

GUIDELINES FOR PARISH WORSHIP COMMISSIONS

DIocese OF LANSING

INTRODUCTION

“The wonderful works of God among the people of the Old Testament were a prelude to the work of Christ the Lord. He achieved his work of redeeming humanity and giving perfect glory to God, principally by the paschal mystery of his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead and glorious ascension, whereby ‘dying he destroyed our death and rising he restored our life’” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 5).

Christ continues to redeem God’s people and remains present in his Church, especially in its liturgical celebrations. With Christ as our high priest, we celebrate this same paschal mystery and offer thanks to God for the great gift of our salvation. All liturgy, then, is an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. “...Every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of his Body the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its effectiveness by the same title and to the same degree” (CSL 7; canon 834.1).

The word “liturgy” is derived from the Greek word, *litourgia* – “the work of the people.” Our Christian liturgy, however, is really God’s work. We cooperate in God’s work. At his invitation, we gather together to worship him in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24).

And in this worship, we both express and foster faith. “Faith grows when it is well expressed in celebration. Good celebrations foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations may weaken it” (*Sing to the Lord*, 5). Therefore, it is with the utmost pastoral concern that pastors and parish leaders must prepare liturgies that are in accord with the liturgical books and documents, bear fidelity to the rich heritage of the Church, and enable “the full, active and conscious participation of the assembly” (CSL 14, 42).

These goals are best served when dedicated persons are attentive to how liturgy is celebrated. Therefore, each parish should develop and maintain a Parish Worship Commission, who works in collaboration with the bishop and the pastor.

Liturgical actions are not private actions but celebrations of the Church itself, which is the “sacrament of unity,” namely, a holy people assembled and ordered under the bishops; therefore liturgical actions pertain to the whole body of the Church and manifest and affect it, but they affect the individual members of the Church in different ways according to the diversity of orders, functions and actual participation.

– Canon 837.1

THE ROLE OF THE BISHOP

The supervision of the sacred liturgy depends solely on the authority of the Church which resides in the Apostolic See and, in accord with the law, the diocesan bishop (canon 838).

First and foremost, the bishops exercise the office of sanctifying; they are high priests, principal dispensers of the mystery of God and moderators, promoters and custodians of the whole liturgical life of the church committed to them (canon 835.1) The faithful's life in Christ in some way is derived from him and depends on him (SC 41).

THE ROLE OF THE PASTOR

The presbyters also exercise this office; they are in fact sharers of the priesthood of Christ Himself so they are consecrated as his ministers under the authority of the bishop to celebrate divine worship and sanctify the people (canon 835.2)

THE ROLE OF THE PARISH WORSHIP COMMISSION

A Parish Worship Commission's role is advisory. With the bishop and pastor, it:

- assesses the needs of the worshipping assembly and regularly evaluates practices to see that those needs are being met.
- advises the pastor, pastoral coordinator, or sacramental minister on liturgical matters and the condition of liturgical spaces.
- provides direction for those who prepare liturgies. Then, under its leadership, others implement plans. The commission itself does not concern itself with installing the Advent wreath, purchasing the red geraniums for Pentecost, nor choosing hymns. Subcommittees may be established which utilize others' musical or artistic gifts.
- provides for the liturgical education of all parishioners, using various methods including speaker series, school and religious education curriculum, bulletin articles, and liturgical commentary, when appropriate;
- promotes the development of competent liturgical ministers (including those who bring the Eucharist to shut-ins) with regular communication and annual evenings of formation;
- with the pastor, it implements liturgical laws, universal norms and diocesan policies and directives (cf. canon 837.1);
- sets goals for the progress of the liturgical life of the parish;
- and helps the parish see the connection between worship and Christian living.

As an entity of the Parish Pastoral Council, it maintains regular communication with other parish commissions.

MEMBERSHIP AND STRUCTURE

The Commission should reflect the community which it serves. Its members, therefore, will be registered parishioners, active in the sacramental life of the Church, and representative of the general parish population.

