

Ministry Formation - Liturgy Committee

The Role of the Liturgy Committee

- The committee assesses the prayer and worship life of the entire community with an eye toward helping its members develop a deeper relationship with God.
- Following the guidelines of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, it considers the full, conscious, and active participation of all the faithful in worship before all other concerns.
- Offering regular formation sessions for all liturgical ministers is an ideal way to improve liturgy overall and encourage greater engagement in the liturgy. A well-proclaimed reading, a friendly face of greeting at the door, the warm eye contact made at communion all have a widespread influence on the assembly.
- The committee engages the skills and knowledge of specialists, such as, musicians, artists, gardeners, gifted speakers, etc. to enhance the liturgy. The committee elicits help and guidance from these specialists and nurtures them rather than dictating to them.
- The primary work of the committee, then, is to grow in knowledge of the liturgy through reading, sharing ideas, attending conferences, etc. and then to assist the growth of the liturgical ministers and the greater community.
- The committee pays attention to the liturgical basics of gathering, welcoming, proclaiming, reflecting on the Word, and celebrating Eucharist. It serves as a sounding board for parishioners on liturgical matters and advises the pastor so that he may fulfill his liturgical responsibilities. (*Guide for Liturgy Committees*, Paul Turner and Michael Prendergast, 2009, Liturgy Training Publications)

Is a liturgy committee necessary?

Pastoral councils advise on all parish pastoral issues and often create committees to assist. Canon 536 leaves it to the bishop to call for pastoral councils and the Bishop of Erie has done so. (See the Parish Pastoral Council Formation file.) Such a council “enables all to collaborate in fostering pastor activity, i.e. an organized, unified endeavor, which broadly includes liturgy, education,” etc. “Parish council committees [such as liturgy] frequently correspond to these areas of concern” (from *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary* by Corden, Green and Huntschel, Paulist Press, 1985).

The Big Picture

- The Liturgical Year: Each season has a particular flavor that will affect the environment, prayers, music and readings of liturgical services. Liturgy Committees should be well versed in these differences. To gain a better understanding of each season, refer to the *Ordo*, *Sourcebook for Sundays and Seasons*, *Living Liturgy* or other resources listed on the “Resources” page.
 - The major seasons are: Advent, Ordinary Time 1, Lent, Triduum, Easter Season, Ordinary Time 2
 - Liturgy covers more than Mass. Be aware of the needs of the community for Morning and Evening Prayer, Eucharistic Exposition as well as the devotional expressions of the community throughout the liturgical year.
- Liturgical Ministries: Every service depends on a series of ministers working in concert: presider (priest, deacon, lay leader), reader, musician, altar server, hospitality minister, (greeter, usher), communion minister. Each does his or her part, depending on their

God-given gifts and talents. Each requires ongoing formation for the long-term improvement of parish worship experiences.

Preparing for the Current Season

- It is advisable to prepare for each season as a unit. What will the season look and feel like? How will it sound? What will be continuous throughout the season, environment, music, prayers, rites, etc. to help maintain its seasonal identity?
- What will each ministry need to do to support the season?

Use the texts named on the “Resources” page for help in answering these questions.

Weekend Masses

- The liturgy committee does not necessarily prepare Mass for each Sunday.
- Parishes prepare Masses differently. In some, one person prepares the music, intercessions, and changeable parts of Mass and directs the environment. In other parishes, the preparation of these elements may be shared by the priest, deacon, music leaders of individual Masses and environment ministers. An individual or team may write intercessions.
- Aware of the parish pattern, the committee engages, in a collaborative way, all the people who work in these ministries. Ideally, the committee acts as a focal point to coordinate formation for all ministries so that over time a consistent view of “good liturgy” is shared by all.
- The committee may communicate and work toward overall parish goals, perhaps as discerned through the pastoral council’s work or through the committee’s own assessment, such as, greater participation at the First Communion Liturgy. The actual preparation of the weekend Masses is the responsibility of those directly involved, whether volunteer or paid staff, who have the skills and gifts for the ministry, such as, environment, music, etc.

