

**Jubilee 2003**  
**Diocesan Pastoral Plan**  
Promulgated by the  
Most Reverend George J. Lucas,  
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois,  
26 October 2003

**Goal 1**  
**Grow in our communion  
with God and one another  
through prayer and the  
celebration of the  
sacraments, especially  
Sunday Eucharist.**

- Promote catechesis on the Holy Eucharist as the source and summit of Catholic life.
- Promote catechesis on the Sacrament of Reconciliation and its place in Catholic life.
- Foster full, conscious, and active participation in the life of the Church.
- Revitalize Sunday as the first holy day of all – a day of Christian joy.
- Encourage Eucharistic adoration in parishes and institutions.
- Participate in retreats and renewal programs.

*Our response to God's invitation to grow in our communion with him and with one another leads us to prayer, to the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our daily lives. The Second Vatican Council expressed the profound hope that all members of the Catholic community would be engaged in "full, conscious, and active participation" in the liturgy and, therefore, the life of the Church. This is our primary goal as a diocesan Church – to grow in communion with God and one another by participating fully in the life of the Church.*

2005 ❖ Office for Worship/RCIA  
Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

## **Weighing Practices against Principles: Revisiting the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy***

❖ ❖ ❖

### **A workbook on eight basic principles for the liturgy**

By Eliot L. Kapitan

The beginning of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* provides an overall goal and eight foundational principles for doing good liturgy. In presenting each principle I will explain terms and concepts, describe how the principle is expressed in the liturgy and the liturgical year, name good practices to foster (using examples from parish experience), list dangers to avoid, and clarify what is at stake.

This workbook also contains worksheets for users to (1) name additional good practices to foster, (2) name additional dangers to avoid, (3) assess current parish practice, and (4) list dreams for parish improvement as a way to establish parish priorities.

#### **GOAL FOR DOING GOOD LITURGY**

“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” [CSL, no. 14].

#### **SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR THE PROMOTION, REFORM, AND GOOD CELEBRATION OF THE LITURGY**

1. Liturgy celebrates the paschal mystery (the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension) as the redeeming work of Jesus Christ the Lord.
2. Liturgy celebrates the many ways Christ is present in the Church.
3. Liturgy, through the power of Christ, makes people holy.
4. Liturgy prepares and leads the Church to the heavenly life with God.
5. Liturgy invites believers to live the Christian life: a life grounded in catechesis, community, worship and liturgy, and service.
6. Liturgy is both the summit and the fount for the Church.
7. Liturgy requires the faithful to have proper dispositions and pastors to realize the law is not enough.
8. Devotional prayer is always in harmony with liturgical prayer.

The text of this workbook was printed in edited form in *Rite Magazine* (Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago IL) in the January-February, March-April, and May-June 2005 issues.  
© 2005, 2004, 2003, Eliot L. Kapitan

# Weighing Practices against Principles: Revisiting the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*

By Eliot L. Kapitan

## Introduction

In the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois two liturgy anniversaries absorbed our attention in 2003. The first was local: the diocese celebrated her sesquicentennial, marking 150 years of being Church in south-central Illinois. At the end of a year filled with special prayers and events, Bishop George Lucas issued a pastoral plan to guide the local Church for the coming years. It set out four sets of goals: 1) on worship and liturgy, 2) on lives of commitment and service, 3) on Scripture and Catholic faith, and 4) on action for charity and justice. Our goals for worship and liturgy were as follows:

Grow in our communion with God and one another through prayer and the celebration of the sacraments, especially Sunday Eucharist.

- Promote catechesis on the Holy Eucharist as the source and summit of Catholic life.
- Promote catechesis on the Sacrament of Reconciliation and its place in Catholic life.
- Foster full, conscious, and active participation in the life of the Church.
- Revitalize Sunday as the first holy day of all – a day of Christian joy.
- Encourage Eucharistic adoration in parishes and institutions.
- Participate in retreats and renewal programs.

Our response to God's invitation to grow in our communion with him and with one another leads us to prayer, to the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our daily lives. The Second Vatican Council expressed the profound hope that all members of the Catholic community would be engaged in "full, conscious, and active participation" in the liturgy and, therefore, the life of the Church. This is our primary goal as a diocesan Church – to grow in communion with God and one another by participating fully in the life of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

This challenges the diocese to very hard work. But it also offers a grace-filled opportunity to rethink conversion and discipleship, faith and worship, liturgy and spiritual renewal, and allocation of resources. It is an opportunity to ask: "How will we be faithful in this new age?"

The second anniversary observed the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* issued in 1963.<sup>2</sup> This anniversary prompted a new commitment for this writer: to reread the constitution annually on 4 December to assess the past and look to the future by asking hard questions. How has the liturgy been celebrated? What progress have these parishes and this diocese made? How have we been faithful?

---

<sup>1</sup> *Jubilee 2003 Diocesan Pastoral Plan*, promulgated by the Most Reverend George J. Lucas, Bishop of Springfield in Illinois, 26 October 2003.

<sup>2</sup> VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December 1963.

What still needs attention? What kind of people do we want to be, do we need to be on the constitution's golden anniversary of 4 December 2013 because of faithfully celebrating the Church's liturgy?

This article is the result of rereading the constitution on its fortieth anniversary. Priests, liturgists, and diocesan staff can present programs, attend meetings, and print documents, but to be sure we are on the right liturgical track it is important to return to the station from which the reform of the liturgy started – the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. The beginning of the constitution (articles 1-14) provides an overall goal and eight foundational principles for doing good liturgy.