Since the role of the presider is important in any liturgical celebration, and since one of the chief duties of a pastor is the faithful stewardship of the mysteries of God (SC 19), the pastor (or pastoral coordinator and sacramental minister) are *ex-officio* members of this Commission.

In addition, the Commission should include the:

- Director of Liturgy
- Director of Music
- Director of Religious Education,
- Director of Christian Initiation (or a representative of the RCIA Team)
- Art and Environment chairperson
- Sacristan
- a representative from each of the liturgical ministries, e.g., lectors, ushers, EMHC's, etc.
- a liaison from the parish's Spiritual Development Commission
- a liaison from the Pastoral Council
- and several at-large members, including youth

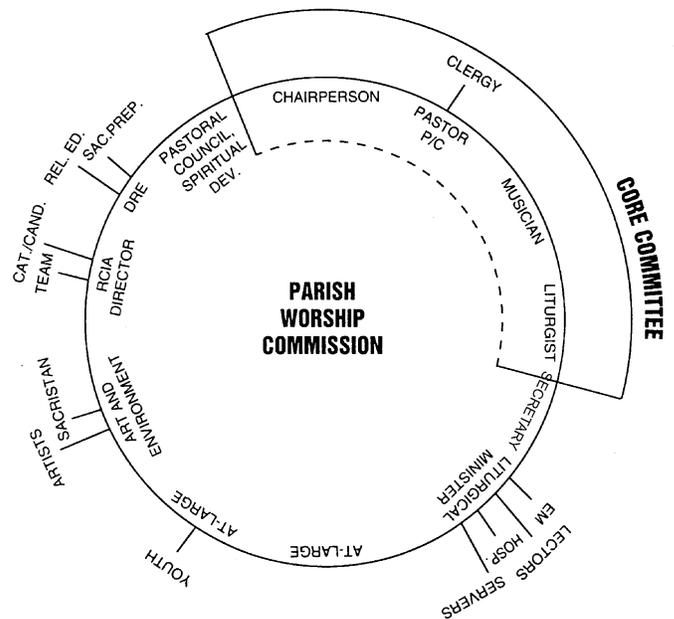
From these, the Commission will elect a chairperson who will lead meetings. A secretary, too, is elected or appointed; perhaps commission members will rotate the responsibility of recording discussions, evaluations, and consensus.

Initially, the pastor or pastoral coordinator may appoint parish members based on their experience, qualifications and compatibility. Later, the usual process of nomination or application, review, election or selection-by-lots will occur.

A fair, complete, and written job description should be available to each interested parishioner. Terms should not exceed three years with provision made for the orderly expiration of terms in varying years.

FORMATION AND TRAINING

The spiritual and liturgical formation of the commission must be thorough and ongoing. They should be conversant with the Liturgical Year, the Order of Mass, and the liturgical documents and books. Most notably, they should be familiar with the *Lectionary*, the *Sacramentary*, the sacramental rites, the Order of Christian Funerals, the Liturgy of the Hours, and the Book of Blessings.



The parish funds all their formation and training. This includes national conventions, diocesan conferences, and local workshops. In addition, they should have access to a resource library of liturgical books, documents, and periodicals. (Please see the resources in the bibliography that follows.)

MEETINGS

The Commission should meet monthly, though some liturgical seasons may require more frequent meetings. Prior to each meeting, a core committee – consisting of the pastor/pastoral coordinator, liturgist, music director, and chairperson – meets to set the agenda for the meeting.

Prayer should always be an integral part of every meeting. In addition, each meeting's agenda should include ongoing study and formation, a method of evaluating prior celebrations, discussion and future planning. The core committee should be open to the suggestions of the commission as well as individual parishioners (Canon 212 §2).

RESOURCES

The Diocesan Worship Commission, mandated by the Second Vatican Council (SC 45), advises the Bishop and the Office of Worship. It is pleased to act as a model and resource for parish commissions.

