



Parishes may find it particularly helpful to engage in a process of liturgical self-assessment. With this in mind, pastors, assisting clergy, parish lay leaders and staff, and parish councils may wish to consider using this “Year of Parish Revival” to examine the various aspects of the liturgical life of their parish and discern which areas are in need of review or special attention.

In this effort, the Office for Divine Worship has designed a four-part series with a number of considerations in the areas of 1) Music, 2) Environment, 3) Ministries, and 4) Assembly so that they may serve as a starting point for discussion.

In the July 2023’s Newsletter we offered the considerations for
MUSIC

“Christ himself becomes the choir director who teaches us the new song and gives the Church the tone and way in which she can praise God appropriately and blend into the heavenly liturgy.” (A New Song for the Lord, n.97)

1. The music that is rendered within the Liturgy is truly sacred and liturgically appropriate in nature, espouses the Word of God, and is drawn primarily from Scriptural or liturgical texts (RS, 57).
*It is noteworthy to mention that while there is a wide selection of Christian music that is inspired by sacred scripture, not all is appropriate for use in Catholic Worship, which is (among other elements) Eucharistic-centered. Additionally, not all music that speaks about love and/or God is theologically sound and appropriate for the use in the Catholic Mass.
2. The music of the Liturgy reflects the season of the Liturgical Year or Feast that is being celebrated, as well as the scripture readings that are proclaimed at the Liturgy. (STTL, 112)
3. The music of the Liturgy, along with its effective preparation, fosters the maximum participation of the gathered faithful. (STTL, 122)
4. The music of the Liturgy is rendered competently, which in turn, serves the Church well at prayer. (STTL, 50)
5. The members of the choir possess a full understanding of their ministerial roles as supporters of the gathered faithful’s singing. In addition, there are times when the choir exercises its ministry by singing alone – in doing so, it draws from the treasury of sacred music, singing compositions by composers of various periods, and in various musical styles. Music that expresses the faith of the various cultures that enrich the Church is also encouraged. (STTL, 28, 30)
6. Cantors are well-prepared and encourage the singing of the gathered faithful. In doing so, they make sure to not overpower the faithful nor take their place as solo vocalists. (STTL, 38)
7. In choosing the parts of the Liturgy that are to be sung, preference is given to those that are of greater importance and especially to those which are to be sung by the Priest or the Deacon or a reader, with the people replying, or by the Priest and people together (GIRM, 40). For example,



Glory to God, the Eucharistic Acclamations (Gospel Acclamation, Holy, Mystery of Faith, Amen), and the Lamb of God. The responsories between the Priest and the people are encouraged to be sung (e.g., The Lord be with you...and with your Spirit).

8. Moments of silence are observed within the Liturgy – this allows the community to reflect on what it has heard and experienced, and to open its heart to the mystery celebrated (STTL, 118). Places within the Liturgy where silence is especially called for are in between the First Reading and Responsorial Psalm, between the Responsorial Psalm and Second Reading, between the Second Reading and Gospel Acclamation, after the homily, and after Communion.

Music is considered a normal and ordinary part of the Church’s liturgical life – therefore, the use of music in the Liturgy is always governed by the principle of progressive solemnity. This principle includes not only the nature and style of the music, but how many and which parts of the Rite are to be sung. For example, greater feasts such as Christmas Day or Easter Sunday might suggest musical selections that contain more complexity than what is regularly sung, thus adding an extraordinary richness to these special celebrations. The use of additional musical instruments also reflect the season of the Liturgical Year or feast that is being celebrated. In addition, those days of the greater feasts might suggest a sung response at the Prayer of the Faithful, but a recited response might be more appropriate during Ordinary Time. And at other times, the liturgical season calls for a certain musical restraint. In Advent, for example, musical instruments are used with moderation and not anticipate the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord. In Lent, musical instruments are used only to support the singing of the gathered assembly. (STTL, 110, 112, 113, 114)

