



Archdiocese of Los Angeles	Office for Divine Worship (213) 637-7262	3424 Wilshire Boulevard	Los Angeles, California 90010-2241
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GUIDELINES FOR PARISH LITURGICAL COMMITTEE

In the Church's liturgy, God the Father is praised as the source of all blessings through His Son and gives us the Holy Spirit to make us His children. Christ's saving work is made present in the liturgy through the Holy Spirit, and the Church, as His Body, serves as a sign and instrument of this salvation. Through the liturgy, the Church on earth participates in a foretaste of the heavenly liturgy. The Holy Spirit prepares the faithful to encounter Christ, reveals Him in faith, makes His saving work effective, and brings about spiritual communion within the Church. In other words, the Sacred Liturgy is primarily about God's action and not about human activity. The faithful participate in the Sacred Liturgy and experience God's grace.

Liturgy is not a set of external ceremonies. Rather, liturgy demands a deep desire for encounter and reflection. Those that participate are invited to move through the outward expressions of the liturgy and enter into a profound reality. It is important to resist the temptation of the superficial or become attached to personal preferences. The liturgy leads the people of God to an objective reality—the person of Christ himself.

The liturgy does not hand on an idea of Christ or serve a simple recollection of His actions. Rather, it is the means by which the Trinity continues to manifest the saving mysteries of the Paschal Mystery throughout the ages. Every liturgical celebration ensures a real encounter with this mystery, an encounter that brings about our salvation and sanctification. It is through the liturgy that God perpetually communicates His redemptive work and draws humanity into union with Himself. Through perceptible signs, He exercises His priestly ministry and sanctifies the world. Through the Liturgy God gathers his people and orients them toward the common and ultimate end: union with God.

Given the demands of the sacred liturgy, it is important for parishes to pay special attention to how they participate in the Paschal Mystery through the Mass. To this end, parishes have established liturgical committees, so that a group of dedicated parishioners may aid in the implementation of the demands of the sacred liturgy.

The Parish Liturgy Committee serves as a consultative body that supports the pastor in nurturing and enriching the liturgical and sacramental life of the parish. Its purpose is to help ensure that the celebration of worship is marked by beauty, reverence, and full, active participation by the parish community. In carrying out this mission, committee members must recognize that liturgy is not something that is created or reshaped according to personal preference; it is a sacred reality that is gifted to the people of God. The Mass does not belong to the priest or to any individual worshipper, but to Christ and His Church. Therefore, a spirit of humility is essential for a genuine encounter with the Paschal Mystery through the liturgy.

Alignment with official Church Documents

All activities and decisions should align with:

- *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. United States, 3rd Edition (GIRM)
- *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy)
- Archdiocesan norms and guidelines from the Office for Divine Worship
- Other official Church documents on liturgy and the sacraments from the Vatican and from United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

A Parish Liturgical Committee must be able 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 these members.
- Monitor the organizational details of the parish liturgies to ensure that the parish liturgy is a unified work of prayer and worship by all ministers.

Key Responsibilities of the Liturgical Committee

a. Liturgical Preparation

As liturgical preparation is discussed, it is important to keep in mind that the liturgy is the action of Christ and the Church (cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium, §7); it is a sacred gift to be received with reverence, not an event to be created. Thus, those who prepare for its celebration—Liturgical Committee—are servants of the mystery, not designers of a program.

- Assist in implementing the celebrations of the liturgical year (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Ordinary Time, sacramental masses, Feasts, and Holy Days of Obligation).
- Coordinate special liturgies such as First Communion, Confirmation, Holy Week, Patronal feast or culturally important feasts (*Simbang Gabi*, Our Lady of Guadalupe, *Santo Niño*, *Señor de los Milagros*, Saint Joseph's Table, etc.) and funerals.
- Encourage liturgical year seasonal themes in music, environment, and prayer.
- Schedule, monitor, recruit, train, and mentor all liturgical ministers.
- Plan yearly retreats for parish liturgical ministers.

b. Formation and Education

Liturgical formation is the process by which the faithful are transformed by the liturgical celebration, especially the Eucharist. Through this transformation the people of God are able to live out the mystery of Christ in their daily lives. Liturgical formation is both educational and experiential, two complementary dimensions: being formed by the liturgy (experiential, spiritual, personal transformation) and forming for the liturgy (instruction, preparation, catechesis).

