

Order of Mass: Liturgy Notes Liturgy of the Word



Introduction

The purpose of these notes is to:

- suggest strategies and ways of implementing and introducing the new translation
- make links between the liturgical celebration and the catechesis
- indicate good practice

Key changes in the text

- Response to the readings — The word of the Lord
- Gospel dialogues
- Profession of Faith: Nicene and Apostles' Creed

Introductory Period

From September until Advent the following texts will be used:

From the current Missal

- (nothing)

From the Lectionary

- Readings

From the new translation

- Response to the readings
- Gospel dialogue
- Profession of Faith: Nicene and Apostles' Creed

Key points for catechesis

Liturgy of the Word

Purpose of Liturgy of the Word

The main part of the Liturgy of the Word is made up of the readings from Sacred Scripture together with the chants occurring between them. As for the Homily, the Profession of Faith and the Universal Prayer, they develop and conclude it. For in the readings, as explained by the Homily, God speaks to his people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation, and offering spiritual nourishment; and Christ himself is present through his word in the midst of the faithful. By silence and by singing, the people make this divine word their own, and affirm their adherence to it by means of the Profession of Faith; finally, having been nourished by the divine word, the people pour out their petitions by means of the Universal Prayer for the needs of the whole Church and for the salvation of the whole world. [GIRM 55]

Pre-eminent among the texts of the Mass are the biblical readings with their accompanying scriptural chants, for even now from the word of God handed down in writing God speaks to the people, "and it is from the continued use of Sacred Scripture that the people of God, docile to the Holy Spirit under the light of faith, receive the power to be Christ's living witnesses before the world." [CTM 69]

The dynamic of the Liturgy of the Word is:

- All must listen with reverence to the readings of God's word:
- meditating on the word,
- taking it to heart,
- and beginning to respond to it in prayer. [CTM 70]

Some of the general points of catechesis on the translation are exemplified in the Liturgy of the Word:

- The uncovering of scriptural allusions in the texts of the Missal.
- The use of theological language and terms to more clearly express the faith of the Church.

Introducing changes

Response to the readings

After each reading, whoever reads it pronounces the acclamation, and by means of the reply the assembled people give honour to the Word of God that they have received in faith and with gratitude. [GIRM 59]

A brief prayerful silence is observed before a reading as the assembly prepares to listen God's word. A somewhat longer period of silence is observed after the a reading, allowing all to ponder on the word spoken. It is often preferable for the reader to remain at the ambo during the silence. If this is not practicable care should be taken that the prayerful silence is established before the reader moves from or to the ambo, and that their movement does not break the silence. [CTM 160]

- The invitation (*The word of the Lord.*) has changed; the response (*Thanks be to God.*) remains the same.
- The shorter phrase echoes Communion (*The Body of Christ*).
- It is about the word which has been proclaimed not the book.
- Even when the reading is said the response may be sung.
- There is bookmark that can be downloaded from the Liturgy Office website and placed in the Lectionary which can help be an aide-memoire for readers.

Gospel dialogues

The reading of the Gospel constitutes the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. The Liturgy itself teaches the great reverence that is to be shown to this reading by setting it off from the other readings with special marks of honour, by the fact of which minister is appointed to proclaim it and by the blessing or prayer with which he prepares himself; and also by the fact that through their acclamations the faithful acknowledge and confess that Christ is present and is speaking to them and stand as they listen to the reading; and by the mere fact of the marks of reverence that are given to the Book of the Gospels. [GIRM 60]

The deacon (or priest), with hands joined, greets the people with The Lord be with you, and while announcing the Gospel passage he makes the Sign of the Cross first on the book, then on his forehead, lips, and breast. The faithful also sign themselves in this way and then respond, Glory to you, O Lord.

Even if the Gospel reading itself is not sung, it may be helpful to sing the greeting and title of the Gospel reading at the beginning and The gospel of the Lord at the end, so as to allow the people to sing their acclamation. [CTM 166]

- There are changes both to the opening dialogue and to the final acclamation.

- The note on *And with your spirit* in the **Introductory Rites** and on the response to the readings above should be considered.