9. Gregorian chant, along with liturgical music that is composed in various styles, is included within the liturgy as to reflect the generational and cultural diversity of the gathered faithful. The musical selections, regardless of style, correspond to the spirit of the liturgical action and that they foster the participation of all the faithful. (GIRM, 41)
10. The organ is given pride of place amongst the musical instruments used within the Liturgy. In addition, other wind, stringed, or percussion instruments might be admitted into divine worship, according to longstanding local usage, in so far as these are truly suitable for sacred use or can be made suitable. (GIRM, 393)

In the August 2023’s Newsletter we offered the considerations for
LITURGICAL ENVIRONMENT

“Churches or other places should be suitable for carrying out the sacred action and for ensuring the active participation of the faithful. Moreover, sacred buildings and requisites for divine worship should be truly worthy and beautiful and be signs and symbols of heavenly realities” (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, n.288).



1. The number of Masses scheduled is based on actual need.
2. The Lectionary, Book of the Gospels, and the Roman Missal are in good condition and are suitable for the celebration of the liturgy. (General Instruction of the Roman Missal [GIRM], 349)
3. The vessels for the Eucharist are of good quality, made for liturgical use, not easily broken (i.e. not made from glass, earthenware, or clay), and blessed before use. (GIRM, 329; *Redemptionis Sacramentum* [RS], 117 and 118)
4. Liturgical vesture is of good quality and worn appropriately. (GIRM, 335-347; RS, 122-128)
5. Vestments are properly stored and regularly cleaned.
6. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved in a chapel that is noble, prominent, and suitable for prayer. (GIRM, 314-316; RS, 130)
7. The liturgical environment is clean and well maintained. (GIRM, 289, 292, 293)
8. The liturgical environment is enhanced by appropriate decoration in the sanctuary area, the assembly area, and outside the church building. (GIRM, 289, 292, 293; *Built of Living Stones* [BLS], 122-129)
9. Floral decorations show moderation (GIRM, 305), noble beauty (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* [SC], 124) and do not obstruct or detract from the liturgical action.
10. Floral decorations may be around the altar table rather than on the altar itself (GIRM, 305) and only what is required for the celebration of the Mass is placed on the altar table: namely, from the beginning of the celebration until the proclamation of the Gospel, the Book of the Gospels; then from the Presentation of the Gifts until the purification of the vessels, the chalice with the paten, a ciborium, if necessary, and, finally, the corporal, the purificator, the pall, and the Missal (GIRM, 306).
11. Either on the altar or near it, there is a cross, with the figure of Christ crucified upon it, a cross clearly visible to the assembled people. Additionally, the cross should remain near the altar even outside of liturgical celebrations, so as to call to mind for the faithful the saving Passion of the Lord (GIRM, 308).
12. The choir is positioned with respect to the arrangement of each church so that its nature may be clearly evident, namely as part of the assembled community of the faithful undertaking a specific function. The positioning also helps the choir to exercise this function more easily and allow each choir member full sacramental participation in the Mass in a convenient manner (GIRM, 312).
13. The ambo, altar, baptismal font, and presider's chair are designed and placed appropriately. (GIRM, 288-318; BLS, 56-69)
14. Images of the Lord, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Saints, are displayed for veneration by the faithful and are arranged so as to lead the faithful toward the mysteries of faith celebrated. Care, therefore, is taken that their number is not increased indiscriminately, and moreover that they are arranged in proper order so as to not draw the attention of the faithful to themselves and away from the celebration itself. There is only one image of any given Saint (GIRM, 318).
15. The lighting and sound systems are adequate and fully functional. (BLS, 221-225; 228-233)
16. There are enough programs/hymnals provided for all members of the assembly.



17. The bread and wine used for the Eucharist truly have the appearance of food and are made of appropriate material. (GIRM, 320-322; RS, 48)
18. Enough bread and wine are prepared for the faithful to receive Communion consecrated at the same Mass. (GIRM, 85; RS, 49)
19. There is an atmosphere of prayer and silence before Mass, both in the church and in the sacristy. (GIRM, 45)
20. The configuration of the church invites full, active, and conscious participation of the faithful, conveys the image of the gathered assembly, and facilitates the liturgical action. (GIRM, 288 and 294; BLS, 49-53)
21. The church is fully accessible to those with special needs. (BLS, 42)

In the October 2023's Newsletter we offered the considerations for
LITURGICAL MINISTRIES

What does “being a minister of Jesus Christ” mean?