Other services

- Other liturgical and devotional services play an important role in the prayer life of the people. First Communion, Confirmation, Penance services, Holy Hours, Stations of the Cross, etc. require the same careful preparation and evaluation as Mass does. The process of preparation and evaluation laid out here will serve these other services well.

Liturgy Committee Members

- The answer to the question, “Who should sit on the committee?” depends on how the parish functions.
- A larger parish may include this typical arrangement: the pastor, and the coordinators for each ministry group. In addition, the RCIA coordinator and the formation coordinators of the parish [and school] may be added. A few parishioners who are interested in liturgy but do not coordinate a group may be helpful to get a broader view.
- In a smaller parish where multiple functions may be handled by one person, consider the following arrangement: pastor, music director, coordinator of ministries, religious education coordinator, and some members of the assembly.

- Each member must be committed to learning more about liturgy through prayer, reading, study and shared conversation.
- The Liturgy Committee is a pastoral ministry of the parish. It operates in an advisory capacity to the pastor and serves the worship of the larger community. It guides the growth in knowledge on liturgy and enables the full participation of the community. It may take on the responsibility for arranging liturgical formation for the overall community through workshops, bulletin notes, coffee hours, etc. Always, it nudges the assembly gently toward better liturgical practice.

Agendas

- **Prayer** (10-15 minutes) Each meeting begins with prayer. It may be based on the readings of the season and include faith sharing on how that particular passage speaks to individuals and their lives.
- **Formation** (30-45 minutes) Each meeting includes formation. Parishes may choose from a variety of formation materials including those on the Resource List. Typically, an article or a chapter of a book on liturgy is read before the meeting. A facilitator, someone aside from the pastor, leads conversation and assures that everyone has a chance to participate. When an issue arises, the facilitator asks a member to research the question in reputable sources and share a response with the group. Prayer and Formation may take up an entire meeting until such a time that all have reached a common knowledge on the fundamentals of liturgy.
- **Preparation** (45– 60 minutes) When preparing a season, such as Advent, it may be appropriate to read all of the Scriptures for the season and spend some time in reflection looking for repeated themes, images or concepts that will help to link each liturgy of the season to each other. Some of this work may need to be done by each member at home to prepare for the meeting.

Frequency of Meetings

- A regular monthly or bi-monthly meeting is suggested. It takes time for committees to grow together in an understanding of liturgical principles and liturgical practice. Regular meetings for prayer and formation will establish the foundation from which prayerful liturgies may grow.

Leadership Structure

- A facilitator should lead the meeting to keep it on task and elicit participation. A secretary or note-taker records a summary of the meeting. A prayer coordinator works with the pastor and facilitator in advance to prepare the prayer for each meeting. The ministry coordinators and the pastor should be freed of these roles during the meeting so that they may concentrate on their liturgical roles as the meeting proceeds.

The End Product

- **What does a committee do?** Following their prayerful work, the committee shares guidelines on images, themes, and an overall feel for a liturgy to its specialists: presider, environment, music, etc. who then proceed with their own work. Specific needs for servers, greeters, readers and communion ministers are passed on to the appropriate coordinators, if they are not on the committee. For a longer season, it may be helpful to re-convene the committee to review what the specialists have come up

with. In a smaller parish, the members themselves may alone execute a plan based on the committee work.

- **Evaluation** Once the liturgy has been celebrated, the committee evaluates how the ministry pieces worked together to create a complete and engaging liturgy. Notes from this meeting are shared with the various coordinators. At the end of a season it may be good to bring all ministry coordinators together to help evaluate how well the actual liturgies met the goals set by the liturgy committee. As each ministry learns more about liturgy and what it requires, these notes will help to guide in preparing future liturgies. This process is also used for Penance services, Holy Hours, Stations of the Cross, etc.

Conclusion

The work of the liturgy committee assists liturgical ministers and the assembly to improve worship in the parish over a period of time. Patience is the byword. Opinions on liturgy vary widely. Each committee must commit to learning the basic principles of liturgy themselves and then forming the community in a comprehensive understanding liturgy as well. This takes time. The overriding question guiding the committee is “How can this particular community worship well given where we are at this time?”

See the Resource List in this package for additional help.

Feel free to contact the Office of Worship for help creating or forming a liturgy committee.