- Promote ongoing liturgical formation for all age groups and cultural groups in the parish
- Support the training of liturgical ministers (lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, altar servers, ushers, musicians, etc.).
- Educate on the meaning and structure of the Mass and sacraments.
- Members should take the “Parts of the Mass” Online course created by the Office for Divine Worship and C3 <https://c3.leadlms.com/register/group/745>

c. Liturgical Environment

- To manage the planning and setup of the liturgical environment according to the liturgical seasons, solemnities and feasts
- To assist in the proper use of symbols, colors, and art so that they reflect proper Catholic theology and tradition

d. Music Ministry

Members of the parish liturgy committee must be aware of the nature of ritual music. Liturgical music supports the ritual texts of the liturgy and thus is an integral part. 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 liturgical music. The committee collaborates with the music leadership so that music selection is educated by the knowledge of the Church's liturgical norms and archdiocesan guidelines. Finally, the liturgical committee assists in vetting those who participate in the music ministry to ensure that they have the necessary music skills and abilities. They also support their continuous training so that the parish sung prayer is able to meet the expectations of the Church's sacred liturgy.

e. Mystagogical formation

Mystagogical formation is a form of Christian formation that emerges from participating in the liturgy. This type of formation leads to a personal and communal expression of the Christian mysteries. This formation involves three interrelated dimensions:

- first, the experience of the liturgy as a transformative encounter with the Paschal Mystery;
- second, a contemplative understanding of the rites that goes beyond intellectual knowledge to perceive God's action in the celebration; and
- third, the integration of the mystery into daily life.

Rather than reducing the liturgy to a set of rituals to be explained, this approach invites believers to enter more fully into the sacred mystery they celebrate. Its goal is to shape both the heart and the mind, allowing the liturgy to form the faithful from within. True liturgical formation is not about grasping abstract concepts, but about being drawn into the mystery of salvation—so that the people of God are continually transformed by what is celebrated at the altar.

f. Evaluation and Reflection

The Parish Liturgical Committee regularly engages in evaluations of liturgies. Seeking to foster reverence, participation, and adherence to liturgical norms, the committee encourages feedback and reflection on areas of growth and improvement. Members of the committee are capable of collaboration through minor disagreements and challenges because they share one vision: to give praise and worship to God as a parish community.

In evaluations, it is important that listening to people takes place since it will help guide the work and direction of the committee. At times, it is necessary to evaluate celebrations of liturgy to assess areas for improvement, and also to take note of things that work well in the Parish. In Appendix I there are a series of questions that can be used in the evaluation of liturgical celebrations.

See Appendix I “Questions for Evaluation”

g. Collaboration

It is essential that the committee work closely with the pastor, other clergy, pastoral staff, and other parish commissions. They also are to coordinate with faith formation and social justice groups for liturgies that reflect the mission of the Church. Additionally, the committee must foster unity and dialogue across diverse ages, cultures, and language groups within the parish, especially for major liturgies like solemnities, feasts, and cultural and ethnic celebrations of the Blessed Mother and the saints.

Membership

h. Composition

Members should be active parishioners with a love for liturgy and prayer, but most especially have strong relationship with God. The committee should include representatives from liturgical ministries (e.g., music, art/environment, sacristans, hospitality, etc.), and different age and cultural/ethnic groups within the parish. It should include a staff liaison, ideally the liturgist or worship coordinator, and the Pastor or a clergy member that has been delegated by the Pastor.

