

Office for Worship Guidelines for Parish Liturgy Committees

“The liturgy is the source for achieving in the most effective way possible of human sanctification and God’s glorification, the end to which all the Church’s other activities are directed.” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy from the Second Vatican Council, No. 10*)

“The liturgy makes explicit what is hidden and implicit in human history; it recalls what God has done in the past, that we might recognize the same God at work in the present, and it reminds us of the goal to which the world and its history are to be directed. It puts us in touch with the mystery that lies at the very heart of things.” (*Liturgy Made Simple, p. 28, Mark Searle, Liturgical Press, 1981*)

“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 Pt 2:9) is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Second Vatican Council, no. 14*)

“Liturgical participation commits a person to a life of faithful discipleship.” (Built of Living Stones No. 21)

Liturgy is like beautiful art in that it uses the languages of sign and symbol, (symbol-actions and symbol-objects) to tell the story of salvation, and to assist us in DOING the story of salvation. In the liturgy, we use every expression of our humanity to stand before the mystery of God’s presence. “Taste and see the goodness of the Lord!” We use the languages of movement, sound, silence, song, color, light, scent, taste. We use beautiful forms of expression that open our hearts, minds and spirits to grow in the goodness of the Lord. Like art, liturgy is more about feeling and heart-knowing, than about cognitive thought. It is more about continually being molded into a people of God, than about learning facts about God and the Bible. It’s about BEING church, not being in church!

Purpose of the Parish Liturgy Committee

- to be effective stewards of the parish liturgy by studying and learning about the church’s liturgy, its signs and symbols, its ministries and music, its rhythm and pace
- to be effective stewards of the parish liturgy by studying and learning about effective committee operations
- to reflect upon and evaluate all parish liturgies
- To discover and give voice to the **parish liturgical vision**, based on the vision outlined in church liturgical documents, coupled with the liturgical practice of the parish, past and present
- To reflect the identified parish vision of the liturgy in all intra-parish communications and liturgical preparations
- To identify and write a **parish liturgy committee mission statement** that reflects that vision and calls all parish members to an authentic liturgical spirituality
- By effective preparation, enable the transformative nature of the liturgy to unfold in the parish and ensure that the parish liturgy is a unified work of prayer and worship
- To facilitate the full, conscious and active participation of the assembly
- To coordinate the liturgical ministries in the parish
- To establish an annual liturgical preparation plan

Primary Role of the Parish Liturgy Committee

- To identify all the various cultural and age groups in the parish, and work towards the full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy of all of these members
- To provide initial and on-going formation for all liturgical ministries in the parish
- To monitor the organizational details of the parish liturgies
- To offer on-going liturgical formation for all age-groups and cultural groups in the parish
- To be the connecting point for each liturgical ministry
- To manage the seasonal decorating of the worship environment
- To schedule, monitor and mentor all liturgical ministers

Qualifications of a Liturgy Committee Member

- Faith in God
- A person of personal and public prayer
- Love for the Church and Love for the liturgy
- Fully Participating and Weekly-Attending Member of the Assembly
- Understanding of “servant leadership”
- Knows, Loves and Respects their Worshipping Community
- Have a Basic Familiarity with the RCIA and other Sacramental Rites

Personal Qualities of a Parish Liturgy Committee Member

- Reflective disposition
- Willingness and ability to read, learn and grow
- Good listener and observer
- Knows how to disagree respectfully
- Open-minded
- Verbally articulate
- Respect for all age groups and ethnic cultures

Parish Liturgy Committee Members Need a Working Knowledge of the Following Church Liturgy Documents:

Apostolic See

- Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Vatican II
- General Instruction of the Roman Missal
- Lectionary for Mass: Introduction
- General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar
- Directory for Masses with Children

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

- Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship
- Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship
- Fulfilled in Your Hearing: the Homily in the Sunday Assembly

Archdiocese of Los Angeles

- Gather Faithfully Together: A Guide for Sunday Mass, 1997

Members of the Parish Liturgy Committee Need to be Participating Regularly in one or more of the following on-going Spiritual and Ministerial Formation Opportunities:

- Weekly Lectionary-based Scripture Reflection Group or Lectio Divina
- Archdiocesan Liturgical Ministry Renewal Sessions
- Webinars offered and archived at the Office for Worship website: LALiturgy.org
- Spiritual Reading
- Bible Study groups or courses

Parish Liturgy Committee: Executive Members

- Pastor
- Chairperson
- Vice Chairperson
- Note-Taker or Record-Keeper

Parish Liturgy Committee: General Ministry Representation Membership

- Eucharistic Ministry
- Lector Ministry
- Altar Server Ministry
- Hospitality Ministry – Ushers and Greeters
- Musicians and Cantors
- Environment Team
- Sacristan Ministry
- Presiders
- Director of Initiation **and/or** Faith Formation –children, youth, adults
- Parish School Masses
- Mass Time Coordinators or Captains

Responsibilities of the Parish Liturgy Committee Executive Committee

- Agenda Development– **Monthly** agendas are based on the parish master calendar
- Establish time schedules for all meetings and preparations
- Facilitate meetings
- Prepare and lead committee meeting prayer time
- Extend Regular and Constant Communication of Information to all Members
 - members receive all agendas and information at least one week prior to meeting
 - All members are expected to prepare for each meeting
- Scheduling of Meeting facilities
- Establish and Communicate Group Decision-Making Process
- Manage Conflict Resolution
- Establish Collaborative Mode of Operation
- Keep record of all meetings and member responsibilities
- Establish terms of service for each member
- Coordinate annual committee retreat

Parish Liturgy Committees Formation Priorities:

When first establishing a parish liturgy committee, or when renewing or re-structuring the committee, one year of committee formation and development is recommended before beginning to serve the parish.

For established parish liturgy committees, on-going formation of the same content is highly recommended.

- Instruction and Reading on the Church's Liturgy and the Liturgical Year
- Instruction on Committee Dynamics and Effective Functioning
- Committee Retreats and Weekend Study Groups
- Disciplined commitment to Personal Daily Prayer

Some Foundational Principles of Liturgical Prayer

- **It is Divine initiative and human response**

Divine Initiative: God is always calling.

"Jesus is the visible outreach of God to the human family" Mark Searle, *Liturgy Made Simple*, Liturgical Press, 1981

Human Response:

"God is at the heart of our human desire and our religious hunger."

Paul Janowiak, SJ *Standing Together in the Community of God; Liturgical Spirituality and the Presence of Christ*, Liturgical Press, 2011

- **2. It is Trinitarian**

"God is faithful. Christ is intimate with us. The Spirit is moving."

Paul Janowiak, SJ *Standing Together in the Community of God; Liturgical Spirituality and the Presence of Christ*, Liturgical Press, 2011

- **3. It is the one-sacrifice of Christ**

We surrender our individuality at liturgy to become a part of the one sacrifice of Christ.

Each time we participate at liturgy in the one sacrifice of Christ we are all further formed into the ONE BODY OF CHRIST.

- **4. The assembly is the primary liturgical minister.**

We are all members of the assembly and equal participants. Some of us have specific roles to play on behalf of the whole assembly, but these ministers do not stand apart from the assembly. They stand within the assembly.

- **5. Liturgy is both expression and formation.**

It is an expression of who we are as the Body of Christ, and it forms us further into who we are becoming.

- **6. Fourfold Presence of Christ in the liturgy**

Through the action of the community, we become aware of Christ's presence:

in the people gathered, in the minister, in the Word proclaimed, in the Eucharist.

- **7. Liturgy is a corporate action, not an individual act of devotion**
- **8. Hospitality is the foundation of all liturgical action.**
- **9. God is revealed through scripture and tradition.**

The liturgy is the longest running tradition of the church.

We are caretakers of a sacred tradition and a sacred memory.

Very often, tradition means something that is larger than our own personal experience.

- **10. There are two liturgies, official public prayers of the church:**

the Eucharistic liturgy, within which most of the sacraments take place,

The Liturgy of the Hours or Divine Office: Monastic Form or Cathedral Form.