### **Vision and Goal of the Liturgical Reform**

The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* was approved by 99.8 percent of the bishops in council – an astonishing level of agreement.<sup>3</sup> In the introduction they asserted that “the liturgy is important to the life of the Church because it is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.”<sup>4</sup> They went on to state the goal of the whole liturgical reform quite clearly at the beginning of Chapter II: “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.”<sup>5</sup>

Our American bishops affirmed the importance of liturgy in 1972 and reaffirmed it in 1982: “Faith grows when it is well expressed in celebration. Good celebrations foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations may weaken and destroy it.”<sup>6</sup> Every celebration has some effect on the lives of the faithful – for good or ill. What is at stake in the celebration of liturgy is not “the faith,” meaning our doctrine and dogma, important as they are but rather “faith” itself, the very relationship with God, with God in Christ, with the good and Holy Spirit.<sup>7</sup> The Church cannot take the risk of celebrating liturgy poorly. All of our liturgy must be done well – too much is at stake.

### **The Constitution's Basic Principles for Good Liturgy – Touchstones for Ongoing Work**

The first chapter of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* provides the Church with some basic principles for the promotion, reform, and good celebration of liturgy. Being faithful to the constitution that launched the reform will guide us during these subsequent stages of ongoing reform.

The eight basic principles recounted here will keep liturgical ministers very busy for the next ten years. In presenting each principle I will explain terms and concepts, describe how the principle is expressed in the liturgy and the liturgical year, name good practices to foster (using examples from parish experience), list dangers to avoid, and clarify what is at stake. Although fostering good liturgy may seem like lofty work, it is often the practical, specific, and humble actions at every parish's disposal that help express the mysteries of faith.

---

<sup>3</sup> 2137 yes votes, 4 no votes.

<sup>4</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 14.

<sup>6</sup> BISHOPS' COMMITTEE ON THE LITURGY, National Conference of Catholic Bishops [now the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops], *Music in Catholic Worship*, 15 November 1982, no. 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 150.

**Principle One:**  
**Liturgy Celebrates the Paschal Mystery**  
**(the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension)**  
**as the Redeeming Work of Jesus Christ the Lord.**<sup>8</sup>

The paschal mystery is at the very heart of Christian faith (relationship with God in Christ) and the liturgical year (our ordered way of living the Christian life). This paschal, Easter mystery recalls the suffering and death and rising of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>9</sup> It is one mystery. It is one redemptive event. We take our name from him, the dead and risen one, who saved us once for all.

Every eighth day, Christians gather as Jesus commanded.<sup>10</sup> On this Lord's Day we break bread and share the cup. At Mass, by the power of Christ and the Church at prayer, bread and wine become the Body given up and the Blood of the new and everlasting covenant.<sup>11</sup> Christ himself becomes the sacred meal eaten in memory of this dead and risen one. We give this mystery special attention in the annual celebration of the Easter Triduum (Three Days) and the Easter season (Fifty Days).

Every liturgy must clearly speak the message of death and resurrection. Every liturgy proclaims that the passage through death is acceptable and necessary because new life is on the other side.

**Good Practices to Foster**

Plants and flowers that die and go into the compost pile speak death and life. Candles that burn down and are periodically replaced speak death and life. Symbols that are large and clear and unencumbered speak death and life. Rituals that help us prepare for death and grieve over death and proclaim our trust in what will come speak death and life.

Saint Agnes Parish<sup>12</sup> saves all the candle stubs throughout the year – not only those from the candles used at Mass, but the sanctuary lamp, the votive candles, the Vigil tapers, and the old Easter candle. On February 2, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, parishioners bring in household stubs of blessed candles and take home newly blessed ones for use during the next 12 months. From all this wax, a new Easter candle is made and adorned for blessing at the coming Easter Vigil.

Saint Albert Parish commits half of the tillable land on the campus to plants and flowers, trees and shrubs. The Good Ground Committee tends expansive beds with native plantings and seasonal flowers that bloom throughout the growing seasons and stand witness to past blooms in dormant ones. The committee's task is to help bring the outside inside as the seasons change and the liturgical year progresses: Forsythia branches and tulips in early spring, lilies and green plants in later spring, daisies, Queen Anne's Lace, and asters in summer, and mums, grasses, produce, and foliage in fall.

A parishioner of Saint Angela Parish plants and harvests an alfalfa crop on the land set aside for future expansion. The hay is given to farmers who have need of it that year.

---

<sup>8</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 5; *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*, no. 18; *The Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer, "Let us proclaim the mystery of faith."

<sup>10</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 106; *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*, no. 4.

<sup>11</sup> *The Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer.

<sup>12</sup> This and the following stories are true. Parish names have been changed so that every parish can make the story true for itself.

Saint Ambrose Parish has an apple picking party in its small orchard. Half of the crop goes to the local food pantry; the rest is made into juice, jelly, and pies for the parish fall festival.

The Pastoral Care Committee at Saint Ann Parish cares for the sick, homebound, and elderly with pastoral visits, Meals on Wheels, and transportation to doctors. The Bereavement Committee cares not only for the dying but the families left behind. Some members help with funeral arrangements and liturgies. Some bring in food and lay out a meal for all who return from the procession to the cemetery. The anniversaries of 30 days, one year, and family occasions are marked with attention to those who still remain and remember the death.

Saint Anthony Parish, in preparation for its centennial year, gathered information on all the deaths of people buried from the parish church. A calligrapher filled page after page with names and dates. It is updated annually. This beautifully bound book is placed in the church on the solemnity of All Saints. It remains throughout the month of November while the Church reflects on thanks for the harvest, holiness, death, the end time, and the second coming of Christ.

### **Dangers to Avoid**

Plastic plants and silk flowers, no matter how beautiful, do not help us trust the paschal mystery. With only a periodic dusting, they proclaim: you never have to deal with the mess of death.

