

Practice Note

Liturgical Celebrations on Weekdays

This Practice Note addresses the appropriateness of the not uncommon practice of celebrating Liturgies of the Word with Communion, popularly but incorrectly known as ‘Communion Services’, in parishes and worshipping communities on those occasions when it is not possible for Mass to be celebrated on weekdays.

In any parish or worshipping community there will be times when, for a range of valid reasons, it is not possible for Eucharist to be celebrated on weekdays. Some of these reasons include, but are not limited to:

- The priests of the parish being absent on annual or sick leave;
- The priests of the parish being required to attend to responsibilities beyond the parish, or having the care of multiple parishes;
- The priests of the parish attending conferences, retreats, and other similar activities outside the parish;
- The priests of the parish having more than one call for the celebration of Mass on any one day; and
- The priests of the parish availing themselves of their legitimate day of rest.

In these, and other, circumstances the community is still encouraged to gather for some form of liturgical celebration. The question that often arises is what form that liturgical celebration should take.

Origins

A question was posed to the Diocesan Liturgy Council as to whether there was a possibility of a 1990 Diocesan publication entitled *Communion Services* being republished. It was observed that a large number of people still make use of this publication both for taking Communion to the sick and housebound, and for ‘Parish Communion Services’ when the Eucharist is not able to be celebrated in the Parish for some of the reasons enumerated above.

In response to the question posed to it, the Diocesan Liturgy Council determined that it was

- a) Not feasible to republish the *Communion Services* publication, since the appropriate ritual for taking Communion to the sick and housebound can be readily found in other commercially available publications based on the *Pastoral Care of the Sick* ritual book (see Chapter Three: Communion of the Sick);
- b) Appropriate to examine the practice in the Diocese when it is not possible for the Eucharist to be celebrated on weekdays in Parishes of the Diocese.

The Diocesan Liturgy Council, as part of its ongoing work in developing the liturgical life of the Diocese, has considered the issues with a view to offering to the diocesan community, some assistance and guidance that is drawn from a consideration of the relevant sources.

Sources

In preparing this resource, the Diocesan Liturgy Council has drawn on the following resources:

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal: Final Text With Application for Australia (Strathfield: St Pauls Publications, 2012).

Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass (Sydney: E.J.Dwyer, 1975).

Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, Instruction on Certain Matters to be Observed or to be Avoided Regarding the Most Holy Eucharist (Strathfield: St Pauls Publications, 2004).

The Code of Canon Law (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1983).

Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, in *The Liturgy Documents: A Parish Resource*, ed. David Lysik, vol. one, 4th edition (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2004): 1-30.

Foley, Edward, Mitchell, Nathan D., and Pierce, Joanne M., eds., *A Commentary on the General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2008).

Huels, John M. "Title III: The Most Holy Eucharist", in *The Code of Canon Law: Text and Commentary*, eds. James A. Coriden, Thomas J. Green and Donald E. Heintschel (New York: Paulist Press, 1985): 643-672.

Comments

At the outset it must be clearly stated that "It is strongly recommended that the faithful receive holy communion in the course of a Eucharistic celebration" (*Code of Canon Law*, Canon 918). This is entirely in keeping with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in its *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (qv no. 55), and the new edition of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (qv no. 85). The latter indicates that it is 'strongly recommended' or 'most desirable' that the faithful

receive communion from those elements that are consecrated during the celebration of Mass. This relatively strong language maintains the unbreakable link between sacrifice and communion.

The difficulty in connection with the reception of communion outside the celebration of Mass comes from the second sentence of Canon 918: “If, however, for good reason they ask for (holy communion) apart from the Mass, it is to be administered to them, observing the liturgical rites”. The term ‘good reason’ – also translated as ‘just cause’ – should be strictly observed, and the usual examples are given as “an inability to participate in the Eucharistic celebration due to illness or old age, or the absence of a priest who can preside at Eucharist” (Huels, 654). This would seem to indicate that weekday ‘Communion Services’ in the absence of a priest in the parish would be permissible.