Parish Liturgy Committee: Executive Members

- Pastor
- Chairperson
- Vice Chairperson
- Secretary (for the purposes of note taking and record keeping)

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
- Maintain regular and constant communication of information amongst 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 modes of operation
- Record the minutes of all meetings and keep track of member responsibilities
- Establish terms of service for each member
- Coordinate annual committee retreat

Parish Liturgy Committee: General Ministry Representation Membership

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| • Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion | • Environment Team |
| • Lector Ministry | • Sacristan Ministry |
| • Altar Server Ministry | • Clergy |
| • Hospitality Ministry – Ushers and Greeters | • Director of Initiation and/or Faith Formation –children, youth, adults |
| • Musicians and Cantors | • Parish School Mass Coordinator |
| | • Mass Time Coordinators or Captains |

i. Qualifications and Qualities

Candidates for the Parish Liturgical Committee are baptized Catholics who possess a strong faith in God and demonstrate a deep love for the Church and her liturgy. They have a strong personal and communal prayer life. They understand the principles of servant leadership and respect their worshipping community. Additionally, they should have a familiarity with the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA), the other sacramental rituals and basic liturgical formation.

A Parish Liturgy Committee member should possess a reflective disposition, along with a willingness to learn, and grow in their role. They should be good listeners and keen observers. Open-mindedness and verbal articulation are important qualities, as is genuine respect for people of all age groups and ethnic cultures.

j. Appointment and Terms

It is recommended that members are appointed by the pastor or invited from ministry groups with a term of typically 2–3 years, renewable once. Membership must rotate to allow for fresh perspectives while maintaining continuity.

k. Formation Priorities

When first establishing a parish liturgy committee or when renewing or re-structuring it, 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 on basic knowledge of the Church's Liturgy and the Liturgical Year
- Commitment to personal learning by reading the Church's liturgical documents
- Practice of committee retreats and weekend study groups
- Dedication to personal daily prayer

Meetings

The committee meets regularly (monthly or bi-monthly). Meetings begin with prayer and reflection. Focused agendas must be prepared beforehand. Discussions around upcoming liturgical seasons, ministry needs, and formation topics are to take place with ample timing. To ensure accountability and follow-up, discussions and decisions need to be documented.

One of the primary purposes of liturgy meetings is to prepare for upcoming liturgical celebrations. Pastors and administrators should use this time to consult with the liturgical committee, especially when considering changes that affect the worship space, the flow of the liturgy, or other practical aspects of its organization. Thoughtful planning and collaboration with the committee help ensure a smooth transition. Furthermore, any modifications should be clearly communicated to the parish community before being implemented.

Relationship to the Archdiocesan Office for Divine Worship

The members of the Liturgical Committee are encouraged to attend programs and workshops offered by the Office for Divine Worship. All members of the committee should be placed on the Office for Divine Worship's email distribution list to receive the Newsletter.

Resources for Parish Liturgy Committees Documents and Rites

Foundational documents

1. “The Liturgy Documents, Volume One, Fifth Edition”, Essential Documents for Parish Worship.

It provides ready access to the following primary documents:

- Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy
- *Dies domini*
- General Instruction of the Roman Missal
- Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds
- Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar
- *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*
- *Redemptionis sacramentum*
- Lectionary for Mass: Introduction
- Book of the Gospels: Introduction
- Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship
- Built of Living Stones
- Fulfilled in Your Hearing
- Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest
- Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence
- Gathered in Steadfast Faith

2. The Book of Blessings

3. The Rites of the Catholic Church: Volume One, Second Edition.

It provides access to the following:

- Christian Initiation (General Introduction)
- National Statutes for the Christian Initiation of Adults
- The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults
- The Order of Baptism of Children
- The Order of Confirmation
- The Order of Penance
- Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery outside Mass
- The Order of Blessing the Oil of Catechumens and of the Sick and of Consecrating the Chrism
- The Order of Celebrating Matrimony
- The Order of Anointing of the Sick and of Their Pastoral Care
- The Order of Christian Funerals

Books

- **Living Liturgy: Spirituality, Celebration and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities** (Liturgical Press), annual
- **The Mystery of Faith: A Study of the Structural Elements of the Order of Mass**, Lawrence Johnson (Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions)
- **Liturgy with Style and Grace**, Gabe Huck and Gerald T. Chinchar (LTP),
- **Guide for Liturgy Committees**, Paul Turner and Michael R. Prendergast, (LTP)
- **The Liturgy Committee Handbook**, Thomas Baker and Frank Ferrone (Twenty-Third Publications)
- **Guide for Celebrating Sunday Mass**, Paul Turner (LTP)
- **Sourcebook for Sundays, Seasons, and Weekdays**, The Almanac for Pastoral Liturgy (LTP), annual

