mt 28:16-20
(LFM 165)

Blessings: The Order for the Blessing of Fathers (*Book of Blessings* 1729-1733) may be appropriately used today.

**June 18-25
International Eucharistic Congress -Rome**

JULY 2000

**Tue July 4
Independence Day - proper Mass**

optional Memorial of Elizabeth of Portugal, religious

Jubilee of Religious Freedom (USA)

Readings: Am 3:1-8; 4:11-12/

Mt 8:23-27 (LFM 378)

**Sat July 8
Jubilee Celebration of Cultural Diversity (USA)**

Readings: Am 9:11-15/ Mt 9:14-17 (LFM 382)
Masses: The Mass for Promoting Harmony might be appropriately celebrated today.

**Sun July 9
Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Jubilee in Prisons**

Readings: Ez 2:2-5/ 2 Cor 12:7-10/ Mk 6:1-6 (LFM 101)
Blessings: Because of the large number of prisoners suffering from addiction, the Order for the Blessing of a Person Suffering from Addiction or from Substance Abuse (*Book of Blessings* 407-429) may be useful today.

**July 6-9
National Encuentro 2000**

AUGUST 2000

**Sun August 6
Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord
Day of Prayer & Fasting for Christian Unity**

Readings: Dn 7:9-10, 13-14/ 2 Pt 1:16-19/ Mk 9:2-10 (LFM 614)

Blessings: The Order for the Blessing of Ecumenical Groups (*Book of Blessings* 553-568) may be appropriately used today.

**August 15-20
15th World Youth Day /
Jubilee of Youth -Rome**

Blessings: Parents may be encouraged to use the Order for the Blessing of Sons and Daughters (*Book of Blessings* 174-194) today.

Please consult the NCCB Jubilee Year 2000 website for future listings of Jubilee Day resources:
www.nccbuscc.org/jubilee

¹ In those places where the solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord has been transferred to the Seventh Sunday of Easter, the Mass and readings of the Ascension are used: Acts 1:1-11/ Eph 1:17-23 or 4:1-7, 11-13/ Mk 16:15-20 (58).

Third Millennium & Jubilee Year 2000
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