To stand before God- to look to him, to be there for him- and minister in the name of the Lord. cf. Deut. 18:5

1. The celebration of the Eucharist is in the action of Christ and of the Church. This action affects the individual members of the Church in a different way, according to their different functions, and actual participation. Therefore, all whether ordained ministers or lay Christian faithful, in fulfilling their function or their duty, carry out solely but totally that which pertains to them. (GIRM, no. 91)
 - o For example, if a Deacon is present, the priest celebrant or a concelebrant should not read the Gospel. And the Lector should also not take on the role of Server and/or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. There is a wide variety of services to be performed, and it is desirable that different individuals exercise those services so that the talents and gifts God has placed within the Christian community are fully utilized and these roles of service are not monopolized by a few. (*Ministries and Roles within the Liturgical Assembly at Mass*)
2. Liturgical ministries appropriate to the laity (e.g., Lectors, Music Ministry, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Ushers, Sacristans, Altar Servers) are distributed among a number of trained liturgical lay ministers. (GIRM, 115; RS, 46)
3. The liturgical ministers reflect the assembly in age, gender, and ethnic background.
4. In their knowledge and love for our one Father in heaven, they understand that all are brothers and sisters one to the other. Consequently, they avoid any appearance of singularity or division within the liturgy and their church community. (GIRM, no. 95)
5. Whenever asked, they gladly take on the opportunity to serve the People of God in whichever service or function within the liturgy. (GIRM, no. 97)
6. Liturgical ministers carry out their service in their parish community with a deep sense of their role in the liturgy being a privilege, not a right.



7. Except in cases of necessity, liturgical ministers normally exercise only one ministry at a given liturgy. (SC, 28; RS, 44)
8. Discernment within the parish for liturgical ministries is handled as a process that involves prayer and contemplation—personal and communal. Above all, it involves the dialogue and evaluation of the parish leadership.
9. All liturgical ministers have received liturgical formation and are properly trained to perform their ministry. (SC, 29; RS, 46) Training at the parish level includes: practical, spiritual, theological, and pastoral.
10. When embracing a role for liturgy, the liturgical ministers embrace the commitment to dependability, preparation before each liturgy, and to ongoing development and enrichment.
11. Liturgical ministers are “deeply imbued with the spirit of the liturgy,” and perform their office with “sincere devotion and decorum demanded by so exulted a ministry.” (SC, 29)
12. There is a sense of prayer and reverence among the liturgical ministers.
13. Liturgical ministers show their deep religious sense and their charity toward their brothers and sisters who participate with them in the same celebration. (GIRM no. 95)
14. By exercising their ministry, liturgical ministers seek to enhance the full and active participation of the faithful.
15. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are asked to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion only in cases of genuine necessity.
16. All liturgical ministers have the spiritual maturity and physical capacity to serve in the ministry assigned to them.
17. Priests and deacons are imbued with the spirit of the liturgy and exercise their liturgical role with sincerity, decorum, dignity, humility, and devotion. (SC, 14 and 17, GIRM, 93)
18. Being that lay liturgical ministers are called forth from the assembly, they do not have a reserved seating location nor do they wear any special liturgical attire, such as albs, etc. The exception to this norm is for the Altar Servers. Since they are active in their ministry throughout the entire Mass and are seated in a reserved location—in the line of sight of the priest celebrant. Altar Servers may wear a simple alb and cincture.
19. Liturgical ministers do not wear clothing, jewelry, pins or buttons that draw attention to the minister and away from the Lord’s presence.
20. Priests and Deacons strive to deepen their own liturgical knowledge and grow in developing a proper *ars celebrandi*. (SC, 16 and 17; RS, 33)
21. There is harmony and diligence among all those involved in the effective preparation of each liturgical celebration in accordance with the Missal and other liturgical books. However, the Priest who presides at the celebration retains the right of arranging those things that pertain to him. (GIRM, no. 111)



