

IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE

GATHERED ON A WEEKDAY WHEN EUCHARIST IS NOT CELEBRATED



NATIONAL CENTRE FOR LITURGY

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Gathered on a Weekday When Eucharist is Not Celebrated

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VERITAS

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
INTRODUCTION	9
ONE: GATHERED ON A WEEKDAY WHEN THE EUCHARIST IS NOT CELEBRATED	11
TWO: THE CENTRALITY OF SUNDAY	19
THREE: EAT THIS BOOK! APPROACHING THE SACRAMENTALITY OF THE WORD TODAY	25
FOUR: LITURGY OF THE HOURS IN CATHEDRALS AND PARISHES	29
FIVE: THE COMMUNION RITE AND ‘WITH COMMUNION’	35
SIX: WEEKDAY COMMUNION SERVICES	45
SEVEN: WHEN MASS IS NOT CELEBRATED ON WEEKDAYS	49
EIGHT: LEADING GOD’S PEOPLE IN PRAYER	61
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A: POPULAR DEVOTIONS	117
APPENDIX B: MUSIC RESOURCES FOR LITURGY	119

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Liam M. Tracey OSM
Editor

INTRODUCTION

It is Good for Us to Be Here is a publication of the National Centre for Liturgy.

It brings together the fruits of pastoral–theological–liturgical reflection that has been conducted by the Council for Liturgy of the Irish Bishops’ Conference on how parishes pray on weekdays when they do not have the celebration of the Eucharist.

This reflection crystallised at national conferences held on 3 April and 6 November 2014, and on 30 April 2015, in which two hundred and seventy representatives of all the dioceses of Ireland and of several Church agencies took part.

Conference One, in the form of guided round-table conversations, aired the issues and identified the course for Conferences Two and Three. In Conference One, the participants spoke about faith development and guidance, and the need for user-friendly, flexible resources. They committed to a conversation beyond the room: in the local Church; back in their own dioceses. They commissioned a formation and training manual that could be used in the training and development of non-ordained leaders of public prayer.

It is Good for Us to Be Here collects the papers, presentations and resources that serve to respond to these requirements.

It is acknowledged that across the Church in Ireland, people and parishes are at different starting points in their response to how the community might pray when the celebration of the Eucharist is not possible. This inevitably means that the content of this collection does not hold enough for some and bears too much for others.

What is clear in true discernment is that Jesus Christ, the High Priest, is present always in the power of the Holy Spirit, when the Christian community gathers and prays the Liturgy of the Church. What is clear, too, is that discernment from within sound theology is the best safeguard against poor practice.

It is Good for Us to Be Here is another tool for the Church in Ireland seeking to make informed decisions in a changed landscape.

Danny Murphy
Director
National Centre for Liturgy

ONE

GATHERED ON A WEEKDAY WHEN THE EUCHARIST IS NOT CELEBRATED

Some Theological, Liturgical and Pastoral Considerations

STATEMENT OF THE IRISH BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
APPROVED AT CONFERENCE MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 2015

Foreword

1. The topic of weekday worship has been on the Irish Bishops' Council for Liturgy's agenda for a long time. *Gathered on a Weekday: Some Theological, Liturgical and Pastoral Considerations* is a practical response to the pastoral predicament in which many parishes now find themselves. It simply provides some theological and liturgical markers for those communities who wish to celebrate on weekdays when the celebration of the Eucharist is not possible. The aim is to inform decision-making within the context of the rich Christian tradition at our disposal.

2. It addresses the following in particular:

- ▶ The centrality of the Sunday Eucharist as the point of reference for liturgical celebrations on all other days of the week.
- ▶ The component parts of the liturgy, along with its long-standing and immediate preparation.
- ▶ Options available to Christian communities when they do not have the celebration of the Eucharist.
- ▶ The call of bishops, priests and the laity in responding to new pastoral circumstances.

3. Our hope is that this document will prove helpful to those currently trying to discern forms of weekday worship that will nourish and sustain our faith communities in the years ahead. Good theology is one of our safeguards against poor practice, and this document is offered in that spirit. We are also aware that although the challenge of Sunday celebration without the celebration of the Eucharist is not addressed here, it is a matter that will require much consideration and attention.

4. The Council for Liturgy is committed to supporting, in whatever way it can, all those called to guide and lead liturgical formation at the present time.

An Easter People, A Sunday People

5. Christian people are decidedly a Sunday people. Christians gather with brothers and sisters on Sundays in order to keep memorial of Jesus being raised from the dead on a Sunday; the day which the Jewish people named the 'first day of the week'.

6. Already by the time of the writing of the Book of Revelation, believers in the Lord were distinguishing themselves as people who came together on Sundays. Being Christian ever since

involves the same response – to come together on Sundays and to be immersed in and transformed by the memorial of the Resurrection and of the whole Paschal Mystery.

7. It is at the heart of being the Church to assemble on Sunday and encounter the Lord. The Easter Triduum culminating in Easter Sunday is the annual, great, memorial of the Lord. Thereafter, the Sundays of Easter and every other Sunday are the Church's weekly, no less joyful, Easter celebration.

Sunday Public Worship: Source and Summit of Weekday Worship and Life

8. Christians who are Easter people, Sunday people, may seek to be together for worship on weekdays, too. There is no imperative to do so, save the call for God to sanctify all our days, for all of time.

9. The public worship of the Church on weekdays flows from the vision, experience and empowerment of Sunday's public worship. It serves to enable us, form us and orient us for Sunday worship. It whets the appetite for the fullness of light, joy, festivity and company of the Church reassembled on the following Sunday to offer its constant sacrifice of praise. It, too, manifests all glory to God the Father, in Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Component Parts of Public Worship – the Liturgy – Especially on Sunday

10. The Liturgy of the Church consists of the celebration of the Seven Sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Marriage, Orders, Anointing of the Sick); the Liturgy of the Hours; the Order of Christian Funerals and the Order of Blessings. The Liturgy of the Church, its sacrifice of praise, surpasses every form of popular, private devotion.

11. The centre and high point of the Liturgy of the Church and of the whole Christian life is the celebration of the Eucharist. Here is thanksgiving at the substantial, uninterrupted presence of the Lord, under the eucharistic species of bread and wine.

12. The celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday has particular importance. There is a non-negotiable festal atmosphere. It is the essential forum for the apprenticeship, initiation and sustenance of Christian discipleship. Being Church 'means that we are to be God's leaven in the midst of humanity. It means proclaiming and bringing God's salvation into our world, which often goes astray and needs to be encouraged, given hope and strengthened on the way. The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel' (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 114).

13. Among the component parts of every celebration of the Eucharist and of all the rites of the Church's liturgy are:

1. A gathering of the community, which works to become one in voice, heart and body through sung, spoken and ritual prayer, and through daily witness.
2. Thanksgiving for the Lord who is present within the persons gathered, through the ministry of the presiding ordained celebrant and in God's Word proclaimed and broken.

Preparing the Celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday

14. The celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday, as the centre and high point of the whole Church's life, requires that the greatest care be taken in both its long-standing and immediate preparation.

15. The celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday should manifest a true, substantial gathering of the people. The scheduling of Sunday Eucharist and the number of celebrations in each parish should serve to unite, not scatter, God's people. It is helpful to have neighbouring parishes cooperate on schedules; inward interests and singular convenience are not decisive. It is relevant to ask: how early on Sunday morning is too early to reach the full, conscious, active participation required by the nature of the liturgy? Furthermore, consideration ought to be given to those who work in essential public services and more on Sunday, and how they can be accommodated to celebrate the Eucharist in neighbouring parishes if the schedule in their own parish is not feasible.

16. As the celebration of the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Sacrifice of the Cross is carried out by means of symbols and signs perceptible to the senses, great care must be taken with the elements and forms belonging to the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday. Such care would lead us to:

- ▶ Bread which looks and tastes like bread, and which is large enough to be seen by and to be broken and shared with the assembly.
- ▶ Holy Communion from the chalice for all, so that the faithful who wish to may receive Holy Communion under both kinds, and the faithful who suffer from gluten intolerances may partake in Holy Communion without inconvenience or the public disclosure of their condition.
- ▶ The facilitation of the assembly with the words and music of the acclamations, responses and hymns, in order to participate in singing the Eucharist, since liturgical music is integral to both the congregation's part and the presiding ordained priest's part in celebrating the Eucharist.
- ▶ The assembly being provided with only what it needs to celebrate the Eucharist. Except for persons with hearing impairments, the congregation does not need the texts of the readings from scripture or the full text of the Eucharistic Prayer. Furthermore, it is inappropriate that the choice of Eucharistic Prayer be determined from outside the worshipping community in mass-produced, generic, missalettes.
- ▶ Capable proclaimers of God's Word and sufficient extraordinary ministers for Holy Communion under both kinds, as well as the enlistment and formation of psalmists, cantors and instrumentalists, assistants at the altar, sacristans, collectors, stewards and ministers of welcome, of decoration and environment. In all, let there be men and women, including children, teenagers and young adults and persons representative of the whole faithful who are each capable of and enabled for the given ministry. For all, let there be informed development in their understanding of the liturgy and safeguarded participation and mutual respect.

17. In the teaching of St John Paul II, *Dies Domini: On Keeping the Lord's Day Holy*, the Sunday Eucharist is set out as the model for all other eucharistic celebrations. On Sunday, the celebration of the Eucharist appears more clearly than on other days as the great thanksgiving. The Eucharist we celebrate on Sunday should be characterised by the joy, festivity, unity and hope of Easter.

The Celebration of the Eucharist in General

18. In the celebration of the liturgy, the same Lord that is *encountered* especially through the eucharistic elements of bread and wine is *heard* in the proclamation of God's Word and is *seen* in the gathering of the faithful, the other members of the household of God and of God's people, as well as in the ministry of the presiding ordained celebrant.

19. The substantial, uninterrupted presence of the Lord in and through the elements of Holy Communion arises at the Lord's command to the Church, by the will of the Father and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Here, within the gathered assembly, the ministry of the ordained priest, presiding in the name and person of Christ the head of the Church, is indispensable.

20. This substantial, uninterrupted presence of the Lord within and outlasting the celebration of the Eucharist is played out in the fourfold action of Christ at the Last Supper: he took, blessed, broke and gave. We experience these today, firstly, in the three divine-human actions of:

- a. *Taking* bread and wine (the presentation of the Gifts);
- b. *Blessing* this bread and wine (praying the Eucharistic Prayer from the Preface dialogue to the Great Amen, by which the presiding priest and the whole assembly of the faithful participates in God's consecration of the bread and wine);
- c. *Breaking* the eucharistic bread (the Fraction Rite, in which the bread being broken signifies that the faithful are all of the one body and blood of the Lord).

21. The triple action of *taking*, *blessing* and *breaking* leads to and makes possible the fourth action, which is encountering the Lord in the *giving and receiving* by the assembly of the eucharistic bread and wine.

22. The Church is exacting in her teaching that Holy Communion, as the *giving* and *receiving* of the eucharistic elements, is not separated without just cause from the concurrent celebration of the Eucharistic Prayer; the experience, that is, of the *taking*, the *blessing* and the *breaking* in the one and the same celebration.

Giving and Receiving

Holy Communion of the Faithful Who are Sick, Aged, Housebound or Dying Following the Celebration of the Eucharist

23. The Church is mindful to have special care for people, who, because of a debilitating illness, age or condition, are not able to gather at their church on Sunday in order to commemorate the Resurrection of the Lord.

24. We know from the writings of St Justin Martyr, c. 100–165 CE, that it was the practice and desire of the Church to have Holy Communion brought to those who were unavoidably absent from the celebration of the Eucharist. Parishes today need to ensure they have a sufficient number of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion for this same ministry. The sick, aged, housebound or dying person, and the faithful present with them, may receive Holy Communion under both kinds or in the form of bread or wine alone, as is appropriate.

25. In the Communion Rite in the Liturgy of the Easter Triduum on Holy Thursday, that is the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the priest entrusts the Eucharist from the altar to an appropriate minister, so that, afterwards, it is brought to the sick, the aged, the housebound and the dying at home or in hospital or in a care facility, so that they can take part in Holy Communion.

26. This same rite is applicable to all celebrations of the Eucharist, and especially those on Sundays, wherein the Eucharist is entrusted from the altar of meal and sacrifice (that is, *not* from the tabernacle) during the Communion Rite and brought to people who are sick, aged, housebound or dying.

27. Here, the *giving* and *receiving* of the eucharistic species in Holy Communion is concurrent with the Eucharistic Prayer which has been prayed in the parish church; it is not separated from the essential preceding actions of the *taking*, *blessing* and *breaking* in the community's place of worship. The Holy Communion of the sick, the aged and the housebound and the viaticum of the dying is, in this instance, part of the same Communion Rite, even though it is occurring outside the place of worship.

28. When a priest, deacon or extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion attends the home of a sick, aged or housebound person, he/she uses the appropriate liturgical rite, namely *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, Chapter Three: 'Communion in Ordinary Circumstances'.

29. When a deacon or an extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion attends the home of a dying person, he/she uses *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, Chapter Five, namely 'Viaticum Outside Mass' [excluding those parts belonging to an ordained priest].

30. When a deacon or an extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion attends a sick, aged or dying person in a hospital or care facility, he/she uses: *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, Chapter Three: 'Communion in Ordinary Circumstances', or Chapter Five: 'Viaticum Outside Mass' [excluding those parts belonging to an ordained priest].

31. When a deacon or an extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion attends to several sick, aged or dying persons in a hospital or care facility, he/she uses: *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, Chapter Three: 'Communion in a Hospital or Institution'.

Giving and Receiving

Holy Communion of the Faithful who are Sick, Aged, Housebound or Dying at Times Other than during the Celebration of the Eucharist

32. This is the case when Holy Communion in a home, care facility or hospital is not part of the Communion Rite of the celebration of the Eucharist, as described above, but takes place at another time. Since the faithful who are sick, aged, housebound or dying may receive the Eucharist at any hour, the elements of the Eucharist are taken from what is reserved in the tabernacle.

33. This is one instance of two just causes for separating the *giving and receiving* of the eucharistic elements from the concurrent experience of celebrating the full eucharistic rite inclusive of the preceding, essential actions of the *taking*, the *blessing* and the *breaking*.

34. The primary purpose of the tabernacle in a church is to reserve the Eucharist for the Holy Communion of the sick, the aged, the housebound or the dying outside the celebration of the Eucharist. It is not to reserve hosts for their distribution to subsequent congregations during other celebrations of the Eucharist.

35. Indeed, there is no indication in the *Roman Missal* that the *giving and receiving* of the eucharistic species in Holy Communion during the celebration of the Eucharist should normally be with hosts taken from the tabernacle. Rather, the contrary is stated, namely:

It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord's Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in cases where this is foreseen, they partake of the chalice, so that even by means of the signs Communion may stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated. (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 85)

Giving and Receiving

Holy Communion of the Faithful Assembled in the Parish Church Without the Celebration of the Eucharist

36. A second just cause for separating the *giving and receiving* of the eucharistic elements from the concurrent experience of praying the Eucharistic Prayer (the *taking*, the *blessing* and the *breaking*), is the unavailability of an ordained priest to preside at the celebration of the Eucharist.

37. The *giving and receiving* of Holy Communion to the faithful assembled in parish churches outside the celebration of the Eucharist requires the adjudication and permission of the diocesan bishop.

38. Notwithstanding the variety of reasons why a priest might not be available for the celebration of the Eucharist on weekdays (sickness, annual holidays, day off, leave of absence, the general shortage of priests), bishops are restricted by Church law in the conditions and circumstances in which they may grant permission for Holy Communion outside the celebration of the Eucharist to the faithful assembled in parish churches. Furthermore, if a bishop does grant permission, it requires his ongoing oversight and regulation.

39. The bishop's permission is restrictive because the celebration of the Eucharist is at the very nature and heart of the community. When the *giving and receiving* in Holy Communion is decoupled from the *taking*, the *blessing* and the *breaking*, the integrity of the eucharistic rite, in faithfulness to the Lord's fourfold command, is compromised. The Church cannot envisage, as normal, the Holy Communion of the faithful gathered in assembly taking place apart from their concurrent celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

40. In the event that on select occasions and circumstances, after prudent discernment with the Priests' Council, the Diocesan Pastoral Council or equivalent bodies, the diocesan bishop gives permission for this to happen, he is to lay down general and particular norms and ensure clear understanding of the primacy and essential difference of the celebration of the Eucharist.

How do Parishes Pray When They do Not Have the Celebration of the Eucharist?

41. The pattern of a daily gathering for public worship is long established in the Church in Ireland. Here, faithfulness to the Gospel is interwoven with social, cultural and interpersonal motives. Indeed, Easter people, Sunday people seek to be together for worship on weekdays.

42. The daily prayer of the Church consists in the celebration of the Eucharist with its cycle of readings and prayers *and* the Liturgy of the Hours (especially Morning, Evening and Night Prayer). Just as there is a given cycle of texts for the celebration of the Eucharist for each day, so, too, there are given 'hours'; a given cycle of hymns, psalms, readings and prayers to be prayed at different times of the day.

43. It is increasingly common that the celebration of the Eucharist is not possible every weekday in all parishes. This is because an ordained priest is unavailable to preside over the celebration in the name and person of the Lord. When the celebration of the Eucharist is not possible, a congregation can still share fully in the proper given liturgy of the day, in praying one of the 'hours' of that day.

44. The Lord is present when people pray the Liturgy of the Church other than the Eucharist, for he said: 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them' (Mt 18:20). Similarly, he is present when the scriptures are read, for when the scriptures are read in sacred assembly, God speaks to God's people and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel (cf. *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 27, 29).

45. When the Church gathers to celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours (especially Morning, Evening or Night Prayer) or the Liturgy of the Word, which has been assigned to a particular day, the Lord truly is with his people. He is teaching them. He is nourishing them. He is sustaining them. He is increasing their appetite for their communion with him in the *taking*, the *blessing*, the *breaking*, the *giving* and *receiving* at the celebration of the Eucharist, the sacrifice of the Mass, especially on Sundays.

46. When a parish does not have the celebration of the Eucharist on weekdays, people who wish should continue to gather and encounter the Lord in his Word and in the assembly, prayer and witness of God's people. With such gathering, they will help sustain the faith life of their community and support one another.

47. They ought to celebrate God's Word in all its richness, in good proclamation and liturgical song, and so help to build up and enhance the greater celebration and breaking open and witness to God's Word, which is Sunday's Eucharist.

48. It is good practice to have lay faithful in each parish to serve and assist those who wish to gather and pray on weekdays when the celebration of the Eucharist is not possible. It will be essential to form these as leaders of public prayer, particularly of celebrations of God's Word and of Morning, Evening and Night Prayer. Permanent deacons, where available, have a part to play as leaders of public prayer, when the celebration of the Eucharist is not possible.

49. It will also be useful and important to provide resources and assistance for weekday assemblies to sing the Word of God, namely, psalms, canticles, hymns and acclamations in praise of the Lord.

50. In addition to praying one of the 'hours' of the day, or the given Liturgy of the Word from the celebration of the Eucharist of the day, it is desirable to have occasional celebrations of the Word of special intercession and community focus that are rooted in the patterns of liturgical worship and the Sunday commemoration of the Lord and his Resurrection. These celebrations ought to be attuned to the liturgical season and day. They can be seen as opportunities to identify new gifts in and for the community. We can see them also as the invitation and means to a renewed participation in Sunday's celebration of the Eucharist.

51. When people gather to pray on weekdays on which they cannot have the celebration of the Eucharist, let them thank God for all who serve the life of faith in the Church in Ireland and beyond: parents, parishioners, parish teams and pastoral workers, catechists and those who provide spiritual accompaniment, diocesan councils and faith development services, teachers of theology, shepherds and pastors of souls. Let us pray earnestly that there are new and eager labourers for God's harvest always, especially ordained priests, to serve the celebration of the Eucharist in the name and person of Jesus, the Lord. The task of making and sustaining Christians through the power of the Holy Spirit belongs to the whole Church. The call of Christ to serve him and his Church as ordained priests, equally, belongs to the whole Church.

T W O

THE CENTRALITY OF SUNDAY

LIAM M. TRACEY OSM

Introduction

How to live in time is a question that haunts human beings. Time structures and gives order to human existence, yet it also gives a sense of life's limits. The passing of days, months and years is common to all, and the desire to make sense of its passage and to mark its inevitability has characterised human togetherness. Time's passing and how it is measured and marked by a group is crucial to creating and sustaining its common identity. For Christians too, time is constitutive to their identity, time for them is a gift of God, a God who creates and who will bring time to its fulfilment in Christ Jesus. Louis-Marie Chauvet, the celebrated French theologian, has summarised this relationship: 'For in the same way Baptism and Eucharist are the memorial of the resurrection through the sacramental medium of the bread and wine, Sunday is the memorial of the resurrection through the sacramental medium of time (the day that Sunday is) and more exactly of the assembly that characterises that day.'¹

A Historical Note

Early Christians, like their Jewish neighbours and relatives, continued to celebrate the saving actions of God in history, events occurring in time, when God intervened to redeem and liberate God's people. While these events happened in the past, their saving effects were seen to be active even now, and most especially in the ritual remembering of them. The most basic unit of time is probably the period of twenty-four hours that we call the day, especially in societies where living and surviving was a daily toil, from morning till nightfall as we learn from the parable of the workers in the vineyard. Moments of the day were set aside for prayer and in these daily practices, Christians were probably sharing Jewish customs in giving a structure to daily time. Sunday is perhaps the most characteristic day of the Christian week, but not the only one; Christians, like Jews, fasted on two days of the week but differed from Jewish practices perhaps in an attempt to distinguish themselves from Judaism.² Liturgists now argue that the celebration of Sunday developed as Christian communities grew and shaped their identity alongside and sometimes in opposition to their Jewish neighbours and friends.

The first generations of Christians, especially those coming from a Jewish background, would have continued to celebrate the Sabbath and, as liturgists now agree, perhaps did so for several generations, certainly longer than previously thought. The relationship between the Sabbath and Sunday became a key issue in early Christian communities, and this is reflected in the arguments found in the Gospels over the attitude of Jesus toward the Sabbath and how it was to be later observed.

1. Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 35.
2. For a full discussion of the origins and development of Sunday see Paul F. Bradshaw and Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Origins of Feasts: Fasts and Seasons in Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 2011), 3–28.

This may well reflect later Gentile-Christian concerns who wished to adopt a different approach and clearly mark a separation from the Sabbath, and with it Judaism. Presumably these Jewish-Christian groups continued to gather on a Friday evening for the Sabbath meal, which marked the beginning of the Sabbath and rested from all activity on the Sabbath day. These meals were celebrated in a domestic setting and it seems that communal celebrations in the synagogue only developed later in the first century. So the Sabbath has its origins as a day of rest, mirroring the rest of God after the action of creation, rather than a day for communal gathering. Perhaps at the end of the Sabbath, i.e. Saturday evening, they then celebrated the Eucharist. Though this hypothesis too, is disputed by some scholars who see this as only developing later. Because of external pressures, like local curfews, outbreaks of persecution and communities becoming too large for communal meals, this gathering on a Saturday evening is eventually replaced by a Sunday morning gathering, one that is eventually without a full meal.

This confusing state of affairs is perhaps summed up best by Andrew McGowan, who writes that: ‘despite some uncertainty about its importance in the first few decades after Jesus, Sunday soon found a familiar place in the lives of Christian communities. It seems to have involved the celebration of the eucharistic meal, perhaps held on Saturday nights (counted as the first part of Sunday by Jewish reckoning) at first, thus not competing with but complementing Sabbath observance for Jewish Christians and others inclined to see the two days as complementary.’³ What is clear now, however, is that Sunday is not the Christian Sabbath, and that the two certainly in their origins are different – Sabbath being a day of rest and Sunday a day of communal gathering which celebrates the goodness of God and comes to be associated with the resurrection of Jesus. Lost in this shift of focus is the earlier emphasis on Sunday as the day that looks forward to the fulfilment of time when the Lord will come in glory.

In 321 CE, the Roman emperor Constantine promulgated a law ordering all to rest from work on Sunday, with an exception granted to farmers. It is not clear whether this was a response to Christian requests or was a measure taken by Constantine on his own initiative. With the Eucharist now being universally celebrated on a Sunday morning, the shape of Sunday as we know it today in many parts of the world is now fixed. Though it will take a number of centuries for Sunday as a day of rest to become the primary image of the day, much greater emphasis is given to its character as a day of communal gathering.

The Titles of Sunday

In 1998, St John Paul II issued his Apostolic Letter on the Lord’s Day, entitled *Dies Domini*, (hereafter *DD*), the title taken from the first words of the letter, the Lord’s Day.⁴ Key to interpreting this letter is its subtitle: *On Keeping the Lord’s Day Holy*. Every parish liturgy group would do well to study and reflect on this important letter. It gives a real sense of what it means to celebrate Sunday as a Christian community, where the Risen Lord is encountered in the midst of the eucharistic assembly, and once more the depth of the paschal mystery which gives meaning to Christian life is experienced.

A useful way of understanding the place of Sunday for contemporary Christian life is to explore the titles given to this day by Christian tradition. Sunday is not just one thing, but has several faces;

3. Andrew B. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 223.

4. The letter can be found on the Vatican website, w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1998/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_05071998_dies-domini.html.

as they become more obvious the reason why the community is called to keep this day holy become clearer. For far too long Sunday has been seen as a duty, and presented as an obligation. This letter reminds Christians that it is also a privilege to keep this day holy.

The five chapters of *DD* refer to Sunday as the Day of [...] which is a particular characteristic of that day. **Chapter One** is the Day of the Lord, which links the creation with the new creation shown forth in the resurrection of Christ. It is in this context that the Sabbath as a joyful day of rest is discussed. However, rest is not seen as an interruption of work, but rather a rejoicing in all that God the Creator has done, which in turn inspires the celebration and thanksgiving of the wonders that God has worked. **Chapter Two** is the Day of Christ, who is the Risen Lord and intimately linked to the celebration of Sunday. The resurrection is seen as central to the meaning of the Lord's Day. Creation, rest and the resurrection are not separated but are profoundly linked. **Chapter Three** discusses the Day of the Church, and special emphasis is given to the Sunday assembly of the faithful, where Christians gather to celebrate the Eucharist, the heart of Sunday and the inspiration for their mission in the week ahead. **Chapter Four** is the Day of Humanity, where the root of human joy is found in the risen life of Christ, the image of what God calls us to be. Particular emphasis is given to Sunday as a day of solidarity through the sharing of the Eucharist. **Chapter Five** explores the Day of Days, where Sunday is presented as the primordial Christian celebration and reveals the meaning of times itself, which, of course, for the Christian is Christ himself – the beginning and the end of time.

The Day of the Lord

In its first paragraph, *DD* recalls this ancient name for Sunday: 'The Lord's Day – as Sunday was called from apostolic times – has always been accorded special attention in the history of the church because of its close connection with the very core of the Christian mystery.' While biblical scholars dispute the exact meaning of this phrase found in the Book of Revelation (1:10), there is no doubt that later Christian tradition saw this as referring to Sunday, and more especially to the meetings of the Christian community, on this day. The title has a strong eschatological sense, pointing to when the Lord will be revealed and judge the nations. It also reveals who Jesus is to the Christian community, linking his resurrection to his lordship. 'And when Christians spoke of the "Lord's Day", they did so giving to this term the full sense of the Easter proclamation: "Jesus Christ is Lord" [Phil 2:11; cf. Acts 2:36, 1 Cor 2:3]. Thus Christ was given the same title that the Septuagint used to translate, and what, in the revelation of the Old Testament, was the unutterable name of God: YHWH' (*DD* 21).

