

## **Principle Six:** **Liturgy is both the Summit and Fount for the Church.** <sup>58</sup>

Liturgy accomplishes two things all at once: It helps the faithful see where they are headed and it helps them know who nourishes them. Liturgy is mountain top and headwaters, destination and starting point. In liturgy, the covenant relationship with God is strengthened and the truths of faith are grasped. “When the Church celebrates the sacraments, she confesses the faith received from the apostles — whence the ancient saying: *lex orandi, lex credendi*....The law of prayer is the law of faith: the Church believes as she prays. Liturgy is a constitutive element of the holy and living Tradition.” <sup>59</sup>

### **Good Practices to Foster**

Summit and fount language highlights two ends for liturgy: human holiness and the glory of God. All liturgical celebrations, especially the Eucharist, enable the People of God to attend to both.

Sunday Mass is the great prayer that recalls the redemptive action of Jesus Christ and gives glory to God. This liturgy shapes us once again as God’s own and equips us to live seven more days as Christian people. On the next Sunday, we return to begin again — not exactly at the beginning, because we have been changed by our witness and work and will be transformed again in the blood of the Lamb.

Saint James Parish expends time, energy, and budget on making Sunday a festival day. Since the Church calls it the first holy day of all, <sup>60</sup> the parish staff carefully protects these first days of each week. Business meetings, council meetings, and sacramental preparation meetings are scheduled during the week and not on Sunday or the preceding Saturday evening. <sup>61</sup> Gatherings that help parishioners rest in the Lord, however, do take place on these days. Parish pot-lucks, cook outs, or hosted meals are held to celebrate a special day. Some follow the Saturday anticipated Mass. Others fall on Sunday. Evening Prayer has grown in importance. What started as a onetime event in Lent and Advent is now celebrated almost every Saturday or Sunday in the seasons of Advent, Lent, and Easter. Other activities may follow the meal or prayer gatherings: a family movie with popcorn and hotdogs, board and card games for all ages, packing Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets, storytelling, book discussions, sock hops, ballroom dancing, or country-western nights.

Saint Jane Parish expended effort in training and forming small faith communities. Several groups meet regularly and use the Sunday Missal and Lectionary texts as the starting point for prayer, discussion, and further reflection on the Christian life.

St. John Parish embraces the mystagogical method in all post-sacramental formation. This ancient catechetical form builds on the catechesis of sacramental preparation. <sup>62</sup> After the pre-baptismal session and communal Baptism liturgy, the families are invited to a post-baptismal gathering to reflect on the impact of Baptism and its meaning for the Christian life. Childcare is provided. Four times a year, newly-weds come with photos and mementos to discuss the meaning of married life for Christians in this

---

<sup>58</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 10.

<sup>59</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1124; see *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, nos. 10 and 397.

<sup>60</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 106; *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*, no. 4.

<sup>61</sup> ***On Worship of the Eucharist*** *Eucharisticum mysterium*, no. 28. Sunday begins the evening before with Evening Prayer I. Consequently, the first Mass of Sunday may be anticipated in the late afternoon or evening of the preceding Saturday.

<sup>62</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1073-1074. See Kathleen Hughes, *Saying Amen: A Mystagogy of Sacrament*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1999.

age. Special sessions are held with those who grieve death, those who celebrate Penance, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation.

St. Julie Parish centers formation on liturgical catechesis. As is common in many places, all age-specific catechesis attends to the agenda of the Sunday Missal and Lectionary texts. But in addition to catechetical sessions, every event, every meeting, every gathering makes use of some blessing or prayer from the Church's treasury. Over time, more parish leaders are schooled in this pray-reflect-learn method. After 15 to 25 minutes of praying, an equal amount of time is devoted to the remaining two steps. Participants name what they notice or remember from the prayer. They talk about how it struck them or made them feel. Then, they make connections to the broader tradition of the Church – Scripture, doctrine, worship, and practice. When appropriate, the leader provides a brief teaching on what the Church believes about some central point of the prayer and discussion.

### **Dangers to Avoid**

Liturgy that is hurried or perfunctory, while valid, does not convey to the extent possible the great mystery being celebrated. Liturgy celebrated in haste does not allow the assembly or the celebrant the necessary time of silence for reflecting on the sacred mysteries. Pilgrims cannot savor the sensory aspects of liturgy or rest in God.

Parish practice that does not trust the liturgy, that does not use the Church's ritual prayer for shaping hearts and minds, misses the best opportunity available for forming Christians.

### **What Is at Stake**

Since liturgy tells us who we are – the body of disciples with a mission to help bring all things to Christ – then liturgy is absolutely critical to the faith life of the initiated Christian.<sup>63</sup> When done well, liturgy always builds up faith.<sup>64</sup>

Liturgy feeds the faithful. Sunday done well, empowers us to live and work as faithful disciples doing our part to bring about the kingdom of God.

---

<sup>63</sup> *Christian Initiation*, General Introduction, no. 2.

<sup>64</sup> *Music in Catholic Worship*, no. 6.

**Principle Six:**

**Liturgy is both the Summit and Fount for the Church.**

- Read the preceding two pages.
- In silence, write down additional (1) good practices to foster and (2) dangers to avoid. Do this either as homework to prepare for the meeting or during some silence provided during the meeting.
- Share this individual work in the large group.

<b>(1) – More Good Practices to Foster</b>

<b>(2) – More Dangers to Avoid</b>

**Principle Six:**  
**Liturgy is both the Summit and Fount for the Church.**

- In silence, (3) assess the current parish practice concerning this principle for good liturgy.
- Then listen to the assessing of current parish practice each person has done respecting any differences expressed while at the same time testing each assessment with the values and principles of Roman Catholic liturgy. Affirm the good practices of the parish.
- Brainstorm (4) dreams for the parish to improve the celebration of liturgy.

<b>(3) – Assessing Current Parish Practice</b>

<b>(4) – Dreams for Parish Improvement</b>