Tubes with spring-loaded candles or containers with oil-fed wicks, and electric votive lamps tell a lie. What is made to look like a candle never burns down, never leaves a stub, is never consumed.

Baptizing with three teaspoons of water suggests that we are uneasy about being baptized into the death of Christ. Baptizing in three hundred gallons of water proclaims more confidently that we are buried with him in death and then raised to newness of life.<sup>13</sup>

Bread that cannot be seen to be broken by those sitting in the last pew does not speak clearly about the meal to be shared. Too little wine and too few ministers of the cup discourage the faithful from sharing robustly in eating and drinking at the table of the Lord.

### **What Is at Stake**

The paschal mystery – death and rebirth – is cherished by the Church. Every texture, every color, every plant, every item, every gesture and song and spoken word must proclaim that we are not afraid of death. Death has no more power over us; life is for ever changed. And so, every ritual act, every liturgy must exude the paschal mystery of the dead and risen Christ Jesus the Lord.

---

<sup>13</sup> *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 41ABC, Epistle for the Easter Vigil, Romans 6:3-11; *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, nos. 213 and 226; *National Statutes for the Catechumenate (USA)*, no. 17.

**Principle One:**

**Liturgy Celebrates the Paschal Mystery  
(the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension)  
as the Redeeming Work of Jesus Christ the Lord.**

- 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 One:**  
**Liturgy Celebrates the Paschal Mystery**  
**(the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension)**  
**as the Redeeming Work of Jesus Christ the Lord.**

- 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>

## **Principle Two:** **Liturgy Celebrates the Many Ways Christ Is Present in the Church.** <sup>14</sup>

The God of the new covenant is not far off. God, while still being God, is present to us. God is with us. God in Christ is one like us in all things but sin. The constitution counts these ways that Christ is present in the Church, especially in the liturgy: in Mass, not only in the minister but especially under the Eucharistic elements, in the sacraments, in his word, and in the Church praying and singing. <sup>15</sup>

The liturgy acknowledges this presence of Christ in various ways. Advent calls upon Emmanuel, God-with-us, and knows this is Christ the Savior. <sup>16</sup> One of the Gospels for December 25 proclaims: “And the Word became flesh / and made his dwelling among us.” <sup>17</sup> The Bible footnote recalls this literal translation, “he pitched his tent among us,” alluding to the dwelling place of God with the chosen people of the Exodus. <sup>18</sup>

We remind ourselves of how treasured this presence of Christ is to the Church with every profession of the Nicene Creed when we bow our bodies while saying, “by the power of the Holy Spirit / he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” This presence of God in Christ in our midst and the real presence in the Body and Blood are ways most dear to us. Every presence of Christ manifests all of Christ whole and entire.

### **Good Practices to Foster**

The Eucharistic liturgy is important for the very life of the Church. But Mass is not enough. It cannot bear the whole weight of our liturgical praying or our Christian lives. In this diocese (and in others as well), daily Mass is not possible in the majority of parishes. Therefore, in addition to Mass, the rich treasury of word and sacrament, of Morning and Evening Prayer, of blessing and song are liturgical ways to fill every gathering with a conscious presence of Christ.

Saint Barbara Parish has a Bread Baking Committee with a long history of making substantial and legal bread for use at every Mass. There is a dedicated refrigerator in the parish center to store staples and prepared loaves.

At Saint Basil Parish, the ministers for both the children’s Liturgy of the Word and the catechumens’ and candidates’ dismissal take with them ritual editions of the appropriate *Lectionary for Mass*. In both prayer spaces a place of honor is readied to put this ritual book. It is used by the prepared readers to proclaim God’s word and Christ’s presence to the people. <sup>19</sup>

The people of Saint Bridget Parish devote 15 to 25 percent of every meeting to prayer. The Lord’s Prayer alone is not enough for staff, committees, and councils. Over the years, members of these groups have been formed to prepare suitable liturgical prayer and faith sharing. They use the full complement of ministers that liturgy requires, and music, even a *cappella* singing, always has its place in

---

<sup>14</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 7.

<sup>16</sup> *The Roman Missal*, entrance chant, December 21; *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Evening Prayer, antiphon for the Canticle of Mary, December 23; *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 201.9, Alleluia verses for the weekdays of Advent from December 17 to December 24.

<sup>17</sup> *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 16ABC, Nativity of the Lord, Mass during the Day, John 1:14.

<sup>18</sup> *New American Bible*, John 1:14, Exodus 25:8ff.

<sup>19</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 29.

this prayer. Because these groups are convinced that prayer time prepares them for better use of the remaining meeting time, the committee and council work still gets done.

Saint Boniface Parish takes this treasured time for prayer one step further. Whenever possible, parish meetings and choir rehearsals are held on a common night. All the various members gather first in church for Evening Prayer or a Celebration of the Word of God or some other prayer suited to the feast or season. All parishioners are invited to participate even if they have no meeting to attend. The pastoral council eventually moved to a larger space when more and more parishioners stayed for the open meetings. Saint Benedict, a smaller rural parish, holds one of the council meetings on the same night as child and youth catechesis and begins with common prayer suited to ages and gifts of those gathered.

### **Dangers to Avoid**

Stale hosts <sup>20</sup> and too little wine, unprepared ministers, and regular use of the reserved sacrament are some of the ways that the real and glorious presence of Christ in the Eucharist is poorly manifested during Mass.

Poor proclamation by readers who have neither gift nor art, who are not trained, or who do not regularly love and read holy Scripture cannot persuade the faithful that Christ is present in the word.