Web Sites

- www.usccb.org – United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- <https://lacatholics.org/departments-ministries/worship-office/> - Office for Divine Worship | LA Catholics
- 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.
- <https://adoremus.org/>

Appendix I

Campus & Church Maintenance

- ☐ Are the parking lot, gathering areas, and church space clean and inviting?
- ☐ Are the locations of restrooms clearly marked so that visitors know where to find them?
- ☐ Do those in wheelchairs have easy access to all parts of the church grounds?
- ☐ Is the church clean?
- ☐ How is the landscape?
- ☐ Are the envelopes in the pews and other materials up to date?
- ☐ Are the posted flyers and other information posted on the boards up to date?
- ☐ Are the Missals properly placed in the pews?
- ☐ Is there trash on the floor (inside or outside)?
- ☐ Are outside areas clear of clutter?
- ☐ Are grounds properly maintained (painted walls peeling off)?
- ☐ Is the Holy Water replaced once a week?
- ☐ Does the sound system work well throughout the church?

Hospitality

- ☐ Are there greeters outside the church, at the church doors, and inside the church welcoming people as they arrive?
- ☐ Would a visitor or newcomer feel welcomed? Would a visitor leave Mass never having been personally greeted, welcomed, and invited to return by at least one other person?
- ☐ Are worship aids or projected materials printed clearly in type that is easily read?
- ☐ Do all who use microphones use them effectively so that all can hear well?

Procession

- ☐ Did the gathering procession look like a procession?
- ☐ Did the ministers walk with dignity?
- ☐ Were the cross, Book of the Gospels, and other items carried and placed with dignity?

- ☐ Did the ministers walk slowly or hurriedly?
- ☐ Did they all move gracefully?

Music

- ☐ Are song numbers clearly marked? Are there enough hymnals in every pew? Can visitors find books and song numbers easily? Were the song numbers announced clearly by the cantor?
- ☐ Was the opening song familiar, known and sung by all, even those in the procession? Or was it brand new?
- ☐ Did the opening song accomplish the task of gathering the assembly?
- ☐ Did the opening song accompany the whole liturgical procession until the ministers arrived at their places?
- ☐ Did the assembly know and sing the Gloria?
- ☐ Did the presider, deacon, and altar servers sing all the music?
- ☐ Did the accompaniment support and enable the full participation of the assembly in sung prayer?
- ☐ Did the assembly sing the Responsorial Psalm well? Did the assembly seem to know the music? Did the assembly know when to sing? Did the assembly sing confidently?
- ☐ Were the verses of the Responsorial Psalm sung or chanted by the cantor?
- ☐ Overall, rate the quality of the musical performance of the Responsorial Psalm by the cantor, choir, and assembly.
- ☐ Did the assembly sing the Gospel Acclamation well? Did the assembly seem to know the music? Did the assembly know when to sing? Did the assembly sing confidently?
- ☐ Was the verse of the Gospel Acclamation sung or spoken?
- ☐ Overall, rate the quality of the musical performance of the Gospel Acclamation by the cantor, choir, and assembly.
- ☐ If the response of the General Intercessions was sung, did the assembly sing the response well? Did the assembly seem to know the music? Did the assembly know when to sing? Did the assembly sing confidently?
- ☐ Did the assembly sing all three Eucharistic Prayer acclamations (Holy, Mystery of Faith, Great Amen)?
- ☐ Did the assembly seem to know the music? Did they sing confidently?
- ☐ Did the musical setting of the acclamations match the feel of the liturgical season?
- ☐ Overall, rate the quality of the musical performance of the Eucharistic Prayer by the cantor, choir, and assembly.
- ☐ Did the assembly sing the Lamb of God confidently?
- ☐ Did the singing of the *Lamb of God* begin as the priest broke the first piece of bread, and did the singing continue through the entire action?
- ☐ After the assembly said, "Lord, I am not worthy...", did the Communion song begin immediately?
- ☐ Was the assembly able to sing the Communion song(s) confidently?
- ☐ Was there a song of praise after Communion that everyone sang?
- ☐ Was there a song of sending forth? Was the song known by the assembly?