When celebrated, such ‘Communion Services’ should be celebrated in accord with the appropriate liturgical rites, which are to be found in Chapter 1 of *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*. The liturgical form contained therein is the only legitimate form by which Communion can be distributed outside the celebration of Mass on weekdays: **Communion should not, therefore, be distributed when any other form of liturgy is celebrated.** By way of example, it would be improper to attach the distribution of Communion to the celebration of any part of *The Prayer of the Church* (also commonly known as *The Liturgy of the Hours*). It is also not appropriate to use the ritual for *Sunday Celebrations of the Word (with Communion)* on weekdays. There are elements included in this ritual which highlight the celebration of Sunday. They are therefore inappropriate for a weekday liturgy.

The matter of receiving Communion outside the celebration of the Eucharist seems to be clarified satisfactorily in the 2003 Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum*. In referring specifically to Sunday, it says in part:

[165.] It is necessary to avoid any sort of confusion between this type of gathering [*i.e. a Sunday Celebration of the Word with Holy Communion*] and the celebration of the Eucharist. The diocesan Bishops, therefore, should prudently discern whether Holy Communion ought to be distributed in these gatherings...

[166.] Likewise, especially if Holy Communion is distributed during such celebrations [*i.e. Sunday Celebrations of the Word*], 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.

The regular celebration of *Sunday Celebrations of the Word with Holy Communion* in parishes and worshipping communities is, therefore, problematic. It is, however, clear that the provision of ‘Communion Services’ on weekdays is not to be easily approved, and may only be approved by the diocesan Bishop. Since Eucharist is most intrinsically linked to Sunday, the Day of the Lord, such an

interpretation is amenable to the theological vision contained in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and subsequent documents of the Church.

Indeed in a more recent consideration of the issue of *Sunday Celebrations*, the Australian Catholic Bishops noted as an emerging issue to be addressed by dioceses and parishes,

When a community has regular Sunday Celebrations there is a need to distinguish these from weekday liturgies. Other forms of worship should be explored for weekdays. [Emerging Issues in the Australian Church: Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest. October, 2009]

The Diocesan Liturgy Council has formed the opinion that weekday *Liturgies of the Word with Communion* should not readily be celebrated in the parishes and worshipping communities of the Diocese, most particularly in those communities where *Sunday Celebrations of the Word with Communion* are a regular occurrence. If they do occur, this should be with the explicit approval of the Bishop.

If 'Communion Services' are not to be readily celebrated, what then would be the recommended liturgical celebration to be celebrated in a parish when it is not possible to celebrate Mass?

There is a choice to be offered here. When Mass is not able to be celebrated on a weekday, a parish community has options. Firstly this presents an opportunity to celebrate either

- a) part of the *Prayer of the Church* (known also as the "Divine Office" or "Liturgy of the Hours"); or
- b) a Liturgy of the Word.

While both are acceptable choices, the use of the *Prayer of the Church* might be more advantageous. It would allow for the difference between this particular celebration and the celebration of Mass to be more readily identified, and it would open the community to another liturgical treasure.

It should be remembered that the *Prayer of the Church* is the prayer of the entire Church and not restricted only to the use of clergy and religious. A more widespread use of this liturgy of the Church is something to be encouraged.

Secondly, parishes might like to think more broadly and use weekdays to provide opportunities for people to experience different types of prayer. Recently one parish was looking at offering Christian Mediation early one weekday. Pope Francis' recent Apostolic Letter *Evangelii Gaudium* invites the Church to be bold and creative as it reaches out to address the Good News to all. It could be said that the signs of our times indicate that the vast majority of the faithful are not engaged with the regular forms of worship currently celebrated in parish communities. Perhaps the inability of communities to have Mass every day might be seen as an opportunity to be seized.

