

Conclusion: A Proposal for the Next Ten Years.

The intent of this project has been to weigh parish practice against basic foundational principles for doing good liturgy. The beginning of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, articles 1-14, has been the source for it. For each of the eight principles named, real examples from parish life have been highlighted to show what is possible.

It is this writer's hope that conversation, reflection, and work does not end with this reading. The Office for Worship/RCIA of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois has prepared this workbook to help parishes become intentional about the ongoing task of working on Goal 1 of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan and the never ending task of doing good liturgy. This next-step-work can properly be done by the parish staff, the pastoral council, the liturgy committee, or even a larger group convened for the following work.

Method

Each parish can establish its own process for doing this work based on available resources and past experience. The following steps will help the parish devise its plan.

Documents.

1. Provide this text, "Weighing Practices against Principles: Revisiting the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*", to each member of the group. Do this all at once or one principle at a time.
2. Provide the text of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* to each member or at least articles 1-14.

Working with each principle.

3. Consider each principle one at a time.
4. Each participant reads, reflects, and prays with the text. This could be suitable preparation for the group meeting.
5. Each participant names (1) additional good practices to foster and (2) additional dangers to avoid recalled from his or her experience in this and other parishes. Write down these examples on the worksheet provided. Do this either prior to the meeting or during some silence provided toward the beginning of it.
6. Someone reviews the principle under consideration and outlines what is at stake.
7. Share the additional examples in a small and large group process suited to the size and nature of the group. Provide a way to gather and save this information.
8. Any discussion that follows will need to clarify if the example is indeed a good practice to foster or a danger to avoid. Rely on those with suitable liturgy competency to help with this. Take a break here or reconvene for the following steps at the next meeting.
9. Provide some silence for each participant to (3) assess the current parish practice concerning the one principle under consideration. Have each one jot notes, brief stories, and examples. Use the worksheet provided.
10. Do not take time to consider whether the examples belong with this principle or another one yet to be considered. Accept what is given.
11. Discuss. Collect the written work for later use.
12. Provide time for each participant to think about and write (4) dreams for parish improvement on the topic. Use the worksheet provided.
13. Use a group process method to hear, list, and then put these dreams in priority order.
14. Repeat steps 3-13 for each of the remaining principles. This may take 8 to 16 meetings or 1 or 2 workdays depending on the preferences of the participants.

Weighing Practices against Principles: Revisiting the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*
Step 13: Priority List of Dreams for Parish Improvement

Parish:
Prepared:
Revised:

<p>Principle One: Liturgy celebrates the paschal mystery (the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension) as the redeeming work of Jesus Christ the Lord.</p>	
<p>Principle Two: Liturgy celebrates the many ways Christ is present in the Church.</p>	
<p>Principle Three: Liturgy, through the power of Christ, makes people holy.</p>	
<p>Principle Four: Liturgy prepares and leads the Church to the heavenly life with God.</p>	

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Parish:
Prepared:
Revised:

<p>Principle Five: Liturgy invites believers to live the Christian life: a life grounded in catechesis, community, worship and liturgy, and service.</p>	
<p>Principle Six: Liturgy is both the summit and the fount for the Church.</p>	
<p>Principle Seven: Liturgy requires the faithful to have proper dispositions and pastors to realize the law is not enough.</p>	
<p>Principle Eight: Devotional prayer is always in harmony with liturgical prayer.</p>	

Summary work with all the principles.

15. At the next gathering, revisit the Priority List of Dreams for Parish Improvement from step 13.
16. Pray. Make changes as needed. Seek agreement on a final form.
17. Thank the large group for its work thus far.

Developing a plan.

18. Assign a smaller group (for example, staff, liturgy committee, or task force) to develop goals and objectives that are both short and long term for each item on the priority list.
19. Choose a relatively small number of priorities, perhaps only 2 to 5 in the beginning, that are necessary and achievable. Work out action steps, assignments, and evaluation criteria.
20. Seek additional input from the original large group either during a meeting or by mail. Refine the work as needed.
21. Seek approval from the appropriate body (pastor, staff, council).
22. Implement the plans. Work hard. Keep the parish informed. Continue to pray.

Annual review.

23. Review the progress in one year and each year thereafter. Modify as needed. Establish some new goals and objectives from the priority list.
24. Repeat steps 18-22.

Ongoing Work

This huge task of weighing liturgical practice against sound liturgical principles is not beyond any parish. Good liturgy occurs when we believe incarnation and trust human experience. Good liturgy is celebrated when we attend to the details of the worship environment, the items used in prayer, and how the people act and sing within the ritual space.

Our goal remains this: “The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations called for by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people’ (1 Peter 2:9; see 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.”⁸⁰

How can a diocese, how can a parish remain faithful to the reform called for by Vatican Council II? How can local decisions be made not on whim, not on “what I like,” not on what is easy? The core values for good liturgy are expressed in the first fourteen articles of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. It is the starting place. It is also the place to return each 4 December to assess and evaluate the plan anew.

Author

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⁸⁰ *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 14.