The Day of Resurrection

According to the Gospel writers, the resurrection of Jesus occurred on the 'first day of the week' (Mk 16:2). Christians in the second century, and right throughout the history of Christianity, have seen this resurrection event as the foundation of Christian gathering on Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist. *DD* focuses on this central Christian mystery, the letter constantly returns to the resurrection of Jesus as a weekly Easter, a day of joy and the foundation of the Christian life. It continues the work of the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council and the Modern Liturgical Movement going right back to the celebrated talk of Lambert Beauduin (1873–1960) in 1909 and the insights of Odo Casel (1886–1948) that the liturgy is none other than a celebration of the saving work of Christ. Christians are called to be active participants in this ritual action, where the Risen Christ encounters

his beloved people. The passing of Christ from death to new life is the grounding of every Christian hope and the promise of what we one day hope to share. This is the centre of the Christian faith and it is the kernel of the Sunday celebration. Sunday is not just a holy day, or the day we go to Church – it is the day of resurrection

DD notes that the resurrection of Jesus ‘... is a wondrous event which is not only absolutely unique in human history, but which lies at the very heart of the mystery of time. In fact, “all time belongs of [Christ] and all the ages”, as the evocative Liturgy of the Easter Vigil recalls in preparing the paschal candle’ (*DD* 2).

The Day of the Eucharist

Profoundly linked to Sunday is the celebration of the Eucharist. Indeed the three coordinates of Sunday are Resurrection, Assembly and Eucharist. *DD* affirms that the assembly gathered to celebrate the Eucharist is the heart of Sunday: ‘This promise of Christ never ceases to resound in the Church as the fertile secret of her life and the wellspring of her hope. As the day of Resurrection, Sunday is not only the remembrance of a past event: it is a celebration of the living presence of the Risen Lord in the midst of his own people’ (*DD* 31). This is something that Christians are summoned to celebrate in a communal fashion; it is not enough to do so privately and in the depth of one’s heart. We are called through the dignity of our Baptism to celebrate this day as the People of God. The Church is made manifest on Sunday, as an assembly convoked by Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a witness to the whole world of their salvation in Christ who came to save all people. The Risen Lord is present inviting the Assembly to share his word and to participate in the breaking of bread, it is truly an epiphany of the Church (*DD* 34).

The Day of the Christian Assembly

Gordon Lathrop has written eloquently on the nature and meaning of the Christian assembly as the gathered Church. He notes that the ‘Assembly, a gathering together of participating persons, constitutes the most basic symbol of Christian worship. All the other symbols and symbolic actions of liturgy depend upon this gathering being there in the first place. No texts are read, no preaching occurs, no hymns are sung, no Eucharist is held without an assembly, however small or large this gathering of persons may be. The event we call Baptism brings a person into this assembly.’⁵

The Church is this gathered assembly; it is on Sunday gathered to celebrate the Eucharist, the sacrament of the Risen Christ that the Church is shown to the world and witnesses to the power of its Risen Lord. ‘It is important therefore that they come together to express fully the very identity of the Church, the *ekklesia*, the assembly called together by the Risen Lord who offered his life “to reunite the scattered children of God” (Jn 11:52). They have become “one” in Christ (cf. Gal 3:28) through the gift of the Spirit. This unity becomes visible when Christians gather together: it is then that they come to know vividly and to testify to the world that they are the people redeemed, drawn “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rv 5:9)’ (*DD* 31). The salvation brought about by the Risen Christ is to gather the scattered children of God, so the Sunday Eucharist is a place of unity where this goal is celebrated and realised. The celebration of the Eucharist, the great act of thanksgiving, is the response of the community to the gift of Sunday and all that it represents for them.

5. Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 21.

Hearing the proclaimed Word of God in this assembly leads Christians to live out this encounter with the rest of humanity who are our brothers and sisters; it is a call and a challenge to solidarity, to ‘... make the Eucharist the place where fraternity becomes practical solidarity, where the last are the first in the minds and attentions of the brethren, where Christ himself – through the generous gifts from the rich to the very poor – may somehow prolong in time the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves’ (*DD* 71). This profound sense of assembly that Sunday represents and fosters is a challenge to all our notions of faith as a private affair between the person and their God. Sunday is a public event, a public witness and a public statement of who Christians are and are called to be in the world in which they live. We are not saved on our own, we do not practice our Christianity on our own and we are not members of the Body of Christ on our own. We are part of the people of God.

The Day of Hope

The eighth day is a title given to Sunday by some early Christian writers. Not only is Sunday the first day of the week and the day of resurrection, it is the eighth day and its suggestions of a new creation in Christ and the future destiny of Christians. The title is linked to the end time, and also the day of the Lord. To share the eucharistic table is to share in the banquet set by the Lord of Hosts, and to proclaim our faith that he will come in glory. This roots a hope that is foundational to Christian identity and is nourished on Sunday when the community witnesses and celebrates what it aspires to become. This anticipation of what God wishes the world to become is a call to live in hope and also to work for its just implementation. ‘Renewed and nourished by this intense weekly rhythm, Christian hope becomes the leaven and the light of human hope’ (*DD* 38). Andrew McGowan has suggested that ‘The explicit basis for observance of the first day in the earliest Christian sources had to do with history and the resurrection, and if there were a cosmic dimension it had to do not so much with the origins of this world but with the “new creation” of the “eighth day”’⁶

Conclusion

Gathering as a Christian assembly on Sunday with its celebration of the Eucharist gives a real insight into the Christian understanding of time. Time is a gift of the Creator God who gathers people to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus the Lord, not as a past event but as a living reality for us today. Christ’s resurrection stands at the heart of all Christian worship, inviting the Christian community to celebrate their salvation in Christ and to move forward with confidence, assured of the presence of the Holy Spirit. As *DD* recalls, it has implications for the whole of the Christian life: ‘Sunday in a way becomes a synthesis of the Christian life and a condition for living it well’ (*DD* 81). Sunday is not just a time for the community and its members to rest, but is a renewal of humanity itself.

6. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 222.

T H R E E

EAT THIS BOOK! APPROACHING THE SACRAMENTALITY OF THE WORD TODAY

SÉAMUS O'CONNELL*

'O mortal, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the House of Israel.' So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then I ate it; and in my mouth it was as sweet as honey. He said to me: 'Mortal, go to the house of Israel and speak my very words to them.' (Ezekiel 3:1-4)

Word and Presence: Two Stories

My father was a man of few words. The day I left home to come to Maynooth, he appeared as I was leaving for the train. After some small-talk, he quietly remarked, 'You can always come home!' That was precisely forty years ago. He is long dead, but I have never forgotten those words. They have remained with me; in them, not only do I hear him, but in them he is present with his acceptance and encouragement and welcome. Twenty-five years after his death, his word still is creating 'home' – that place of genuine warmth and welcome that permits us to become ourselves. In his word, he is present. Even though he is gone, his word still renders him present.

Hermann Volk (1903–88) was bishop of the German Diocese of Mainz. In contrast to my father, he was not a retiring person! As a young parish priest he had held his line in Nazi Germany, later becoming Professor of Theology in Münster, before being elected Bishop of Mainz in 1962, just in time to play an active role in the Council, and afterwards guide the people and priests of his church through the turbulent years after the Council. Paul VI made him a cardinal in 1973. He resigned as Bishop of Mainz in 1982. In 1985, St John Paul II invited him as an auditor to the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops marking the twentieth anniversary of Vatican II. The pastorally robust Cardinal – himself a Council Father – had plenty to say about it, but auditors have no speaking rights. He still sought permission to speak, but was refused. In his frustration, he shouted to his old acquaintance Karol Wojtyła, 'Next time, I'll send my soutane!' The pope smiled wryly, and Cardinal Volk got to speak. Presence without word was not enough.

These two stories give us a way of looking at the Word of God: we see that the word that is truly from another, not only evokes the memory of the other, but renders the other present. Conversely, having the other present without the possibility of a word, is less than that presence merits. This initial perspective on the reality to the human word in our lives – the word evokes a real presence of the other and the real presence of the other demands the possibility of a word – provides a window on the reality of God's Word in our lives.¹

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1. On the metaphorical character of the expression, 'Word of God', see footnote 2.

God's Word and Us

We have just seen how the real presence of another person demands the possibility of a word. It might be more accurate to say, the real presence of the other demands that one communicate.² Of course, being addressed by anyone is no guarantee that we will hear. My speaking does not constrain the other to listen. So too with God.

It is a fundamental insight of how Christians have come to view the world – in other words, of Christian faith – that the Lord dwells within the person and among us. We call this the divine indwelling. We hear Paul not only bearing witness to this, but founding his life and mission on this reality. To the Galatians he can say:

It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. (Gal 2:20)

And he immediately continues:

And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:20)

For Paul, Christ is not only *within* him, but *living, alive* in him. Furthermore, this life of Christ in him constitutes his life now. Christ has given himself to Paul. Paul has been told (by others) that Christ give his life for him, but that is not the whole story. The whole story, and the real story, is that this Christ has been raised from the dead and Paul knows this because he has experienced Christ rising up within himself. He has experienced Christ within himself. Christ has been proclaimed to Paul; in other words, the word about Christ has been told to Paul.³ When Christ reveals himself to Paul – when he ‘appears’ to Paul, Paul experiences Christ for himself.⁴ The Risen Lord is present to Paul in the Spirit. Thus we have Paul tell the Roman parishes (communities):

Ye did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but ye have received a spirit of adoption. [So] when we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God ... (Rm 8:15-16)

The Holy Spirit is welling up within the Roman Christians in their communal and personal prayer. So he can continue:

the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. (Rm 8:26)

As Paul will later tell the Galatians:

because ye are [God's] children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’

2. Communication is not just a matter of words, it is also gestures, gifts, actions. Some of our deepest *communication*, indeed our deepest communion, with each other is beyond words. It is wordless, but none the less real.

3. This can be seen as a mirror of what happens in the liturgy: the word about God and about Christ is proclaimed to the assembly.

4. This too mirrors the journey and the call of the liturgy, that we discover for ourselves the realities that have been proclaimed to us.

The prayer which rises up in the hearts of the Romans and of the Galatians bears witness to the presence of the Spirit and therefore the presence of Christ within them, individually and corporately. Here is the foundational reality of God's presence within us. Theologically, it can be put like this:

The Trinity is present within us as the source of our being on every level. Each level of life from the most physical to the most spiritual is sustained by the divine presence. To do [celebrate] liturgy or to pray while thinking that God is absent will prevent us from relating properly to the divine presence.⁵

We therefore have both a human (or anthropological) and a theological context for the sacramentality of the word: God is always present in us. In fact, we cannot live unless God lives in us.⁶ God's Word is therefore is both a word that comes to us from God, and it is a word that comes to us most deeply from within ourselves.⁷ In fact, if it does not come from within ourselves it cannot be truly God's Word for us. It remains the word of another.

Thus the Word of God is GIVEN: it comes from beyond us, and from our deepest and truest selves. This given-ness and giftedness of the word is expressed liturgically in our responses to the readings in the liturgy. To the lector's proclamation, 'The Word of the Lord', the assembly responds, 'Thanks be to God'. We do not say, 'What a wonderful word' and stop there. We effectively say, 'What a wonderful word *God* has given us! Let us give thanks to God!' The same holds for the Gospel: to the priest's or deacon's proclamation 'The Gospel of the Lord', the gathered people respond, 'Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ'. The good news comes from Christ. In him and through him has God uttered his definitive word.⁸

The Word of God as Metaphor

Our reflection thus far has been based on an assumption that when God speaks, he speaks like us. But in a real sense, God is *not* like us. In fact, were God like us (finite and limited, time-bound, location-bound), God would not be God! Therefore when we speak about God's Word, we are looking at things from our (human) perspective. We have no other way to look at the things of God.⁹ Therefore when Jews and Christians speak about the 'word' or the 'mouth' of God, we are using metaphors. We are speaking of one reality in terms of another.

Metaphors are very important in human communication. We say things like 'she has a heart of gold' or 'you are the apple of my eye'. We talk of 'the elephant in the room' and of 'blankets of snow'. We say that somebody has 'kicked the bucket' or has 'given us something to chew on'. All these images express one reality in terms of another. They also seek to convey something essential of the reality that is communicated. Like everything human, they have their limits. We know this.

5. Thomas Keating, ed., *The Divine Indwelling: Centering Prayer and its Development* (New York: Lantern Books, 2001), 3.

6. Of course, that our life is a life from God and with God is not something that can be perceived by everyone. In fact our growth and progress on the way of faith, on human and spiritual journey is marked by our growing appreciation of the presence of God to us is more and more present to us. Thomas Keating OCSO puts it well: 'As we progress on the journey, God is more and more present to us' (ibid., 2).

7. Here we see the fundamental challenge: to appreciate both the transcendence and the immanence of the otherness of God.

8. The parallel with our reception of the Eucharist is not to be lost: the minister says, 'The Body of Christ!' We respond, 'Amen'. Our response to the GIFT of the Lord's body is to welcome that body for what is – as the Lord's gift of himself for us and his call for us to remember what we are: 'the body of Christ and individually members of it' (1 Cor 12:27) with all that is entailed therein.

9. To cite Thomas Aquinas, *quidquid recipitur, ad modum recipientis recipitur* (everything that is received, is received in the manner of the receiver), *De Veritate*, Q. 10, a. 4c.

Would you look for a 'blanket of snow' among sheets and duvets? 'Hearts of gold' are not for sale in the jewellers. Precisely because it is metaphor, even expressions as important 'the word of God' or 'the body of Christ' have their limits. When we do fail to appreciate their limits, and reduce them to mere labels, then we rob them of their power and their ability to be in the service of the mysteries of God. An example: if we see the 'Body of Christ' too literally, we end up effectively replacing 'Body of Christ' with the 'Flesh of Jesus' and all the distractions that can entail. Similarly, if we, *in a facile way*, equate the words of the scriptures with the Word of God, we risk not hearing the Word of God, because being under the illusion that once we have God's Word, we no longer seek to hear his Word which is spoken in our hearts, in our lives, in the life of the Church, in the liturgy, and in the world. This latter danger, that of shallow overuse, is particularly present in communities of faith and results in all sorts of tyrannies and dead ends.

The Word of God and Scriptures

In *Dei Verbum*, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, the Second Vatican Council, was at pains to teach that God does not merely send us words, but that God gives us himself. This is the wonder and our good news. Our faith is not that our 'god' has sent us some message or messenger from the heavens. No, our God has given us himself: 'in his goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal himself ...' (*DV* § 2). It is in this dynamic that Ezekiel perceives his prophetic call (see Ez 3:1-4, cited above): he has to eat the scroll. The scroll and its words have to become part of him. Only then can he proclaim God's 'very words' to the House of Israel. The scriptures are the 'sacrament' of God's Word; when they are consumed they render God's Word present in the prophet.

However, God's self-gift to us did not finish with the gift of his word to the prophets. As the Letter to the Hebrews puts it 'Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son ...' (Heb 1:1-2) God's overture to us took flesh in Jesus (see Jn 1:14). In him God has spoken definitively. In him, who, in the resurrection, is poured into hearts, God speaks, heart to heart, soul to soul, body to body. This Christ, our bother, is the sacrament of God. The scriptures and – in a privileged way – the Gospels, when they are opened and welcomed, occasion anew the welling up of the living Christ within us. It is a 'word' that comes from with and that arrives from within. It is always from God and from God's Son. It always ours.

Just as the Bread of Life remains inert until it finds a home in our lives, so the word of the scriptures remains a dead letter until it takes root in our hearts. God gives us himself. He loves us enough and is faithful enough to risk waiting for us to respond.

FOUR

LITURGY OF THE HOURS IN CATHEDRALS AND PARISHES

COLUMBA MCCANN OSB

This Contribution

The material that follows was written as a talk addressed to staff members of cathedrals from around Ireland as part of a seminar on the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours in cathedrals. Virtually all of it can be applied, with appropriate adaptation, to parishes, since the cathedral church is, in a sense, a parish church writ large. Since there are a number of 'hours' that can be celebrated each day, consideration is mostly limited here, for practical purposes, to Evening Prayer. I ask the reader's indulgence for the fact that this contribution may read more like the text of a speech than an article to be read at a desk or in an armchair.

The Situation Today in Ireland

What do we think of when we hear of the 'Divine Office'? Possibly we think of priests praying the breviary on their own, or we think of religious brothers or sisters praying the Divine Office in community. When we hear of 'sung Vespers', we might think of monasteries and seminaries. Vespers are not part of ordinary cathedral or parish life in Ireland.

We might ask: why is this the case? Need it be so? I think of places I have visited over the years: Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris has been celebrating a popular form of Sunday Evening Prayer for decades, and it is very well attended. Moving over to Germany, a visit to Munster Cathedral on an ordinary weekday brought me to a simple Evening Prayer, sung by the people, led by a cantor and an organist. Most Anglican cathedrals have some form of Evensong, ranging from the very elaborate to something simple. Westminster Cathedral has daily Vespers. The Anglican cathedral in Durham has a simple form of Matins, sometimes with just a handful of people present. Some parishes around Dublin have Morning Prayer before Mass. This could become the basis of a daily liturgy when there is no Mass. Back in the 1980s one Dublin parish was using Night Prayer to conclude parish meetings in the evening. More recently, someone in another parish showed me a form of sung Evening Prayer which he introduced in his parish for use during Lent and Easter. He said it was well attended and he said that people liked it.

Unfortunately in Ireland, aside from these rarer examples, the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours in parishes is a largely alien idea. It is not part of our lived Church life at the moment. It might even be that, aside from rites of passage such as Baptisms, weddings and funerals, in most parishes, and even in cathedrals, we in the Irish Church really know of no other liturgy except the Mass. We might say that, for Catholics, the Mass is the diamond in our liturgical crown; but the problem in Ireland is that often we are left with the diamond, and no liturgical crown within which to set it.

Where We Came from and How We Got Here

Why is the Liturgy of the Hours not a normal part of our ecclesial experience in Ireland? Was this always the case? Was there a time when some form of popular Evening Prayer was part of the experience of at least some of the People of God, and not just the preserve of very particular communities such as convents, seminaries and monasteries? Could there be a different way of envisaging the future?

If you travel eastwards and roll back many centuries to look at the earliest well-established patterns of a daily office you do indeed find monastic communities gathering for daily prayer, for example the monastic communities in the desert in Egypt, back in the fourth century. Whether you would really call it a sung liturgy is debatable. One well-known example, mentioned by John Cassian (who gives what may be a rather idealised description of such an office in Books 2 and 3 of his *Institutes*), was a case of one person chanting some psalms, one after the other, while everyone listened, stopping occasionally for meditation and prayer. Or you might get a series of readings, interspersed with prayer. ‘Very low-key’ is probably a good way of describing what we know about the earliest offices conducted by small monastic communities.

But we know of examples from around the same time of a popular form of daily prayer centred around the towns and cities. The centre of the local church was the cathedral. Before the Middle Ages there weren’t really parishes as such. The diocese was the basic unit, and the cathedral, served by the bishop and his clergy, was the liturgical gathering place. Instead of one or two people chanting their way through the Psalter while others listened, you had a very different style: people gathered in the morning and in the evening to sing a small number of psalms, which they probably knew off by heart. They tended to sing the same things every day, and with gusto. With the bishop and many clergy present, there was a certain amount of ceremonial. There were processions and favourite hymns. The nearest equivalent from more recent times that comes to my mind is my childhood memory of May or October devotions: we all knew the prayers and the hymns. We enjoyed joining in. And the whole point was that the singing really didn’t change much. We all knew our part. I guess that, while evening devotions are a fairly modern invention, the atmosphere of the early cathedral office might not have been unlike them in terms of fervour, ease of participation and popular appeal.

There was indeed a time when, at least in some locations, Evening Prayer was seen as something belonging to the whole people of God. The famous church historian Eusebius of Caesarea wrote in the early fourth century:

It is surely no small sign of God’s power that throughout the whole world in the churches of God at the morning rising of the sun and at the evening hours, hymns, praises, and truly divine delights are offered to God. God’s delights are indeed the hymns sent up everywhere on earth in his Church at the times of morning and evening.

We can take the phrases ‘the whole world’ and ‘everywhere on earth’ with a grain of salt, but it appears that some form of popular office was widespread, at least in the view of Eusebius. We know that the *Gloria*, which we in the Roman Rite sing at Mass, was originally a hymn widely used in the East as part of the morning office – one of those texts sung so often that people would have known it off by heart.

We know that as the centuries rolled on, the longer monastic office had its influence on general Church practice. The offices gradually became longer and more complex. When, in the Middle Ages,

dioceses were subdivided into parishes, local priests found they did not have the resources to put together such a demanding liturgy at local level. The sensible thing might have been to come with a simpler version that could be used in the parish. This is what the Anglicans eventually did many centuries later with Anglican Matins and Evensong, producing a form of the Liturgy of the Hours that has remained very much alive until today. Instead, clergy tended to take the most immediate solution, not particularly well thought out: they did what they always did when they couldn't make it to the cathedral – they recited it on their own. So for many centuries, the experience in most local churches is that the Liturgy of the Hours is celebrated only by religious communities, or recited by priests on their own. Across Europe, Sunday Vespers did remain a constant in many cathedrals right into the twentieth century. I am unsure about the more recent history in Ireland. Did Sunday Vespers revive in Catholic cathedrals in Ireland after Catholic emancipation? Or did the Italianate devotions beloved of the likes of Cardinal Cullen fill the gap? I have no real research on this, but anecdotal evidence is that Sunday Vespers was common enough in Ireland before Vatican II. I suspect that the arrival of evening Mass put an end to many other evening gatherings, be they Sunday or weekday. It's ironic that Sunday Vespers may have largely died out just when the Council was trying to promote it.

New Proposals after the Second Vatican Council

The liturgical context addressed by the Second Vatican Council was one in which the Liturgy of the Hours was largely a clerical or monastic experience. In this situation, the Council said that 'Pastors of souls should see to it that the principal hours, especially Vespers, are celebrated in common in church on Sundays and on the more solemn feasts' (SC 100). *The General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours (GILH)*, given at the beginning of the *Roman Breviary*, takes up the teaching of the Council and speaks of the importance of promoting the Liturgy of the Hours as a local celebration. It speaks of celebrations in each local diocese with the people taking part as far as possible (GILH 20), and in parishes, where the more important hours could be celebrated in common at the church (GILH 21), saying that '[i]f the faithful come together and unite their hearts and voices in the Liturgy of the Hours, they manifest the Church celebrating the mystery of Christ' (GILH 22). Reference is also made to other gatherings of lay people:

Wherever groups of the laity are gathered and whatever the reason which has brought them together, such as prayer or the apostolate, they are encouraged to recite the Church's Office, by celebrating part of the Liturgy of the Hours. For they should learn to adore God the Father in spirit and in truth especially through liturgical worship; they must remember that by public worship and prayer they can have an impact on all and contribute to the salvation of the whole world. (GILH 27)

What about cathedrals? The *Ceremonial of Bishops* says:

The cathedral church should be regarded as the centre of the liturgical life of the diocese. (*Ceremonial*, no. 44)

It should be regarded as a model for other churches in the diocese. (*Ceremonial*, no. 46)

It is most highly recommended that, whenever possible and especially in the cathedral church, the bishop celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours together with his presbyters and ministers and with the full and active participation of the people; this applies particularly to the celebration of morning and evening prayer. (*Ceremonial*, no. 187)

The *Ceremonial of Bishops* makes particular mention of celebrations of the Liturgy of the Hours on solemnities, the Easter Triduum and Christmas Eve (*Ceremonial*, no. 189). It also speaks about encouraging 'communal celebration in parishes, in communities, and in various kinds of religious meetings' (*Ceremonial*, no. 190).

The Celebration of Evening Prayer: What's Involved?

Here is an outline of the shape of the celebration:

- Verse and Response, *O God, come to our aid ...*
- Hymn
- Psalm
- Psalm
- NT Canticle
- Short Reading
- Responsory
- *Magnificat*
- Intercessions
- The Lord's Prayer
- Concluding Prayer
- Blessing

Some Comments

- ▶ O God, come to our aid ... These short psalm verses were used in the Egyptian desert as a means of constant prayer, as monks went about their daily living. The Rule of St Benedict brought them into the Divine Office as an invocation of God's help as the communal prayer begins. These verses could be recited or sung.
- ▶ The breviary gives hymns for each hour and gives a collection of hymns for each liturgical season. Hymns are ideally sung, and if those given in the book are not known to the participants, suitable alternatives may be provided. Hymns are supposed to provide an attractive opening to the celebration, conveying something of the time of day or the liturgical season.
- ▶ The short responsory is like a compressed responsorial psalm, providing a meditative response to the hearing of the word of God. Some of the larger hymnals give settings of these. A short Taizé chant might be an alternative, fulfilling the same role.
- ▶ The *Magnificat* is a high point of the liturgy and is ideally sung. There are many settings available, some of which involve a refrain for the congregation.
- ▶ The intercessions can have a sung response. The General Instruction also indicates some flexibility about the text. For example, extra petitions may be added, and an alternative style, more in the manner of a litany, is given in an appendix.

- ▶ There are no hymns for an entrance procession or a concluding procession. On more solemn occasions where there is a procession, some instrumental music would be appropriate.

Performance Styles of Psalms and Canticles

- ▶ Responsorial style – the simplest way to begin to help congregations to join in the singing of psalms and canticles is to use responsorial settings which have a sung refrain in the manner of a responsorial psalm.
- ▶ A further development is for the verses of the psalm or canticle to be sung in alternation between cantor(s) and congregation. Often a two-line psalm tone is best. This format was used very successfully at the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin in 2012.
- ▶ Some settings might have a more elaborate choral element.
- ▶ Musical settings of the antiphons may be more difficult to find. As an interim measure, one could have a standard way of ornamenting the psalm tone. It is sufficient for the cantor to sing the antiphon once, before the psalm.

Possible Models for Starting Out

If Evening Prayer has not been part of the normal life of a parish or cathedral, some thought needs to be put into finding ways of introducing this prayer in a manner that is attractive and feasible. Here are some options for consideration:

- ▶ One might consider some once-off special occasions for festive events involving choir, cantors and a full complement of liturgical ministries. When a cathedral or parish celebrates a centenary or another important anniversary, or marks a special event or occasion, the default setting has tended to be to have a festive Mass. Because the cathedral is at the centre of the diocese, such special occasions are not lacking. Why not have festive Evening Prayer instead? It will give people an appetite for more and introduce them to the Liturgy of the Hours in an attractive way.
- ▶ Something less demanding during could be planned for special seasons like Advent or Lent. People are on the lookout to do something special for Lent. This is a perfect opportunity to introduce some form of Evening Prayer.
- ▶ Sunday Evening Prayer (there is here a musical advantage: there are at least three texts that repeat each Sunday – first psalm, New Testament canticle and *Magnificat*). In terms of the liturgical assistants, cantor and organist might be sufficient, perhaps with a small group to support the congregation.
- ▶ Something much simpler could happen on weekdays, as is already happening in a small number of parishes around the country.
- ▶ *GILH* envisages a fairly flexible approach. While it gives very precise texts and directions it, also speaks in many places of substituting texts other than those given. I think this is particularly useful for people starting out. It also emphasises the spirit and meaning of what is being done over rigidity or a mere concern for formalities (*GILH* 279). This reminds of the work which went into preparing the daily Morning Prayer for the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin in 2012. Each morning we had hundreds of people of different language groups, but we managed to produce settings that enabled them to join in without any rehearsal. And they did. The texts

of all the liturgies had to be sent to Rome for approval. What we had produced was not always exactly what you find in the Roman Breviary as it stands, but those whose responsibility it was to oversee the Eucharistic Congresses at an international level recognised the flexibility required in order to help people to truly participate in prayer and song. It was very clearly the Divine Office of the Roman Rite, and it was suitably adapted for prayerful participation in a local context.

- ▶ As regards printed participation aids with texts, remarkably little needs to be put into the hands of those in the congregation. Simple refrains do not need to be printed, as they are easily repeated. Longer antiphons are more likely to be sung by cantors or choirs. The only texts that are likely to be needed for participation are the verses of any hymns or psalms to be sung by the congregation. All the other texts are in the hands of reader, cantor, choir and presider.

