

6. FINALLY, LITURGY COMMITTEE MEMBERS SHOULD ENTER FULLY INTO THE LITURGICAL LIFE OF THE PARISH

They should freely and reverently open their hearts to the awesome experience of confronting the image of God in Christ, gathered, proclaimed, blessed, broken and shared. They must often grapple with what this calls them to be and to do in their own lives as well as at liturgy committee meetings.

*Father, increase in our minds and hearts
the risen life we share with Christ
and help us grow as your people
towards the fullness of eternal life with you. Amen.*

Questions for discussion:

1. *What gifts do I/we bring to this liturgy committee?*
2. *Where does our study of the liturgy begin?*
3. *What resources does the parish require?*
4. *What are the strengths of our liturgical celebrations?*
5. *How are our liturgies a foretaste of the heavenly banquet?*

Resources:

Diocesan Newsletters:

- ◆ God's Masterpiece: the Seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church
- ◆ What is Liturgy?
- ◆ Witnessing to our Faith at Mass.

These are available on line at: www.chch.catholic.org.nz

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To: Priests and Pastoral Assistants
Parish Liturgy Committees
Directors of Religious Studies
PPRE Teachers



THE PARISH LITURGY COMMITTEE

“The Lord delights in His people”

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LITURGY

Liturgy is at the very heart of parish life, for it is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed, and at the same time, it is the font from which all her power flows. It is through the liturgy, especially the celebration of the Eucharist that the work of our redemption is carried out.¹

Through the celebration of the Liturgy, the people of the Church are able to express in their lives and reveal to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the Church.

Through the Liturgy, the work of Jesus Christ is carried on in each generation until the end of the world. In his paschal mystery, Jesus gave perfect glory to his Father and made holiness and deliverance from sin and evil available to all. The Risen Lord entrusted the proclamation of the Gospel to his apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit. By his will, the work of salvation preached by them and their successors is made present in the Church by the Eucharistic sacrifice and sacraments through the action of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, the High Priest, always associates the Church with himself in this great work in which God is glorified and people are made holy. The liturgy is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus so that every liturgical celebration is an action of Christ. Christ, the Priest, and his Body, the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others.

¹ Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium.

2. THE CHALLENGE OF THE LITURGY

The liturgy of the church is a complex reality, combining as it does readings from the Sacred Scriptures, liturgical texts, music and song, sacred space, elements of furnishings, symbols, ritual movement and distinctive offices and roles. So much is visible and tangible and demanding of our attention.

The full, conscious and active participation which is required goes further than this, however. All that engages us is at the service of the unseen reality of the heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, Minister of the holies and the true tabernacle. The work of Christ and the action of the Holy Spirit take precedence over whatever we do and bring to the celebration.

3. THE PARISH LITURGY COMMITTEE

The priest who presides at the liturgical celebration has a responsibility to ensure that the **Liturgy of the Church** is carried out as the Church intends. It must be centered on God, faithful to the Rite and marked by noble simplicity. To assist him in this, a parish liturgy committee can offer valuable assistance and advice when all are fully in tune with what the Church teaches. All members of the committee should continue to grow in their understanding of the theological, historical, pastoral and spiritual principles of liturgy.

The parish liturgy committee serves by:

- ◆ undertaking formation in the liturgical resources of the Church, such as the Roman Missal, the Rites of the Sacraments, the Divine Office and Diocesan Policies.
- ◆ studying the theology of the Liturgy as presented in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.
- ◆ assisting with preparations for sacramental services such as RCIA, First Penance, and Rite of Anointing etc..
- ◆ working collaboratively with the priest in establishing parish liturgical policies which encourage the assembly to celebrate through “full, active and conscious participation.”

- ◆ supporting the priest in reviewing the liturgical life and needs of the parish, assisting with long and short-term liturgical planning as well as evaluating the liturgies seasonally.
- ◆ ensuring that all who carry out liturgical roles and ministries are well prepared (e.g. readers, musicians, servers). Primary attention on doing the basics well is key – the fundamental actions of gathering, welcoming, proclaiming, and celebration of the Eucharist.
- ◆ reflecting with the music ministry to ensure that theological content, pastoral appropriateness, and musical standards are worked toward and achieved.
- ◆ ensuring that the ritual environment (decorations) enhance the rites and seasons being celebrated.
- ◆ fostering respect for different cultures within the assembly, constantly developing attitudes of welcome, hospitality and service.

4. EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IS VITAL

The power of the liturgy transforms hearts and lives. Liturgy Committee members should have fidelity to Church directives, humility and passion to improve the quality of the parish’s worship. Their leadership should be nurtured and supported by the group leader. Membership is both a service to the liturgy itself and to the community. At times members should show passion for what they believe in, but also be willing to support decisions based on alternative points of view, always receptive to the mind of the Church. For example, a committee may choose to sing the Kyrie during Lent or to have a Sprinkling Rite throughout the Easter season.

5. THE PRIEST AND COMMITTEE NEED TO BE CLEAR ABOUT HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE

In some parishes the priest may choose to make all decisions about liturgical matters, but priests working with liturgy committees are strongly encouraged. Decisions can be made by arriving at a consensus, but final responsibility for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy rests with the priest. Each situation calls for a process of building trusting relationships.