Profession of Faith

In the Profession of Faith, the people respond and give their assent to the word of God heard in the readings and explained in the Homily. Before they celebrate the mysteries of faith in the Eucharist, they recite the rule of faith in a formula approved for liturgical use.

The Profession of Faith is recited by priest and people together on Sundays and Solemnities. It may also be said at other solemn celebrations.

The form customarily to be used is the Nicene Creed. The Apostles' Creed, the baptismal creed of the Church of Rome, may replace the Nicene Creed at Masses with children and especially in Lent and the Easter Season as the Church celebrates the mystery of the Resurrection of Christ in the rites and Sacraments of Initiation. No other Creeds may be used. Care should be taken to ensure that children develop familiarity little by little with the Nicene Creed.

In the Nicene Creed, a profound bow is made by all at the phrase by the power of the Holy Spirit... and was made man. In the Apostles Creed, a profound bow is made during the recitation of the words who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary.

At the Masses of Christmas day and the Annunciation all kneel at the words: by the power of the Holy Spirit... and was made man or who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary. [cf. CTM 170]

- The Order of Mass offers two texts for the Profession of Faith: Niceno-Constantinopolitan & Apostles'.
- The Apostles' Creed is especially recommended for Lent and Easter Time.
- As text which is recited and known communally it would be important to use one text consistently over a period of time before using the other text.
- In some communities it may be easier to begin with Apostles' Creed.
- The *Roman Missal* provides two simple musical settings of the Nicene Creed based on plainchant.

Good Practice

The introduction of the new translation is an opportunity to review current liturgical practice.

By heart

- The people's texts in the Order of Mass are generally unchanging; repeated from

celebration to celebration. This repetition means that people generally know the texts by heart. This confidence can encourage people to participate more fully in what they hear and see.

- For many communities which have not used Mass sheets or booklets with the current translation one particular challenge will be to recognise the time when people know the text well enough so that they are not encumbered by pieces of paper. The Profession of Faith is a good example of how in the liturgy we know texts corporately — that is, a congregation can recite a text together where its individual members would falter. Music can be of great assistance helping people to remember. Though it can be good practice to have some Mass leaflets for those who are visitors or form who English is a second language Priest might encourage people to look up and be confident.

Silence

The Liturgy of the Word is to be celebrated in such a way as to favour meditation, and so any kind of haste such as hinders recollection is clearly to be avoided. In the course of it, brief periods of silence are also appropriate, accommodated to the assembled congregation; by means of these, under the action of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God may be grasped by the heart and a response through prayer may be prepared. It may be appropriate to observe such periods of silence, for example, before the Liturgy of the Word itself begins, after the First and Second Reading, and lastly at the conclusion of the Homily. [GIRM 56]

The word, in fact, can only be spoken and heard in silence, outward and inward... Rediscovering the centrality of God's word in the life of the Church also means rediscovering a sense of recollection and inner repose... Only in silence can the word of God find a home in us, as it did in Mary, woman of the word and, inseparably, woman of silence. Our liturgies must facilitate this attitude of authentic listening... Silence, when called for, should be considered "a part of the celebration". Hence I encourage Pastors to foster moments of recollection whereby, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the word of God can find a welcome in our hearts. [cf. Verbum Domini 66]

- There are a number of opportunities for silence in the Liturgy of the Word:
 - After the readings
 - After the homily
 - As part of the Prayer of the Faithful
- In the liturgies of the Papal Visit many noted the quality of the silence. In the Liturgy of the Word the main period of silence was after the homily —this may be

the place to establish a period of silence.

- The following pointers may be helpful:
 - the silence should have a purpose — it is more than nothing happening
 - however, the absence of other activity is an important aspect
 - At first it may be helpful to invite people into the time of silence and maybe even suggest how they might use it.

Gospel Acclamation

The Alleluia or Gospel Acclamation is an acclamation by which the assembly of the faithful welcomes and greets the Lord who is about to speak to them in the Gospel, and by which they express their faith.

The Gospel Acclamation has traditionally accompanied the Gospel Procession, in which the Book of the Gospels is carried to the ambo accompanied by lights and incense.

As an acclamation, the Alleluia or Gospel acclamation is sung by everyone present. The verse may be sung by cantor or choir (or even recited).