Possible Elaborations

For a full celebration on festive occasions, some of the following elements may be included:

- ▶ A longer reading from scripture may be suitable.
- ▶ A homily may be given.
- ▶ Organ interludes that ‘comment’ musically between the psalms are used on the continent in larger churches and cathedrals. This can be an attractive way of ‘intoning’ a psalm or canticle.
- ▶ The use of incense increases the solemnity of the celebration. In Solemn Vespers the presider, vested in a cope, incenses the altar during the singing of the *Magnificat*. An alternative way of using incense is used by some communities: a brazier with burning charcoal is placed before the altar before the celebration begins. Incense is placed on the burning charcoal at the beginning of the celebration and at the beginning of the *Magnificat*.
- ▶ Following the pattern of the *lucernarium* found in many early offices of Cathedral Vespers, a ‘service of light’ is added to the beginning of the celebration, whereby an evening candle or lamp is lit while a suitable song celebrating the light of Christ is sung. Examples of suitable music can be found in standard hymnals such as *Gather, Worship, Alleluia Amen* and *Alleluia Amen Supplement*.
- ▶ The choral dimension of the celebration can be expanded, while still allowing plenty of space for the congregation to sing.

The celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours in Ireland is, at present, not very widespread, but in those places where it has happened, it has been an attractive, prayerful and appealing experience. I hope that the anecdotal, historical and practical material collected here will encourage others to begin, perhaps with modest initiatives at first, to give people a broader access to this dimension of the Church’s liturgy.

FIVE

THE COMMUNION RITE AND 'WITH COMMUNION'

The Body of Christ in Liturgical Celebration

MARY CONNOLLY*

The invitation to consider the merits of celebrating a Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion on a weekday is one that is very welcome. Yet it is a topic that is not altogether straightforward. Receiving Holy Communion has always been the culmination of the Christian assembly's participation in the celebration of the Eucharist, and the rubrics relating to its distribution are found in the Communion Rite of the Mass. When we talk about the distribution of Holy Communion *outside* Mass, we are faced with a certain difficulty with regard to meaning: a clear distinction between the two forms of celebration is something that immediately arises and seeks acknowledgement. Equally, an understanding of the meaning of the words 'the Body of Christ' is always necessary for any true appreciation of what it means to be a worshipping community of faith. Thus, in exploring the issue of choosing options for weekday liturgical prayer that will sustain faith communities in the long run, the following seems to be called for: recognising the need for a context in which to consider the options available; finding a framework for focusing the energy of parish communities and councils at this time; identifying some reference points to guide decision-making; and keeping a perspective that does justice to a bigger picture. There is nothing prescriptive, however, in what is being presented here. On the contrary, this conversation is about the need to ask leading questions in the light of our Christian tradition in order to facilitate those seeking a safe passage through the current, increasingly unfamiliar, pastoral landscape.

Without The Lord's Day

In Chapter 2, Professor Liam Tracey outlined for us the fundamental place of the celebration of the *Sunday* Eucharist in our Christian tradition. We recall the response of the early Christian Martyrs when called to account: *sine Dominica non possumus*.¹ It was the celebration of the Eucharist on a Sunday – *the Lord's Day* – that turned out to be non-negotiable. Whether or not it will be possible to go on living without the celebration of the Eucharist on a Sunday is a question for local Churches in our own time. Given that some of the more remote communities in our Irish dioceses are already without a resident priest, it is a question that needs to be addressed perhaps sooner rather than later.

The Liturgy's Many Meanings

In our time, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*² (hereafter *SC*), names and articulates the importance of the liturgy to 'the Christian life of the faithful'.³ It remains our most definitive document on the subject and states that

* This is the text of the address given at St Patrick's College, Maynooth, as part of an all-island conversation entitled, 'How do parishes pray when they do not have the celebration of the Eucharist?'; 6 November 2014.

1. The witness of the Martyrs of Abitina (c. 304 CE).
2. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Second Vatican Council, 4 December 1963.
3. *SC*, 1.

... the Liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed ... the fount from which all the Church's power flows ... the source for achieving in the most effective way possible human sanctification and God's glorification, the end to which all the Church's other activities are directed.⁴

This statement is often quoted in defence of our celebration of the Eucharist. Some, however, claim that it is overstating the matter. Paul Bernier, for instance, agrees that '[i]t is a beautiful statement' but suggests that, '[u]nfortunately, it is not true'.⁵ He supports his view by simply drawing attention to the fact that 'less than half of all Catholics celebrate Mass each Sunday – and even many who do attend do not see it as essential to providing direction for their lives'.⁶ Such statistics cause some pause for thought and it is hard to argue with the obvious. In so many liturgical celebrations, a real discrepancy between theory and actual practice is undoubtedly the case. In an article entitled 'Liturgical Studies in a New Millennium', Tracey also highlights the necessity of juxtaposing both, confessing that

... as liturgists ... we have not reflected, sufficiently, on what people actually experience Sunday after Sunday, the meaning(s) which they attribute to that practice, individually and collectively.⁷

He notes that according to the American Jewish liturgist, Lawrence A. Hoffman, *private, official* and *public* meanings can be operative at the same time in any given religious ritual. The fact that there can be more than one meaning assigned to a liturgical celebration appears to throw some light on the current tension and confusion surrounding the celebration of what is more commonly referred to as a 'Communion service'. Awareness of such complexity can only serve to enhance the discernment necessary for choosing forms of weekday worship that will prove truly life-giving for faith communities in the years to come.

In the Absence of the Eucharist

The word liturgy comes, as we know, from the Greek word *leitourgia*, and in our Christian tradition refers to the work of worship done by the People of God as a participation in the work of God.⁸ SC speaks of 'the work of our redemption ... most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist' (SC 2). 'To accomplish so great a work,' it says, 'Christ is always present in his Church, especially in its liturgical celebrations' (SC 7). This puts all liturgical celebration, and particularly that of the Eucharist, at the heart of our faith. But if celebrating it is no longer an option, the question of what to do arises. Finding a possible way forward requires us to return to the drawing board and, as part of an initial response at least, to take a look at some of our Church documents. In this respect, SC is one that clearly points the way and gives us a direction to go in. In reminding us that Christ is present, not just in the Eucharist, but in all of the Church's liturgical celebrations, we have at our disposal some options that can be considered.

4. SC, 10.

5. Paul Bernier, *Living the Eucharist: Celebrating its Rhythms in Our Lives* (Mystic CT, Twenty-Third Publications, 2005), 1.

6. Ibid.

7. Liam M. Tracey, 'Liturgical Studies in a New Millennium', *Irish Theological Quarterly* 66 (2001), 349.

8. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC 1069).

Daily Practice

As stated earlier it is weekday worship, in particular, that is our focus here and which we will now consider more closely. It has been noted that apart from the Eucharist, '[h]ardly any other shared forms of prayer exist for most parishioners.'⁹ Huck and Chinchar, for instance, claim that

... [w]ithout habits and rituals to provide day-in, day-out prayers, to train us in how to pray, to lead us in ways of praise, petition, thanks and contrition, we have no way to *prepare* to pray the Eucharist, ... to *learn* how to pray in large gatherings ... to let the Eucharist *echo* through our week.¹⁰

Here we appreciate that the weekday has its own very particular function. It must lead us out from our Sunday Eucharist and towards the following Sunday's celebration. Its job is to whet our appetite for the feast by anticipating it and preparing for it. It does so through helping us become comfortable and competent in the component parts of festive celebration: gathering as a community; sharing communal prayer and song; receiving the Word of the Lord proclaimed and broken open; all schooling us in the rhythm of refrain and silence as it echoes on in our day-to-day living.

We must, in the first instance, then, decide whether subscribing to a daily practice of gathering and celebrating (in whatever form) is important for us. The title of this gathering's discussion today 'How do parishes pray when they do not have the celebration of the Eucharist?' hints at an answer. It asks how we pray. 'Without ceasing' (1 Th 5:17), of course, has always been the Church's response. Our tradition is one of daily and 'hourly' practice. The notion of practice is, indeed, key. Prosper of Aquitaine's great axiom *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi* (the law of praying is the law of believing) makes it clear that the depth of our faith is proportional to the degree to which we practice prayer and celebrate our liturgies. Liturgical theology bears this out when it claims that the privileged place for catechising the People of God is in the liturgy.¹¹ It is a given that the rites of the Church both express and shape the beliefs of every celebrating community. We ignore their celebration at our peril.

Daily Bread: The Prayer of the Church

The liturgy *par excellence* for daily celebration is, of course, the Liturgy of the Hours. Yet the great liturgical scholar J. D. Crichton held the Church to account when he stated that

The Church holds a high doctrine of the divine office, yet its practice must be said to be low ... It is one sector of the liturgy of which the laity know hardly anything at all.¹²

Over fifty years on from Vatican II this is still largely the case. For most people, the Prayer of the Church is synonymous with the 'priest's breviary'. Many might be surprised, indeed, to find that the following prayer belongs to the celebration of Morning Prayer on Saturdays during Eastertide:

Eternal Shepherd, strengthen us for the coming day with the bread of your word; nourish us with the bread of the Eucharist.

9. Gabe Huck & G. T. Chinchar, *Liturgy: With Style and Grace* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1998), 108.

10. *Ibid.* (*emphasis added.*)

11. CCC, 1074.

12. J. D. Crichton, cited in Robert Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1986), xii.

This intercession focuses on the day ahead and welcomes the bread of God's Word while anticipating the nourishment of the Eucharist. Equally surprising for people, perhaps, might be Yves Congar's claim about the efficacy of the bread of God's Word:

If in one country Mass was celebrated for thirty years without preaching and in another there was preaching for thirty years without the Mass, people would be more Christian in the country where there was preaching.¹³

This is surely a relevant comment and one we might do well to heed. Reviews of his recently translated essays into English all agree that they 'read like they were written for us today'.¹⁴ Perhaps we can look forward to revisiting our celebration of liturgies of the Word and especially the Liturgy of the Hours since, as Sheila Browne suggests, it 'sets us up really, to celebrate the Eucharist'.¹⁵

Daily Diet: A Pastoral Survey

If we look at practices in our own parishes we can see a relatively clear pattern. There are certain differences, needless to say, between rural and urban parishes and this, in itself, is quite instructive. Generally speaking, you may agree that community worship from Monday to Saturday in most parishes might be summarised as follows:

- ▶ In a rural parish, Mass may be celebrated in the local church once or twice a week while adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the recitation of the Rosary are two devotional practices that remain common to a greater or lesser degree ...
- ▶ In an urban parish, daily Mass has been the norm until quite recently ...

In more recent times, however, many parishes (both rural and urban) have seen the introduction of Liturgies of the Word with Communion. The catalyst for this development has been the more recent phenomenon of 'the priest's day off' and the consequent attempt to provide parishes with liturgical celebrations other than the Eucharist. We note, however, that as Rev. Professor Michael Mullaney already states in Chapter Six, the priest's day off is not sufficient grounds for having such a service from the perspective of Canon Law.

An Update

Let us now take a quick look at the background to this development and critique it, as far as possible, in the light of future needs. A short, historical update may be helpful at this point:

- ▶ 1973 *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*
This document outlined the purposes of eucharistic reservation as follows: for viaticum; giving Communion to those unable to participate in the Mass; and for adoration.
- ▶ 1973 *Extraordinary Ministers of Communion*
Lay 'Ministers of the Eucharist' became a phenomenon.
- ▶ 1988 *Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*

13. Yves Congar, 'Sacramental Worship and Preaching', *Concilium* 33 (1968), 62.

14. Paul Philibert ed., trans., *At The Heart of Christian Worship: Liturgical Essays of Yves Congar* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010).

15. Sheila Browne, 'Our Prayer and My Prayer: What's the Difference? What's the Same? Forms of Prayer that Complement Liturgical Prayer', *Liturgical Ministry* (Autumn 2003), 213–17.

... when Mass is not possible, a celebration of the word of God is particularly recommended, and also its completion, when possible, by eucharistic communion. [20]

Given the above, one can see how the so-called 'Communion services' began to happen (even if the 1988 document refers only to Sunday Mass). In effect it could be argued that, for lay people, the absence of a priest meant little more than the absence of the consecration at Mass. Finding themselves suddenly sanctioned to both lead a Liturgy of the Word and distribute Holy Communion from the reserved hosts in the tabernacle, lay parishioners had no reason to question the practice of having Communion services on weekdays if the priest of the parish had authorised them. Many priests, it seems, have done just that. We can conclude that some discussion of the situation is now overdue. The following official document on the matter concurs.

- ▶ 2004: *Redemptoris Sacramentum: Particular Celebrations Carried Out in the Absence of a Priest*
It is necessary to avoid any sort of confusion between this type of gathering and the celebration of the Eucharist ... the diocesan bishops ... should prudently *discern whether holy communion ought to be distributed in these gatherings* [165] (emphasis added).

It is obvious that there is a clear change of mind in the above document, and one can only assume that what transpired in practice was not what had been envisaged. The Bishops of Kansas put it succinctly in a pastoral letter:

... we have come to judge that Holy Communion regularly received outside of Mass is a short-term solution that has all the makings of becoming a long-term problem.¹⁶

That long-term problem is one that the Church has been at pains to avoid. Confusion between the Mass and a Communion service, along with the possibility of Communion services eventually becoming the norm, remains a serious concern. The difficulty is that when such celebrations become the norm, the need for a priest and, ultimately, the need for the Eucharist, is no longer acutely felt. As James Dallen remarks, '[l]ack of familiarity may lead to distaste. Or, simply, the rarity of the Eucharist may dull the appetite and lead to eucharistic anorexia.'¹⁷

All of this forces us to engage in a reappraisal of the norm and to look again at our celebration of the Eucharist. We need, in fact, to compare and contrast it with a celebration of a Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion to understand the essential difference between the two and why it matters.

Do This

Most Catholics will tell you that at the Last Supper Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to his disciples and commanded them to do the same. At Mass, therefore, we understand that we *take, bless, break* and *give* the Bread of Life to all who come to the table of the Lord. Yet when asked where *this* actually happens in our celebration of the Eucharist, many hesitate to answer and often admit to only being conscious of when the bread is blessed and given. In other words the *taking*

16. Bishops of Kansas, *Sunday Communion Without Mass* (1995).

17. James Dallen, *The Dilemma of Priestless Sundays* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 140.

(preparation of the gifts) and *breaking* (the fraction during the ‘Lamb of God ...’) is already more or less overlooked, and the fourfold action of the Eucharist becomes, in effect, reduced to two actions: the consecration of the eucharistic elements during the Eucharistic Prayer, and the distribution of Holy Communion. Equally, one might ask whether many members of our communities ‘see the communal dimensions of Communion, or is it primarily a private moment with Jesus?’¹⁸ How many parishioners realise, for instance, that in saying ‘Amen’ to the words ‘the Body of Christ’ when receiving Holy Communion, they are also assenting to their identity as members of the Body of Christ, the Church? Add to that the general absence of the Blood of Christ at our Sunday Eucharist and it suddenly becomes much easier to sympathise with the view that ‘the average modern Catholic theology of the Eucharist is without a future.’¹⁹ Looking at the scholar David Gregg’s interpretation of what has happened (over time) to the celebration of the Eucharist, we can begin to appreciate why this might be so.²⁰ He recommends ‘perform this action’²¹ as a more accurate translation of the command of Jesus at the Last Supper. According to Bruce Morrill (in articulating Gregg’s concern), the object of the command, ‘do this’, has been too narrowly understood in the Catholic tradition to be the objects of the bread and wine and, together with an almost exclusive focus on the raising of the host and chalice, has left the people with ‘a ritual of adoration but not a liturgy for participation in the transforming, narrative remembrance of Jesus.’²²

Altogether we find that, for many Catholics, the Eucharist is understood more as an object than an action and its celebration, therefore, is severely impoverished. So much so, in fact, that we find ourselves only one step away from a Liturgy of the Word with Communion (especially if the hosts that are distributed at Mass come from the tabernacle). It becomes very difficult, then, for the worshipping assembly to notice any difference. Yet the difference is fundamental. Wherever Holy Communion is distributed without Mass, the ritual unity and essential action of the Liturgy of the Eucharist is ultimately broken. The *giving* becomes completely disconnected from its fourfold action: *no taking, blessing or breaking* of the bread occurs. This practice ensures that the symbol of bread broken and shared, so critical to the meaning of Eucharist, can have little power to ‘speak’. In other words, partaking of the Body of Christ only makes sense as the final part of the fourfold action of the celebration of the Eucharist where the *one loaf* is ritually *taken, blessed, broken and shared* among all who are gathered. Hence, the giving and receiving of Holy Communion can be said (as ever, in our liturgical tradition), to belong, properly, to the Communion Rite.

Christ is Present

To date, when speaking of Christ’s presence in the Mass it is clear that, for many, it still appears to be largely synonymous with the consecrated hosts. The following quote from our Religious Education Programme for young candidates for First Eucharist helps to illustrate how misguided this perception actually is:

18. Lawrence E. Mick, *Worshipping Well: A Mass Guide for Planners and Participants* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 88.

19. Edward J. Kilmartin, ‘The Catholic Tradition of Eucharistic Theology: Towards the Third Millennium’, *Theological Studies* 55:3 (September 1994), 443–9, at 443.

20. See David Gregg, *Anamnesis in the Eucharist*, Grove Liturgical Study 5 (Bramcote Notts., England: Grove Books, 1976).

21. *Ibid.*, 15

22. David Gregg, cited in Bruce T. Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 170 (emphasis added).

Christ is present in the people gathered
Christ is present in the Gospel that's read
Christ is present in the priest
Christ is present in the consecrated wine and bread.²³

This child's rhyme could almost be said to summarise the 'five modes'²⁴ of Christ's active presence in the liturgical celebrations of the Church identified in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC 7). It underlines the fact that without the priest and, therefore, without the Eucharist, Christ still remains present. Perhaps it is time for faith communities in our dioceses to become more familiar with these other ways in which Christ becomes present to us, namely, in his Word and 'when the Church prays and sings, for he promised: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20)' (SC 7). In choosing weekday liturgies that can be led by a lay person, we clearly need to pay greater attention to the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Hours. Both are gifts of our tradition that have an infinite capacity to nourish and deepen the faith of all who celebrate them. Put simply, they allow us to encounter Christ, fully present among us. We meet him in these and all liturgical celebrations – *the sacred mysteries* – since the Christian tradition has always recognised that 'the mysteries of Christ are our mysteries.'²⁵ It could be argued, also, that revisiting the concept of the Mystical Body of Christ (*Corpus Mysticum*) is something that would prove helpful in this regard. For too long, perhaps, an overemphasis on the concept of the 'Real Presence' (*Corpus Verum*) has contributed to perpetuating the very narrow understanding of 'the Body of Christ' that still exists among many parishioners today. The words of Eucharistic Prayer III, for example, remind us of the fact that the worshipping assembly itself, becomes the Body of Christ:

... grant that we, who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son and filled with his Holy Spirit, may become one body, one spirit in Christ.

It would seem that with a renewed appreciation of the significance of the Eucharistic Prayer in the celebration of the Eucharist, such words might resonate more forcibly among those gathered to celebrate and to the good of all.

Finding an Alternative

It is true that alternatives to the celebration of the Eucharist must be found as the number of priests decreases but, according to Dallen, we should also be forewarned:

23. Irish RE Primary School Programme, *Alive-O 4* (Dublin: Veritas, 1999), 39.

24. See Gerald O'Collins, 'Vatican II on the Liturgical Presence of Christ', *Irish Theological Quarterly* 77 (2012), 3–17, for a critique of the manifold presence of the risen Christ in the Church's liturgical celebrations. He highlights a notable lack of interest in the topic and proposes ten aspects of presence: as relational, mediated, personal, free, transformative, costly, bodily, multiform, feminine and future-oriented. This, he suggests, 'can and should prove a rich lode of reflection for sacramental theology' when applied to the five modes of Christ's presence outlined in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

25. See Gregory Collins, *Meeting Christ in His Mysteries: A Benedictine Vision of the Spiritual Life* (Dublin: Columba, 2010). Quoting Blessed Columba Marmion in the introduction (p. 7), a persuasive case is made for all liturgical celebration as the privileged 'disclosure-zone' where the mystery of Christ becomes manifest.

At root, the problem is the lack of priests, and ‘to offer a liturgical solution to a non-liturgical problem’ is unwise to say the least ... Simply continuing the present policy is a choice ... that is a more radical departure from tradition than changing the ordination discipline.²⁶

We, of course, can only respond to the pastoral task at hand in whatever way we are called to do so. It is to that task we now turn before concluding.

The Pastoral Task

The great French liturgist L. M. Chauvet maintains that the pastoral task is:

... a particularly important and urgent mission for today’s Church ... In our kind of society, it is a whole ‘catechumenal’ *dimension of the Church* that should be developed as one of the major ‘strategic’ axes of its mission.²⁷

The parish, of course, is the place of mission and today we realise that the role of the laity is one that needs to be appreciated and honoured. Both lay and ordained members of our Christian communities share the baptismal call to participate in the mission of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Hence, decisions made at parish and diocesan level will need to be made in a collaborative fashion. The question, of course, is what this might look like in real terms. A first step might be to:

- Assess the needs of the community
- Be informed
- Commit to a process of engagement
- Identify priorities
- Follow some guiding principles
- Review and revisit practice

The specific task of leading public prayer in the absence of a priest will also require much consideration. In discerning what is to be done, parish communities may need to engage in an assessment of the liturgical and pastoral needs of a parish and its resources, and a prayerful discernment of those who could best lead the community’s worship in the absence of a priest.

Care may also be needed in ensuring that the ministry does not become one person’s exclusive domain. On the other hand, parishes may not need a large number of people for this ministry. Equally, lay leaders of liturgy will need to be publicly commissioned in their local parish for a specified period of time after being called by their community, accepted by the local bishop, and completing a training/formation programme.

This process will enable lay leaders of liturgy to exercise their ministry confident in the knowledge that they act on behalf of the Church.

26. Dallen, *The Dilemma of Priestless Sundays*, 142–3.

27. Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, Madeleine Beaumont, trans. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 199.

In Conclusion

In our exploration of Christ's presence in liturgical celebration much has been addressed. The difficulties in relation to the celebration of the Word with Holy Communion as an option for liturgical celebration on a weekday has been of particular concern and interest. In the end, of course, we remember that all liturgical celebration, and especially that of the Sunday Eucharist, leads us out into life where we live the pattern we celebrate; we are taken, blessed, broken and given for the life of the world. Godfrey Diekmann reminds us of this ultimate dimension:

Holiness is not something I get in the morning at Mass and then which throughout the day leaks out of me, grows ever less so that I must recharge myself again the next morning or the next Sunday. *Instead, our day, our day's meeting with other people, our work, should itself become an unfolding, a development, a deepening renewal of the morning's mystery of love.*²⁸

We will do well to keep this in mind as we seek to deepen, daily, the mystery of God's love in our lives.

28. Godfrey Diekmann, *Personal Prayer and the Liturgy* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1971), 62 (emphasis added).

SIX

WEEKDAY COMMUNION SERVICES

MICHAEL MULLANEY*

In recent years, the declining number of priests has led to fewer weekday Masses in many parishes. This article will focus on the weekday celebrations of the Word and distribution of Holy Communion (henceforth *weekday Communion services*). In what circumstances and conditions does the Code and recent Church documents allow for the legitimate use of such weekday Communion services?

The Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (2004) is the only curial document specifically to address weekday Communion services. However, this does not mean there is no other material to help us understand what the mind of the legislator is on this matter. Since the law does not make an express provision about weekday Communion services, the question is to be addressed by taking into account laws and curial documents dealing with similar matters, that is, Sunday Communion services (cf. canon 17). In this case: canons 918 and 1248, §2, as well as the recent curial documents, *Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (1988) and the Instructions *Ecclesiae de Mysterio* (1997) with the already cited *Redemptionis Sacramentum*.

The Code of 1983

The first canon states: 'It is highly recommended that the faithful receive Holy Communion during the eucharistic celebration itself. It is to be administered outside the Mass, however, to those who request it for a just cause, with the liturgical rites being observed.' The fact that the canon stresses that it is 'highly recommended' that Holy Communion be given primarily during the Mass, the requirement of a just cause should be strictly observed. A just cause for Holy Communion to be administered outside the Mass would be the need of those who are housebound, particularly the sick and the dying (viaticum) or the absence of a priest to celebrate the Mass. This latter situation addressed in canon 1248 states: 'If participation in the eucharistic celebration becomes impossible because of the absence of a sacred minister or for another grave cause, it is strongly recommended that the faithful take part in a Liturgy of the Word if such a liturgy is celebrated in a parish church or another sacred place according to the prescriptions of the diocesan bishop, or that they devote themselves to prayer for a suitable time alone, as a family, or, as the occasion permits, in groups of families.' The canon only 'recommends' weekday Communion services and highlights the role of the diocesan bishop in regulating for any such provision.

The Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest, 1988

This Directory gives clear direction how these canons are to be understood and interpreted in

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relation to Sunday celebrations without a priest. Directories are theological and pastoral documents which are normally addressed to bishops to assist them in specific areas of their pastoral care. While not legislative in the strict sense, directories lay out principles that have a binding force because of their doctrinal foundations.

The fundamental purpose of this Directory is to ensure, in the best way possible and in every situation, the Christian celebration of Sunday. This means remembering that the Mass remains the proper way of celebrating Sunday, but also means recognising the presence of important elements even when Mass cannot be celebrated. Although the Directory did not address the specific issue of weekday Communion services, it can be applied *mutatis mutandis*, indeed even more rigorously in the light of the later (2004) Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum*.

The intent of the Directory is not to encourage, much less facilitate unnecessary or contrived Sunday assemblies without the celebration of the Eucharist. The intent, rather, is simply to guide and to prescribe what should be done when real circumstances require the decision to have Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest (nn. 21–22).

The conditions in the Directory for such celebrations on Sunday give some indicators which will be of use in deciding on weekday Communion services: the faithful must be taught about the substitutional and temporary character of these services regardless of the seriousness of the shortage of priests, and even if this scarcity of priests for a protracted length of time is foreseen. This is not an optimal solution, nor can it be allowed for convenience; no confusion is to arise about the difference between this celebration and the celebration of Mass, and it is not to be availed of when Mass is still being celebrated in a nearby parish or religious community. The Directory is forceful on the need for a proper formation and catechesis of any parish community that will avail of such services so as to avoid any confusion about the centrality of the Mass and the relationship between ordained and non-ordained ministry.

The role of the diocesan bishop in this matter is clearly underlined in the Directory. The permission of the diocesan bishop is essential for any such services. Indeed, the diocesan bishop must set out the general and particular norms for weekday Communion services so as to ensure the necessary catechesis in the diocese and in parishes where this celebration is permitted. The diocesan norms are to list the criteria for the appointment of suitable and properly trained leaders where such Communion services are permitted, with preference for deacons, followed by those who have been trained as extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist and lectors.

The Instruction *Ecclesiae de Mysterio* also makes reference to Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest. The thrust of the Instruction is to narrowly restrict the occasions and pastoral circumstances in which the non-ordained exercise ministries that are normally exercised by the ordained. The document cautions that the collaboration of the non-ordained in the pastoral ministry of the clergy has developed in a very positive fashion when that collaboration is mindful of the boundaries established by the nature of the sacraments and of the diversity of charisms and ecclesiastical functions. It calls on the non-ordained to act appropriately and within their proper limits in dealing with these realities. It echoes many of the same concerns as those listed in the Directory.

The Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum*

The principal purpose of this document was to address a wide range of violations of liturgical law in

regard to the Eucharist, including the celebration of the Word and distribution of Holy Communion outside Mass. The Instruction deals specifically with weekday Communion services in no. 166:

Likewise, especially if Holy Communion is distributed during such celebrations, the diocesan bishop, to whose exclusive competence this matter pertains, must not easily grant permission for such celebrations to be held on weekdays, especially in places where it was possible or would be possible to have the celebration of Mass on the preceding or the following Sunday. Priests are therefore earnestly requested to celebrate Mass daily for the people in one of the churches entrusted to their care.

Three clear characteristics about the faculty to permit weekday Communion services emerge in this paragraph: permission is restrictive, reserved and requires regulation.

First, the tenor and tone of the Instruction is restrictive in what it interprets are the conditions and circumstances when weekday Communion services can take place. It does not envisage weekday Communion services as regular or routine. The weekday Communion service is not intended as a substitute for the Mass on a priest's day off or while he is on holidays or away on retreat. Certainly, this form of celebration is not envisaged when Mass is celebrated in another church in the parish or in a nearby parish, or when Mass is celebrated in the parish on the previous or following Sunday. An example of an occasion when the diocesan norms might permit could be a Communion service at a funeral in the parish when no priest is available, or a communal distribution of Holy Communion on first Fridays in a nursing home. These weekday Communion services are not for providing a role for deacons or non-ordained ministers. The Instruction recommends that even when led by the non-ordained, the various parts be distributed among several of the faithful rather than having a single lay member of the faithful direct the whole celebration alone. Nor is it ever appropriate to refer to any member of the lay faithful as 'presiding' over the celebration (no. 165).