Actions of Parish Liturgy Committee Members:

Meeting	Observing	Discussing	Recording
Praying	Reflecting	Discerning	Communicating
Studying	Imagining	Implementing	Reading
Listening	Preparing	Evaluating	Revising

Evaluation vs. Complaint!

- Evaluation flows from a vision to which each committee member is committed.
- The motivation of complaint is different. It rises out of negative feelings, not vision.

Parish Liturgy Committees Priorities in Parish liturgical Life:

- Weekly Sunday Eucharist
- The Triduum
- Other Feasts and Seasons
- Parishioners with Special Needs
- The Celebration of the Sacraments
- Parish Celebrations of the Liturgy of the Hours
- School and Religious Education Liturgies
- Weekday Masses
- The Private Devotional Prayer Life of the Parish

Understanding Ritual Music

Each member of the parish liturgy committee must be aware of the nature of ritual music. The music of the liturgy is integral to the ritual. It is determined predominantly for its support of the ritual texts. There are moments when it serves merely to enhance the liturgical experience, but these moments should never dominant. The pastor and the parish liturgy committee must ensure that any musicians serving as leaders of the sung prayer of the assembly, are trained in the specific demands of ritual music. Ministers of music should be skilled musicians, fully competent on their instrument, and educated in the church's liturgy and liturgical year. Please refer to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles Music Guidelines available at laliturgy.org

Primary Symbols within the Shape and Structure of the Liturgy

Action	Title	Primary symbols
Gathering	Opening Rites	Assembly, Procession and Song, Gospel Book, Collect
Listening	Liturgy of the Word	Word/Ambo, Proclamation, Acclamation, Silence, Universal Prayers
Responding	Liturgy of the Eucharist	Altar, Gifts, Eucharistic Prayer and Acclamations, Fraction Rite, Sharing Communion
Going Forth	Concluding Rites	Blessing, Sending

Remember:

- St. Benedict's phrase accurately applies here: Listen with the ear of your heart.
- There is no room for the imposition of personal ego or power struggles on the committee! Surrender your personal agenda at the door!
- The goal of the parish liturgy committee always encompasses the worship and praise of God within the context of the common good of the community at large.
- Repetition is part of the nature of ritual.
- Balance of sound, space, silence, movement, decoration is of utmost importance
- Learn to focus your work and energy on the primary symbols.
- Everything we do in liturgy communicates something. Learn to observe and read non-verbal communication in the liturgy.

Recommended Reading List for Parish Liturgy Committees:

Liturgy Made Simple, chapter one, Mark Searle, Liturgical Press, 1981

The Liturgy Committee Handbook, Baker and Ferrone, Twenty-Third Publications, 1998

The Book of Sacramental Basics, Tad Guzie, Paulist Press, 1981

Liturgy, Rita Ferrone, Paulist Press, 2015

Catechesis for Liturgy, Gil Ostiek, Liturgical Press

From Mass to Mission: Understanding the Mass and Its Significance for Our Christian Life,
Trish Sullivan Vanni, Liturgy Training Publications (LTP), 2015

Becoming Word for One Another: A Spirituality for Lectors, Richard Gaillardetz, Ligouri, 2002

The Liturgical Ministry Series, LTP, (available in English and Spanish)

Guide for Cantors

Guide for Liturgy Committees

Guide for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Guide for Music Ministers

Guide for Sacristans

Guide for Servers

Guide for Lectors

Guide for Minister of the Liturgical Environment

Guide for Deacons

Pastoral Liturgy Magazine, LTP, bi-monthly, excellent articles and bulletin inserts

Preparing the Liturgy, Austin Fleming, LTP, revised edition, 2007

Liturgy with Style and Grace, Gabe Huck, LTP, third edition

WEB SITES

www.usccb.org – United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

www.fdlc.org – Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions

www.npm.org – National Pastoral Musicians Association

www.ltp.org – Liturgy Training Publications

www.wlp.org – JS Paluch/World Library Publications

www.giamusic.org – GIA Music

www.ocp.org – Oregon Catholic Press offers

www.litpress.org – The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN

www.swlc.org – The Southwest Liturgical Conference.