Resources

General

- **Sourcebook for Sunday and Seasons: An almanac of parish liturgy**, Liturgy Training Publications, LTP.org
- **Living Liturgy: Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities**, Liturgical Press, LitPress.org
- **The Mystery of Faith: A Study of the Structural Elements of the Order of Mass**, Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, FDLC.org
- **A History of the Mass**, video # 2614, from the Erie Diocesan Media Center. Conceived and written by Fr. John H. McKenna, CM Department of Theology and Religious Studies, St. John's University, Jamaica, NY, 2001, Liturgy Training Publications. Includes a study guide by Lawrence Mick. "This video traces the evolution of the Mass, showing how it was shaped and reshaped by times and cultures, by theologies and the arts. We see a visual record of our past and hear from witnesses along the way, people who engaged in the conversation about the meaning and celebration of Sunday Mass... That conversation continues with you."
- **Celebrating Good Liturgy**, ed. James Martin, 2005, Loyola Press; reprints of articles on liturgy from America Magazine series. Written in an accessible, popular style, covers the ministries involved in the celebration of liturgy, preside, deacon, assembly, hospitality, Eucharistic ministers, etc. Many articles are available online at www.AmericaMagazine.org
- **From Age to Age**, Edward Foley, 2008, Liturgy Training Publications, LTP.org. Historical review of Christian celebrations through "architecture, music, books and vessels."
- **Parish Liturgy Basics** Msgr. William Belford, 1992, Pastoral Press. Can be purchased from Oregon Catholic Press, OCP.org.
- **Preparing Parish Liturgies: A Guide to Resources**, Rita Thiron, 2004, Liturgical Press, LitPress.org.
- **Sunday Mass Five Years from Now**, Gabe Huck, 2001, Liturgy Training Publications, LTP.org. A step by step scheme for working toward the renewal of Sunday Mass in your parish. Available through the Office of Worship.
- Videos by Liturgy Training Publications and others: See Diocesan Video Library online at www.erieRCD.org.

Liturgy Committees

- **Preparing for Liturgy, A Theology and Spirituality**, Austin Fleming, 1997, Liturgy Training Publications, LTP.org. A classic. Fleming insists that the liturgy is already planned; we "prepare" for it. Includes reflections for liturgical ministers from the "Yours is a Share..." series
- **Catechesis for Liturgy**, Gilbert Ostdieck, 1986, Pastoral Press, can be purchased from Oregon Catholic Press, OCP.org. Establishes a necessary evaluation process for liturgical celebrations.
- See the article on Liturgy Committees in **Celebrating Good Liturgy** above
- See **Parish Liturgy Basics** above.
- **The Ministry of the Assembly**, Joyce Ann Zimmerman, 2016, Liturgical Press, LitPress.org.
- **The Ministry of Servers**, Michael Kwatera. 2016, Liturgical Press, LitPress.org.
- **Liturgy with Style and Grace**, Gabe Huck and Gerald Chinchar, 1998, Liturgy Training Publications, LTP.org.
- **Guide for Liturgy Committees**, Paul Turner and Michael R. Pendergast, 2009, Liturgy Training Publications, LTP.org.
- **Great is the Mystery, Encountering the Formational Power of Liturgy**, Joe Paprocki and D. Todd Williamson, 2013, Liturgy Training Publications, LTP.org.

Ministry Formation

One of the most effective ways to improve liturgy is to provide thorough and ongoing formation for all liturgical ministers. Several series from various publishers exist on liturgical ministry. The Liturgical Press has recently updated its series: *The Ministry of...lectors, hospitality, etc.* ***The Ministry of the Liturgical Environment*** (2004) by Joyce Ann Zimmerman is particularly good and places environment concerns in a spiritual and liturgical context.

Resources for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

A History of the Mass, video # 2614, from the Erie Diocesan Media Center. Conceived and written by Fr. John H. Mckenna, CM Department of Theology and Religious Studies, St. John's University, Jamaica, NY, 2001, Liturgy Training Publications. Includes a study guide by Lawrence Mick. "This video traces the evolution of the Mass, showing how it was shaped and reshaped by times and cultures, by theologies and the arts. We see a visual record of our past and hear from witnesses along the way, people who engaged in the conversation about the meaning and celebration of Sunday Mass...That conversation continues with you."