Second, the competence to decide this matter is reserved exclusively for the diocesan bishop. As with the permission for the Sunday celebration, the diocesan bishop should consult and 'prudently discern', with the Priests' Council, the Diocesan Pastoral Council or equivalent bodies, whether Holy Communion ought to be distributed in these gatherings. In the event that the bishop permits them, he is to lay down general and particular norms for such celebrations. An adequate catechetical formation is to take place beforehand, providing a clear understanding of the centrality of the Mass in the life of the Church, and an appreciation of the difference in the participation of the non-ordained and the ordained in the priesthood of Christ. The matter would appropriately be determined in view of a more ample coordination in the Bishops' Conference, to be put into effect after the *recognitio* of the acts by the Apostolic See through the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (no. 166). Until the diocesan bishop has given his permission, parishes which do not have a priest available to celebrate daily Mass should explore alternative celebrations, e.g. the Liturgy of the Word; the Liturgy of the Hours; short exposition of the Blessed Sacrament with prayers; and other sacramentals (e.g. the Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, other approved public prayers).

Third, the diocesan bishop must issue general or particular diocesan norms or implement the norms of the Episcopal Conference, if they exist, with regard to weekday Communion services. In those parishes where weekday Communion services have emerged without the permission of

the bishop, there is the need of urgent attention of the bishop whose responsibility it is to protect the integrity of the liturgy and the celebration of the sacraments in the diocese entrusted to his care. Weekday Communion services cannot appeal to custom for their continued justification; such practice would not meet the criteria for custom outlined in canons 23–26. Any such practice of weekday celebration in Ireland at this time would be contrary to good pastoral practice and to the principles elaborated in the Directory of 1988 and the Instructions of 1997 and 2004. Indeed, a bishop must reprobate expressly any such customs that are contrary to the law, good pastoral practice and doctrinal principles.

In view of the law and the documents of the Church, it is reasonable to conclude that the conditions for weekday Communion services currently do not exist in Ireland. The changing pastoral landscape, however, would encourage the diocesan bishop or the Episcopal Conference to exercise the mandate given in the Code and curial documents to consult with both laity and priests, with a view to providing parishes and communities with clear norms and catechetical formation around the issues raised. Parishes should also be facilitated in exploring alternative liturgies or sacramentals that can be celebrated by the faithful in the growing number of parishes without a resident priest, while still facilitating the daily spiritual, pastoral and social needs of those for whom the daily Mass is so important.

SEVEN

WHEN MASS IS NOT CELEBRATED ON WEEKDAYS

Some Reflections from Theology

THOMAS R. WHELAN*

An issue of *New Liturgy* (published by the National Secretariat for Liturgy in Maynooth) from 2013 carried an account of a discussion that is currently taking place on the (Bishops') Council for Liturgy concerning weekday liturgies when Mass is not celebrated.¹ This discussion takes up an earlier conversation by its predecessor, the Irish Commission for Liturgy. What follows here is a commentary, not so much on the discussion document itself but rather on the issues that it raises. And this discussion relates to the changing situations in parishes rather than to daily worship in nursing homes, hospitals, and other contexts of pastoral ministry where occasional or frequent celebrations of Mass have been presumed to be normal. In a way not true of other places, parishes are subjected to the effects of this development more acutely because, in the first place, daily Eucharist was and is presumed to be the universal norm, and second, because it signals an inevitable outcome of a growing shortage of ordained clergy and gives a foretaste of what this experience will be like.

The question of what we do on weekday mornings in a parish when Mass is not available relates not just to 'weekday Mass' but to a host of other issues. It touches into considerations of how we organise ourselves at local level; the nature of daily prayer in community; and how we want to envision the development of the Irish Church in the near future.² We can make mistakes by rushing into seemingly obvious solutions without having thought these through, not realising that, in the process, we could be creating long-term problems for ourselves in the not-too-far distant future.

In any serious reflection on weekday worship we will need to allow pastoral solutions (which, at the end of the day, is what ministry is all about) be enlightened by a serious but balanced consideration of history and, in a critical way, by the best of theological reflection. What follows seeks to offer a small contribution to this discussion.

What is the Problem?

An increasing number of parishes cannot celebrate weekday Eucharist³ with the frequency that they once enjoyed and presumed. This practice has been a commendable part of Catholic piety for at least one millennium (although mostly, throughout its complex history, it was enjoyed principally by monks and priests), and for many it has constituted a central part of nourishment of faith and a

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1. Council for Liturgy, 'When Mass is not Celebrated: An Account of the Discussion', *New Liturgy* 157 (Spring 2013), 12–19.
2. It also begs a serious reengagement with questions, which will not be discussed here, around the frequency of Mass; Mass stipends; the multiplicity of Masses; so-called 'private' Masses celebrated by (mostly religious) priests who have no pastoral responsibility; and the clericalisation of the Liturgy of the Hours as well as its appropriateness as a form of communal prayer in parishes.
3. The term 'Eucharist' is used here in reference to Mass and not to the service of distribution of Holy Communion.

Christian lifestyle. The immediate cause of the problem is a shortage of ordained priests, an issue that urgently needs to be discussed in all parts of the Church, taking up once again a conversation that began some fifty years ago and that has continued in some quarters.

However, we need to contextualise the current Irish experience. In a large number of places throughout the world, including in younger churches, Catholics have never benefitted from huge numbers of ordained priests and have developed ways in which to worship on Sundays and on other significant festival days, such as those associated with Christmas and Easter. For many people in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, parts of western USA and Australasia, for example, the norm is infrequent Sunday Eucharist, ranging in remote areas from once or twice a year to once a month. In this context, the daily celebration of Eucharist is deemed to be a privilege and will often be available only in large towns or cities.

In Ireland, as in many (but not all) of the ‘older’ churches, an increasing shortage of priests has been a feature of the last fifty years or so. However, we need to keep matters in perspective. Compared to many other local churches throughout the world, we in Ireland have not yet reached a crisis point in relation to numbers of ordained priests. For some inexplicable reason there is panic that we will be without priests in a short period of time – a panic that is somewhat shaped by our desire to retain and serve current structures rather than engage with an ecclesiology of communion and of pilgrimage, for example, which might suggest alternate ways of addressing the issue.⁴ Our comparison relates to a memory of the unnaturally huge numbers of priests that existed in Ireland from the late 1940s through to the early 1960s. The importation of clergy from younger local churches, especially the few that have a generous supply of priests, is not yet a necessity in Ireland and will actually mask the problem. It will only give us an excuse not to ask the hard questions, and will serve to procrastinate on any revisioning that urgently needs to be done.⁵ We need to retain a balance in how we analyse the problem, as well as in how we seek solutions to it. This is a vastly significant question which requires of us serious theological exploration that is fully respectful of and sympathetic to the pastoral reality which gives it its context.

In the short term, the ‘vocations crisis’ needs to be addressed on at least three levels. First there is a requirement to continually pray for vocations. However, this must be accompanied by a second response: the need to trust in the Spirit of God that, to the extent we are faithful to the mission purpose of God’s initiative in Christ, the Church *will be* supplied with whatever ministries (ordained or not) are required for the furtherance of the Kingdom. We need to pray for vocations, but that prayer in turn needs to be rooted in a confidence that God will not abandon the Church. Excessive worry over a ‘shortage of vocations’ points to a deficiency of faith on our part – as if the salvific work of Christ depended solely on us. The third aspect relates to the first two. Even a nodding acquaintance with the recovery of some older forms of ministry which have re-emerged since the Council is sufficient to invite us to consider once again how the Church community could continue to live the mystery of Christ in fidelity to his mission, even with a smaller number of ordained priests than it has been used to. Part of this may require us to organise ministry – being inspired by ministerial forms proposed

4. Beyond the scope of this article, the issue has been discussed frequently in recent decades. It remains extremely serious, not least because of the great stress that is felt by a numerically diminishing clergy as they are further strained by added administrative tasks and extra responsibilities in a ministry that is forced, as a consequence, to become focused narrowly on the dispensing of sacraments. The result is that less energy and time is available to address wider pastoral concerns or, significantly, the underlying presenting problems.

5. This does not negate the need for a form of reverse mission, or for a more explicit expansion of horizons (making us more ‘Catholic’), on the part of the Irish Church.

to us by our tradition – in imaginative ways that ensure that the Church continues to be present to the various aspects of people’s lives. This includes a radical reconsideration of how churches at both diocesan and local levels are administered.

Clustering

At a structural level, further reflection needs to be given to the ‘clustering’ of parishes, an idea for which we seem to have opted and which was imported without much debate or deliberation.⁶ We do not seem to have critically reflected on its ecclesial implications for Ireland, nor do we seem to have listened to the critique offered by others to this attempt at a solution to the problem. We need to consider if, in an Irish context, the (historically) relatively modern idea of the territorial parish benefits the faith needs of people today. Maybe the response to that will differ from urban to rural areas. The problem that clustering of parishes seeks to address is that of an increasing paucity of ordained priests, but this is not the only or most obvious response that would emerge if a different question is posed. Rather than taking the clerical dimension as a *starting point* when seeking a solution, why not consider the facilitation of the faith development of believers themselves (including the faith development of the ordained)? Increasingly, reference is being made to ‘intentional’ communities which are open and inclusive, but whose ministerial needs could be served more easily through other models.⁷ These are less defined by territory and geography and more by intentional association – a ‘liquid’ parish, if you will. There is also a need to acknowledge that such a Church is already beginning to form. We owe it to future generations of Irish Catholics to think this through in a responsible way because it is not easy to reverse decisions made when they relate to ecclesial structure (even at local level) once these become embedded in the life of the local church. Whatever we decide will directly impinge on how we pastorally facilitate weekly assemblies who gather to worship, even when there is no Mass.

Reflecting on Some Theological Presuppositions

Apart from retaining a balance and perspective while discussing weekday worship when there is no Mass, we also need to respect a few theological markers to ensure that whatever practices develop as a result are well grounded. The following ‘theological presuppositions’ seem to provide some helpful boundaries.

1. The first statement that can be made is that Christians have always responded, in one fashion or another, to the biblical mandate to ‘pray without ceasing’. While different forms of prayer are to be found throughout history, our tradition tells us that groups of Christians always gathered every day for prayer. Weekday worship functions, then, not simply to provide a space for private individual prayer, nor to assuage our desire for piety – as important as these are for Christian living – but to incarnate the need of believers to ‘pray without ceasing’.
2. One of the writings of Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* (9), reflects an understanding of salvation as part of its teaching which is founded on a central biblical insight: we are saved, it says, not as

6. However, some good reflection has been undertaken on this by Eugene Duffy, who offers an excellent rationale along with a theological justification for the clustering of parishes in his, ‘Clustering Parishes: Practice and Theology’, *Parishes in Transition*, Eugene Duffy, ed. (Dublin: Columba, 2010), 92–115. This publication also contains considerations on the topic by other authors. See also Duffy’s more recent piece, ‘Priests and the Clustering of Parishes: A Theological Reflection’, *Priesthood Today: Ministry in a Changing Church*, Eamonn Conway, ed. (Dublin: Veritas, 2013), 88–98. Nevertheless, other perspectives need to be examined, and to this end the comments are made here in the light of the wider questions that are thrown up by an absence of weekday Mass.

7. One comment on this is found in Aidan Ryan, ‘The Last Monk of Clonmacnois’, *The Furrow* 65:1 (2014), 7–13.

individuals, but 'as a people'. Our post-enlightenment Western selves normally tend to think of community in terms of a collection of people gathered to fulfill individual obligations to worship – and we therefore count Mass-attendance numbers. When we bring to the fore the idea of a pilgrim Church, continually being formed as a living sacrament of Christ, discovering more deeply how to become a priestly people called to incarnate the Body of Christ in society, then we need to learn to see the liturgical assembly as 'Church' gathered, in the here and now, in order to do its worshipful thing. We need to move away from the idea of 'prayer in common' to that of 'common prayer'.

Those who cannot be present at weekday liturgy are still represented in the worship of those who can be present. Therefore, the smaller assembly on weekdays is the local parish at daily worship, irrespective as to how many people actually turn up. From this it follows that weekday worship is not just a 'nice thing to do', or a 'service' provided for a few people who want to go to Mass regularly, but rather it is the parish community fulfilling its evangelical mandate to pray always. (We probably do well to speak of weekday assembly rather than weekday liturgy.)

3. Parish communities organise themselves and their worship in ways that best suit their own lives. But they do not do this without reference to the wider local Church (the diocese) of which they are intrinsically part and of which they are not independent. Those parishes that are able to celebrate regular Sunday Eucharist, but not necessarily able to celebrate Mass every weekday, have not yet arrived at a 'crisis point' in terms of vocations to ordained ministry, although the warning signs have been posted. When other solutions are not available, the parish community needs to work from its own resources to supply for its weekday worship needs.
4. Church tradition affirms the right that people have to be nourished by both Word and sacrament (see, for instance, Acts 4:23 and *Ad gentes* 6) in order that they will be sustained by Easter life in Christ. The norm – and ideal, according to the Church's practice – has been that people celebrate Eucharist every Sunday. The right that people have to liturgical nourishment (including Eucharistic) comes from Baptism, and the usual time and place for this is the Sunday assembly, although there is no theological agreement as to how frequently this ought to be availed of. However, according to tradition, we cannot make the same claim of a right to the Eucharist on weekdays. (This statement does not diminish the central role of Eucharist in our lives but rather attempts to contextualise it.)
5. Our long tradition, both East and West, has given to us a rich fare in terms of worship forms. The oldest and most consistent has been, and remains, daily prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours, most particularly at morning and evening times. Even this developed in a myriad of shapes, but its basic content remained more or less stable: the offering of praise and thanksgiving to God, with Christ, through the psalms and through intercession. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, the hours became clericalised, and the reforms of the recent Council did little to effectively return this form of prayer to the priestly people of the entire Church.

Monastic communities and hermits developed their own ways of worshipping daily, which at times also included Holy Communion celebrations, although this practice did not always enjoy the approval of the wider Church. We must wait until the ninth century, in or about, before daily Mass becomes common in monasteries and some of the churches of large cities. This is a phenomenon of the West: not even today do Eastern Christians, in general, know of the practice of daily Eucharist. It was only in the nineteenth century that an expectation arose

that all priests would celebrate Mass daily, and this was seen as a barometer of their personal fervour.

6. In the context of a discussion of weekday worship, we need to reflect on why we 'do liturgy' in the first place. Most of us have grown up to see liturgy as presenting to us channels of grace, or as providing a conduit to God and a moment for interceding for our needs. While these are not unimportant, they do not reflect the heart of what worship is all about. If we can take St Paul seriously (especially in Rm 12:1-2), worship ultimately consists in making 'in our bodies' a living offering of praise and thanksgiving to God. We need to conform ourselves to the self-offering of Christ through our bodies and in our lives. This worship is embodied! We celebrate liturgy in order to be inserted ever more deeply into the mystery of God's love expressed for us, in human terms, through the saving death and resurrection of Christ. This event of Christ grounds our conviction that the power of evil has been destroyed in Christ, that we can live in the here-and-now something of the new life of God given to us by Christ. Our nourishment by Word and sacrament is not simply a by-product we 'receive'; through them we are propelled into a deeper relationship with the Easter mystery of Christ. But this relationship in Christ, to be authentic, must find expression in our daily lives, in how we relate with those with whom Christ preferred to relate – those who have little hope and those whom society has marginalised or has decided are 'failures'. We are not referring here to people becoming 'do-gooders'. Outreach to others, especially those rejected by society, is inherent in the Baptismal call and intrinsic to an authentic celebration of liturgy.

This gives cause for reflection and offers a challenge when we wish to consider questions around the absence of weekday Mass. The purpose of our daily gathering as a parish community is not simply to fulfil a desire for individual piety.⁸ Our worship in Church should be embodied in our lives, both communally and individually, and be part of the same continuum that seeks an identity between liturgy and our social interaction in our community. What we seek in our daily worship can be fulfilled, even if in a different way, not just through the Mass but also through a celebration of the Word, or a celebration of Morning (or Evening) Prayer. Our worship serves to deepen our corporate relationship with God, and the authenticity of this is tested by how it spills out in our relationship with others, particularly those on the margins.

7. There is a substantial difference between a celebration of Eucharist (Mass), and a service in which Holy Communion is distributed. Unfortunately bad catechesis over many years has often led us to believe that the purpose of Mass was simply 'to consecrate the Eucharist'. The downside of this is that we have made the Eucharist into an object and forgotten its liturgical context which is relational and ecclesial. One of the great recoveries in the theology of Eucharist since at least the early 1900s has been an appreciation of the importance of both *anamnesis* (the efficacious recalling of the saving mystery of Christ) and *epiclesis* (the transformative action of the Spirit). The celebration of Eucharist opens to us the entire Mystery of Christ as a dynamic process in which we encounter the saving action of God for us. This is not something that is simply located in the biblical past of two thousand years ago. Liturgical

8. Although the discussion document in *New Liturgy* lists the possibility of substituting some form of popular devotion (Rosary, Stations of the Cross, etc.) when a weekday Mass cannot be celebrated, it needs to be noted that there is a qualitative difference between liturgical celebrations (even in the absence of an ordained priest) and exercises of popular devotion (see SC 13). Popular devotion should not be considered an easy substitute when weekday Eucharist is not possible.

theology speaks of us recalling the ‘event of Christ’, rather, as something that brings Christ’s ministry and actions into the circumstances of our own parish communities *today*, with full sacramental efficacy. Our own reality, messy and ‘ordinary’ though we consider it to be, meets with the salvific event of Christ which can then imbue it with graced transformation. Through the transformative power of the Holy Spirit, just as the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ, we pray that we too, by participation in this Eucharist, may likewise be transubstantiated into the living Body of Christ (see, for instance, Eucharistic Prayer III). The sacrament of the Eucharist is an event that carries the assembly into the dynamic of the death and resurrection of Christ so that it may *now*, through this action of praise and thanksgiving, be empowered to reach out to the society of which it is part and become an embodiment of the liberating presence of Christ. This is expressed more clearly when people are able to receive Communion at Mass under both species.⁹ Bad practices, which continue today despite being officially discouraged, mean that we are used to receiving Holy Communion regularly from the tabernacle rather than from the elements which have been consecrated at that Mass which we celebrate.¹⁰ Holy Communion, when it is distributed outside of the Eucharist, brings the communicant into contact with the fruit of this sacramental event, but not into the liturgical dynamic from which Holy Communion flows and apart from which it cannot be understood.¹¹ Exceptions to this have always abounded, most particularly when people are ill or dying, or otherwise unable to celebrate Eucharist for serious reasons. Because of the possible confusion between the distribution of Holy Communion and the celebration of the Eucharist, the Church has increasingly restricted this practice on occasions when Mass is not possible – most particularly for weekday celebrations. A lack of clarity around this issue has led to a myriad of pastoral problems in other countries, and we would be well advised not to visit these on ourselves.

The report of the Council for Liturgy’s discussion in *New Liturgy* (2013) proposes that, in order to address a short-term solution to the question of weekday worship that there is no Mass, we need to reflect with some level of care on a way forward. There are some ‘givens’ that we cannot change. The easiest solution would be to do little and to take the path of least resistance, thereby renegeing on leadership. This is obviously not an option. It behoves us to ensure that the solutions we seek will not, in time, create yet further problems. That is why we need clear theological reflection on the issue in its various facets. When a less-than-ideal practice has begun it becomes virtually impossible to modify it or change it at a later stage.

Keeping a Perspective ...

It is essential that matters are kept in perspective. In the first place, we are talking about weekday

9. The *General Instruction* which prefaces the *Roman Missal* uses the Latin term *clarior* (more clearly: see *GIRM* 281–2). This text strongly recommends that people receive Eucharist under both species (permission for which was granted by Rome to the Irish Episcopal Conference in 1991 – the details of which are outlined in the *Liturgy Calendar for Ireland 2015*, Liturgical note 18, pp. 16–17).

10. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* exhorts that people (for the same reason that a priest is obliged to do so) should receive Communion at Mass from the bread *consecrated at that Mass*, and not from hosts taken from the tabernacle: see *GIRM* 85.

11. Although in a different context, this same point is emphasised by *GIRM* 85 when it states that it is ‘most desirable’ that people receive Eucharist consecrated at the Mass being celebrated (and ‘in cases where this is foreseen’ under both species) ‘so that even by means of the signs *Communion may stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated*’ (emphasis added).

and not Sunday Mass. There is a qualitative difference between the two. Weekday Eucharist is optional and devotional, whereas Eucharist on Sundays is vital from the perspective of faith, being the traditional way (in resonance with Lk 24 and Rv 1:10, for instance) in which Christians mark the Day of the Resurrection

Second, it would be accurate to say that, in a global context, there are more Catholics who cannot celebrate regular Sunday Mass than there are who can and do. This situation, while statistically normal, cannot be considered normative. The problem of not being able to celebrate *weekday* Mass pales significantly in comparison.

Third, we should not begin to unthinkingly copy ‘solutions’ found in other places. There are parts of the Christian world where large geographical distances separate small rural parishes or where rough terrain creates challenges for the small number of local clergy to negotiate as they minister. Some dioceses, which have a widespread demographic with far-flung parishes and outstations, permit as an option the distribution of Holy Communion on Sundays. Parishes are not so distant from one another in Ireland as to make it impossible for people to travel, at least occasionally, to a neighbouring parish for a eucharistic liturgy.

From this a fourth consideration emerges: liturgical law as well as ‘best practice’ recommended after theological reflection is that the distribution of Communion at a Liturgy of the Word should not take place on a Sunday if people have the possibility of celebrating Mass in a neighbouring parish. Such a service is absolutely forbidden if Mass was celebrated earlier in that same Church, or will be celebrated there at a later stage in the day. If these principles are in place for *Sunday* celebration when there is no Mass, they are all the more pertinent for weekday liturgy. It is difficult to envisage a parish situation in Ireland that would justify the distribution of Communion outside of Mass on a weekday morning.¹²

Fifth, let us not reinvent wheels. This question, relating to Sunday as well as weekday worship when there is no Mass, has been discussed and debated by the churches in the USA and Canada, as well as in France, Germany and other places nearer to home. It would be irresponsible, to say the least, if we were to embark on a discussion of weekday worship, not to mention developing new practices, without engaging with the experiences of others.

What Do We Do?

Medium Term: Reflecting on Church and Ministry

A long-term solution will require an exploration of questions central to ordained ministry. Closer to home, a medium-term reflection can begin with a consideration of Church as a priestly community in Christ whose *raison d'être* is to serve and proclaim the Kingdom.

For many decades it has been the concern of people, lay and ordained, that reduced numbers of clergy will return us to a medieval experience of ‘Mass priests’. If the ministry of the ordained is reduced to dispensing sacraments outside of a context of broader pastoral care – of service of the Word (in the fullest sense) and of leadership – then he becomes a mere functionary supplying a commodity. And his ministry will soon be evaluated solely in terms of his efficiency in carrying out this sacramental task. Just as episcopal ministry can only be conceived of in relation to the variety of ministry (lay and ordained) in his diocese, so it is with the ordained priest in a parish. His ministry

12. This does not refer, obviously, to situations wherein Mass cannot be celebrated in nursing homes, hospitals, etc. On these occasions the ministry of a Holy Communion service is not just needed but is most appropriate.

cannot be understood in isolation from that of others who serve the parish community and whose ministry is as necessary to the vibrancy of the local Church as that of the ordained. All ministry in a community – and therefore all ministers (ordained or not) – must be nothing other than a ‘sacrament’ of the fundamental ministerial quality of the Church itself. In other words, ministries must reflect the basic service that Church community is called to give, in the name of Christ, to the world and the society of which it is part. This inverts our normal understanding of what ministry is, with the consequence that parishoners will have to learn – with their ordained colleagues – to develop forms of collaborative leadership that respect both diversity as well as the particularity of each ministerial form.

There is a lack of clarity around the ecclesial identity and function of the permanent deacon. He is not a ‘mini’ priest, nor is he a priest’s substitute – for anything. We may have missed the point that an extension of forms of ministry has much to do with reconceiving Church as the community of the baptised and nothing to do with an expansion of the institution. Diaconate is a ministry in its own right which needs to find its place among the variety of ministries that exist in the Church. Alongside this, unfortunately, lay ministry is often considered as a service that exists in order to assist the clergy.¹³ As a result we have not always enabled a Church to develop in a way that is ‘ecclesial’ in the best sense of the word and that is vibrant at local levels.

Everything done to deal with weekday worship when Mass cannot be celebrated must work towards building up the community of faith, for the worship of the local assembly is no mere commodity that is manufactured or ‘done’. Weekday worship (like that of Sunday) is a faith activity of a community which exercises its baptismal priesthood and is ‘caught up in an act of becoming’ (Nathan Mitchell). Liturgical and communal leadership is awesome in its demands – and yet such demands are intrinsic to the undertaking that is ahead of us in the celebration of weekday liturgies, with or without Mass. Whether presided over by ordained or lay people, the liturgical prayer of the weekday assembly is charged with continuing the Sunday dynamic of becoming, in an ever-newer way, a realisation of what Church is and is called to be.

These considerations caution us to approach with care (and after much discussion and reflection) questions of how our parishes organise themselves in order to arrive at short-term solutions to a situation that has arisen as a consequence of a decreasing number of ordained personnel. Whatever decisions we reach cannot have the effect of clericalising our ‘solution’, nor can it reduce ministry to functionality.

Short Term: Options for the Weekday Assembly

It might sound rather harsh, but there is a sense in which we need to say that if we don’t have Mass, maybe we *should* miss it, and not try to cover it over by creating short-term ‘make believe’ solutions in the hope that the problem will go away. In its opening paragraph, the discussion report from the Council for Liturgy states that ‘the need for a daily liturgy remains’. When daily Mass cannot be celebrated, that does not say that people cannot continue to worship using other forms of liturgical prayer.

13. This is a view that was expressed very strongly in a Roman interdicasterial document of 1997, *On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priest*, published, among other places, in *Origins* 27/24 (27 November 1997), 397–410.

The Roman *Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (1988)¹⁴ may assist in locating some of the concerns that need to be addressed. However, the qualitative difference between Sunday (the concern of this Directory) and weekdays needs to be respected, and some solutions which it proposes for Sundays when Eucharist cannot be celebrated are not necessarily appropriate for weekday worship in similar circumstances. That suggests that we need to delve into our rich tradition and to apply this creatively to our circumstances today. While we need to speak in practical terms of weekday liturgies, it is worth considering that our task is less caught up with ritual forms than with the development of the prayer life of the weekday assembly. The principles that guide us need to be based on those proposed by Vatican II for the reform of the Church and its liturgy.

Worship with Another Assembly. There will always be people who are accustomed to daily Mass and who would prefer the option of travelling (when this is possible) to a neighbouring parish for the celebration of Eucharist. This 'solution' brings with it mixed benefits. While some individuals have their liturgical needs addressed in this way, such an arrangement may not suit everyone who normally attends weekday Mass in the parish, and a decimated assembly may feel challenged to gather for worship in these circumstances. Against that, a regular weekday assembly that has not become fragmented would be able to create a gathering which develops around communal prayer, whatever shape this may take.

Morning or Evening Prayer. The traditional form of daily worship was and remains the Liturgy of the Hours. Despite popular belief to the contrary, the hours remains the official daily prayer of the Church (rather than Mass), and has been such, albeit throughout a very patchy history, from the earliest decades of Christianity.

Some parishes have already begun to use Morning (or Evening) Prayer occasionally or on a more regular basis. This is to be hugely commended. Serious consideration should be given to adopting (or creating, if necessary) a form of Morning or Evening Prayer that is aligned with a popular or parish form of this liturgy. Much of the material that is currently being published in Ireland is modelled on the *Divine Office*, a form that falls between the monastic tradition and the more popular structure found in earlier centuries.¹⁵ A proposal for a simpler parish form of Morning or Evening Prayer is not to infer that only the clergy are capable of using the full Office, as a number of lay people, in fact, pray it regularly in private. However, the liturgical structure of the so-called 'popular' or 'cathedral' form has greater appeal and can be adopted (and adapted) with relative ease.