Silence

- ☐ Was there a pause after the invitation to the Penitential Rite for people to recall their sins?
- ☐ Was there a pause after the priest says, “Let us Pray” for people to pray before the priest prays the collect?
- ☐ Was there an ample amount of silence before and after the First and Second Readings and before the Responsorial Psalm?
- ☐ Was there silence after the homily?
- ☐ Describe the “quality” of the silence, for example, uncomfortable, deep, rushed, peaceful, etc.
- ☐ Does the assembly know what the role of silence plays during the liturgy?
- ☐ Might there be some catechesis in the bulletin on silence in the liturgy?

Proclamation of the Readings

- ☐ Did the lector/deacon/priest proclaim the reading clearly and confidently?
- ☐ Did they have appropriate eye contact with the assembly?
- ☐ Did they project well, speaking so all could hear?
- ☐ Did they convey the emotion and meaning of the reading?
- ☐ Describe the pace of their reading. Was it too fast or too slow?
- ☐ Describe their posture at the ambo. Did they look attentive? Did they slouch?
- ☐ Did they do anything distracting?

Homily

- ☐ Did the homily relate to the real-life experience, concerns, joys, and fears of the people in the assembly?
- ☐ Did the homily connect the people’s lives with the Scriptures proclaimed at that liturgy?
- ☐ Did the homily strengthen people’s faith to participate in Communion or whatever blessing or sacrament was being celebrated at that liturgy?

Profession of Faith/General Intercessions

- ☐ Did the Profession of Faith feel like a “profession” by the whole assembly?
- ☐ Did the General Intercessions include prayers for the Church, the world, the needs of the community, the needs of those suffering or oppressed?
- ☐ Were the General Intercessions announced by the deacon/lector prayerfully and clearly?
- ☐ Did the presider seem confident in leading the prayer of the people? Did the presider engage the assembly in prayer?
- ☐ Overall did the assembly participate fully, consciously and actively throughout the whole Liturgy of the Word?

Presentation of the Offerings

- ☐ Were the gifts of bread and wine brought to the altar by assembly members from the midst of the assembly or were they simply retrieved from a side table by the priest or assistant?
- ☐ Were the sacred vessels used for the bread and wine of genuine, beautiful, and dignified quality?

- ☐ Was enough bread and wine for the whole assembly brought to the altar?
- ☐ Did the procession of gifts look like a procession? Were the gifts of bread, wine, and money processed to the altar with care and dignity?
- ☐ Was money collected in a graceful, unhurried, but efficient manner?

Eucharistic Prayer

- ☐ Did the priest lead the *Eucharistic Prayer* clearly, reverently, and prayerfully?
- ☐ Describe the pace of the Eucharistic Prayer. Was it spoken too quickly or too slowly?
- ☐ Did the priest chant or sing any parts of the Eucharistic Prayer?
- ☐ Overall, did it feel like the assembly “joined itself with Christ in confessing the great deeds of God and in the offering of Sacrifice?” (GIRM 78)
- ☐ What made it feel that way?

Communion Rite

- ☐ If the Lord’s Prayer was sung, did the whole assembly sing it confidently?
- ☐ Was the Sign of Peace overly lengthened by the priest or other ministers sharing the sign of peace with too many people? If so, did the assembly feel engaged while they waited for the ministers to finish or did the assembly become spectators?
- ☐ Did the *Fraction Rite* seem to take too long? If so, why?
- ☐ Did the *Fraction Rite* look calm? Chaotic? Organized?
- ☐ After the assembly said, “Lord, I am not worthy...”, how long did the assembly have to wait before they began processing to the altar?
- ☐ Were both species available for the whole assembly?
- ☐ Were there enough Communion ministers for the whole assembly so that the procession did not take too long?
- ☐ Did Communion ministers speak clearly and loudly?
- ☐ Was there a good amount of silence after Communion?

Conclusion

- ☐ If there were announcements, were they brief and necessary?

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