Guidelines for Liturgical Celebrations in School Settings

Diocese of Calgary

Implemented Advent 2012

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PREFACE

Liturgy is a Gift from God

We speak of preparing, not planning the liturgy because liturgy is firstly a gift from God. Liturgy comes from the Greek word *leitourgia*, which is properly translated as “a public work”. A “public work” is a benefaction, something given, for the community. Those of us preparing liturgy must put aside the consumerist attitude prevalent in our culture. A consumerist mentality demands what it wants and manipulates the liturgy for its own ends. The liturgy, however, is God’s initiative and we should be grateful receivers.

The Importance of Beauty

The Second Vatican Council described our participation in the *earthly liturgy* as a foretaste of the *heavenly liturgy* (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 8*)*. Liturgy draws us into the divine and the divine into our world. Today there is a tendency to reduce liturgy to text. Words are a very important part of the liturgy but God speaks to us in a multi-dimensional way, of which words are only one part. Young people are especially receptive to the layered meanings of symbols and they appreciate authenticity. Give non-verbal signs room to speak richly and truthfully. Make full use of colour, movement, texture, arrangement of space, and song. Bring in natural symbols like light and darkness, live plants and flowers, water and oil. Whether preparing a Mass, a liturgy of the Word, or any prayer in the classroom, cultivate beauty and allow the symbols of the liturgy to speak in their language to the assembly.

The Nature of Ritual

By nature ritual is repetitive. Ritual helps the worshipper to enter into prayer quickly and easily. The familiarity of a ritual can be a consolation and a comfort. An unfamiliar ritual can be alienating. With liturgies in schools the question arises: what is familiar to whom? Our schools include those who have not been baptized, non-Catholic Christians, and even Catholics who do not attend Mass regularly with their families. Liturgical celebrations in the school setting are an opportunity to engage the “seeker” in an authentic encounter with God. They also can prepare students to worship when they do attend Mass at the parish. It is important that liturgical prayer in the school be aligned closely with liturgical prayer in the parish. Young people are part of the greater assembly. Liturgy in the school should prepare them to take up their rightful place in the assembly at the parish.

Preparing for Liturgy

Much can be done in the school to prepare students to participate more fully in the ritual of the liturgy as a member of the assembly or even as a minister. Bring elements from the liturgy into the classroom and school environment so students can become familiar with them. Decoration can reflect liturgical seasons and symbols, students can pray prayers from the Mass in the classroom, and music can be introduced ahead of time.

Students should also bring their own experience into the liturgy. Discuss the Gospel in a grade-appropriate fashion ahead of time to ensure that the proclamation at Mass speaks to them. Help the students to write prayers of the faithful that follow the liturgical pattern but give voice to the needs in the hearts of the student body. The key to participation is preparing not only the liturgy but also the assembly. As God's gift expressed in human terms, the liturgy is already planned. In preparing the liturgy, we must also prepare ourselves and the assembly to receive the gift. Preparation can lead the entire community to full and active participation in response to God's offer of salvation.

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INTRODUCTION

Why this document?

This document is presented to you in the hope of achieving consistency throughout all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Calgary with regard to school liturgies. The document will highlight practical norms and guidelines such as:

- who can proclaim the Word of God
- who may minister as an Extra-ordinary Minister of Holy Communion
- which readings are to be used
- which Lectionaries are to be used
- who can give the homily
- when a “reflection” by a lay presider is an option

Finally, the document will give you direction and clarity in the preparation for and celebrating of liturgical celebrations of both the *Eucharist* and *Liturgies of the Word*. It will identify for you all of the key elements to keep in mind during the preparation of liturgy and will highlight some practical “do’s and don’ts” of what to aim for and what to avoid.

What are some of the challenges for preparing a good liturgy?

One of the challenges of celebrating “good liturgy” is being faithful to the **liturgical norms and guidelines** as a means of ensuring authenticity rather than legality. To conscientiously prepare and celebrate our liturgies as best we can, respectful of the norms and guidelines, is the most effective means by which we can ensure that we do well what we are called to do.

General Instruction of the Roman Missal

On the First Sunday of Advent 2011, as a Canadian Catholic Community, we officially started to use the new Roman Missal. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) contains the universal directives and norms as well as the Canadian adaptations particular to our nation. This document aims to familiarize you with both new terminology contained in the new Roman Missal and new practices implemented by the GIRM.

PROCESS FOR DETERMINING THE FORM OF THE LITURGICAL CELEBRATION

The form of the liturgical celebration within the school context is determined through a collaborative process which involves considerations about the presider, the purpose of the celebration and the liturgical season.

Communicate with the Presider
If a priest or deacon will preside, ensure that they have the selected scripture readings, prayers and music selections at least two weeks in advance of the celebration date that approval or recommendations for change can be given.

Step 1: Determine Liturgical Season or Occasion to be Celebrated
School Opening, Thanksgiving, Remembrance Day, Advent, New Year, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Easter Season, Marian Celebration, Graduation, Farewell Celebration, Year End, Other: _____.

Step 2: Set the Date for the Celebration: _____
Locate the date on the liturgical calendar (Ordinary Time, Advent, Christmas, Lent or Easter) and establish if the planned celebration falls on a feast day, solemnity, memorial, optional memorial or ferial day to determine scope for selection of scriptural passages.

Step 3: Determine the type of celebration.
This celebration will be … (select one of the options)

A. Mass
Administration or delegate confirms availability of a priest to preside.

Follow outline preparation sheet for the Eucharistic Liturgy on page 7.

B. Liturgy of the Word
Administration or delegate confirms availability of priest or deacon to preside or selects one person to preside.

Follow outline preparation sheet for the Liturgy of the Word on page 22.

C. Prayer Service
Select one person to lead.

Create or use an existing prayer service. See section starting on page 33.

Note: Scripture readings, Mass prayers and responses change depending on the liturgical season and day on which the celebration takes place. If you are unsure about any of these, check with the parish priest or refer to the liturgical calendar available online at: http://nlo.cccb.ca/index.php/liturgical-calendar.