The practical difficulty with relation to the introduction of the hours in a parish is that, as a form of liturgy, it is quite unfamiliar to people in general, although where it has been introduced carefully and used occasionally, it is liked and appreciated. Experience shows that there are a number of ways in which Morning or Evening Prayer can be introduced in a parish. Some places have used an extended form of Evening Prayer to mark special occasions or days in the parish, or to assist the assembly as it journeys through Advent or Lent, for example. This can be particularly appropriate when a parish has already celebrated Eucharist earlier in the day.

There are parishes that have developed the custom, over a number of years, of a small number of people gathering to pray Morning Prayer before morning Mass. On these occasions it is important

14. For a discussion of this Directory and related questions, see Thomas R. Whelan, 'Sunday Liturgies in the Absence of Eucharist', *Parishes in Transition* [footnote 6], 179–207.

15. Some of the simplifications merely remove one or two of the psalms given in the *Divine Office* book and modify other elements. No thought is given to a modification of the structure itself so as to make it more accessible and usable in parish contexts. It is generally accepted that of all elements of the post-Conciliar liturgical reform, that of the Liturgy of the Hours has been the least successful and still needs to be reconceived.

that the priest join them for Morning Prayer; this communicates strongly that the Liturgy of the Hours is not the preserve of clergy, and conveys very clearly that this is the local assembly joined in common prayer. Communities that are accustomed to praying the Liturgy of the Hours, in whatever form, with their priests before weekday Eucharist will have little difficulty in continuing this practice when Mass is not possible. By introducing Morning/Evening Prayer through the small group who pray it as part of their weekday worship, people become familiar with a different and venerable way of praying (and one that is biblical in every sense of that word).

Liturgy of the Word. There is also much to recommend in replacing a Mass that cannot take place on a weekday with a celebration of a Liturgy of the Word. The format is familiar, and the weekday cycle of Lectionary readings continues to be proclaimed and heard in the local assembly. The preparation of a parish community could provide the opportunity to remind people that the Liturgy Constitution of Vatican II (no. 7) recovered an ancient teaching that we encounter the real presence of Christ in the Word of God proclaimed. There is much reflection taking place in Catholic circles over the past thirty years around the idea that the Word of God proclaimed in liturgy is sacramental, not in a derivative way, but in its own right.¹⁶ The *General Introduction to the Lectionary* (no. 5) speaks of the relationship as follows:

The more profound our understanding of the liturgical celebration, the higher our appreciation of the importance of God's Word. Whatever we say of the one, we can in turn say of the other, because each recalls the mystery of Christ and each in its own way causes that mystery to be ever present.

This liturgy could be celebrated in a way that leads people to a deeper appreciation of the biblical Word as well as providing an opportunity for a prayerful reflection on it. A celebration led with care can be an enriching experience for a local assembly.

With or Without Holy Communion? That many people will only celebrate the Liturgy of the Word on these occasions if it is followed immediately with the distribution of Holy Communion (the 'real' part of the liturgy) is sad. It is probably an indictment on us that we have been slow to appreciate the centrality of the Word of God in our formal prayer. To refer to these as Communion services is unhelpful as this does not describe a service which is appended to a Liturgy of the Word. As stated earlier, the distribution of Holy Communion as part of a weekday liturgy should be discouraged rather than encouraged.¹⁷ The most appropriate short-term pastoral solution is not to be found in the distribution of Communion on weekdays purely on the grounds that people are used to daily Mass. There is a hegemony of opinion which supports this practice, and to which, unfortunately, people subscribe without any prior thought or critical reflection. The best pastoral practice would be to assist communities to understand the difference between this form of service and eucharistic celebration, and to do all that can be done to facilitate communities to become places of communal prayer, daily.

16. This point was brought out by Pope Benedict in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Verbum Domini* (2010), esp. 52–4. Liam Tracey discusses briefly the relationship: 'Word and Sacrament', *The Study of Liturgy and Worship*, Juliette Day and Benjamin Gordon-Taylor, eds. (London: SPCK, 2013), 53–62. See also Thomas R. Whelan, 'Eucharist and Word', *Milltown Studies* 74 (2014), 88–121.

17. One among the many writings questioning the appropriateness of this as a regular occurrence, even on Sundays, is Gerard Austin, 'Communion Services: A Break with Tradition', *Fountain of Life: In Memory of Niels K. Rasmussen, O.P.*, Gerard Austin, ed. (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1991), 199–215.

If, in years to come, Sunday worship with no Eucharist becomes more common in Ireland, then a question will arise as to whether the same form of liturgy used on a weekday ought to be celebrated also on a Sunday, or if there should be a different form of worship that will bring out what is special, according to our tradition, about gathering on the Day of the Resurrection.

Conclusion

The discussion document of the Council of Liturgy published in *New Liturgy* needs to be read by bishops, priests, members of pastoral councils and, in fact, by all members of parishes, especially where the problem of weekday celebrations without Mass already exists or will soon become a reality. It will be important not to lose focus: whatever short-term solution we choose must serve the longer-term desire to build an assembly which, even with its smaller numbers, wishes to pray on weekdays. What happens on a weekday morning – even in the absence of Masses and ordained priests – remains a liturgy insofar as it is a formal gathering of the local assembly, under the authority of the wider Church, which gathers to worship as the living Body of Christ, and exercises its priesthood (of Baptism) by offering praise and thanksgiving to God for the wonderful things done for us in Christ. In this exercise it gathers around the Word and is nourished by it.

Consultation on what and how to address weekdays when no Mass is available should be wide, and no hasty or rash decisions should be made. Bishops ought not be afraid to make bold decisions that will not have dire consequences a number of years down the road which they will later find themselves powerless to address. Above all, they and parish priests should never seek the easy solution, and follow the path of least resistance. Solutions can be only reached after informed discussion and debate in local churches and assemblies. Appropriate forms of preparation for this will include helping people acquire the necessary skills to preside at these liturgies, and, with training, to offer reflections on the scripture readings when this is deemed appropriate.

It is incumbent on the local assembly to celebrate liturgy daily. The question of how to prepare the worship of the weekday assembly when parish Mass is not possible creates an opportunity for us to re-vision pastoral ministry and to empower the assembly to become a vibrant priestly community rooted in its Baptism. The shape of the Church of the near future, and the Church to come, requires nothing less.

EIGHT

LEADING GOD'S PEOPLE IN PRAYER

A Training and Formation Programme for Leaders of Public Prayer on Weekdays when Mass Cannot be Celebrated

JULIE KAVANAGH

Introduction

The following material is offered to dioceses and parishes to assist in the formation of lay leaders of public prayer. More and more the need for such people in parishes is becoming obvious. Increasingly we encounter lay people leading weekday parish liturgies in the absence of an ordained priest, as well as lay people leading public prayer in homes and funeral homes at the time of the death of a Christian, and on other occasions.

Alongside the practical need in parishes there is, happily, a growing realisation of the baptismal call of lay people to be a priestly people. Lay people can lead the public prayer of the Church, not because they are an emergency solution but, rather, because of their baptismal identity as members of the People of God who are called to be priest, prophet and king, following the model of Jesus.

Flexibility of Content

The content of this programme is very much intended to be adaptable to individual diocesan/parish circumstance. The nature of parish means that the starting point of working with this material varies greatly, even within individual dioceses.

Those who use this resource are free to move around, condense and expand material as suits the local situation. Not all sessions need to last for the same duration and some sessions may need to be longer than others. This can be a local decision.

Origin and Focus of Material

This training and formation programme arises out of a series of national days of conversation hosted by the National Centre for Liturgy, Maynooth, that considered weekday liturgies in the absence of an ordained priest. Participants on these days requested that such a resource be made available. Consequently, the material is focused on preparing leaders of prayer for these particular liturgical experiences. However, the essence of the material can, obviously, be applied to forming prayer leaders for other occasions also.

Partner Resources

This material sits alongside *It is Good for Us to Be Here* and the accompanying resource articles that have been reproduced in this manual. All of this material can also be found on the website of the National Centre for Liturgy, liturgy-ireland.ie. This will be invaluable as background and support material for presenters of the following sessions. It is hoped that many of these resources will be made known to and shared with parishioners.

Local Decisions

Dioceses and parishes will have to decide how this material will best suit particular needs. Regardless, it would seem that the obvious people to explore what happens on a weekday gathering in the absence of an ordained priest are the very people who are already gathering.

A local parish might consider extending an open invitation to these people to a meeting or a number of meetings in the parish after Mass on a weekday. Beyond a first meeting, some or all of those who attend might choose to explore the remainder of the material. It may be wise to allow people to work through all the material before committing themselves to leadership roles in the future. Another option is to deliver this material at a diocesan level before bringing it to individual parishes, while other options more suited to the local circumstance may well be employed.

Invitation and Hospitality

However this material is presented, some thought should be given to how to make the experience as positive for people as it can be. Depending on circumstances, many people's starting point may well be a sense of loss, loss of Mass on a regular given day. The manner in which any invitation to these sessions is presented should be considerate of this, while staying positive about the value of remaining as a praying community.

An open invitation and transparency about what is happening can also help to avoid any future sense of some people in the parish 'taking over' or being part of a 'clique'.

A warm welcome, a nice setting, comfortable seats and a cup of tea can go a long way in helping people to work together throughout!

Session Outlines

The following pages give an outline of the content to be found in each of the five sessions. The bulk of inputs are to be found in Session One, with a further one to be found in Session Two. These very short inputs are scripted here but can be adapted for use by the presenter.

Session One Outline

Aim: To identify the local need for weekday gatherings of prayer in the absence of an ordained priest; to let participants know the options for prayer available on these occasions; and to outline the task of those leading this prayer.

Content

- ▶ **Welcome**

- ▶ **A Time of Prayer: Using text of 1 Thessalonians 5:12-18**

- ▶ **Conversation: Why do people gather in church on a weekday and why might such gatherings continue in the absence of Mass?**

- ▶ **Input 1: Why we might continue to gather on a weekday ...**
 - Synthesis of what people have said
 - Gathering as rooted in scripture and early Church practice
 - Rooted in our baptismal identity as a priestly people
 - Primacy of Sunday
 - Ancient tradition of daily gathering for Liturgy of the Hours
 - Weekday gathering – building on a living tradition

Check in with participants

- ▶ **Input 2: What we might do – exploring what forms this prayer might take, as envisaged by the Church**
 - Pastoral realities, learning from other places
 - Preferred options: a celebration of Morning/Evening Prayer or a celebration of the Word; (a celebration of the Word with distribution of Holy Communion – restricted in their use)
 - A word on popular devotions and other prayer forms

Check in with participants

- ▶ **Input 3: A final conclusion – we need leaders!**
 - Needed: A group to share the task of leading prayer
 - Why such leadership can be exercised in the Church
 - What the task might include
 - Getting ready for the task

Check in with participants

Close of Session: Thanks and invitation

Session Two Outline

Aim: To introduce participants to the principal prayer forms available for use and the possibilities within them.

Content

- ▶ **Welcome**

- ▶ **A Time of Prayer: Using Psalm 66**

- ▶ **Exploring the Format of a Morning/Evening Prayer**
 - Format handout for participants
 - Notes for presenter and handout

Check in with participants

- ▶ **Exploring the Format of a Celebration of the Word**
 - Format handout for participants
 - Notes for presenter and handout

Check in with participants

- ▶ **Exploring the Format of a Celebration of the Word with Distribution of Holy Communion**
 - A word before a presenter uses this material – or doesn't!
 - Format handout for participants
 - Notes for presenter and handout

Check in with participants

- ▶ **Input: The distinctions between Mass and a celebration of the Word with distribution of Holy Communion**
 - Building on what people have said in the previous check in
 - Relationship to Sunday Eucharist
 - Four actions of the Eucharist and their absence in this celebration
 - Principal reasons for reservation of the Eucharist
 - Caution from experience; weekday rather than Sunday context

Check in with participants

Close of Session: Thanks and invitation

Session Three Outline

Aim: To explore the different elements of the role of prayer leaders, and to explore how to move from a text for ritual to an experience of prayer by beginning to prepare for a celebration of Morning/Evening Prayer.

Content

- ▶ **Welcome**

- ▶ **A Time of Prayer: Using the hymn, 'Be Thou My Vision' and Psalm 130**

- ▶ **Conversation 1: What do you think are the qualities that would be helpful among our prayer leaders? What do you think would be the particular skills needed among the people who will prepare and lead our public prayer?**

- ▶ **Input 1: The qualities and skills needed for prayerful leadership**

Check in with participants

- ▶ **Input 2: From text to celebration – preparing liturgy**
 - Imagining liturgy beyond a text
 - Set up and set down
 - Hospitality
 - Ministers
 - Music
 - Pace
 - Posture and gesture
 - Organising as a group

Check in with participants

- ▶ **Practical Exercise: Preparing a Morning/Evening Prayer**
 - Distribution of full text with preparation guide
 - Group exercise of preparation
 - A glossary of terms handout

Close of Session: Thanks and invitation

Session Four Outline

Aim: To give participants an opportunity of being part of leading a Morning/Evening Prayer together; to draw out any reflection and learning from the experience; and to begin to prepare for a celebration of the Word.

Content

- ▶ **Welcome**

- ▶ **A Time of Prayer: Using Morning/Evening Prayer**

- ▶ **Reflecting on the Experience**
 - The prayer itself
 - Preparing the prayer
 - Leading the prayer
 - Bringing it together

- ▶ **Practical Exercise: Preparing a celebration of the Word**
 - Distribution of full text with preparation guide
 - Group exercise of preparation

Close of Session: Thanks and invitation

Session Five Outline

Aim: To give participants an opportunity of being part of leading and praying a celebration of the Word, reflecting on the experience and looking ahead to their ministry.

Content

- ▶ **Welcome**

- ▶ **A Time of Prayer: Using a celebration of the Word**

- ▶ **Reflecting on the Experience**
 - The prayer itself
 - Preparing the prayer
 - Leading the prayer
 - Bringing it together

- ▶ **Input 1: Remembering the journey**
 - Looking back on what has been explored to date in these sessions

Check in with participants

- ▶ **Input 2: Looking ahead – some pointers for the conversation**
 - Local need and response
 - Organising for the task and building in processes
 - Communicating with parishioners
 - Recognition of prayer leaders
 - Ongoing review and formation

Close of Session and Thank You

SESSION ONE

Aim: To identify the local need for weekday gatherings of prayer in the absence of an ordained priest; to let participants know the options for prayer available on these occasions; and to outline the task of those leading this prayer.

An Overview of the Session Steps

Exploring why people gather on a weekday and why they might continue to gather in prayer on weekdays in the absence of an ordained priest.

Looking to the rich and long tradition of daily, community prayer in the Church.

What forms this prayer might take today as envisaged by the Church.

The need for lay prayer leaders and what exactly prayer leaders do.

Welcome

The presenter welcomes people to the session and explains why this gathering is taking place. Let people know what is to be covered at this particular meeting and that subsequent meetings will develop what is explored in this session.

Be clear on how many sessions are envisaged taking place and the timescale of each.

Finally in this welcome time, ask participants to introduce themselves if they are new to one another.

A Time of Prayer: Using the text of 1 Thessalonians 5:12-18

But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labour among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Conversation: Why do people gather in church on a weekday and why might such gatherings continue in the absence of Mass?

Depending on numbers, this conversation may be done in the large group or in small groups. If small groups are used, ask someone in the group to record the key points made by people. Keep a record of what people are saying.

Over to You

- ▶ Can you think of as many reasons as possible why people gather in Church on a weekday? (5 mins)
- ▶ In light of all the reasons given for gathering on a weekday, why might it be important that such gatherings continue, even in the absence of the celebration of the Mass? (7 mins)

Input 1: Why we might continue to gather on a weekday ...

- Synthesis of what people have said
- Gathering as rooted in tradition of scripture and early Church practice
- Rooted in our baptismal identity as a priestly people
- Primacy of Sunday
- Ancient tradition of daily gathering for Liturgy of the Hours
- Weekday gathering – building on a living tradition

Synthesis of Why People Might Gather on a Weekday

There are many reasons why people gather in their church on a weekday. Participants may well have already named some of the following and others:

- The desire to receive the nourishment of Holy Communion
- The desire to receive the nourishment of the Word of God
- To pray for particular needs
- To mark anniversaries
- People also gather for the experience of community, for mutual support and companionship
- The daily gathering can serve as 'a spiritual neighbourhood watch'

(Findings of National Gathering on Weekday Liturgies, Maynooth, 3 April 2014)

Rooted in Tradition of Scripture and Early Church Practice

The tradition of Christians gathering for prayer together is an ancient one. We can trace the roots of such gatherings in Jewish practice, a practice exercised by Jesus himself. New Testament references to such prayer include the following:

- ▶ All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds – to all, as any had need. *Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple*, they broke bread at home – and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day, the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:44ff).
- ▶ All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers (Acts 1:14).

All of this is to say that to gather for prayer as a faith community in our local place of worship has been part of the fabric of what it means to be Christian from earliest times.

In fact, as members of the Church, we are called to be a people who pray. We might remember the call to all followers of Christ to 'pray without ceasing' that we heard in the reading from Thessalonians in our opening prayer.

Rooted in Our Baptismal Identity as a Priestly People

Another way of saying this is that, through our Baptism, we are a priestly people. We are people who can and who are called to offer prayer and intercession to God in the name of Jesus:

- ▶ Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name (Heb 13:15).

Indeed, as Christians, when we make our prayer to God together we have the assurance that that in such gatherings we encounter the Risen Lord in our midst. We recall the words of Jesus recorded in Matthew's Gospel:

- ▶ For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them (18:20).

When we gather to pray in the name of the Lord, Christ is with us. Just take a moment to think about that truth and its implications.

Primacy of Sunday

Looking back at the tradition of the early Church, Sunday very quickly became the principal day of gathering. Sunday was the day of assembly and the day of Eucharist. This central reality of Church life and practice endures and holds true today. Sunday is to the week what Easter is to the year. The Sunday celebration of Eucharist is the high point in the weekly life of the Christian community. Everything else in the life of the community flows into and out of this weekly tradition. All of our prayer during the week leads us to and finds its culmination in the Sunday Eucharist.

Ancient Tradition of Daily Gathering for Liturgy of the Hours

Returning to the early Church, in many places, alongside the primary gathering that was Sunday Eucharist, people continued to assemble on weekdays for the daily nourishment of shared prayer. In this way they were responding to the call to pray without ceasing. While undergoing different forms over the centuries, what we know today as the Liturgy of the Hours (or the Divine Office), not the Mass, is considered to have been the daily prayer of early Christians. It reached particular popularity by the fourth century, at which time it would have been attended by a large portion of the community.

Over the centuries, the Liturgy of the Hours came to be perceived as the responsibility and preserve of the ordained and religious. The modern reform of the liturgy in the life of the Church has sought to retrieve the Liturgy of the Hours as the prayer of the whole Church, the People of God.

The most important hours, and those we are most likely to encounter in a parish context, are Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer. These two hours are seen as the two 'hinges', as it were, of the daily office of prayer. In a set pattern and cycle of prayer, they have at their heart the praying of the psalms, the Word of God, the singing of hymns and canticles, and the community's intercession to and praise of God.

- ▶ The daily prayer of the Church consists in the celebration of the Eucharist with its cycle of readings and prayers *and* the Liturgy of the Hours (especially Morning, Evening and Night Prayer). Just as there is a given cycle of texts for the celebration of the Eucharist for each day, so, too, there are given 'hours'; a given cycle of hymns, psalms, readings and prayers to be prayed at different times of the day (from *It is Good for Us to Be Here*, para. 42).

Through the daily praying of the Liturgy of the Hours, all of time and human activity within it is made holy.

Weekday Gathering: Building on a Living Tradition of the Baptised

Looking to the future, we can be assured, then, that gathering daily for prayer in our churches, even in the absence of the celebration of the Eucharist, is continuing a long and sacred tradition of prayer among the People of God, a people called to be:

- ▶ A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people (1 Pt 2:9).

By virtue of our Baptism, even when we cannot be led by an ordained minister of the Church, the faithful can gather with the purpose of praying together, offering hymns of praise, interceding to God for one another, and receiving the nourishment of the living Word of God; all the while assured that they are in God's presence. This is the baptismal dignity, right, privilege and duty of the People of God.

As Thomas R. Whelan writes, 'Weekday worship is not just a nice thing to do ... It is the parish community fulfilling its evangelical mandate to pray always.'

Check in

- Is anything striking you in particular as you hear and reflect on what is being said? Depending on numbers, people might be invited to share in twos and threes and then open it to the wider group.

Input 2: What we might do – exploring what forms this prayer might take, as envisaged by the Church.

- ▶ Pastoral realities, learning from other places
- ▶ Options that the Church provides for weekday liturgies other than Mass:
 - A celebration of Morning/Evening Prayer
 - A celebration of the Word
 - A celebration of the Word with Distribution of Holy Communion

Pastoral Realities: Learning from Other Places

The purpose of these sessions is to begin to put in place a way of praying when we cannot celebrate the Mass on a weekday but still wish to continue to gather as a faith community in prayer.

This is a pastoral reality that has been addressed by the Church across the world in recent decades. Because of this, in many ways we have the advantage of learning from past practices in other places. As time has progressed there is a growing sense that some of the earliest responses to the question *what can we do when we don't have Mass?* may not have been the wisest or most appropriate. Time has taught the wisdom of pausing before making any local decisions and reflecting on what is the best local pastoral solution in light of good theology, remembering that short-term solutions have long-term implications. So what follows has emerged through the Church's reflection on recent practice.

Options: A Celebration of Morning/Evening Prayer; a Celebration of the Word; a Celebration of the Word with Distribution of Holy Communion

The most favoured options envisaged by the Church for a stable and regular celebration of weekday liturgy when Mass cannot be celebrated, from both a pastoral and theological perspective, are:

- ▶ A Celebration of Morning/Evening Prayer, based on the given Liturgy of the Hours of the day.
- ▶ A Celebration of the Word, based on the given Liturgy of the Word of the day.

Both of these celebrations belong to the daily Liturgy of the Church throughout the world. Both prayer forms have a definite shape and content. When a local community prays these liturgies they are doing so in harmony and unity with the Church throughout the world on the given day. As such, while mindful of the intrinsic value, popularity and importance of other prayer forms, these particular liturgies surpass every form of popular, private devotion (cf. *It is Good for Us to Be Here*, para. 10).

We have already highlighted that Christ is present when people gather to pray the Liturgy of the Church. The Church teaches that the Lord is also present when the scriptures are read, for when they are read in the sacred assembly, God speaks to God's people and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel.

We Find the Following in Para. 45 of It is Good for Us to Be Here

‘When the Church gathers to celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours (especially Morning, Evening or Night Prayer) or the Liturgy of the Word, which has been assigned to a particular day, the Lord truly is with his people. He is teaching them. He is nourishing them. He is sustaining them. He is increasing their appetite for their communion with him ... at the celebration of the Eucharist and the sacrifice of the Mass, especially on Sundays.’

Some people may have experienced for themselves or heard of a celebration of the Word with distribution of Holy Communion. These are often referred to as Communion services. As we will see in our next session together, on reflecting on their use the Church has come to recognise real issues with these services and how they relate to the primary celebration of the Mass. In light of this ongoing reflection on practice, the Church has imposed severe restrictions on these celebrations, which are under the regulation of the local bishop. It is important that we are aware of this when we move towards our own local decisions.

In the next session we are going to look in greater detail at these prayer forms, exploring their structure and what exactly is involved in each of them.

Check in

- Has anybody in the group experienced any of these prayer forms?
- If yes, what do you remember about them?

This is a very quick check in with participants. It may not be helpful to go into detailed conversation here. Its purpose is to get a sense from the group if any participants have had experience of any of the prayer options mentioned. Now is not the time to get into the value or otherwise of them. If you find the conversation getting bogged down, gently remind people that they will be coming back to explore these options in greater detail next time.

Input 3: A final conclusion – we need leaders!

- Needed: a shared task of leadership
- Why such leadership can be exercised
- What the task might include
- Getting ready for the task and exploring together as a group

As said before, we are going to look at these prayer forms in greater detail in the next session. But before we do it might be helpful to name something obvious from the outset.

Needed: A Shared Task of Leadership

In order for these prayers to happen, and indeed to happen in a prayerful, reverent and nourishing manner, we need people who are going to prepare and lead them. This is a shared task. It is not about one person being the leader, but about a small group of people together taking leadership, on behalf of the parish, in helping to ensure that the weekday prayer of the community continues in a life-giving way.

Why Such Leadership Can Be Exercised

For those of us who will carry out this shared task, this shared ministry – for it is a service to the People of God – we can be assured that we can do so because of:

- ▶ Our baptismal identity as members of the priestly People of God; remember we are a people who can and who are called to offer our prayer and petitions to God.
- ▶ The need of the parish to continue to gather to pray as a community.
- ▶ The nature of our Church itself that, as the Body of Christ, is made up of people who are gifted in many ways, and who are called to share these gifts for the good of the community and in response to the needs of the community. It is not just the task of priests and religious but of all of us to share our gifts in the community.

Our common baptismal vocation, our mutual need of each other's charisms, and our co-responsibility for the Church's ministry, impels us to a life of collaboration. (Role of the Laity, Cardinal R. Mahony)

Anyone who is invited to and undertakes this shared leadership role does so in the name of the parish. Leaders who are called by the parish and undergo training will have both the mandate and the ongoing support of the parish.

What the Task Might Include

- ▶ Making sure that all that is needed is in place for the celebration of prayer, and that any practical things like turning on heat/microphones/lights are done as necessary.
- ▶ Coordinating the celebration, ensuring that people have what they need in order to pray the prayer, and that people have been assigned any individual roles needed within the prayer, for example readings, leading prayers of intercession.
- ▶ Welcoming people and being present, in the full sense of that word.
- ▶ Opening and closing the prayer.
- ▶ Helping to ensure that the pace and flow of the service brings people deeper in prayer.

Check in

This, again, is a quick check in with participants. The next sessions will expand and engage participants directly in the tasks outlined above.

- Is there anything that might be missing in this list?
- Is there anything that needs immediate clarification?

Getting Ready for the Task and Exploring Together as a Group

The number of people needed to be part of leading prayer is relatively small. The next couple of sessions are about equipping these leaders with what they need in order to be able to do the above. The sessions are also about exploring together as a group what we think are the best options for us as a local community. We each have a voice and are needed in this exploration, regardless of whether in the future we will be a prayer leader or not.

Close of Session: Thanks and invitation

Thank people for their time and engagement. Remind people of when and where the next meeting will take place and how long it will be, and encourage them to come back!

SESSION TWO

Aim: To introduce participants to the principal prayer forms available for use and the possibilities within them.

An Overview of the Session Steps

Exploring the format of Morning/Evening Prayer.

Exploring the format of a celebration of the Word.

Exploring the format of a celebration of the Word with distribution of Holy Communion.

Naming the distinctions between Mass and celebrations of the Word with distribution of Holy Communion and the canonical issues involved.

Welcome

The presenter welcomes people to this session and reminds them what was looked at the last time they met. Let participants know what they will be exploring on this occasion and how long the session will be.

A Time of Prayer: Using the alternative Invitatory Psalm of Morning Prayer, Psalm 66

All: Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

Reader: O God, be gracious and bless us
and let your face shed its light upon us.
So will your ways be known upon earth
and all nations learn your saving help.

All: Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

Reader: Let the nations be glad and exult
for you rule the world with justice.
With fairness you rule the peoples,
you guide the nations on earth.

All: Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

Reader: The earth has yielded its fruit
for God, our God, has blessed us.
May God still give us his blessing
till the ends of the earth revere him.

All: Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

Exploring the Format of Morning/Evening Prayer

The presenter gives out the handout on the next page and talks through the format, drawing on the subsequent notes. The notes can also serve as a handout to leave with participants at the end of the session. Columba McCann's article (p. 27) in this manual can serve as further reading for the presenter ahead of this session. This article could also be made known to participants for their own reading.