From Benedict XVI, *What is Christianity? The Last Writings*

“No one is closer to his master than the servant who has access to the most private dimensions of his life. In this sense ‘to serve’ means closeness, it requires familiarity. This familiarity also involves a danger: when we continually encounter the sacred, it risks becoming habitual for us. In this way, reverential fear is extinguished. Conditioned by all our habits, we no longer perceive the great, new, and surprising fact that God himself is present, speaks to us, and gives himself to us. We must ceaselessly struggle against this becoming accustomed to the extraordinary reality, against the indifference of the heart, always recognizing our insufficiency anew and the grace that there is in the fact that he consigned himself into our hands. To serve means to draw near, but above all it also means obedience. The servant is under the word: ‘not my will, but thine, be done’ (Luke 22:42).”

In the January 2024’s Newsletter we offered the considerations for the
ASSEMBLY

1. Through liturgical catechesis, the assembly has become conscious that they are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy people God has made His own. (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* [SC], 14; RS, 36)
2. Through liturgical catechesis, the assembly is aware that, by virtue of their baptism, it is their right and duty to participate in liturgical celebrations. (SC, 14; RS, 37)
3. Through liturgical catechesis, the assembly understands that they are called to offer themselves as a living and holy sacrifice of praise through prayer and worship. (RS, 37)
4. Through liturgical catechesis, the assembly sees their participation in the Eucharist as not only sharing in a sacred meal, but also participating in the sacrifice of Christ. (RS, 38)
5. The faithful are encouraged to participate in the liturgy through acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and canticles, as well as actions or movements and gestures. (SC, 30; RS, 39)
6. The assembly willingly participates by actively listening, singing wholeheartedly, and being present to the action of the liturgy. (SC, 14 and 30)
7. The assembly understands and appreciates that active participation includes an observance of sacred silence. (GIRM, 45; RS, 39)
8. The liturgy is properly adapted to the needs of the faithful, respecting cultural and ethnic traditions which are appropriate within liturgical celebrations. (SC, 37-40; RS, 39)
9. In the same manner, all the faithful, especially in multicultural parishes, understand that not only is the Universal Church united in the one great act of praise; but it is always the worship of a particular community in a particular culture. It is subjective in that it depends radically upon what the worshippers bring to it; but it is objective in that it transcends them as the priestly act of Christ himself, to which he associates us but which ultimately does not depend upon us.



10. The faithful have received formation that helps them recognize that the liturgy has dimensions both local and universal, time-bound and eternal, horizontal and vertical, subjective and objective.
11. The faithful understand that, at the liturgy, they are not to participate “as strangers or silent spectators,” but conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full involvement. (SC, 48)
12. In the same manner, the faithful understand that active participation does not preclude the active passivity of silence, stillness, and listening. Worshippers have received catechesis that allows them to understand that when listening to the readings or the homily, when following the prayers of the Celebrant as well as the chants and music of the liturgy, these experiences of silence and stillness are profoundly active; and that their active participation is required.
13. Through catechetical instruction, the faithful have been helped to enter more deeply into the contemplative dimension of worship which includes a sense of reverence and adoration – these, being the fundamental attitudes in our relationship with God.
14. Efforts have been made to instill in the faithful a sense of deep wonder before the greatness of the mystery of faith that is the Eucharist. (RS, 40)
15. The faithful know that our worship is one that looks to mission. Our liturgy is comparatively brief: there is much to be done outside the church; and thus why we have the dismissal, “*Ite, missa est*”, which gives us the term Mass: the community is sent forth to evangelize the world in obedience to Christ’s command (cf. Mt 28:19-20).
16. Efforts have been made so the faithful learn that in everybody doing the same gesture, everyone speaking in one voice, “there is a uniformity that educates individual believers to discover the authentic uniqueness of their personalities not in individualistic attitudes, but in the awareness of **being one body**”. (DD, 51)
17. Efforts are made so that through the liturgical action of the Mass, the faithful are able to enter a time and space where the mystery of Christ “does not consist in a mental assimilation of some idea but [a] real existential engagement with his person.” (DD, 41)