The Office of Worship offers on-site training sessions for parish commissions. It will provide a start-up package that includes prayer, reflection questions, a sample meeting agenda, sample budgets, sample job descriptions, and evaluation forms.

“The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time, it is the fount from which her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made children of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's Supper”

– Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 10.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

Second Vatican Council

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1963)

Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments

- *Paschale Solemnitatis*: Circular Letter On Preparing and Celebrating the Paschal Feasts (1988)
- *Inter Oecumenici*, First Instruction on SC – General Principles for Carrying out the Liturgical Renewal (1964)
- *Treb abhinc annos* – Second Instruction on SC: Adaptations to the Order of Mass (1967)
- *Liturgicae inaurationes*, Central Role of the Bishop in the Renewal of the Liturgy (1970)
- *Varietatis legitimae*, Inculturation and the Roman Liturgy: Fourth Instruction for the Right Application of the Conciliar Constitution on the Liturgy, nn. 37-40 (1994)
- *Liturgiam Authenticam* (Fifth Instruction on the Use of Vernacular Languages in the Publication of the Books of the Roman Liturgy (March 28, 2001)
- *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, Instruction on the Eucharist: On Certain Matters to be Observed or to be Avoided Regarding the Most Holy Eucharist (April 23, 2004)

Papal Constitutions and Encyclicals

- *Fidei Depositum*, On the Publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (October 11, 1992)
- *Dies Domini*: On Keeping the Lord's Day Holy (Pope John Paul II, May 31, 1998)
- *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, On the Eucharist and Its Relationship to the Church (Pope John Paul II, April 17, 2003)
- *Sacramentum Caritatis*, On the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's Life and Mission (2-17-07)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- Part One: The Profession of Faith
- Part Two: The Celebration of the Christian Mystery
- Part Three: Life in Christ
- Part Four: Christian Prayer

Documents Which Accompany the Liturgical Books

- General Instruction of the Roman Missal (2002)
- Lectionary for Mass: Introduction (1969, 1981, 1998)
- Introduction to the Book of the Gospels (2000)
- General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar (1969)
- Christian Initiation, General Introduction (1969, 1974)
- Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (1972; emended 1974; U.S. adaptation 1988; excerpts)
- National Statutes for the Catechumenate (1986)
- Order of Christian Funerals: General Introduction (1985, 1989)
- Directory for Masses with Children (1973)
- Ceremonial of Bishops (1984)
- Dedication of a Church and an Altar, Chapter Introductions (1978, 1989)
- Book of Blessings: General Introduction (1989)
- General Instructions of the Liturgy of the Hours (1971)
- Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest (1988)
- Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest: Introduction (2007)

From the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

- Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship (2007)
- Introduction to the Order of Mass: A Pastoral Resource of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (2003)
- Built of Living Stones (2000)
- Norms for the Celebration and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America (2001).
- Order for Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist (1992)

- Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism (1993)
- God's Mercy Endures Forever: Guidelines on the Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching (1988)
- Plenty Good Room: The Spirit and Truth of African American Catholic Worship (1990)
- Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities (1995)
- Fulfilled in Your Hearing: The Homily in the Sunday Assembly (1982)

HELPFUL RESOURCES

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- Untener, Bishop Kenneth. *Sunday Liturgy Can be Better*. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1980.

RECOMMENDED PERIODICALS

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| BCL Newsletter | Committee on Divine Worship 202-541-3060 www.usccb.org/liturgy |
| Pastoral Liturgy (formerly Rite) | Liturgy Training Publications 1-800-933-1800 orders@ltp.org |
| Pastoral Music | National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM) 240-247-3000 www.npm.org |
| Today's Liturgy/ <i>Liturgia Canción</i> | Oregon Catholic Press 1-800-LITURGY (548-8749) www.ocp.org |
| Worship | The Liturgical Press 1-800-858-5450 www.litpress.org |



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