THE FORMAT OF MORNING/EVENING PRAYER: HANDOUT

MORNING PRAYER		EVENING PRAYER
STAND	OPENING VERSE 🎵	STAND

Leader: O God, come to our aid.

All: O Lord, make haste to help us. Glory be to the Father ... Alleluia

Alternatively for Morning Prayer

Leader: O Lord, open our lips.

All: And we shall praise your name. Glory be to the Father ... Alleluia

Alternatively for Evening Prayer

Leader: Light and peace in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

HYMN 🎵		
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SIT	PSALMODY 🎵	SIT
Antiphon 1 read by leader A Morning Psalm Antiphon repeated by all <i>Silent prayer</i>		Antiphon 1 read by leader An Evening Psalm Antiphon repeated by all <i>Silent prayer</i>
Antiphon 2 read by leader An Old Testament Canticle Antiphon repeated by all <i>Silent prayer</i>		Antiphon 2 read by leader A Psalm Antiphon repeated by all <i>Silent prayer</i>
Antiphon 3 read by leader A Psalm Antiphon repeated by all <i>Silent prayer</i>		Antiphon 3 read by leader A New Testament Canticle Antiphon repeated by all <i>Silent prayer</i>

*The number of psalms prayed can be reduced. This might be particularly wise in the early stages as people get used to this form of prayer.

SCRIPTURE READING

Silent Prayer/Reflection

SHORT RESPONSORY

***May be omitted**

STAND	GOSPEL CANTICLE 🎵	STAND
Antiphon read by leader Canticle of Zechariah (the Benedictus) Antiphon repeated by all		Antiphon ready by leader Canticle of Mary (The Magnificat) Antiphon repeated by all

INTERCESSIONS 🎵

THE LORD'S PRAYER 🎵

CONCLUDING PRAYER AND CONCLUSION OF THE HOUR 🎵

Leader: The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.

🎵 Indicates parts that can be sung where resources allow.

NOTES ON MORNING/EVENING PRAYER: HANDOUT

The Opening Verse

The prayer leader begins the prayer from their appointed place. The leader does not sit in the presider's chair (or the priest's chair) but is in a position where he/she is both visible and audible. Just as we do at any other liturgical prayer in the Church, we stand for the opening. Remembering the promise of Jesus, 'Where two or three are gathered in my name I am there'. In our posture of standing we are showing honour to Christ and greeting the Risen Lord in our midst.

As is also customary, we mark ourselves with the Sign of the Cross. This is typically done as people make the response to the leader, 'O Lord, make haste to help us'/'And my mouth will proclaim your praise'. This verse can be recited or sung.

The Hymn

The opening hymn is intended to be a familiar one that all present can sing, for example 'Christ be Beside Me' or 'Be Thou my Vision'. It might speak to the time of day, for example, 'Day is Done' as a hymn for Evening Prayer. It might speak of praise, creation or gathering. During the seasons of Advent/Christmas, Lent/Easter, a seasonal hymn can be used. In many instances in a local parish this will be without accompaniment, so care should be taken in its selection.

Psalmody

The people are seated for the praying of the psalms. The praying of the psalms is at the heart of the Liturgy of the Hours. Over the course of four weeks, through the various hours that are prayed in the Church, practically all one hundred and fifty psalms are prayed. Thus, in a four-week cycle, each hour is assigned particular psalms and canticles.

For a local community starting out with this prayer, it may be too ambitious to do all the psalms assigned to a particular hour on a particular day. A community might decide to do two, or even one, initially. A community might also decide to settle on a particular set of psalms and repeat them daily/weekly, before expanding over time the repertoire of psalms prayed.

A psalm can be sung using a psalm tone or it can be sung using a responsorial style, as we experience at Mass. Alternatively, the psalms can be recited in a number of different ways: 1) alternating between two groups, for example men/women, one side of the church and the other; 2) alternating between the leader and the whole group or 3) recited by just one person. Typically, recited or chanted psalms conclude with the prayer Glory Be. If recited, think about how you will facilitate the psalm being prayed meditatively and slowly rather than being rushed through.

Each psalm has an **antiphon** that is recited by the leader before the psalm and by all at the end of the psalm. This psalm or scripture verse contains the central thought of the psalm and can assist in praying the psalm in the particular liturgical season we find ourselves. During the Easter season the antiphon is concluded with an **Alleluia**.

The **silence** between the psalms is very necessary, allowing time for what we have just prayed in the psalm to enter deeper into our hearts before moving on to the next one.

The two psalms of the hour are traditionally accompanied by an Old Testament canticle (hymn) in the morning and a New Testament canticle in the evening.

Scripture Reading

This can be led from the ambo (the place from where readings are normally proclaimed in church) and is read by someone other than the prayer leader. Unlike in the Mass, the reader simply proclaims the verses without an introduction or conclusion, i.e. without saying 'A reading from ...' or 'The

NOTES ON MORNING/EVENING PRAYER: HANDOUT

Word of the Lord'. Each Hour on a given day has a particular reading assigned to it. As this is a very short reading, those preparing the prayer might consider going to the Bible text itself and extending the verses read. After this reading, people are given time to ponder, pray and reflect on the Word of God they have just received.

Short Responsory

In both of these hours a short responsory verse is assigned to follow the scripture reading. If used, it is led by the leader with the people responding. The responsory is linked to the reading that has gone before it. It serves as a kind of acclamation, enabling God's Word to enter deeper into the heart and mind of the one listening or reading.

Gospel Cantic

The leader introduces the cantic by standing and reciting its antiphon. This Gospel text is the high point of both Morning and Evening Prayer. We mark this high point by moving to a standing posture and by blessing ourselves at the beginning of the cantic. This high point can be further experienced through the use of incense. This might be as simple as placing grains of incense on the already lit coal, which is in a thurible or incense bowl, as the cantic begins.

Ideally the cantic is sung. It might be part of the goals of a leadership group to work towards having a setting for the Benedictus/Magnificat that is both familiar and popular in your particular parish. This is especially recommended given that the Gospel cantic will be prayed every time you gather for Morning/Evening Prayer.

Intercessions

While remaining standing, we present our prayers and intercessions to God. Again there are intercessions assigned to each Hour but these can be adapted or added to, depending on local needs. As shared prayers they can be led by someone other than the prayer leader. Some parishes might choose to sing a simple response to the intercessions.

The Lord's Prayer

The prayer leader invites all to pray the Lord's Prayer together. Praying the Lord's Prayer at Morning and Evening Prayer flows from the early Church tradition of Christians praying the Lord's Prayer thrice daily. Recited or sung, it reminds us of the daily nourishment we receive from God, even in the absence of Eucharist.

Concluding Prayer and Conclusion of Hour

The prayer leader draws the time of prayer to a close with a concluding prayer. This concluding prayer may be one that 1) is taken from the Hour of the day, 2) is repeated at each gathering or 3) may be one that is seasonal in nature and tone. Examples of concluding prayers can be found in *Weekday Celebrations for the Christian Community* by John McCann (Veritas, 2000).

Those gathered make the Sign of the Cross as the prayer leader asks God's blessing on him/her and those gathered. The people respond 'Amen'. This conclusion can be sung.

Set Up

Aside from other set-up considerations, before people gather for this prayer, any candles that are usually in place near or on the ambo and altar are lit.

Check in

Before moving on, participants should be given a chance to respond to what they have just explored.

- Having looked to the shape and content of Morning and Evening Prayer, are there elements in this prayer form that are attractive to you?
- Are there elements that you would have a concern/question about?
- On first impressions, how doable is it?
- (For those communities already praying Morning/Evening Prayer, is there anything we can take on board for ourselves in regard to our current practice?)

Exploring the Format of a Celebration of the Word

The presenter, again, may follow the same procedure as above and give out the format of a celebration of the Word as a handout for participants. The handout might be read through once before going back to the beginning and drawing on the notes to walk through the service.

THE FORMAT OF A CELEBRATION OF THE WORD: HANDOUT*

*Elements in () are offered as suggestions. Indicates parts that can be sung where resources allow.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Opening Hymn 🎵 **STAND**
(Carrying in of the Lectionary)

Greeting and Sign of the Cross

Leader: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **All:** Amen.

Leader: Your word, O God, is a lamp for our steps. **All:** And a light for our path.

(Words of Introduction)

Penitential Act 🎵

Collect

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First reading **SIT**
Silence

Responsorial Psalm 🎵
Silence

Gospel Acclamation 🎵 **STAND**

Gospel **SIT**
Silence

(Short Reflection)

(Sung Response 🎵) **STAND**

Intercessions 🎵 **STAND**
Our Father 🎵

CONCLUDING RITE

Concluding Prayer
(Gesture of Reverence to the Scriptures)

Closing verse with Sign of the Cross

Leader: Let us bless the Lord. **All:** Thanks be to God.

Or

Leader: The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. **All:** Amen.

Dismissal

Leader: Go in the peace of Christ. **All:** Thanks be to God.

Closing Hymn 🎵

NOTES ON A CELEBRATION OF THE WORD: HANDOUT

Opening Hymn

The opening hymn unites all who have gathered into one voice as they stand to greet the Risen Lord in their midst and begin their time of prayer together. Therefore this hymn, of necessity, is one that is known and familiar to those who have gathered. Familiar seasonal hymns are also very appropriate. (See notes on opening hymn for Morning/Evening Prayer for more suggestions.)

The opening hymn typically begins when the prayer leader stands in his/her place, marking the beginning of the time of prayer. Again, the prayer leader does not sit in the presider's chair (priest's chair) but is positioned in a location where he/she is both visible and audible.

Carrying in of the Lectionary

Given the focus of this liturgy on the Word of God, it would be very appropriate for a member of the community to carry the Lectionary (the ritual book containing the readings) in procession to the ambo during the singing of the opening hymn, and to place it on the ambo.

Opening Verse

The text of this exchange between prayer leader and people once more highlights the importance of God's Word. It begins with all present making the Sign of the Cross.

Words of Introduction

These words, spoken by the prayer leader, might acknowledge from the outset that we are gathering in the absence of an ordained priest and, because of this, we are unable to celebrate the Eucharist. Alternatively, they may very succinctly look forward to something that will be heard in the readings to come, or they might make reference to the particular day in the liturgical calendar on which the celebration is taking place.

For example: Once again we gather here to be Church. Christ is present with us, as he promised – present in this assembly of his people and in the proclamation of God's Word. As an ordained priest cannot be with us we are unable to celebrate the Eucharist. Today, let us be united in the spirit of Christ with the Church around the world, let us hear and respond to God's Word and give God thanks and praise. We look forward to when we can once more gather together to celebrate the Eucharist.

Penitential Act

To prepare ourselves to hear the Word of God we acknowledge our need for God's mercy and love in the Penitential Act using formulae similar to what we find in the Mass.

Collect

The Collect, or what used to be called the Opening Prayer, is led by the prayer leader. Again a variety of suitable Collects can be found in John McCann's book. Parishes may wish to choose one set prayer for use in Ordinary Time, with some seasonal alternatives. As in the case of all opening and closing prayers, the prayer begins with an invitation to the people to pray, 'Let us pray', which is followed by a moment of silence. In this silence people bring their own prayer to the common prayer to follow. In this way, the common prayer literally *collects* the people's prayers into one. The people give their assent to this prayer with their Amen.

NOTES ON A CELEBRATION OF THE WORD: HANDOUT

Liturgy of the Word: Texts

The Liturgy of the Word in a celebration such as this one will typically employ the texts for the Mass of the day. However, on particular occasions parishes may choose to deviate from these texts. Volume III of the Lectionary provides a selection of readings for various needs and occasions. What is happening in the life of the parish might also inspire readings.

The Readings

The readings are proclaimed by a variety of parish readers and by people other than the prayer leader. As is always the case, there is no need to say 'The first reading' or 'The responsorial psalm, the response is ...' The Gospel is introduced with the following words: 'A reading from the Holy Gospel according to N.'

The Psalm

As always we strive, if we can, to sing the psalm. To this end, we might build up a small repertoire of psalms and use these often, rather than using the psalm of the day. Alternatively, the response might be sung with spoken verses, or all of the psalm might be recited with people reciting the response and a reader reciting the verses.

Gospel Acclamation

All stand for the Gospel Acclamation which is intended to be sung.

Silence

Silence is observed between all the readings in order for people to have time to ponder God's Word. This silence can be developed as time goes on and people get used to it. Any sense of rush should be avoided to the utmost. People will need to be invited to sit for a time of silence after the reading of the Gospel.

Reflection

The prayer leader or other member of the community may read a reflection or commentary on the readings. This is typically done from the ambo. There is a growing body of commentaries available for use. The reflection is based on the scriptures or, where appropriate, on the saint/feast of the day. The group leading this prayer might work with the local clergy in ensuring that any reflections used are suitable and appropriate to those who are gathering for this prayer.

Sung Response

Having pondered God's Word, the people may stand and join in singing a hymn in response to the gift and nourishment of the Word.

Intercessions

There are many resources to draw on for these intercessions, which are introduced by the prayer leader and led by another member of the community. All stand for the intercessions, which can have a sung response.

NOTES ON A CELEBRATION OF THE WORD: HANDOUT

Our Father

The prayer leader invites people to pray the Lord's Prayer.

Concluding prayer

As in the case of the Collect, a set prayer can be put in place for any celebrations of the Word that take place in the parish, or this prayer might take a seasonal tone.

Gesture of Reverence to the Scriptures

As one of the final actions of this time of prayer, parishes might consider inviting those who have gathered to make a gesture of reverence to the scriptures. Depending on circumstance, this might involve one of the readers of the day coming forward at this point and holding the closed Lectionary aloft in the centre of the sanctuary while the prayer leader and the congregation bow to it. Or it might involve all who have gathered coming forward to kiss the Lectionary.

Closing Verse and Dismissal

The prayer closes with the invitation to bless the Lord, after which all respond and make the Sign of the Cross, before concluding with the words of dismissal and response. Again both of these verses can be sung if desired.

Closing Hymn

A well-known hymn can conclude the time of prayer. Again this can be seasonal in nature. Alternatively people may depart in silence.

Set up

Aside from other set-up considerations, before people gather for this prayer, any candles that are usually in place near or on the ambo and altar are lit.

Check in

Before moving on, participants should be given a chance to respond to what they have just explored.

- Having looked to the shape and content of this celebration of the Word, are there elements in this prayer form that are attractive to you?
- Are there elements that you would have a concern/question about?
- On first impressions, how doable is it?
- (In regard to our weekday experience of the Liturgy of the Word during Mass, is there anything we can take on board for ourselves?)

Exploring the Format of a Celebration of the Word with Distribution of Holy Communion

A Word Before a Leader Uses this Material – or Doesn't!

Given that this prayer option is under the regulation of the local bishop, who is canonically advised only to permit them in very restrictive cases, a local parish would need to ascertain whether or not they have permission for these celebrations in the particular set of circumstances they find themselves. It may be that such permission has not been granted and, therefore, it would be redundant for this service to be explored. However, if and when it is presented it should be accompanied by a very clear understanding of its limited permission of use and its very clear distinctions from the celebration of Mass.

Background Reading

Presenters of this material may well find it helpful to have read over some of the accompanying material in this manual. Aside from *It is Good For Us to Be Here*, the articles by Rev. Michael Mullaney (p. 43), Rev. Tom Whelan (p. 47) and Ms Mary Connolly (p. 33) will be of particular help.

Exploring the Celebration

If this material is being used, the presenter, again, follows the same procedure as above and gives the outline of the celebration out as a handout for participants. The handout might be read through once before going back to the beginning and drawing on the notes to walk through the ritual.

FORMAT OF A CELEBRATION OF THE WORD WITH DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION: HANDOUT

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Opening Hymn 🎵 (🎵 Denotes what can be sung where resources allow) **STAND**

Sign of the Cross and Greeting

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **All:** Amen.

Leader: Let us praise the Lord Jesus Christ, who is present among us and in the Word, who keeps us united in love. Bless the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. **All:** Blessed be God for ever.

(Words of Introduction)

Penitential Act

Collect

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading **SIT**

Silence

Psalm 🎵

Gospel Acclamation 🎵 **STAND**

Gospel

Silence **SIT**

(Reflection on the Readings)

(Sung Response 🎵) **STAND**

Intercessions 🎵

COMMUNION RITE

Bringing of the Blessed Sacrament to the Altar

The Lord's Prayer 🎵

(Sign of Peace)

Invitation to Communion

Communion (with suitable hymn 🎵)

Reposition of the Blessed Sacrament and silent prayer **SIT/KNEEL**

Prayer after Communion **STAND**

CONCLUDING RITE

Closing Verse with Sign of the Cross 🎵

Leader: The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. **All:** Amen.

Or

Leader: Let us bless the Lord. **All:** Thanks be to God.

Dismissal 🎵

Leader: Go in the peace of Christ

All: Thanks be to God.

(Closing Hymn 🎵)

NOTES ON A CELEBRATION OF THE WORD WITH DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION: HANDOUT

Notes on a Celebration of the Word with Distribution of Holy Communion

See the previous notes for a celebration of the Word in regard to the opening hymn, the collect, the Liturgy of the Word, the sung response, closing verse with Sign of the Cross, dismissal and closing hymn.

Words of Introduction

These words, spoken by the prayer leader, acknowledge from the outset that we are gathering in the absence of an ordained priest and, because of this, we are unable to celebrate the Eucharist.

For example: Once again we gather here to be Church. Christ is present with us, as he promised: present in this assembly of his people, in the proclamation of God's Word, and in the communion of his body and blood.

As an ordained priest cannot be with us we are unable to celebrate the Eucharist. Let us be united in the spirit of Christ with the Church around the world this day, let us reflect on the Word and pray together and then share Christ's body and blood consecrated for us at a previous Eucharist. We look forward to when we can once more gather together to celebrate the Eucharist.

Penitential Act

To help prepare the assembly (the congregation) to enter into this celebration, the prayer leader invites all to pray the Confiteor together, or alternatively to pray one of the other formulae of the Penitential Act found in the *Missal*.

An example of an invitation: Gathered together in Christ, let us ask for forgiveness with confidence, for God is full of gentleness and compassion.

Bringing of the Blessed Sacrament to the Altar

After the Intercessions and as people remain standing, an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion brings the ciborium (the vessel containing the consecrated hosts) from the tabernacle and places the Blessed Sacrament on the altar upon a corporal (a cloth placed on the altar cloth). If more than one ciborium is being placed on the altar, other extraordinary ministers can assist. This is done with simple dignity. After placing the vessels on the altar, a genuflection is made by those who placed the ciborium/ciboria.

When the vessels for Holy Communion are in place, the prayer leader or the minister of Holy Communion who is to lead the Rite of Communion comes to the altar and stands at it, facing the people. Any extraordinary ministers needed for the distribution of Communion take their place near the altar.

The Lord's Prayer

The minister then invites the people to pray the Lord's Prayer. For example, 'With trust in our Father in heaven we pray as Jesus taught us, saying ...'

Invitation to Communion

Having first genuflected, the minister who leads the distribution of Communion takes the host and

NOTES ON A CELEBRATION OF THE WORD WITH DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION: HANDOUT

raises it slightly over the vessel and, facing the people, says: 'Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those who are called to his supper.' To which the people and minister respond as normal. When the minister receives Communion, he/she says quietly, 'May the body of Christ bring me to everlasting life.'

Holy Communion

Having received Holy Communion him/herself, the minister distributes to any other extraordinary ministers, who then proceed to their stations. The singing of a Communion hymn may suitably be sung during this time.

Reposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Silence

Once all have had the opportunity to receive Holy Communion, time is given for people to offer their prayer to God in silence. During this time any remaining hosts are returned to the tabernacle. Any empty Communion vessels are brought to a side table, and may be reverently purified after the celebration.

Prayer after Communion

The Communion Rite concludes with the Prayer after Communion and is most suitably led by whoever led the Communion Rite itself. If this was the prayer leader then they simply return to their place for this prayer. If it was an extraordinary minister other than the prayer leader, this minister leads the Prayer after Communion from the altar before returning to his/her place among the people.)

The Prayer Follows the Pattern of the Collect

For example: Let us pray (pause).

Lord, we have been fed at this table with the bread of heaven. Give us this food always, that it may strengthen your love in our hearts and inspire us to serve you in our brothers and sisters. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Check in

Participants might be asked for an initial reaction to this prayer.

- What are the attractive elements of this prayer service?
- Are there elements that you would have a concern/question about?
- When you place it alongside the celebration of the Mass, can we name the elements that are missing in this celebration?

Input 1: The distinctions between Mass and a celebration of the Word with distribution of Holy Communion*

**Presenters are reminded of the detailed reading that can be found in the articles at the beginning of this manual in relation to theological and canonical issues regarding the above celebration. Participants can access this material also via the website of the National Centre for Liturgy (liturgy-ireland.ie).*

The presenter is invited to build on what participants have shared in the check in, and to draw on the following in highlighting the distinctions that can be made:

- ▶ Relationship to Eucharist
- ▶ Four actions of the Eucharist and their absence in this celebration
- ▶ Principal reasons for reservation of the Eucharist
- ▶ Caution from experience: weekday rather than Sunday context

Relationship to Eucharist

We cannot fully appreciate the nature of these particular celebrations (of the Word with distribution of Holy Communion) and their limits without viewing them in relationship to the Eucharist, and in particular the Sunday Eucharist. As we have already noted, Sunday is the day of assembly for the Christian community for the celebration of Eucharist. Sunday, assembly and Eucharist make the Church. Any weekday celebration finds its culmination and high point in the Sunday Eucharist.

Four Actions of the Eucharist and their Absence in this Celebration

Both sacrifice and sacrament are found at the heart of every celebration of the Eucharist, whether on a Sunday or on a weekday. In the celebration of the Mass, the real and substantial presence of the Lord – in the elements of bread and wine – arises out of the action of God and our faithfulness to the fourfold action of Christ at the Last Supper.

We encounter these divine actions in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, namely in the:

Taking: Presenting the bread and wine, and indeed, ourselves for transformation.

Blessing: Transformation of the elements of bread and wine and of the people through the Eucharistic Prayer.

Breaking: During the Lamb of God, breaking down the Body of Christ in order for its sharing with this faith community.

Giving: Distributing Holy Communion to those who have assembled to pray the Mass, and on occasion, distributing also to those who cannot be present due to illness or infirmity and who receive directly from this particular celebration of the Eucharist, through the ministry of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to the sick and housebound.

This fourfold pattern of taking, blessing, breaking and giving is the essence of our celebration of the Eucharist. These central actions have endured throughout the centuries. The words of Jesus to ‘Do this in memory of me’ were words that invited us to action. The Eucharist, the Mass, is an event, an encounter, not an object. Clearly, in a celebration of the Word with distribution of Holy Communion there is no taking, no blessing and no breaking. There is only giving. The ritual unity and essential action of the Liturgy of the Eucharist is sundered and broken. This is something that the Church cannot envisage as a routine or habitual occurrence.

As a consequence, ‘the Church is exacting in her teaching that Holy Communion as the *giving* and *receiving* of the eucharistic elements, is not separated without just cause from the concurrent celebration of the eucharistic prayer, that is, of the *taking*, the *blessing* and the *breaking* in the one and the same celebration’ (*It is Good for Us to Be Here*, para. 22).

Principal Reasons for the Reservation of the Eucharist

The principal and original reason for reserving Eucharist in the tabernacle is for giving viaticum to the dying and secondary, for giving Communion to those unable to participate in Mass, especially the sick and aged, and for the adoration of Christ present in the sacrament (*Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*, 1973).

Caution from Experience: Weekday Rather than Sunday Context

While the Church continues to make Holy Communion outside of Mass available for the sick and the housebound, greater caution is clearly being advocated in regard to such practice as part of a normal parish schedule. There is a clear sense that such a practice diminishes our experience of the Eucharist as a community and can be damaging in the long run.

The more common these celebrations are, the greater the risk of diminishing people’s sense of the Eucharist as an action through which, by its very doing, we encounter and are nourished by the Risen Lord in our midst.

We might pay particular attention to the Bishops of Kansas who as far back as 1995 wrote, in light of their experience, that they ‘had come to judge that Holy Communion regularly received outside of Mass is a short-term solution that has all the makings of becoming a long-term problem.’

It is important to note that in those instances across the world where permission has been given for these celebrations, they are envisaged to typically be in cases where a faith community is unable to celebrate Sunday Eucharist. Almost all of the discussion is in regard to Sunday. The reference to weekday celebrations is to highlight that, even more so than on a Sunday, such permission should not easily be given by a bishop, especially in places where it would be possible to have the celebration of Mass on the preceding or following Sunday. It is also important to note that permission cannot be given when Mass will be celebrated in the church at another time during the day, or when Mass is available to the people in a church close by.

Check in

The leader might check in with participants as to their reaction to what is being said.

- Without having had time to fully reflect on it, at this point what is your own sense of what is being said in regard to these celebrations?
- Can you appreciate the concerns that Church leadership has about these celebrations?

Invite people to take time between now and the next session to pray and reflect on what has emerged in this session.

Close of Session: Thanks and invitation

The presenter reminds people of what has been explored in this session and thanks everyone for coming, and for their participation and engagement. Encourage people to return for the next session when they will be looking to the specific task of leading prayer. Let people know the time and duration of the next session.

SESSION THREE

Aim: To explore the different elements of the role of prayer leaders, and to explore how to move from a text for ritual to an experience of prayer by beginning to prepare for a celebration of Morning/Evening Prayer.

An Overview of the Session Steps

The qualities helpful in prayer leaders.

The skills needed by prayer leaders.

How to move from the text to the actual celebration of a prayer ritual; what needs to be considered.

Practical exercise of preparing a Morning Prayer/Evening Prayer.

A glossary of terms.

Welcome

The presenter welcomes people to this session and reminds them what they did the last time they met. Let participants know what they will be exploring on this occasion and how long the meeting will be. Presenters might like to check in with participants as to how the content of the last session is sitting with them before proceeding to the time of prayer.

A Time of Prayer: Based on the hymn, 'Be Thou My Vision' and Psalm 130

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art.
Be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word.
Be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord.
Be thou my great Father, and I thy true child.
Be thou in me dwelling and I with thee one.

Psalm 130

Out of the depth I cry to you, O Lord; Lord hear my voice!
O Let your ears be attentive to the sound of my pleading.

If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt, Lord, who could stand?
But with you is found forgiveness, that you may be revered.

I long for you, O Lord, my soul longs for his word.
My soul hopes in the Lord more than watchmen for daybreak.

More than watchmen for daybreak, let Israel hope for the Lord.

For with the Lord there is mercy, in him is plentiful redemption.
It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Conversation 1: What do you think are the qualities that would be helpful among our prayer leaders? What do you think would be the particular skills needed among the people who will prepare and lead our public prayer?

As members of the group move closer to taking on a prayer leadership role, the following questions are offered to help them focus on the task they are undertaking and the skills and qualities needed. Participants might be reminded that what they have been working towards is being able to continue to gather for prayer when a priest is not available to celebrate Mass. For this to happen a small group of people have to work together in order to prepare the prayer; this is the leadership we are talking about. We are not looking for super or extraordinary leaders. The purpose of the following questions is to surface the awarenesses that will help those involved in this leadership task.

Over to You

What do you think are the qualities that would be helpful among our prayer leaders? (3–5 mins)

What do you think would be the particular skills needed among the people who are going to prepare and lead our public prayer? (3–5 mins)

Depending on numbers, this conversation might be in the large group or in groups of five to six people.

The presenter is encouraged to record and draw out what emerges from the conversation in the following input.

Input 1: The qualities and skills needed for prayerful leadership

The presenter may wish to write up the following bullet points on a flip chart or PowerPoint and talk through them with participants.

Some of the following may have already been included in the conversation, while some may be additional qualities.

Among the qualities included might be:

- ▶ A sense and love of prayer, both private and communal.
- ▶ A willingness and desire to work with others.
- ▶ A commitment to inclusiveness and collaboration in the Church
- ▶ Sensitivity to the needs of others.
- ▶ A willingness and an ability to communicate well with clergy and parishioners alike.
- ▶ An understanding of leadership as service, rather than domination, power or control.
- ▶ Reliability – someone who will follow through on a commitment.
- ▶ A sense of welcome and hospitality towards others.