Guide for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Kenneth A. Riley & Paul Turner, 2007, Liturgy Training Publications, LTP.org. This guide briefly covers the history, theology and practice of Communion ministry while recommending and outlining opportunities for ongoing formation and spiritual development.

Let Us Pray: A Guide to the Rubrics of Sunday Mass, Paul Turner, 2006, Pueblo Books, Liturgical Press, LitPress.org. Turner brings together the statements of the major documents (GIRM, Introduction to the Order of Mass, Norms for Reception and Distribution, *Redemptionis Sacramentum*...) that govern the Celebration of the Eucharist and the Distribution and Reception of Eucharist. His comments help to clarify the reasoning behind the statements.

Broken & Poured Out: A Spirituality for Eucharistic Ministers, Richard R. Gaillardetz, Ph.D., 2002, Liguori Publications, Liguori.org. Available through Hoffmann's. "This booklet discusses the communal aspects of liturgy, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the idea of Eucharist as sacrifice and the role of the Eucharistic Minister." Well done. Explains traditional beliefs in relation to Vatican II teachings.

The Ministry of Communion, Michael Kwatera, 2016, Liturgical Press, LitPress.org.

Resources for Lectors

Lector and Gospel Reader's Workshop, Audrey Sommers, 2009, Liturgy Training Publications, LTP.org. An interactive video workshop that includes a CD ROM on planning and setting up workshop, exercises and handouts.

A Well-Trained Tongue, Aelred Roesser, 1996, Liturgy Training Publications, LTP.org. A guide for lector training, establishes liturgical and ministerial principles for lectors and gives guidance on preparing lector training sessions.

Read the Way You Talk: A Guide for Lectors, Jack Hartjes, 2004, Liturgical Press, LitPress.org. A small book about speaking naturally and sounding like you know what you are saying. Gives very detailed explanations of pronunciation, diction, and inflection for lectors. Not for the beginner.

The Ministry of Lectors, James A. Wallace, 2016, Liturgical Press, LitPress.org.

Resources for Music

The Ministry of Music, Kathleen Harmon, 2016, Liturgical Press, LitPress.org.

Resources for Cantors

Handbook for Cantors, Diana Kodner, 1998, Liturgy Training Publications, LTP.org. Kodner “has advanced degrees in voice and conducting and many years of experience as a cantor and trainer of cantors.” Provides both technical vocal training methods as well as sound spiritual formation for cantors.

Troubleshooter’s Voice Manual, Frances N. Brockington, 1998, Oregon Catholic Press. Brockington, chair of the Vocal Division of the Music Dept. at Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. “An experienced pastoral musician and professor of music, her passion is to help others enjoy singing well.” Written for the music director, this question and answer format can be helpful for individual singers as well. Addresses specific questions and offers practical solutions based on sound vocal principles. This book is no longer available through Oregon Catholic Press; however, you can find it on Amazon.com.

Cantor BASICS, James Hansen, 1991, Pastoral Press, Oregon Catholic Press, OCP.org. Hansen, “proficient and experienced cantor, former coordinator of NPM Cantor schools.” Question and answer format emphasizes the prayer leader role of the cantor. Addresses a broad range of issues on the role of the cantor in relationship to the assembly, the liturgy and the music.

The Ministry of Cantors, Kathleen Harmon, 2016, Liturgical Press, LitPress.org. Harmon takes us deeper into the spirituality of the ministry of cantor through an understanding of the role of the psalm in the liturgy, the primary role of singer as psalmist and the secondary role of singer as song leader, the use of appropriate psalms, and an in-depth look at our gestures as integral to the song and prayer.

Environment

The Liturgical Environment, What the Documents Say, Mark G. Boyer, 1990, Liturgical Press, LitPress.org. Must be read with the newer versions of the General Instruction, Built of Living Stones, etc. in hand. However, very useful.

The Ministry of Liturgical Environment, Joyce Ann Zimmerman, 2004, Liturgical Press, LitPress.org.

Guide for Ministers of Liturgical Environment, Mary Patricia Storms and Paul Turner, 2009, Liturgy Training Publications, LTP.org.