Prayer that does not engage the faithful in the pattern of proclamation and response, in sung and spoken texts, in times for quiet reflection and joyful sounds to the Lord is deadly. Sunday liturgy teaches us ritual patterns of when to sing, when to respond, when to listen, when to be quiet, that need to be transferred to all our praying. <sup>21</sup>

Liturgical prayer that makes use of only one or two ministers (when more are required) is not appropriate. Sunday Mass teaches us that a number of people have differing roles to perform. “All, therefore, whether they are ordained ministers or lay Christian faithful, in fulfilling their office or their duty, should carry out solely but completely that which pertains to them.” <sup>22</sup>

### **What Is at Stake**

Everything and everyone can manifest the presence of Christ. They are to be treated with great reverence and honor. We want to be with Christ now – in Eucharist, in sacrament, in word, and in the gathered assembly. We, and God too if truth be told, are unwilling to wait for heaven to be with Christ.

---

<sup>20</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 320; *Code of Canon Law*, canon 924.

<sup>21</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, nos. 39-45.

<sup>22</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 91.

**Principle Two:**

**Liturgy Celebrates the Many Ways Christ Is Present in 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 Two:**  
**Liturgy Celebrates the Many Ways Christ Is Present in 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>

## **Principle Three:** **Liturgy, through the Power of Christ, Makes People Holy.** <sup>23</sup>

Holy, holy, holy.... <sup>24</sup> Holy is God. Holy is Christ. Holy is the Spirit. The great saints in our tradition are holy men and women, and even among the living, each of us can name people whose holiness we recognize.

It is often harder to call holy those who live under the same roof, those who sit in the same classroom, and those who work in the same business or factory. But holy we are, more because of God's grace than our own efforts. Since God's desire is our perfection, <sup>25</sup> the only way to reach the kingdom of heaven is along the path of holiness. <sup>26</sup>

Baptism indeed makes us God's holy people. <sup>27</sup> The explanatory rites that follow the water bath remind us who we are and what we believe. We are priestly, prophetic, and royal people because of God's holy action. <sup>28</sup> In the saving waters, we have put on Christ and walk now as children of light. <sup>29</sup> This sets us on the pathway of holiness. We follow Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life. <sup>30</sup>

Blessings and sacramentals are ways to remain on the holiness path. Blessings declare God's own goodness through prayers of praise, thanks, and worship. <sup>31</sup> To the faithful, they are perceptible signs of human sanctification. <sup>32</sup>

### **Good Practices to Foster**

The Christian life helps believers to see with eyes of faith. It helps us see the earth and human activity as God sees them. Because God is holy, all that God creates is holy. God's daily mantra in the creation story is: this is good, this is good...man and woman, this is very good. <sup>33</sup>

Saint Casimir is a small parish that serves a portion of a rural county. It looks for ways to give praise to God in the events, actions, and intentions of the parishioners. Long accustomed to blessing seed and soil, farming implements, animals, fields, and harvests, the parish was less familiar with blessing people. In this community where people and their circumstances are well known to each other, Sunday Mass now includes, for those who wish, blessings for engagement, childbirth, the sick, children, students, and travelers. On occasion even the celebration of marriage takes place during the parish Mass. Those who care for the land have long respected this holy earth that they steward. Now they regularly pray over the holiness of the people blessed by God.

---

<sup>23</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 7.

<sup>24</sup> *The Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer.

<sup>25</sup> Matthew 5:4-8; John 10:10.

<sup>26</sup> VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, 21 November 1964, no. 40; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:12; Galatians 5:27; Romans 6:22.

<sup>27</sup> *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, no. 222, the Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation, Prayer over the Water; *The Roman Missal*, Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling Holy Water.

<sup>28</sup> *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 52A, Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year A, 1 Peter 2:4-9; *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, no. 228 and *Rite of Baptism for Children*, no. 62, anointing after baptism of those who are not confirmed at the same celebration.

<sup>29</sup> *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, nos. 229-230.

<sup>30</sup> *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 52A, Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year A, John 14:1-12.

<sup>31</sup> *Book of Blessings*, no. 6.

<sup>32</sup> *Book of Blessings*, no. 9; *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 60.

<sup>33</sup> *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 41ABC, first Old Testament reading for the Easter Vigil, Genesis 1:2-2:2.

Saint Catherine Parish makes sure that a significant time for prayer is part of every gathering of catechumens and candidates. Within that prayer, a blessing is most often included, although a minor exorcism or an anointing is also used to a lesser degree. The intent of this praying is to “Bless these your servants...[and] sanctify them...”<sup>34</sup> This same approach is taken in all catechetical and formational gatherings.

Taking a cue from the Divine Liturgy of the Eastern Churches – “Holy things for the holy”<sup>35</sup> – Saint Charles Parish looks for ways to bless holy things and send them home with holy people. On Christmas Day, blessed straw from the parish manger is taken home with this invitation: “Holy people, take this blessed straw home for your own manger. Let it remind you that the God who was unafraid to become one like us in all things but sin, wants us to be holy like the Son of God.” On Candlemas Day, February 2, parishioners take home blessed candles wrapped with this message: “Let these holy candles burn in your home as you pray in times of joy and sorrow. And remember in your praying that you, too, are holy by God’s holy design.” On Easter Day, parishioners take home blessed water from the baptismal font. The message affixed to the bottle proclaims: “Use this water to bless yourselves and your activities and recall that God made you holy people in the saving waters of baptism.” Holy cards with images and stories of saints both ancient and modern are placed in bulletins, school packets, and periodic mailings to offer models for holy Christian living.

Saint Clare Parish strives to be a good steward of the earth and its resources. The parish actively recycles paper, bottles, and cans. Rather than adding more trash to the landfill, china plates, stainless flatware, and linen tablecloths are used for parish events as well as the parish’s turns for the biweekly town-wide dinners for the poor. The constant message is “a holy earth is cared for by a holy people.”