Among the skills needed – and remember skills can be innate but they can also be acquired with training and practice – might include:

- ▶ Being organised, knowing what is needed to be done and ensuring that tasks are allocated ahead of time as necessary.

- ▶ Familiarity with the materials and practical elements to be employed, for example the Lectionary, candles, lighting, microphones, etc.
- ▶ Taking a full text for prayer and having the ability to let that prayer breath in the midst of the people who gather to pray it.
- ▶ Setting the right pace in the prayer.
- ▶ A sense of presence with and to the assembly/congregation while leading prayer.
- ▶ An ability to engage and invite the assembly into their prayer.
- ▶ The ability to pray aloud; this involves diction, projection, enunciation, good phrasing, posture and eye contact.
- ▶ Comfortableness in voice and body.
- ▶ Knowledge of gestures and their power; bowing, Sign of the Cross ...
- ▶ Taking care with beginnings and endings, welcoming and leave-taking.
- ▶ Leaders of prayer must first of all be people of prayer.

Check in

- Do these qualities and skills make sense in light of the task of preparing and leading weekday prayer in the absence of an ordained priest?

Input 2: From text to celebration – preparing liturgy

- ▶ Imagining liturgy beyond a text
- ▶ Set up and set down
- ▶ Hospitality
- ▶ Ministers
- ▶ Music
- ▶ Pace
- ▶ Posture and gesture
- ▶ Organising as a group

A central task of prayer leaders is to make the movement from having a text for prayer to actually being able to celebrate that prayer well as a community. Once the parish has decided on a full text for their weekday liturgy, that liturgy then has to be prepared.

(The presenter may wish to write up the following eight headings on a flip chart or PowerPoint and talk through them with participants.)

Imagining Liturgy Beyond a Text

Liturgy is not simply the recitation of prayers. Liturgy is communal, embodied prayer so that it involves and engages all who gather to pray it as one assembly. This has to be borne in mind when preparing the celebration of the public prayer of the Church.

The task involves imagining the liturgy as it will be prayed in the particular setting and by the particular people who will gather. It involves getting a sense of the flow and the pace of prayer, the silences and the sounds, the movements and the postures, the people who gather and the drawing upon individual ministers within the liturgy. In essence, beginning to imagine how that liturgy will physically begin to take shape.

When we remember a liturgy that we have been part of, it is primarily these elements, rather than exclusively texts, that we call to mind.

The following will need to be considered in any work of preparation.

Set up

How will the church be physically prepared for this liturgy? This includes light, heat and sound. The group will also need to look to seating arrangements for the congregation and for the leader of the given prayer. The presider's chair, as a symbol of the presence of Christ as head of the Church, is reserved for the ordained priest. Is the Lectionary in place and/or anything else that may be needed during the liturgy? Set up will also need to keep an eye to set down! In other words, we need also to plan for what happens after the liturgy has been prayed.

Hospitality

In the first instance, hospitality will more readily happen when all the necessary preparation has been done before people arrive for prayer. In this way prayer leaders can focus on being a welcoming presence rather than panicking about what still needs to be done. As people gather, do they have what they need in order to fully participate in this prayer? For example, do they have the prayer texts and the words of hymns; do they know where to sit?

Before the liturgy begins have people been given any necessary instructions to help them enter into the prayer rather than interrupting their prayer with instructions? For example, if the praying of psalms is being shared in a particular manner this is better communicated to people before the prayer begins. This can be done by someone other than the leader of the actual prayer itself.

A spirit of hospitality should permeate the whole experience of the liturgy from beginning to end. Be sure to involve the congregation throughout in their prayer; don't just think about what the prayer leader or reader has to do.

Ministers

How many ministers are needed for the praying of this liturgy? As well as a prayer leader, who will open and close the prayer and lead some of the prayers within; how many readers are needed? Is there a music minister upon whom we can draw? Some parishes are lucky enough to have an organist at daily Mass. If so, they might be asked to serve at this weekday liturgy.

Music

Music and singing is an integral part of Catholic worship. Given the particular liturgy we are praying, what are the opportunities for music in it? What are the resources available to us? What will we strive to sing, with or without accompaniment?

Pace

How will we ensure that the liturgy is not raced through? The use of silence throughout the prayer is an obvious aid to avoiding rushing the prayer. When is this silence called for in the prayer? How long is a suitable period of time for the particular group of people who are gathering?

Posture and Gesture

Consider and imagine the different movements, postures and gestures in this liturgy. Know when people are to stand and sit throughout. When we move in the liturgy, even if it is simply moving from one place to another, we might consciously do so with reverence and ease.

Organising as a Group

As part of the remote preparation for the liturgy, depending on the size of the group, the prayer leadership group could allocate from among themselves people to look after set up, others to look after having the prayer text ready and available, and others to ensure that the necessary ministers have been assigned. All this, of course, is reliant on a good level of communication amongst the group. A smaller group might wish to work through these tasks collectively.

Check in

The presenter checks in with participants to see if they have anything to add to any of the elements above, or if they need anything clarified at this stage.

Practical Exercise of Preparing an Evening/Morning Prayer

Having looked at the qualities, skills and tasks involved, participants are now led in a practical experience of drawing on those same skills and engaging in some of the tasks involved.

- ▶ Depending on whether these sessions are taking place in the morning or evening, as appropriate, a full text of either a Morning or Evening Prayer is given to each participant along with the preparation guide (see the following pages).
- ▶ Depending on numbers, either as a whole group or in groups of five or six, participants are asked to begin to set about exploring this text with a view to getting ready to pray it together at the start of the next session. It is recommended that this prayer take place in the church or the place that people will be gathering for weekday liturgy when there is no Mass, or another similar place(15 mins).
- ▶ After fifteen minutes, check in with people as to how they got on. If there are multiple groups, ask if one of the groups will take responsibility for leading the prayer at the next gathering.
- ▶ If only one group is operating, it should, after using the worksheet, be in a position to take on this responsibility beyond this session.
- ▶ While the presenter can offer any assistance to the group that they may need, it will be more beneficial to encourage the group to do as much for themselves as possible in this task between the sessions.
- ▶ The glossary of terms handout (p. 101) can also be given out to participants at the end of this session.

Close of Session: Thanks and invitation

The presenter thanks everyone for coming and for their participation and engagement with this session. Encourage people to return for the next formation session when they will pray Morning/Evening Prayer together, reflect on the experience and look ahead to preparing a celebration of the Word.

Remind them of the starting time, confirm the starting venue, and let those leading the Evening/Morning Prayer know that the session will begin with this prayer before anything else so they will need to be ready to begin at the allocated time.

A CELEBRATION OF MORNING PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

OPENING VERSE

Please Stand

LEADER: O God, come to our aid.

ISAIAH 12:1-6

ALL: O Lord, make haste to help us (*Sign of the Cross*). Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
Alleluia.

I thank you Lord,
you were angry with me
But your anger has passed and you give me
comfort.

HYMN

Be Thou My Vision

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
be all else but naught to me save that thou art.
Be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Truly God is my salvation.
I trust, I shall not fear.
For the Lord is my strength, my song,
He is my saviour.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word.
Be thou ever with me and I with thee, Lord.
Be thou my great Father, and I thy true child.
Be thou in me dwelling and I with thee one.

With joy you shall draw water
from the wells of salvation.
Give thanks to the Lord, give praise to his name!
Make his mighty deeds known to the peoples.

PSALMODY

Please Sit

ANTIPHON 1: You, O Lord, are close; your ways are truth. *Alleluia.*

Declare the greatness of his name,
sing a psalm to the Lord!
For he has done glorious deeds;
Make them known to all the earth.

PSALM 118

I call with all my heart; Lord, hear me,
I will keep your commands.
I will call upon you, save me
and I will do your will.

People of Sion, sing and shout for joy
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

Glory be to the Father ...

I rise before dawn and cry for help,
I hope in your word.
My eyes watch through the night
To ponder your promise.

ALL: The Lord has done marvellous things, let
them be made known to the whole world. *Alleluia.*
Silence

In your love hear my voice, O Lord;
Give me life by your decrees.
Those who harm me unjustly draw near:
They are far from your law.

ANTIPHON 3: To you, O God, I keep vigil at dawn,
to look upon your power. *Alleluia.*

But you, O Lord, are close:
Your commands are truth.
Long have I known that your will
is established for ever.

PSALM 62

O God, you are my God, for you I long;
for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you
like a dry, weary land without water.
So I gaze on you in the sanctuary
to see your strength and your glory.

Glory be to the Father ...

For your love is better than life,
my lips will speak your praise.
So I will bless you all my life,
In your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,
my mouth shall praise you with joy.

ALL: You, O Lord, are close: your ways are truth.
(*Alleluia*) *Silence*

ANTIPHON 2: The Lord has done marvellous
things, let them be made known to the whole
world. (*Alleluia.*)

On my bed I remember you,
on you I muse through the night
for you have been my help;

in the shadow of your wings I rejoice,
my soul clings to you;
your right hand holds me fast.

Glory be to the Father ...

ALL: To you, O God, I keep vigil at dawn, to look
upon your power. *Alleluia.*

Silence

SCRIPTURE READING **2 Timothy 2:8, 11-13**
Silence

SHORT RESPONSORY

LEADER: I will praise the Lord at all times.

ALL: I will praise the Lord at all times.

LEADER: God's praise will be always on my lips.

ALL: I will praise the Lord at all times.

LEADER: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and
to the Holy Spirit.

ALL: I will praise the Lord at all times.

The Benedictus *Please Stand*

ANTIPHON: Blessed be the Lord our God

Now bless the God of Israel (*Sign of the Cross*),
who comes in love and pow'r,
who raises from the royal house
deliv'rance in this hour.

Through holy prophets God has sworn
to free us from alarm,
to save us from the heavy hand
of all who wish us harm.

Remembering the covenant,
God rescues us from fear,
that we might serve in holiness
and peace from year to year.

And you, my child, shall go before
to preach to prophesy,
that all may know the tender love,
the grace of God most high.

In tender mercy, God will send
the dayspring from on high,
our rising sun, the light of life
for those who sit and sigh.

God comes to guide our way to peace
that death shall reign no more,
sing praises to the Holy One!
O worship and adore!

ALL: Blessed be the Lord our God.

INTERCESSIONS

Through the Gospel, the Lord Jesus calls us to
share in his glory. Let us make our prayer with him
to our heavenly Father.

RESPONSE: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for all nations: that they may seek the
ways that lead to peace. **R.**

We pray for the Church: that she will continue
to provide workers for the vineyard, and that
we may continue to be nourished by Word and
Eucharist. **R.**

We pray for our families and the community in
which we live: that we may find you in them. **R.**

We pray for ourselves: that on this day we may
serve others in our tasks, and find peace in our
rest. **R.**

We pray for our faithful departed: that through
your mercy they may rest in peace. **R.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Lord, be the beginning and end of all we do and
say. Prompt our actions with your grace and
complete them with your all-powerful help.
We make this our prayer through Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

CONCLUSION OF THE HOUR

LEADER: The Lord bless us (*Sign of the Cross*), and
keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting
life.

ALL: Amen.

A CELEBRATION OF EVENING PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

OPENING VERSE

Please Stand

Glory be to the Father ...

LEADER: O God, come to our aid.

ALL: O Lord, make haste to help us (*Sign of the Cross*). Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. (Alleluia.)

ALL: How wonderful is this knowledge of yours that you have shown me Lord. (Alleluia.)

Silence

ANTIPHON 2: O Lord, you will show me the fullness of joy in your presence. Alleluia.

HYMN

Be Thou My Vision

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
be all else but naught to me save that thou art.
Be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word. Be thou ever with me and I with thee, Lord. Be thou my great Father, and I thy true child. Be thou in me dwelling and I with thee one.

Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you.
I say to the Lord: 'You are my God.
My happiness lies in you alone.'

PSALM 15

He has put into my heart a marvellous love
for the faithful ones who dwell in his land.
Those who choose other gods increase their sorrows.
Never will I offer their offerings of blood.
Never will I take their name upon my lips.

PSALMODY

Please Sit

ANTIPHON 1: How wonderful is this knowledge of yours that you have shown me Lord. *Alleluia*.

PSALM 138

O Lord, you search me and you know me,
You know my resting and my rising,
You discern my purpose from afar.
You mark when I walk or lie down,
All my ways lie open to you.

Before ever a word is on my tongue,
You know it, O Lord, through and through.
Behind you and before you besiege me,
Your hand ever laid upon me.
Too wonderful for me, this knowledge,
too high, beyond my reach.

O where can I go from your spirit,
Or where can I flee from your face?
If I climb to the heavens, you are there,
If I lie in the grave, you are there.

If I take the wings of dawn
And dwell at the sea's furthest end,
Even there your hand would lead me,
Your right hand would hold me fast.

If I say: 'Let the darkness hide me
And the light around me be night',
even darkness is not dark for you
and the night is as clear as the day.

O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup;
It is you yourself who are my prize.
The lot marked out for me is my delight:
Welcome indeed the heritage that falls to me!

I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel,
Who even at night directs my heart.
I keep the Lord ever in my sight:
Since he is at my right hand, I shall stand firm.

And so my body rejoices, my soul is glad;
Even my body shall rest in safety.
For you will not leave my soul among the dead,
Nor let your beloved know decay.

You will show me the path of life,
the fullness of joy in your presence,
at your right hand happiness for ever.

Glory be to the Father ...

ALL: O Lord you will show me the fullness of joy in your presence. *Alleluia*.
Silence

ANTIPHON 3: All the peoples will come and adore you, Lord. *Alleluia*.

REVELATION 15:3-4

Great and wonderful are your deeds,

O Lord God the Almighty!
Just and true are your ways,
O King of the ages!

Who shall not fear and glorify your name,
O Lord?
For you alone are holy.
All nations shall come and worship you,
For your judgements are true and just.

Glory be to the Father ...

ALL: All the peoples will come and adore
you, Lord. (Alleluia.) *Silence*

SCRIPTURE READING **Colossians 1:3-6a**
Silence

SHORT RESPONSORY

LEADER: From the rising of the sun to its setting,
great is the name of the Lord.

ALL: From the rising of the sun to its setting, great
is the name of the Lord.

LEADER: High above the heavens is his glory.

ALL: From the rising of the sun to its setting ...

LEADER: Glory be ...

ALL: From ...

THE MAGNIFICAT *Please stand*

ANTIPHON: The Lord has satisfied and filled with
good things those who hungered for justice.
(*Alleluia.*)

My soul gives glory to the Lord (*Sign of the Cross*),
in God my saviour I rejoice.

My lowliness he did regard,
exalting me by his own choice.

From this day all shall call me blest,
for he has done great things for me.

Of all great names his is the best,
for it is holy; strong is he.

His mercy goes to all who fear,
from age to age and to all parts.
His arm of strength to all is near;
he scatters those who have proud hearts.

He casts the might from their throne
and raises those of low degree.

He feeds the hungry as his own,
the rich depart in poverty.

He raised his servant Israel,
rememb'ring his eternal grace.

As from of old he did foretell
to Abraham and all of his race.

O Father, Son and Spirit blest,
in threefold name you are adored.
To you be ev'ry prayer addressed,
from age to age the only Lord.

ALL: The Lord has satisfied and filled with
good things those who hungered for justice.
(*Alleluia.*)

INTERCESSIONS

In the name of the Church we pray:

RESPONSE: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for all nations: that they may seek the
ways that lead to peace. **R.**

We pray for the Church: that she will continue
to provide workers for the vineyard, and that
we may continue to be nourished by Word and
Eucharist. **R.**

We pray for our families and the community in
which we live: that we may find you in them. **R.**
We pray for ourselves: that on this day we may
serve others in our tasks, and find peace in our
rest. **R.**

We pray for our faithful departed: that through
your mercy they may rest in peace. **R.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Lord, support us as we pray, protect us day
and night, so that we, who under your guiding
hand live in a world of change, may always draw
strength from you, with whom there is no shadow
of alteration. We make this our prayer through
Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

CONCLUSION OF THE HOUR

LEADER: The Lord bless us (*Sign of the Cross*), and
keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting
life.

ALL: Amen.

Preparation Guide for Morning/Evening Prayer

The following steps are suggested to groups as they work with the prayer, taking it from a text to an experience of shared, communal prayer. While specifically the task is to prepare the prayer for the next session together, participants should keep an eye on the wider context. This is a prayer text that could form the basis of what might be used on a weekday when a priest is not available to celebrate Mass in the parish.

1. Read the Text Fully

Each participant reads through the full text of the prayer by themselves, noting the different elements that they already saw on their previous handout on the format of Morning Prayer. Try to imagine the prayer beyond the text.

2. Consider the Following as a Group

As you do so, again, constantly bear in mind the people in your parish who you hope will pray this prayer, or similar, in your particular church when Mass is not possible.

a) The Prayer Space

Think of the setting of this prayer, the space in which people will gather. How will this space be prepared? Where will the focus of people's attention be? If people are praying before the sanctuary, the altar candles and any candles by the ambo should be lit for this prayer. Will you make any particular set-up changes in the church for this prayer? Consider the seating arrangement of all who gather and where the prayer leader will sit. Think about the lighting, heat and sound that might be needed.

b) The Final Text

Again, consider the people who will gather for this prayer. In light of this, are you happy to go with the text as provided or do you need to make any amendments? For example, do you need to reduce the number of texts in the psalmody or are you happy to remain with those provided?

c) Praying the Psalms

Having decided how many of these texts will be used, now look to how they will be prayed. It might be a combination of alternating verses between a reader and people, between men and women, between one side of the church and another, reading the psalm through together or with a single voice. Depending on resources, one or more of the texts might even be sung.

d) Verbal Elements

Think of the verbal elements of this prayer, for example, the opening and closing of the prayer time, the psalms and scripture, intercessions, invitation to pray the Lord's Prayer and the concluding prayer. When proclaiming texts to the assembly – for example, scripture – remember to actually look at the people as much as you can, rather than having your head buried in a text. Anyone leading these verbal elements should do so slowly and clearly. Who will speak these different verbal elements? How many people do you need from the point of view of readers and prayer leaders? How will you ensure that these people can be heard?

e) Music

Consider when music might be used during this prayer. Whilst you might wish to start modestly, the set of possibilities include: opening and closing verse, the opening hymn, psalmody, Benedictus/Magnificat, response to intercessions and the Lord's Prayer. At a minimum could you sing the opening hymn and the Benedictus/Magnificat?

The text of the Benedictus provided in the Morning Prayer can be sung to the air of 'The King of Love My Shepherd Is'. The text of the Magnificat provided in Evening Prayer can be sung to the air of 'Come O Creator Spirit Blest' or 'When I Survey the Wondrous Cross'.

f) Non-Verbal Elements

Consider the non-verbal elements in the prayer, such as movement, posture (standing/sitting), gesture (Sign of the Cross, bowing) and pace of the prayer. How might these non-verbal elements be carried out with reverence and grace? How will the use of silence be best utilised to enhance the prayer experience? How will you ensure that the silence will happen? Will incense be used during the singing of the opening hymn and the Gospel canticle?

g) Participation of the People and Hospitality to Them

What do you think will help people's participation in this prayer? How can you help to involve them in the prayer? How will they be welcomed and how will they have what they need in order to pray this prayer? Will it be clear in any welcome before the prayer that the prayer leaders are there on behalf of, and in the name of, the parish when your priest cannot be with you for the celebration of Mass, if this is the case?

Any instructions to people, for example, about how the psalms will be prayed, is better done before the prayer begins and not during. This can be done by someone other than the individual prayer leader assigned to the prayer. A vital part of hospitality requires that those leading prayer arrive in good time and have everything in place before people arrive for prayer.

h) Openings and Closings

Think about how this prayer will begin and finish. How will the prayer leader take his/her place among people, and how will they depart? Remember that it is worth taking those extra few seconds to settle and be present in a space before beginning. A prayer leader might spend some moments seated in quiet prayer before standing to begin the prayer.

i) Assigning Tasks

Having looked at this prayer and having made some decisions together, what ministers do you need to assign to it: prayer leader, readers, music, hospitality, set up (and putting away!), other? Begin to put names beside the tasks.

j) Final Check

Have you everything in place that you need in order to pray this prayer next time you gather? Is there anyone that needs to be communicated with ahead of time, i.e. sacristan, parish secretary, key holder ... ? Is everyone clear on what they have to do? Is there any clarification needed?

A Glossary of Terms

Ambo: The place from which the readings are proclaimed in church.

Ciborium: The vessel used to hold consecrated hosts (plural: ciboria).

Corporal: A square white cloth placed over the altar cloth on which the ciborium and chalice are placed at the preparation of the altar and presentation of gifts during Mass or at the Communion Rite during a celebration of the Word with distribution of Holy Communion.

Credence table: A table usually located in the sanctuary upon which items necessary for the celebration may be placed.

Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion: Lay ministers who have been trained and commissioned to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion when needed. They are 'extra' to the 'ordinary' ministers of Holy Communion who are the ordained.

Lectionary: The liturgical book, in three volumes, that contains the readings for Sundays and weekdays, as well as for feasts and ritual celebrations, and from which the readings are proclaimed.

Missal: The liturgical book that contains all the prayer texts of the Mass.

Ordo: The booklet produced for each country or region containing detailed information about each day of the liturgical year, for example, the feast and readings of the day, the given week in the four-week cycle for the Liturgy of the Hours.

Presider's chair: Sometimes called the priest's chair, this is the place from which an ordained priest leads the prayer of the people. Deacons or laypeople lead prayer from a different place, chosen locally.

Pyx: A small container, usually metal, that is used to hold consecrated hosts. It is typically used to bring Communion to the sick or viaticum to the dying.

Sacristy: A room in the church building in which sacred items for the celebration of liturgy are kept, for example ritual books and vestments, and where servers, readers and ministers make final preparations before a liturgy begins.

Sanctuary: The area in the church building where the altar, ambo and presider's chair are located.

Tabernacle: The permanent container in the church building in which consecrated hosts are reserved.

Thurible: Also called a censer, it a vessel for carrying incense in procession. The thurifer is the name given to the minister who carries the thurible.

SESSION FOUR

Aim: To give participants an opportunity of being part of leading a Morning/Evening Prayer together; to draw out any reflection and learning from the experience; and to begin to prepare for a celebration of the Word.

Steps

Praying Morning/Evening Prayer together.

Reflecting on the experience: what did I/we discover?

Practical Exercise in Preparing a Celebration of the Word

Welcome

This session begins with Morning/Evening Prayer, and how it opens is determined by those responsible for leading this prayer. The course presenter can take back the facilitation after the time of prayer. Depending on circumstances, there may well be a brief period needed to move from the church to another room for the rest of this session.

Reflecting on the Experience

The presenter invites participants to take a moment to think back and remember the experience of prayer that they just had. Some of the following questions might help in facilitating a reflection on the experience. Have someone record key points that emerge.

The Prayer Itself

- ▶ How was it for people?
- ▶ Did you find the experience prayerful?
- ▶ Did you have a sense of God and the presence of God?
- ▶ What stands out for you?

Preparing the Prayer

Looking back on how the prayer was prepared:

- ▶ What was helpful about how you went about the task? Is there anything in particular that you have learnt that you need to remember for next time?
- ▶ What was the greatest challenge?
- ▶ What did you most enjoy about the task?

Leading the Prayer

Whether your role was as a greeter, prayer leader, reader, music minister, setting up or another role:

- ▶ What was it like to carry out this role?
- ▶ Did you discover anything about any of these roles that we can all take on board for next time?

Bringing it Together

The leader notes the key points that have emerged and tries to bring the reflections together, affirming participants in the good work they have done and of the solid foundations they are putting in place.

In some instances people may need to be further assured and encouraged that with time and experience any difficulties they felt they had can be overcome.

Practical Exercise: Preparing a celebration of the Word

As in the exercise in the previous session, a full text of a celebration of the Word is given to each participant, along with the preparation guide (see the following pages).

- ▶ Depending on numbers, either as a whole group or in small groups, participants are asked to begin to set about exploring this text with a view to getting ready to praying it together at the start of the next session. As in the previous session, it is recommended that this prayer take place in the church or the place that people will be gathering for weekday liturgy when there is no Mass, or another similar place (15 mins).
- ▶ After fifteen minutes, check in with people as to how they got on. If there are multiple groups, ask if one of the groups will take responsibility for leading the prayer at the next gathering.
- ▶ If only one group is operating, it should, after using the worksheet, be in a position to take on this responsibility beyond this session.
- ▶ While the presenter can offer any assistance to the group that they may need, it will be more beneficial to encourage the group to do as much for themselves as possible in this task between the sessions.

Closing of Session: Thanks and invitation

The leader thanks everyone for coming, and for their participation and engagement with this session. Encourage people to return for the next and final formation session when they will pray a celebration of the Word together, reflect on the experience and look ahead to what choices they will make for weekday celebrations in their parish/circumstances.

Remind them of the starting time, confirm the starting venue, and let those leading the celebration of the Word know that the session will begin with this prayer before anything else so they will need to be ready to begin at the allocated time.

A CELEBRATION OF THE WORD

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Please Stand

ALL: Amen.

OPENING HYMN

Christ Be Beside Me

Christ be beside me, Christ be before me,
Christ be behind me, King of my heart.
Christ be within me, Christ be below me,
Christ be above me, never to part.

Christ on my right hand, Christ on my left hand,
Christ all around me, shield in the strife.
Christ in my sleeping, Christ in my sitting,
Christ in my rising, light of my life.

Christ be in all hearts thinking about me,
Christ be on all tongues telling of me.
Christ be the vision in eyes that see me,
In ears that hear me, Christ ever be.

Greeting

LEADER: In the name of the Father and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen

LEADER: Your word, O God, is a lamp for our steps.

ALL: And a light for our path.

Words of Introduction

Penitential Act

LEADER: My brothers and sisters, let us
acknowledge our sins, that we may receive God's
Word with faith. *Silent Prayer*

LEADER: Have mercy on us, Lord.

ALL: For we have sinned against you.

LEADER: Show us, O Lord, your mercy.

ALL: And grant us your salvation.

LEADER: May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

ALL: Amen.

Opening Prayer

LEADER: Let us pray. *Silent Prayer*

LEADER: Just and merciful God,
true Lord of every house,
sure delight of every heart.
Come into our midst today
to speak your word and satisfy our hunger.
Enable us to see you more clearly,
to welcome you with joy and to give justice and
mercy a place in our lives.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives
and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Please Sit

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Ephesians (3:14-19, Lectionary III, p. 830)
Silence

PSALM 22

RESPONSE: The Lord is my shepherd, there is
nothing I shall want.

(Lectionary III, p. 824)

Silence

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Please Stand

Alleluia, Alleluia.

I am the good shepherd, says the Lord:

I know my own sheep, and my own know me.

Alleluia.

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John
(10:11-18, Lectionary III, p. 835)

Silence

(Gospel Reflection)

Please Sit

SUNG RESPONSE

This is My Will

Please Stand

This is my will, my one command,
That love should dwell among you all.
This is my will that you should love
as I have shown that I love you.
No greater love a man can have
Than that he die to save his friends.
You are my friends if you obey
What I command that you should do.

I call you now no longer slaves;
No slave knows all his master does.
I call you friends, for all I hear
my father say, you hear from me.

You chose not me, but I chose you,
That you should go and bear much fruit.
I chose you out that you in me
should bear much fruit that will abide.

All that you ask my Father dear
For my name's sake you shall receive.
This is my will, my one command
That love should dwell in each, in all.

INTERCESSIONS

LEADER: With confidence in our loving God let us ask God to hear our prayers this day.

READER: For our bishop and the priests of the diocese. May they be blessed and strengthened in their ministry and may others be called to work with them in the vineyard (*pause*). Lord, hear us.

RESPONSE: Lord, graciously hear us.

For all who help share the word of God in our parish, for our parish team, readers, Baptism team members, teachers and parents, that their love of the Word may deepen and grow (*pause*). Lord, hear us.

RESPONSE: Lord, graciously hear us.

For the peace and well-being of the whole world; that God's gifts to us in this life will lead us to salvation in the life to come (*pause*). Lord, hear us.

RESPONSE: Lord, graciously hear us.