The assembly stands while the procession moves to the ambo and the Alleluia is sung.

Where there is only one reading before the Gospel (for example as on a ferial weekday) the Alleluia or the verse before the Gospel may be omitted if it is not sung. [CTM 164-165]

- The Gospel Acclamation should normally be sung. It is something that can easily be sung when there is no other singing at Mass.
- It is one of the special marks of honour that is given to the Gospel, the highpoint of the Liturgy of the Word.

Another suggestion which emerged from the Synod was that the proclamation of the word of God, and the Gospel in particular, should be made more solemn, especially on major liturgical feasts, through the use of the Gospel Book, carried in procession during the opening rites and then brought to the lectern by a deacon or priest for proclamation. This would help the people of God to realize that "the reading of the Gospel is the high point of the liturgy of the word". Following the indications contained in the Ordo Lectionum Missae, it is good that the word of God, especially the Gospel, be enhanced by being proclaimed in song, particularly on certain solemnities. The greeting, the initial announcement: "A reading from the holy Gospel" and the concluding words: "The Gospel of the Lord", could well be sung as a way of emphasizing the importance of what was read. [VD 67]

The Homily

The Homily is part of the Liturgy and is highly recommended, for it is necessary for the nurturing of the Christian life. It should be an explanation of

some aspect of the readings from Sacred Scripture or of another text from the Ordinary or the Proper of the Mass of the day and should take into account both the mystery being celebrated and the particular needs of the listeners. [GIRM 65]

- During the time of catechesis it is important to recognised that the homily may not only be based on the readings but on any text from the Missal.
- The faithful should be able to perceive clearly that the preacher has a compelling desire to present Christ, who must stand at the centre of every homily. [VD 59]
- The following questions [should] be kept in mind:
 - What are the Scriptures being proclaimed saying?
 - What do they say to me personally?
 - What should I say to the community in the light of its concrete situation? [VD 59]

Prayer of the Faithful

Enlightened and moved by God's word, the assembly exercises its priestly function by interceding for all humanity. Because "the joy and hope, the struggle and anguish of the people of this age and especially of the poor and those suffering in any way are the joy and hope, the struggle and anguish of Christ's disciples," the Church prays not just for its own needs but for the salvation of the world, for civil authorities, for those oppressed by any burden, and for the local community, particularly those who are sick or who have died.

- Thus, even though the intercessions may be quite concrete or particular in content, they should always look beyond the concerns of the local assembly to the needs of the whole Church and of the wider world. They are a sign of the communion of the particular assembly with all other assemblies and with the universal Church.
- The priest celebrant directs the prayer from the chair. He briefly invites the people to pray, and at the end he draws their intercessions together in a brief concluding prayer with a short doxology. The intentions are proposed by a deacon, a cantor, reader, other minister, or members of the assembly at the ambo or another suitable place. After each intention, the faithful respond by silent prayer or a common response or both. They affirm the concluding prayer of

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the priest with their Amen.

- It is appropriate for the Prayer of the Faithful to be included in all Masses.
- Both the priest's introduction and the proposed intentions are addressed to the assembly, not to God. They are invitations or biddings to the faithful, who normally will first pray silently for each intention and then give expression to their common prayer in an invocation sung or said together after each intention. Alternatively the prayer after each intention may simply be offered in silence.
- These intentions should be short, clear, and objective enough for the faithful to understand and respond to them without difficulty. They should express the prayer of the entire community. There should be a significant pause after the intention has been read, while the assembly prays before the response is sung or said [CTM 171–173]
- Model Intercessions are given in Appendix V of the Roman Missal.



Liturgy of the Word with Children

Sometimes, moreover, if the place itself and the nature of the individuals permit, it possibly will be appropriate to celebrate the liturgy of the word, including a homily, with the children in a separate, but not too distant, location. Then, before the eucharistic liturgy begins, the children are led to the place where the adults have meanwhile celebrated their own liturgy of the word. [DCM 17]

- The *Guidelines for Liturgy of the Word with Children* issued by the Department for Christian Life and Worship provide principles and guidance. [<http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/LOWC/index.shtml>]