### **Dangers to Avoid**

Preaching and bulletin writing that constantly dwell on the transgressions, shortcomings, and sinful acts of the baptized can smother the truth that we are, in fact, the apple of God’s eye.

Hurried celebrations of baptism with drops of water, dabs of oil, and tiny candles do not clearly speak about whose we are. Celebrations with little music and passive congregations do not clearly reflect the holiness of the baptized bringing one more child of God into the holy fellowship of those made new in Christ.

Poor liturgical celebrations for holy days of obligation neither express the Church’s care for these days nor encourage the faithful to honor them. These solemnities are rooted in days of thanks and praise of such holiness that they were gladly observed. When these days are perceived as burdens on people and staff alike (rather than the joyful times of Mass and fellowship as intended) or when little thought or attention are given to their good celebration, the parish misses the mark.

### **What Is at Stake**

“Holy” is not a title we attach to things and people so that they are set apart and locked away. Holiness is our birthright because of baptism into Christ. Holiness is a way of life. It is a cherished pathway to all-holiness, the God whom we worship and adore. A life of holiness is the way to our destiny – life with God for ever and ever.

---

<sup>34</sup> *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, no 97B and see all the Rites Belonging to the Period of the Catechuminate, nos. 81-103.

<sup>35</sup> In the immediate preparation for Communion in many of the Eastern Churches, just before the fraction, the priest shows the Lamb [of God] to the faithful and says to them: “Holy things for the holy.”

**Principle Three:**

**Liturgy, through the Power of Christ, Makes People Holy.**

- 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 Three:**  
**Liturgy, through the Power of Christ, Makes People Holy.**

- 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>

## **Principle Four:** **Liturgy Prepares and Leads the Church to the Heavenly Life with God.** <sup>36</sup>

We believe that this earthly life is more than mere rehearsal for the next life. It is, in fact, the pathway by which we reach heaven, our journey's end. All the liturgies we celebrate give us a glimpse of what we will see for ever in that new life. Good liturgies, then, do not bemoan life here on earth. Every good liturgy is celebrated by those who trust the paschal mystery and look forward in hope to the salvation we do not see but know to be true. <sup>37</sup>

### **Good Practices to Foster**

How we dress the church shows we care about liturgy. How we move in processions big and small and who takes part in them reflects our understanding of the Body of Christ as pilgrim Church. And how we view heaven, where we will see God face-to-face, shapes how we see God in the faces of those we see here and now. The Lectionary is filled with images and stories of what heaven is like: the kingdom of heaven is compared to scattering seed, growing seeds, baking bread, finding buried treasure, searching for pearls, a net bursting with fish, and eating a great dinner. The *Order of Christian Funerals* proclaims that eternal life with God is that place where there are no more tears, no more weeping. <sup>38</sup> The liturgy for the dedication of a new church and altar as well as the feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica (9 November) name heaven as the New Jerusalem. <sup>39</sup> The new covenant journey to the New Jerusalem recalls the first covenant passage into the promised land.

When Saint Dominic Parish needed a new church building the diocesan staff provided guidance for forming the building team and the parish, for discerning needs, for planning the process, and for preparing the dedication. On that day, the people gathered two blocks away in the temporary worship space. The bishop and other ministers met them there and together they processed with banners and song and instrumental music to the doors of the new church. <sup>40</sup> Saplings that had to be cleared from the land were prepared by the parish scout troops as walking sticks for these pilgrims. They were collected at the doors and then used as fuel for the new fire during the next Easter Vigil.

Saint Elizabeth Parish prepares processions to highlight the image of pilgrim Church: the blessing of throats, the Ash Wednesday giving of ashes, the Holy Thursday transfer of the Holy Eucharist, and the Good Friday veneration of the cross. On the Presentation of the Lord, on Palm Sunday, and at the Easter Vigil parishioners gather at a place outside the church to begin the liturgy. During funerals, the faithful go out with the priest to meet the body and the mourners. After rites of greeting, sprinkling, and clothing the coffin with the white garment (pall), all process into the church. <sup>41</sup> Because the cemetery is on the parish campus, the faithful process again with the body to the place of burial. The solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ <sup>42</sup> and the patronal feast day call for more processions outside the church.

Saint Ephrem Parish makes full use of the preferences the ritual books provide for Baptism. For the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens, the inquirers and their sponsors wait outside the

---

<sup>36</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 8.

<sup>37</sup> *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 62ABC, Pentecost Sunday at the Vigil Mass, Romans 8:22-27.

<sup>38</sup> *Order of Christian Funerals*, nos. 107-108.

<sup>39</sup> *Dedication of a Church and an Altar*, II nos. 16, 62, 75; *The Roman Missal*, Common of the Dedication of a Church.

<sup>40</sup> *Dedication of a Church and an Altar*, II nos. 29-35.

<sup>41</sup> *Order of Christian Funerals*, nos. 131-136, 158-162.

<sup>42</sup> *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass*, nos. 101-108; *Ceremonial of Bishops*, nos. 385-394.

door. The faithful come to them and, after listening to their requests and signing them with the cross of Christ, they process with them into the church to hear the saving word of God.<sup>43</sup> For the Baptism of infants and small children below catechetical age, the assembly gathers at the door to hear the given name and the desire for a life of faith.<sup>44</sup> Then all process in for the celebration of Baptism within Mass.

Saint Felicity is now a bilingual parish with a growing population of immigrants from Mexico. The December celebration of *Las Posadas* marks the Holy Family's search for shelter. Now hundreds of people, both Anglo and Hispanic, join the procession from house to house in search of lodging that ends at the parish center with a piñata, food, and dancing.