For the sick and the dying and all who care for them. May they know the healing embrace of the living Word of God (*pause*). Lord, hear us.

RESPONSE: Lord, graciously hear us.

CONCLUDING RITE

LORD'S PRAYER

LEADER: With trust in our Father in heaven, we pray as Jesus taught us, saying: **Our Father ...**

CONCLUDING PRAYER

May your word, O Lord,
that we have shared this day,
burn in our hearts and bear fruit in our lives,
making us messengers of the Gospel
and witnesses of your love to the world. Through
Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

(Gesture of Reverence to the Lectionary)

CLOSING VERSE

LEADER: The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

ALL: Amen.

DISMISSAL

LEADER: Go in the peace of Christ.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

CLOSING HYMN Holy God We Praise Thy Name

Holy God we praise thy name.
Lord of all we bow before thee.
All on earth thy sceptre own.
All in heaven above adore thee.
Endless is thy vast domain.
Everlasting is thy reign.

Hark, with loud and pealing hymn,
Thee the angel choirs are praising;
Cherubim and seraphim,
one unceasing chorus raising.
Ever sing with sweet accord,
Holy, holy, holy Lord.

Preparation Guide for Celebration of the Word

1. Read the Text Fully

Each participant reads through the full text of the celebration of the Word by themselves, noting the different elements as they already saw on their previous handout on the format of a celebration of the Word. Try to imagine the prayer beyond the text.

2. Consider the Following as a Group

As you do so, constantly bear in mind the people in your parish you hope will pray this prayer, or similar, in your particular church when Mass is not possible.

a) The Prayer Space

Think of the setting of this prayer, the space in which people will gather. How will this space be prepared? Where will the focus of people's attention be? If people are praying before the sanctuary, the altar candles and any candles by the ambo should be lit for this prayer. Will you make any particular set-up changes in the church for this prayer? Consider the seating arrangement of all who gather and where the prayer leader will sit. Think about the lighting, heat and sound that might be needed.

b) The Final Text

Again, consider the people who will gather for this prayer. In light of this, are you happy to go with the text as provided or do you need to make any amendments? For example, do you need to change any of the hymn suggestions?

c) Verbal Elements

Think of the verbal elements of this prayer, for example, the opening and closing of the prayer time, words of welcome, the scripture, Gospel reflection, intercessions, invitation to pray the Lord's Prayer and the concluding prayer. Think of whom these elements are being addressed to. When proclaiming texts to the assembly – for example, the welcome – remember to actually look at the people as much as you can, rather than having your head buried in a text. Anyone leading these verbal elements should do so slowly and clearly. Remember there is a sample introduction in the notes on a celebration of the Word in Session Two. Who will speak these different verbal elements? How many people do you need from the point of view of readers and prayer leaders? How will you ensure that these people can be heard?

d) Non-Verbal Elements

Consider the non-verbal elements in the prayer, such as movement, posture (standing/sitting), gesture (Sign of the Cross, bowing) and pace of the prayer. How might these non-verbal elements be carried out with reverence and grace? How will the use of silence be best utilised to enhance the prayer experience? How will you ensure that the silence will happen? Will the Lectionary be carried in at the beginning? Will people be invited to reverence the Lectionary with a bow before the conclusion of the celebration?

e) Participation of the People and Hospitality to Them

What do you think will help people's participation in this prayer? How can you help to involve them in the prayer? How will they be welcomed and how will they have what they need in order to pray this prayer? Will it be clear in any welcome before the prayer that the prayer leaders are there on behalf of and in the name of the parish when your priest cannot be with you for the celebration of Mass, if this is the case?

Any instructions to people, for example, encouraging the use of silence or regarding the reverencing of the Lectionary, is better done before the prayer begins and not during. This instruction can be given by someone other than the individual prayer leader assigned to the prayer. A vital part of hospitality requires that those leading prayer arrive in good time and have everything in place before people arrive for prayer.

f) Openings and Closings

Think about how this prayer will begin and finish. How will the prayer leader take his/her place among people, and how will they depart? Remember that it is worth taking those extra few seconds to settle and be present in a space before beginning. A prayer leader might spend some moments seated in quiet prayer before standing to begin the prayer.

g) Assigning Tasks

Having looked at this prayer and having made some decisions together, what ministers do you need to assign to it: prayer leader, readers, music, hospitality, set up (& putting away!), other? Begin to put names beside the tasks.

h) Final Check

Have you everything in place that you need in order to pray this prayer next time you gather? Is there anyone that needs to be communicated with ahead of time, i.e. sacristan, parish secretary, key holder ... ? Is everyone clear on what they have to do? Is there any clarification needed?

SESSION FIVE

Aim: To give participants an opportunity of being part of leading a celebration of the Word; to draw out any reflection and learning from the experience; and to begin to put in place plans for local practice on weekdays when Mass cannot be celebrated.

Steps

Praying a Celebration of the Word together.

Reflecting on the experience: what did I/we discover?

Remembering the journey we have made

Moving towards local choices and decisions: considerations

Welcome

This session begins with 'A Celebration of the Word', and how it opens is determined by those responsible for leading this prayer. The presenter can take back the facilitation after the prayer. Depending on circumstances, there may well be a brief time needed to move from the church to another room for the rest of this session.

Reflecting on the Experience

The presenter invites participants to take a moment to think back and remember the experience of prayer that they just had. Some of the following questions might help in facilitating a reflection on the experience. Have someone record key points that emerge.

The Prayer Itself

- ▶ How was it for people?
- ▶ Did you find the experience prayerful?
- ▶ Did you have a sense of God and the presence of God?
- ▶ What stands out for you?

Preparing the Prayer

Looking back on how the prayer was prepared:

- ▶ What was helpful about how you went about the task? Is there anything in particular that you have learnt that you need to remember for next time?
- ▶ What was the greatest challenge?
- ▶ What did you most enjoy about the task?

Leading the Prayer

Whether your role was as a greeter, prayer leader, reader, music minister, setting up or another role:

- ▶ What was it like to carry out this role?
- ▶ Did you discover anything about any of these roles that we can all take on board for next time?

Bringing it Together

The leader notes the key points that have emerged and tries to bring the reflections together, affirming participants in the good work they have done and of the solid foundations they are putting in place.

As was the case in the previous session, in some instances people may need to be further assured and encouraged that with time and experience any difficulties they feel they have can be overcome.

Input 1: Remembering the journey

As you look back on what has been explored over the course of these five sessions, participants can be affirmed in all they have done and their commitment to this time of formation.

The original starting point of the sessions was to explore together, in a practical way, the question of what will happen in the parish when Mass cannot be celebrated on a weekday. The group leader might now take the opportunity to remind the group of the journey of exploration they undertook over the five sessions.

Session One

In the first session, we explored why people gather in church on a weekday and why it might be important to continue to gather even in the absence of the celebration of Mass. We began to look at the options available to us, in the context of Church history and teaching, as well as our own local circumstance. We also began to look at how we will need people to prepare and lead whatever it is we will do on a weekday celebration, and what these people might do.

Session Two

In this session we explored the format of Morning and Evening Prayer, as well as the format of a celebration of the Word (and the format of a celebration of the Word with distribution of Holy Communion, noting the very real distinctions between Mass and this latter celebration, and the cautions around the habitual use of this form of communal prayer).

Session Three

This session looked specifically at the qualities and skills needed in a group preparing and leading prayer. It also considered how to move from a text for prayer to an experience of prayer. We finished this session with a practical exercise of preparing Morning/Evening Prayer.

Session Four

The opening of this session saw members of our group actually lead Morning/Evening prayer. We all had the opportunity to reflect on the experience of preparing, leading and praying this prayer, as well as garnering any learning and discoveries from the experience. We then went on to prepare the celebration of the Word that we prayed in our current session.

Session Five

In this final session we have already prayed and reflected on the experience of preparing, leading and praying a celebration of the Word. It is now time to carry with us all we have experienced and discovered in these sessions as we look ahead to the future and what choices and decisions we will

make in regard to what will happen in our situation when we cannot celebrate Mass on a weekday when it is normally scheduled.

Check in

It might be helpful for participants to make an initial, brief response to looking back on all they have explored together.

- As you look back on what we have done together, are there any key insights or experiences that come to mind for you?

Input 2: Looking ahead – some pointers for the conversation

Introduction

In regard to what might happen on a weekday, we have recommendations of best practice from the Church, as well regulations that must guide us. We have choices to make and we have resources both from among ourselves and outside available to us. To move forward we now need to explore and make some decisions about the following:

The facilitator can draw on the following as well, as adding other areas/specifics that arise locally.

Local Need and Response

- ▶ What is the specific need in our parish/circumstance? For example, how often do we envisage a need for such celebrations – both in the short term and with an eye to the long term?
- ▶ Are we going to pray Morning/Evening Prayer, a celebration of the Word or the former with the latter on occasion (or a celebration of the Word with distribution of Holy Communion where this is permitted and regulated)?

Organising for the Task and Building-in Processes

- ▶ What do we need to have in place in order to be able to offer this prayer in the parish?
- ▶ How will we best organise ourselves to carry out our task? Will we have one preparation group or a rota of a number of groups? Can we draw on the normal weekday rota of ministers? Can we/do we need to involve others beyond our group?
- ▶ Do we need to establish definite working links and practices with particular parish staff, i.e. the sacristan, parish secretary?

Communicating with Parishioners

- ▶ How will the work of these sessions and the outcomes from them be communicated to the parish? What communication tools do we have in our parish that we could use? Church announcements and bulletins are helpful. Alongside these, where they exist, could we include anything on the parish Facebook page or in the parish newsletter? Perhaps this is an opportunity to talk to parishioners about the importance of community and prayer in the life of the Church, as well as the call of our Baptism to be a priestly people and a people who serve one another.

- ▶ Through communications from the parish, parishioners will hopefully be clear that those preparing and leading these liturgies are doing so in the name of and with the blessing of the parish, and that these individuals have given of their time to receive formation and training.
- ▶ What other information do parishioners need? This might include the weekday Mass schedules of surrounding parishes.

Recognition of Prayer Leaders

- ▶ How will prayer leaders be given recognition in the parish? A very helpful practice is to give a blessing to prayer leaders in the context of the Sunday assembly. This does a number of things. First, it gives the individuals themselves the gift of God's blessing upon their ministry. Second, it sends a very clear message to other parishioners that these parish volunteers have the mandate of the parish to carry out their task, and that they have been prepared and trained to do so.
- ▶ The following blessing, or similar, might be considered for use:

Prayer of Blessing

Blessed are you, Lord God,

creator of the universe and Father of all:

you have called us to serve you and praise you in the family of your Church.

Help us to hear your word and praise you by our worship and our lives.

Look with love upon these men and women who have been chosen to lead your people in prayer.

Fill them with your Spirit so that they may proclaim your word and guide us in our worship.

Through their service may your kingdom come among us and may we be inspired to serve you each day.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Ongoing Review and Formation

- ▶ How often will we schedule a meeting together and with parish staff to review how it is going, and to look to ways on how we can build on what we are doing? Such meetings will need to be more regular in the early stages when parishes are establishing good practices and experiences. Long term, there should be at least a couple of review meetings in the year with parish staff and the group preparing and leading weekday liturgy.
- ▶ It is helpful to include in any review concrete proposals/opportunities for ongoing formation for the group, either at local or diocesan level. Openness to continual formation is essential to any ministry group in the parish. The articles found in this manual can serve as a solid foundation for future formation for the group.

Close of Sessions and Thank You

Before the session closes the presenter thanks people for their commitment and participation throughout. He/she reviews and confirms decisions that have been made by the group in the previous conversation and highlights any decisions that have yet to be made. Participants need to be very clear as to what the next step is as they leave the session. The group may like to mark the final session in some way socially or otherwise.

A CELEBRATION OF THE WORD WITH DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Please Stand

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

ALL: Amen.

OPENING HYMN

Christ Be Beside Me

Christ be beside me, Christ be before me,
Christ be behind me, King of my heart.
Christ be within me, Christ be below me,
Christ be above me, never to part.

Christ on my right hand, Christ on my left hand,
Christ all around me, shield in the strife.
Christ in my sleeping, Christ in my sitting,
Christ in my rising, light of my life.

Christ be in all hearts thinking about me,
Christ be on all tongues telling of me.
Christ be the vision in eyes that see me,
In ears that hear me, Christ ever be.

GREETING

LEADER: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen

LEADER: Your word, O God, is a lamp for our steps.

ALL: And a light for our path.

WORDS OF INTRODUCTION

PENITENTIAL ACT

LEADER: My brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins, that we may receive God's Word with faith. *Silent Prayer*

LEADER: Have mercy on us, Lord.

ALL: For we have sinned against you.

LEADER: Show us, O Lord, your mercy.

ALL: And grant us your salvation.

LEADER: May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

ALL: Amen.

OPENING PRAYER

LEADER: Let us pray.

Silent Prayer

LEADER: Just and merciful God,
true Lord of every house,
sure delight of every heart.
Come into our midst today
to speak your word and satisfy our hunger.
Enable us to see you more clearly,
to welcome you with joy and to give justice and
mercy a place in our lives.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Please Sit

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians (3:14-19, Lectionary III, p. 830)
Silence

PSALM 22

RESPONSE: The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want. (Lectionary III, p. 824)
Silence

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Please Stand

Alleluia, alleluia. I am the good shepherd, says the Lord: I know my own sheep, and my own know me. Alleluia.

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN (10:11-18, Lectionary III, p. 835)

Silence

Please Sit

GOSPEL REFLECTION

(Sung Response – Please Stand)

INTERCESSIONS

Please Stand

LEADER: With confidence in our loving God, let us ask God to hear our prayers this day.

READER: For our bishop and the priests of the diocese. May they be blessed and strengthened in their ministry, and may others be called to work with them in the vineyard (*pause*). Lord, hear us.

RESPONSE: LORD, GRACIOUSLY HEAR US.

For all who help share the word of God in our parish, for our parish team, readers, Baptism team members, teachers and parents, that their love of the Word may deepen and grow. (*pause*) Lord, hear us. **R.**

For the peace and well-being of the whole world; that God's gifts to us in this life will lead us to salvation in the life to come (*pause*). Lord, hear us. **R.**

For the sick and the dying and all who care for them. May they know the healing embrace of the living Word of God (*pause*). Lord, hear us. **R.**

COMMUNION RITE

BRINGING OF BLESSED SACRAMENT TO THE ALTAR

LORD'S PRAYER

MINISTER: With trust in our Father in heaven, we pray as Jesus taught us, saying: **Our Father ...**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

MINISTER: Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

MINISTER AND PEOPLE: Lord, I am not worthy to receive you but only say the word and I shall be healed.

COMMUNION HYMN *Soul of My Saviour*

During Communion people may sit or kneel

Soul of my Saviour, sanctify my breast.
Body of Christ, be though my saving guest.
Blood of my Saviour, bathe me in thy tide,
Wash me, ye waters, streaming from his side.

Strength and protection may his passion be:
O blessed Jesus, hear and answer me:
Deep in thy wounds, Lord, hide and shelter me.
So shall I never, never part from thee.

Guard and defend me from the foe malign:
In death's dread moments make me only thine:
Call me, and bid me come to thee on high,
when I may praise thee with thy saints for aye.

(Hymn of Praise)

Reposition of Blessed Sacrament with Silence

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION *Please Stand*

MINISTER: Let us pray. *(Pause)*

God of blessings,
we have been fed at this table
with the bread of heaven.
Give us this food always,
That it may strengthen your love in our hearts and
inspire us to serve you in our brothers and sisters.
Through Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

CONCLUDING RITE

CLOSING VERSE WITH SIGN OF THE CROSS

LEADER: May the Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

ALL: Amen.

DISMISSAL

LEADER: Go in the peace of Christ.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

CLOSING HYMN *Holy God We Praise Thy Name*

Holy God we praise thy name.
Lord of all we bow before thee.
All on earth thy sceptre own.
All in heaven above adore thee.
Endless is thy vast domain.
Everlasting is thy reign.

Hark, with loud and pealing hymn,
Thee the angel choirs are praising;
Cherubim and seraphim,
One unceasing chorus raising.
Ever sing with sweet accord,
Holy, holy, holy Lord.

APPENDIX A

POPULAR DEVOTIONS

ENDA MURPHY

Many parishes already have periods of devotion or prayer when there is no Mass, or immediately before or after the celebration of the Eucharist. This being the case, it is worthwhile to offer some thoughts on the content and value of these devotions, particularly when a priest is not available to celebrate the Mass.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

Many parishes already have this practice as a prolongation of Mass. The introduction to *Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament* makes clear the vital connection between Mass and adoration: 'The Mass itself is the origin and purpose of the worship given to the blessed Eucharist outside Mass whether in communion, prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, Benediction, exposition or eucharistic processions.' In the absence of a priest or deacon, an acolyte or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion may publicly expose the sacrament for adoration. A member of a religious community or of a duly appointed member of a lay association of men and women, which is devoted to eucharistic adoration, may also expose the Blessed Sacrament. It should be borne in mind that the purpose of eucharistic adoration is not only to nourish the spiritual life of the individual, but most especially to direct all towards spiritual and sacramental communion in the great act of worship and praise which is the Mass. It would be beneficial, therefore, that before the sacrament is reposed those present would join in some form of communal prayer, which could be part of the Liturgy of the Hours, or a brief reading from scripture accompanied by a concluding prayer.

The Rosary

The *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* describes the Rosary as 'one of the most excellent prayers to the Mother of God' (no. 197). It is essentially a meditative prayer, and if it is to be used during a weekday when no Mass is celebrated then a little more solemnity might be in order. It would be particularly apt to pray this great prayer on the Mondays during the month of May, which not only is a month dedicated in a special way to Mary but also largely corresponds to the fifty days of Easter. During this time communities could consider 'introducing those Scriptural passages corresponding with the various mysteries, some parts could be sung, roles could be distributed, and ... [using an] opening and closing of prayer' (no. 199). In this way the faithful will more readily 'imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise'.

The Stations of the Cross

Practically every church in the country has a *Via Crucis* that provides a helpful visual aid to

accompanying the Lord in the mystery of his Passion. The way of the cross has taken its present form of fourteen stations since the middle of the seventeenth century. It is a particularly powerful prayer during the season of Lent, and communities who do not have a weekday Mass could consider gathering to pray this prayer together on the Fridays during the season of Lent. The *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* reminds us that the *Via Crucis* 'should conclude, however, in such fashion as to leave the faithful with a sense of expectation of the resurrection in faith and hope' (no. 134). Many texts have been prepared for the celebration of the Stations of the Cross that can readily aid a community as it journeys with the Lord through Jerusalem. Once again, the *Directory* reminds us that 'the *Via Crucis* in which hymns, silence, procession and reflective pauses are wisely integrated in a balanced manner, contribute significantly to obtaining the spiritual fruits of the pious exercise' (no. 135).

Many other devotions are used across the country. One thinks of the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy. All of these devotions can be beneficial in drawing the community, together in prayer and praise of God. Ultimately they can serve to prepare the community, which prays together on a weekday for the great celebration of the paschal mystery which is realised at the Sunday Eucharist, when God's Holy People gather to give praise and worship to God and to become what they receive – the Body of Christ.

Lenten

- 1 Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days
- 2 The King Of Love My Shepherd Is
- 3 God Of Mercy And Compassion
- 4 Forty Days And Forty Nights

(Resources taken from *Veritas Hymnal/Alleluia Amen and Supplement/Hosanna/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old and New/In Caelo/Celebration Hymnal*)

Easter Season

- 1 Jesus Christ Is Risen Today
- 2 Christ the Lord Is Risen Today
- 3 Christ Is Alive
- 4 Christ Be Our Light
- 5 Let The Earth Rejoice And Sing (Ascension)

(Resources taken from *Veritas Hymnal/Alleluia Amen and Supplement/Hosanna/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old and New/In Caelo/Celebration Hymnal*)

PSALMODY

Tones



- 1 Psalm Tones from *Cantate* collection by Margaret Daly-Denton
- 2 Psalm Tones from *Responsorial Psalms for Sundays and Major Feasts* by Fintan O'Carroll

GOSPEL CANTICLE – *Benedictus*

- 1 Benedictus – composer Joseph Walshe
- 2 Benedictus – composer Stephen Somerville

(Resources available at liturgy-ireland.ie)

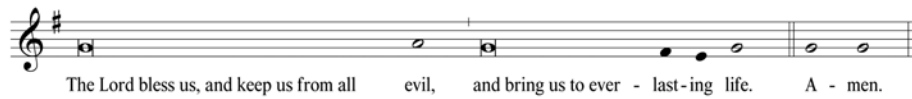
INTERCESSIONS

Kyrie, Kyrie eleison (Taizé)

THE LORD'S PRAYER

- 1 Ár nAthair – Seán Ó Riada
- 2 Lord's Prayer – *Alleluia Amen!* – Byzantine Liturgy
- 3 Lord's Prayer from Mass Settings in *Sing the Mass*

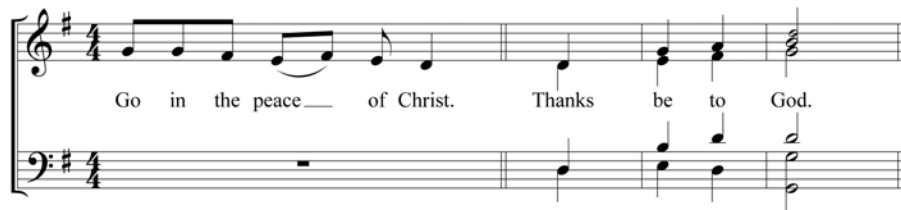
CONCLUDING RITE



The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to ever - last - ing life. A - men.

Dismissal

Lucien Deiss



Go in the peace___ of Christ. Thanks be to God.

EVENING PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

Opening Dialogue



Leader O God, come to our aid. **ALL** O Lord, make haste___ to help us.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son, and to the Ho - ly Spi - rit,
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world with-out end, A-men. Al-le-lu - ia!

HYMNODY

Ordinary Time

- 1 Praise To The Lord
- 2 Day Is Done
- 3 Holy God We Praise Thy Name
- 4 Be Thou My Vision
- 5 Abide With Me
- 6 The Day Thou Gavest Lord Is Ended

(Resources taken from *Veritas Hymnal/Alleluia Amen and Supplement/Hosanna/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old and New/In Caelo/Celebration Hymnal*)

Advent/Christmas Season

- 1 O Come, O Come Emmanuel
- 2 Christ Circle Round Us
- 3 On Jordan's Bank
- 4 Promised Lord And Christ Is He
- 5 Silent Night
- 6 Once In Royal David's City

Lenten

- 1 Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days
- 2 Love Is His Word
- 3 God Full of Mercy and God of Compassion

Easter Season

- 1 Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks to the Risen Lord
- 2 Now The Green Blade Rises
- 3 Stay With Us, Lord, We Pray You
- 4 Let The Earth Rejoice and Sing
- 5 Come O Creator Spirit Blest

(Resources taken from *Veritas Hymnal/Alleluia Amen and Supplement/Hosanna/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old and New/In Caelo/Celebration Hymnal*)

PSALMODY

Tones



- 1 Psalm Tones from *Cantate* collection by Margaret Daly-Denton
- 2 Psalm Tones from *Responsorial Psalms for Sundays and Major Feasts* by Fintan O'Carroll

GOSPEL CANTICLE – Magnificat

- 1 Magnificat – Composer – Joseph Walsh
- 2 Lourdes Magnificat – *Alleluia Amen!*

(Resources available at liturgy-ireland.ie)

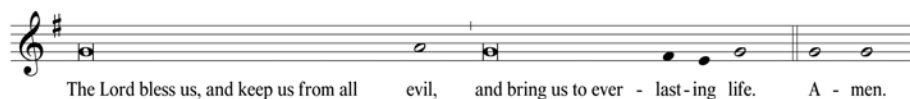
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Kyrie, Kyrie eleison (Taizé)

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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- 2 Lord's Prayer – *Alleluia Amen!* – Byzantine Liturgy
- 3 Lord's Prayer from Mass Settings in *Sing the Mass*

CONCLUDING RITE



Dismissal Lucien Deiss

Go in the peace — of Christ. Thanks be to God.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

HYMNODY

Ordinary Time

- 1 All People That On Earth Do Dwell
- 2 Make Me A Channel Of Your Peace
- 3 All Creatures of Our God and King
- 4 This Is My Will
- 5 Now Thank We All Our God
- 6 Will You Let Me Be Your Servant
- 7 Be Still For The Presence Of The Lord
- 8 Ag Críost An Síol
- 9 Be Not Afraid
- 10 Here I Am Lord

(Resources taken from *Veritas Hymnal/Alleluia Amen and Supplement/*
Hosanna/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old and New/In Caelo/Celebration Hymnal)

Advent/Christmas Season/Lenten Season/Easter Season – Hymnody as in Morning and Evening Prayer (See pp. 119–20)

RESPONSORIAL PSALMS

- 1 Psalms from *Cantate* collection by Margaret Daly-Denton
- 2 Psalms from *Responsorial Psalms for Sundays and Major Feasts* by Fintan O’Carroll
- 3 Grant To Us O Lord
- 4 All The Earth Proclaim The Lord
- 5 My Soul Is Longing For Your Peace
- 6 Shepherd Me O God
- 7 Like A Shepherd
- 8 May Your Love be Upon Us O Lord
- 9 Like The Deer That Yearns
- 10 Sé An Tiarna M’Aoire

(Resources taken from *Veritas Hymnal/Alleluia Amen and Supplement/*
Hosanna/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old and New/In Caelo/Celebration Hymnal)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

- 1 Gospel Acclamations for Ordinary Time, Advent, Christmas, Easter – any well-known Alleluia or from the collection *Sing the Mass*
- 2 Any well-known Lenten Gospel Acclamation or from the collection *Sing the Mass*

INTERCESSIONS

Kyrie, Kyrie eleison (Taizé)

COMMUNION RITE

THE LORD'S PRAYER

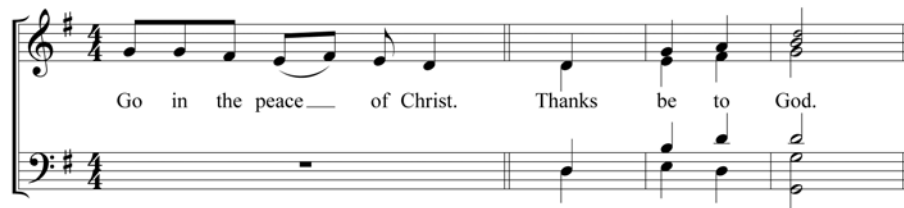
- 1 Ár nAthair – Seán Ó Riada
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- 3 Lord's Prayer from Mass Settings in *Sing the Mass*

COMMUNION HYMNS

- 1 Eat This Bread
- 2 Love Is His Word
- 3 Céad Míle Fáilte Romhat
- 4 I Am The Bread Of Life
- 5 Ag Críost An Síol
- 6 Let Us Be Bread
- 7 Come Feast At This Table (O Sacrament Most Holy)
- 8 Though We Are Many

(Resources taken from *Veritas Hymnal/Alleluia Amen and Supplement/Hosanna/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old and New/In Caelo/Celebration Hymnal*)
(Resources available at liturgy-ireland.ie)

Dismissal Lucien Deiss



Go in the peace of Christ. Thanks be to God.

CLOSING HYMNS

- 1 Holy God, We Praise Thy Name
- 2 Now Thank We All Our God
- 3 How Great Thou Art
- 4 God's Blessing Sends Us Forth

(Resources taken from *Veritas Hymnal/Alleluia Amen and Supplement/Hosanna/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old and New in Caelo/Celebration Hymnal*)
(Resources available at liturgy-ireland.ie)

In recent years, the Irish Church has experienced a reduction in the number of priests available to celebrate Mass on weekdays in our parish communities. With no sign that this pattern will change in the foreseeable future, *It is Good for Us to Be Here* seeks to clearly outline this pastoral challenge facing the Church today; to present the various options that a parish can decide to adopt in praying every day; and to offer a clear rationale for these decisions.

Containing theological and canonical studies which address this pastoral reality, it also provides a training course for the formation of leaders of public prayer in parishes, and liturgical and musical aids to assist communities celebrating on weekdays when the Eucharist is not possible.

