

Principle Eight: **Devotional Prayer is Always in Harmony with Liturgical Prayer.** ⁷³

“Liturgy” is the participation of the People of God in the work of God. ⁷⁴ These official liturgical acts of the Church are found in the approved ritual books. The seven sacraments, signs of grace given to us by Christ, are included in the work of liturgy. ⁷⁵ “Sacramentals” are sacred signs bearing a resemblance to the sacraments. The *Roman Missal* ⁷⁶ and the *Book of Blessings* are replete with blessings of persons, objects, and human activity. ⁷⁷ These sacramentals and blessings are also considered liturgy.

A final category of praying is referred to as devotion, popular devotion, popular piety, and pious practices. Some examples of this “devotional prayer” are the veneration of relics, pilgrimages, some processions, the stations of the cross, the rosary, novenas, and so forth. ⁷⁸ Important as these forms of prayer are in the Christian life, they are not liturgical prayer. They should always flow from and lead the faithful to the Eucharistic liturgy.

Good Practices to Foster

Careful use of devotions helps a parish appreciate the more central liturgical life of the Church. The faithful come to know by good celebrations in parish and diocese the appropriate balance between devotional and liturgical prayer.

Saint Patrick Parish purchased a dozen ritual editions of the *Book of Blessings* soon after it was published. A copy was placed in the sacristy, the school’s liturgy resource shelf, each of the common meeting rooms, and every staff member’s office. The staff and faculty were prepared to know what is within the ritual book and how to use it for liturgical prayer on suitable occasions. Periodically, copies of *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers* or small books of prayers are offered for sale or given as gifts for household use.

When Saint Perpetua Parish built a new church, they wanted to keep some of the more beautiful sacred images and maintain some of the devotional practices cherished by parishioners. In addition to the chapels for reservation of the Eucharist and for reconciliation, the building plan called for niches or devotional spaces at the edges of the primary worship space. Each space contains a piece of sacred art. They provide a quieter space for individuals or very small groups to pray. They also serve as stations for priest confessors when communal penance is celebrated.

Until recently, the parishioners of Saint Peter Parish were able to participate in daily Mass each weekday morning. The parish is now yoked with two others and all share the same pastor. Daily Mass is now celebrated only twice each week in each church. Most of those who took part in daily Mass continued to come every day and fell into the pattern of praying together the rosary with novena prayers. After conversation with this morning group, the pastor provided training and formation on alternate forms of liturgical prayer. Now they celebrate Morning Prayer or a Celebration of the Word of God on the days Mass is not celebrated.

⁷³ *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 13.

⁷⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1069.

⁷⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1113-1121 and 1131.

⁷⁶ *The Roman Missal* includes blessing of water, candles, and ashes.

⁷⁷ *Book of Blessings*, nos. 6-15. See the table of contents.

⁷⁸ *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 13; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1674-1676.

The new pastor of Saint Rose Parish became concerned over what was taking place during the Wednesday exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Participation had so fallen off that it was common for only one or two people to be in the presence of the Eucharist exposed. At times no one was there. Those interested in fostering this ritual practice were invited to the pastoral council meeting for a public conversation. The good of adoration and the longings of parishioners were discussed. The pastor laid out the ritual practice and the laws governing Eucharistic exposition and adoration.⁷⁹ After more discussion, a new decision was made to meet the current situation. Exposition now takes place on the first Saturday of each month. The Eucharist is exposed following the Communion of morning Mass. A full Liturgy of the Word is celebrated at 11:00 AM at which the pastor preaches on some aspect of Eucharistic theology, tradition, practice, and belief. Silence fills out this liturgy and concludes with benediction at noon. The beginning of every other morning and afternoon hour starts with some suitable communal liturgical prayer. The Eucharist is reposed in a simple way fifteen minutes before the 5:00 anticipated Mass. Now, no fewer than two dozen people are present for adoration at any given time.

Dangers to Avoid

Devotional prayer that crowds in upon or is inappropriately included within liturgical rites bewilders the faithful about what is primary and what is secondary. Loading up the sanctuary with icons and sacred images, praying the rosary or stations of the cross right up to the start of Mass can confuse the faithful about liturgy and devotion.

What Is at Stake

The liturgy itself is at stake when popular piety, either in fact or in appearance, replaces it in the mind and heart and actions of the faithful.

⁷⁹ *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass*, nos. 79-100; *Notitiae* 4 (1968), 133-135, nos. 110-113 which is also found in *Documents on the Liturgy*, pages 418-419.

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- 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.

(1) – More Good Practices to Foster

(2) – More Dangers to Avoid

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- 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.

(3) – Assessing Current Parish Practice

(4) – Dreams for Parish Improvement