Saint Fidelis Parish has been living in its new buildings for ten years. The parishioners see themselves as stewards of this property. The parish works with committees of volunteers to keep the place in good shape. Regular groups dust, sweep, and vacuum. Seasonal groups rake leaves, shovel snow, and wash windows. Parishioners know that tithing includes time and talent as well money. The monies not spent on maintenance personnel are used for the poor. Parishioners want their church and the surroundings to look a bit like the heaven to which they are bound.

Saint Frances Cabrini Parish has worked very hard on the Communion procession. In the United States, the norm for receiving Communion is standing and, as a rule, in procession.<sup>45</sup> Catechists draw attention to the Passover meal and Exodus story<sup>46</sup> during preparations for First Communion and mystagogy with neophytes. When possible, the pastor makes use of the biblical stories of journey, pilgrimage, and the reign of God to highlight the glory of heaven. On the golden anniversary of the parish and the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church building, the liturgy committee reread the notes left by the founding pastor. They discovered that the church was built with a sloped floor not to improve sight lines, although that happened. The intentional pitch of the floor was to propel the faithful to the altar and Communion with great ease and to make it harder to walk away after receiving the Eucharistic meal.

## **Dangers to Avoid**

Unkempt buildings, dirty vesture, frayed linen, and tattered ritual books are unworthy for use in rites that celebrate so great a mystery. Ragged processions and unprepared ministers do not foster either a desire for the destination or assurance that anyone will get there. Shepherds who do not know how to lead, where to go, or how to get there will instill no confidence in the faithful. Preaching and song that portray the world as an ugly, unredeemed place to be tolerated for the benefit of a better life hereafter put little trust in God's creative world and work.

## **What Is at Stake**

The Second Vatican Council's recovered image of Church as pilgrim<sup>47</sup> reminds us that we are in procession from this life to life yet to come. Ritual processions for weddings and funerals, for Sunday Mass and Communion, for special feasts and occasions remind us that we are pilgrims. The liturgies in which they take place prepare us for the final liturgy in heaven.

---

<sup>43</sup> *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, nos. 48-60.

<sup>44</sup> *Rite of Baptism for Children*, nos. 16, 29, 32-43.

<sup>45</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 160; BISHOPS' COMMITTEE ON THE LITURGY, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Introduction to the Order of Mass: A Pastoral Resource of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy*, no. 135.

<sup>46</sup> *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 39ABC, Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14 and *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 41ABC, Easter Vigil, Third Reading, Exodus 14:15—15:1.

<sup>47</sup> *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, nos. 14, 48-51.

**Principle Four:**

**Liturgy Prepares and Leads the Church to the Heavenly Life with God.**

- 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 Four:**

**Liturgy Prepares and Leads the Church to the Heavenly Life with God.**

- 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>

**Principle Five:**  
**Liturgy Invites the Believer to Live the Christian Life:  
a Life Grounded in Catechesis, Community, Worship and Liturgy,  
and Service.** <sup>48</sup>

The Christian life is not an easy one to live. But it is the life all the faithful in Christ are charged to live. From the early days of the Church this life, described at the end of the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, has included proper belief, community living, faithful worship and prayer, and service to more than one's own. <sup>49</sup> Those who do catechumenal ministry use this fourfold training and formation in the Christian life as the agenda for the long period of the catechumenate. <sup>50</sup> They understand that the baptismal catechumenate provides the paradigm for all catechesis. <sup>51</sup>

**Good Practices to Foster**

Liturgy can never be an end in itself. It is, however, the first school of the Church and it shapes both the communal relationship with God and the truths Christians hold dear. Reveling in the presence of Christ, liturgy shapes believers as citizens of Church and world, heaven and earth.

Saint Gabriel Parish embraces whole community catechesis for faith formation. After formation and prayer, the catechesis and liturgy committees now work hand-in-hand. The Missal and the Lectionary guide the agenda for Christian formation. Feast, season, and texts are seen as gold mines for shaping all parishioners through intergenerational Christian information, formation, and conformation to the person of Christ. To assist collaborative planning, the pastor meets one hour on Tuesday morning with a rotating group of parishioners for preliminary Scripture reflection and homily preparation. <sup>52</sup> A summary is shared with all parish catechists who have already been at work on their own catechetical sessions. After this common work, both preacher and catechists fine-tune their respective pieces confident of a common focus while attending to age-specific and intergenerational concerns.

The catechumenate team for Saint Gertrude Parish rightly understands that formation in the Catholic Christian life is not to be saved for the Fifty Days of Easter mystagogy. It is as crucial as catechesis and formation in the liturgy. <sup>53</sup> Beginning in the second week following a Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens, new members of the household of Christ are offered opportunities to live the apostolic life of Catholics. With their sponsors, they work with the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, construct a Habitat for Humanity house, prepare food at the local Bread Line that serves over 600 meals a day, and go with visitors to sick and homebound parishioners.

Saint Gregory Parish School has a dedicated fifth grade homeroom teacher who understands the connection between catechesis and service. Each year she matches up students with residents in the senior living home that shares a property line with the parish campus. Students send notes or art work throughout the year and monthly visits are scheduled for special occasions.

---

<sup>48</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 9.

<sup>49</sup> *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 43A. Second Sunday of Easter, Year A, Acts 2:42-47.

<sup>50</sup> *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, no. 75.

<sup>51</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, no. 90-91; *National Catechetical Directory*, no. 213.

<sup>52</sup> BISHOPS' COMMITTEE ON PASTORAL LIFE AND MINISTRY, National Conference of Catholic Bishops (now the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops), *Fulfilled in Your Hearing*, nos. 106-108.

<sup>53</sup> *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, nos. 75 and 78; *General Directory for Catechesis*, nos. 63-68.

