

# **Diocesan Guidelines for PARISH WORSHIP COMMISSION**

In our Catholic worship, we both express and foster faith. "Faith grows when it is well expressed in celebration. Good celebrations foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations may weaken it." (*Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, 5) Therefore, it is with the utmost pastoral concern that pastors, pastoral administrators and parish leaders must prepare liturgies that are in accord with the liturgical books and documents, bear fidelity to the rich heritage of the Church, and enable the "full, active and conscious participation of the assembly"

*(Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 14, 42)*

## **PURPOSE AND FUNCTION**

The Parish Worship Commission serves as a standing committee of the Parish Pastoral Council. This Commission is advisory and consultative to the parish liturgy coordinator or music minister and pastor/pastoral administrator in matters pertaining to the liturgical life of the parish.

Ministries foundational to the liturgical life of the parish include: music; art and environment; liturgy preparation; lectors; Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion; ministers of hospitality, ushers and greeters; sacristans; and servers.

Responsibilities of the Parish Worship Commission include: preparation for liturgies; formation, training, and scheduling of liturgical ministers; formation of the assembly; and the on-going "mystagogical reflection" (evaluation) of parish liturgies.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

The size and make-up of the membership of the Parish Worship Commission will vary from parish to parish. Ideally, membership would include: the parish music minister; the coordinator of art/environment; coordinators of the various liturgical ministries; the pastor/pastoral administrator; and representation from the worshipping community itself. (Especially helpful would be an "at large" representative or two from each of the parish liturgies representing various age groups of the community.)

Members should be parishioners who are faithful in participating in the liturgical life of the parish, able to attend and interested in participating in the meetings and ongoing work of the commission. In addition, those representing the liturgical ministries should have some education and formation in the areas of liturgy, liturgical ministry, the liturgical year, and principles of art and environment and music in Catholic worship. It would be helpful to the work of the Commission if the "at large" representatives were also offered opportunities for such formation.

## **MEETINGS**

The number of meetings of any Parish Worship Commission should be determined at the local parish level, keeping in mind that enough time should be allowed for prayer, ongoing formation, planning (short and long range), evaluation, and other action items that need to be discussed. Sufficient time should be allowed for all to share in discussion and tasks.

There are many approaches to determining and scheduling meetings of Parish Worship Commissions. Some

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parishes find it beneficial to have the full membership of the Commission meet on a monthly basis. As Commissions grow into defining a good working style and pattern, a shift to seasonal meetings of the entire group and smaller meetings of subcommittees (such as art and environment, liturgical music, liturgical ministries, etc.) serve the parish well. There is no "right or wrong" approach, but a good approach is one which makes good use of committee members' time and talent, and keeps true to the four-fold focus of: (1) planning, (2) formation of liturgical ministers, (3) formation of the assembly, and (4) evaluation.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The liturgical ministry of the pastor/pastoral administrator is integral to the ministry of the Parish Worship Commission, and vice versa. It is therefore advised that, at least for seasonal planning purposes, the pastor/pastoral administrator attend the commission meeting. And, if the parish is served by a Sacramental Minister, it might be beneficial that the priest-celebrant at parish liturgies also occasionally be present.

In the pastor/pastoral administrator's absence, often the parish liturgical coordinator or music minister acts as the liaison with the Parish Worship Commission. In addition, chairpersons of subcommittees such as liturgical music, art and environment, and liturgical ministries would be accountable to this designated staff person.

## **TYPICAL ACTIVITIES**

Earlier paragraphs have identified a basic fourfold focus or "basic activities" of a Parish Worship Commission, and a description of the various liturgical ministries that might be represented on the Commission.

Underlying all activity of the Parish Worship Commission is, however, a working knowledge and familiarity with the liturgical documents, the ritual texts of the Catholic Church, and basic principles for preparing and evaluating liturgies.

## **RESOURCES FOR FORMATION**

The diocesan Office of Liturgy has many resources, and the staff is available for consultation by phone or on site. In addition, the Office of Liturgy staff and Diocesan Worship Commission offer various workshops and presentations which include an introduction to the liturgy, the liturgical year, and principles for art/environment and liturgical music.

In recent years, little has been written on the structure and purpose of the Parish Worship Commission. Basic texts which every Parish Worship Commission member should own or have access to include: Lectionary for Mass (all volumes), The Roman Missal (3<sup>rd</sup> Typical Edition), *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (Instruction on the Eucharist), Ordo, The Liturgy Documents (Four Volumes), The Rites I and II, Sourcebook for Sundays, Seasons and Weekdays, Workbook for Lectors and Gospel Readers, and the Book of Blessings.

Liturgical actions are not private actions but celebrations of the Church itself, which is the "sacrament of unity" namely, a holy people assembled and ordered under the bishops; therefore liturgical actions pertain to the whole body of the Church and manifest and affect it, but they affect the individual members of the Church in different ways according to the diversity of orders, functions and actual participation.

(The Code of Canon Law 837.1)

## **Resources:**

Periodicals: Pastoral Liturgy (LTP, Chicago, IL); Pastoral Music (NPM, Silver Springs, MD); USCCB Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship Newsletter.

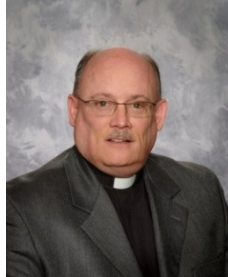
Books: Preparing Parish Liturgies (by Rita Thiron of Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN); The Sacristy Manual, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (by G. Thomas Ryan of LTP, Chicago, IL); Worshipping Well: A Mass Guide for Planners and Participants (by Father Larry Mick of Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN).

Diocesan Website: "We Have Come to Worship Him" (Pastoral Letter on the Implementation of the GIRM 2006); Year of Grace (Liturgical Planning Guide); "Guidelines and Protocols for the Design and Renovation of Churches and Chapels"; Seasonal Penance Liturgies.

Other Websites: NPM.org (National Association of Pastoral Musicians – Planning Calendar); OCP.org (Oregon Catholic Press – Liturgy Planning Guide); liturgy@slu.edu (The Sunday Liturgy at St. Louis University).



The Office of Liturgy Staff is here at the Diocese of Saginaw to be of service to you, so please feel free to contact us for any clarifications and/or further information (989) 797-6665:



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