Saint Hedwig Parish acts on the belief that liturgy and social justice are good friends. The pastor periodically reminds the flock that Christians embrace the cross in one hand while holding the newspaper in the other. The parish understands that the dismissal is more than an end to Mass. It is a charge to live and work in this world that is redeemed by the Eucharistic sacrifice of Christ.<sup>54</sup> The Social Concerns Committee oversees care of the poor and needy. The members regularly collect items for the village food pantry. They connect people who have lost homes or jobs with agencies that can meet these temporary needs. The parish is one of twelve denominations that take a week to house the homeless in the parish center. And because they know so well the needs of the poor, the widow, and the orphan, they have been trained to write the prayer of the faithful for Sunday Mass.<sup>55</sup>

Immaculate Conception Parish uses the liturgical year as a template for Christian living. As a way to affirm the good work of professionals and service providers, they set special days to honor special groups. Nurses, doctors, and all those in the healing profession are invited to the parish on the feast of Saint Luke, October 18. Mass, Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, a celebration of the Word of God, and buffet meals are scheduled throughout the day to accommodate diverse schedules. Lawyers and judges come on June 22, the optional memorial of Saint Thomas More; fire fighters gather on Saint Florian's day; police officers gather on Saint Michael the Archangel's feast, and so forth.

The farmers of Saints Isidore and Maria Parish, without being told, pitch in to plant or harvest when needed for any family in their township who cannot do the work due to accident, illness, or death.

### **Dangers to Avoid**

Educational gatherings whose only outcome is the delivery of information miss the broader goal of catechesis. Sessions without prayer, song, and proclamation of God's word limit the role of catechesis in the Christian life.<sup>56</sup>

Catechumenal teams short change catechumens when the overall formation is provided only by the few members on the team. This false sense of protection robs the larger community of its duty to be active in this ministry's training and formation in the Christian life.<sup>57</sup>

Celebrations that do not help the faithful see their duty to the peace, justice, and social needs in this world can foster an unbalanced Christian life.

### **What Is at Stake**

Liturgy shapes our view of the Church, of the world, and of the mystery of God. Liturgy done well enriches our understanding of God and the things of God; it fosters faithfulness to Scripture and tradition; it strengthens the bonds and friendships within the community of believers; it enables the faithful to build up the kingdom of God for another week.

---

<sup>54</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, nos. 5-6.

<sup>55</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, nos. 69-71; *The Roman Missal*, Appendix I.

<sup>56</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, nos. 94-96.

<sup>57</sup> *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, nos. 4 and 9.

**Principle Five:**

**Liturgy Invites the Believer to Live the Christian Life: a Life Grounded in Catechesis, Community, Worship and Liturgy, and Service.**

- 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 Five:**

**Liturgy Invites the Believer to Live the Christian Life: a Life Grounded  
in Catechesis, Community, Worship and Liturgy, and Service.**

- 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>

## **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.

**(3) – Assessing Current Parish Practice**

--

**(4) – Dreams for Parish Improvement**

--

## **Principle Seven:** **Liturgy Requires the Faithful to Have Proper Dispositions and Pastors to Realize the Law Is Not Enough.** <sup>65</sup>

Liturgy is the public celebration of divine worship. It is holy action. In its ancient Greek form, the word described public work or some service done by citizens for the benefit of the state and the people. “In Christian tradition, it means the participation of the People of God in ‘the work of God.’” <sup>66</sup> Liturgy, therefore, has no audience. Much is required of each one who takes part.

Adequate preparation is perhaps the first step toward achieving the proper disposition the constitution and the resulting liturgical reform seek. This preparation can include praying with Missal texts, Lectionary readings, and Scripture commentaries prior to Mass. Ask, what will I bring to Mass and what will I do after because of it rather than what will I get out of it. <sup>67</sup> Preparation enhances the full, conscious, and active participation of singing, listening, and responding called for in the liturgy. This helps priest and people make full use of the offices and ministries authorized by the Church by acting through, with, and in Christ who is redeemer and high priest. <sup>68</sup>

### **Good Practices to Foster**

Saint Margaret Parish makes it easy for parishioners to receive or purchase material that helps them prepare for Sunday Mass and the liturgical year. Annual books are available in November. <sup>69</sup> Other items are placed in the bulletin or mailed to homes as the year progresses. <sup>70</sup>

The pastor of Saint Marceline Parish believes that good preparation helps ensure good celebration. To that end, he participates in every rehearsal for catechumenate rites, marriage, and the many special liturgies that occur each year. The key ministers (pastor, liturgist, musician, catechist, etc.) meet briefly in the week prior to rehearsal to consider optional elements, ritual choreography, and places for music. They also attend to the needs of disability, age, comprehension, season, and culture. Even though the liturgist or master of ceremonies may run the rehearsal, the pastor as a central minister, helps lead prayer, offers advice and encouragement, and is part of any last minute decisions. This proximate preparation also helps shape his presiding and preaching for the rite.

Saint Martha Parish put in place a 30 minute “fallow time” to precede and follow every liturgy and devotion celebrated in the church. This means that nothing extraneous takes place in the public spaces during these times. Everything needed for the celebration (vessels, books, microphones, lighted candles, etc.) is in place one half hour before the start time. The musicians set up early and warm up elsewhere. Final minister instruction takes place in the sacristy and not in the sanctuary or narthex. The

---

<sup>65</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 11.

<sup>66</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1069.

<sup>67</sup> Bishop George J. Lucas, *Catholic Times*, Official Newspaper of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, 2 January 2005 [109:1], page 2.

<sup>68</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 2; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1069.

<sup>69</sup> Some available items are: *At Home with the Word* (Liturgy Training Publications); *A Simple Guide to the Daily Mass Readings* (Liturgy Training Publications); *Living the Word* (World Library Publications); *Palabra de Dios* (Liturgy Training Publications); and the Cultural World series on the lectionary texts by John Pilch (Liturgical Press).

<sup>70</sup> Some available items are: *Amazing Days* Handouts (Liturgy Training Publications); *Clip Notes for Church Bulletins*, Volumes 1-3 (Liturgy Training Publications); *Modern Liturgy’s Bulletin Inserts* by Paul Turner (Resource Publications); *Paschal Mission: Lent, Triduum and Eastertime* (Liturgy Training Publications); and *Welcome, Yule!* (Liturgy Training Publications).

faithful know they can come early and stay late for private prayer and for conversation with friends and colleagues. Although individuals are encouraged to pray before and after liturgy, there is no communal praying of rosary, stations, or novena during the fallow time.

For diocesan liturgy, no two celebrations of Holy Orders or Confirmation or election are exactly the same. Because those who are the focus of the rite are different each time, the celebration attends to faithfulness both in the ritual and toward those who gather to take part in it. As an example, over the years the bishop has accomplished his duty to celebrate an annual Mass with neophytes<sup>71</sup> in differing ways. Although it usually falls on the afternoon of the third Sunday in May, it has also been included with the Confirmation of Catholic adults on Pentecost, the regional pilgrimages to the seven deaneries on the Sundays of the Easter season, and the field Mass at the state fairgrounds in midsummer during the diocesan jubilee.

### **Dangers to Avoid**

Ministers cannot show up mere minutes before the start time for liturgy and expect to be composed and ready to lead or assist the faithful in prayer.

Technology makes it easy to create and print a presider's book that includes everything needed for a given liturgy and excludes options that will not be needed. The danger is to return to this adapted text the next time rather than return to the full array of possibilities the ritual text affords.

### **What Is at Stake**

Above all else the vision and integrity of the Church's liturgy must be fostered and upheld. Ministers must have an intimate knowledge and comfort with the Roman Rite and the many separate ritual books.

Adaptation, inculturation, and choice of options cannot be seen as exceptional or rare occurrences but the way the business of liturgy is faithfully done. The introduction of each ritual book states the competency of the conference of bishops, the diocesan bishop, and the minister of the rite concerning appropriate adaptations.<sup>72</sup> Further, the rubrics of a given rite will indicate the choices for a text spoken or sung "in these or similar words," a specific psalm or "another appropriate liturgical song" that may be sung, or more than one way to do or say something. Full and intelligent use by ministers of options and adaptations found in the ritual books and the broader tradition can ensure faithful celebration.

---

<sup>71</sup> *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, no. 251.

<sup>72</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, nos. 37-40; *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, nos. 352-367 and 386-399; *Christian Initiation*, General Introduction, nos. 30-35; *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, nos. 32-35; *Rite of Baptism for Children*, nos. 23-31; *Rite of Confirmation*, nos. 16-18; *Rite of Penance*, nos. 38-40; *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass*, no. 12; *Rite of Marriage*, nos. 8-18; *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, nos. 38-41; *Order of Christian Funerals*, nos. 43-49.

**Principle Seven:**

**Liturgy Requires the Faithful to Have Proper Dispositions  
and Pastors to Realize the Law Is Not Enough.**

- 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 Seven:**  
**Liturgy Requires the Faithful to Have Proper Dispositions  
and Pastors to Realize the Law Is Not Enough.**

- 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>

## **Principle Eight:** **Devotional Prayer is Always in Harmony with Liturgical Prayer.** <sup>73</sup>

“Liturgy” is the participation of the People of God in the work of God. <sup>74</sup> 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. <sup>75</sup> “Sacramentals” are sacred signs bearing a resemblance to the sacraments. The *Roman Missal* <sup>76</sup> and the *Book of Blessings* are replete with blessings of persons, objects, and human activity. <sup>77</sup> 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. <sup>78</sup> 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.

---

<sup>73</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 13.

<sup>74</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1069.

<sup>75</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1113-1121 and 1131.

<sup>76</sup> *The Roman Missal* includes blessing of water, candles, and ashes.

<sup>77</sup> *Book of Blessings*, nos. 6-15. See the table of contents.

<sup>78</sup> *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.<sup>79</sup> 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.

---

<sup>79</sup> *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.

**Principle Eight:**

**Devotional Prayer is Always in Harmony with Liturgical Prayer.**

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

- 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>

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

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

**Parish:**  
**Prepared:**  
**Revised:**

<p><b>Principle Five:</b>          Liturgy invites believers to live the Christian life: a life grounded in catechesis, community, worship and liturgy, and service.</p>	
<p><b>Principle Six:</b>          Liturgy is both the summit and the fount for the Church.</p>	
<p><b>Principle Seven:</b>          Liturgy requires the faithful to have proper dispositions and pastors to realize the law is not enough.</p>	
<p><b>Principle Eight:</b>          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.”<sup>80</sup>

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**

Eliot Kapitan has worked in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois since 1988 where he is the director of the Office for Worship/RCIA. Eliot teaches, writes, and is a workshop presenter on liturgy, ritual catechesis, and catechumenal ministry. He is active in the work of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions and is a team member with the North American Forum on the Catechumenate. He brings to this work experience in both parish and diocesan ministry. He welcomes dialogue on this project and can be reached at:

Eliot Kapitan  
Diocese of Springfield in Illinois  
Office for Worship/RCIA  
PO Box 3187  
Springfield IL 62708-3187

Phone: (217) 698-8500, ext. 177  
FAX: (217) 698-0802  
E-mail: ekapitan@dio.org

---

<sup>80</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 14.