Suggested Practices

In light of the above, the following suggestions are made:

1. The Form of Liturgical Celebrations on Weekdays
Where it is not possible for Mass to be celebrated in a parish community **it is recommended** that parishes form the habit of celebrating either the *Prayer of the Church* (whichever hour of the day seems appropriate – Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer) or the *Liturgy of the Word*. Either liturgy enables the community to gather to be nourished by the Word and to offer their praise and thanks to God.
2. Exceptions to the Above
Where parish communities insist on the possibility of being able to receive Holy Communion, either on a once-off or ongoing basis, when Mass is not able to be celebrated on weekdays **it is recommended** that the Parish Priest should write to the Bishop seeking permission for this to take place. **It is further recommended** to the Bishop that this permission not be readily given, and only for the most pressing of pastoral reasons. **It is also further recommended** that when permission is sought on an ongoing basis that this should be subject to regular review at least every two years.
3. Form of Authorised 'Liturgy of the Word with Communion'
Where permission is given by the Bishop for Holy Communion to be distributed outside the celebration of Eucharist **it is strongly recommended** that these celebrations adhere to the approved liturgical form, i.e. a Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion. **It is further recommended** that any other form of liturgical celebration that includes the distribution of Holy Communion be discontinued.
4. Parishes consider alternative forms of prayer, and times and venues, on week days.

Some Resources

As indicated earlier, those communities wishing to celebrate a *Liturgy of the Word with Communion* on weekdays, are directed to the ritual book *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*.

The Liturgy Council recognises the challenges of negotiating the change recommended above. In particular, communities may need some assistance in learning to pray the *Prayer of the Church*. This form of prayer is much loved by many in the community and we suggest that these people would be the most appropriate 'on the ground' resource to the community. Such people include priests, religious and many others who are long time prayers of the *Prayer of the Church*. We therefore encourage communities to identify these people and invite them to help initiate the wider community into praying the *Prayer of the Church*. East Maitland Parish has recently taken steps in inviting the community to join in praying the *Prayer of the Church*. Contact the Chisholm Region Office if you would like more information.

There are two forms of the *Prayer of the Church*: the Monastic form with which most people would be familiar, AND the Cathedral form which is simpler (shorter) and may ultimately be better suited to parish life. The latter would be particularly appropriate for prayer at meetings.

To further assist with this:

- The liturgy section of the diocesan website has a page entitled 'Prayer of the Church'. It contains: a brief introduction; a short article on the psalms which people could read individually and together; links to Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Night Prayer.
- LabOra Worship contains the entire Psalter for Morning, Evening and Night Prayer from the *Prayer of the Church*. It also contains an outline for the same in the 'Liturgy Outline' section.
- Templates have been uploaded to the diocesan website for:
 - Morning and Evening Prayer – Monastic and Cathedral style
 - Weekday Liturgy of the Word (with Communion)
- Many versions of the *Prayer of the Church* can be purchased, including e versions for iPads and Tablets.
 - E versions include:
 - *Universalis* has both a free version and one that can be purchased. A link to the free version is on the diocesan website.
 - *ebreviary* www.ebreviary.com/ provides various forms of subscriptions.
 - *iBreviary Terra Sancta* and *Laudate* are both free apps.
 - Some printed versions include:
 - Laughlin, Corinna and Maria. *Daily Prayer 2014: A book of prayer for each day of the liturgical year*. Chicago, IL: Archdiocese of Chicago: LTP, 2013. www.ltp.org/p-2564-daily-prayer-2014.aspx
 - *Proclaim Praise: Daily Prayer for Parish and Home*. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago IL. 1995. www.ltp.org/p-1242-proclaim-praise-daily-prayer-for-parish-and-home.aspx

Check with local clergy and religious and others in the community who pray this prayer to ascertain which versions they use. Some parishes such as Hamilton have bought books. The issue for some people is the translation of the psalms.

The initial enquiry made to the Liturgy Council also referred to Communion to the Sick. In addition to the ritual book already mentioned, other simple versions which can be purchased include:

- O'Loughlin, F., and Elich, T. *Communion of the Sick*. (Brisbane: The Liturgical Commission, 2012). liturgybrisbane.net.au/products-page/liturgical-rites/communion-of-the-sick/
- *Catholic Prayers: Pastoral Care of the Sick* (Pamphlet). (Brisbane: The Liturgical Commission, 2009). liturgybrisbane.net.au/products-page/liturgical-rites/pastoral-care-of-the-sick/

Some Strategies

- Start using the *Prayer of the Church* for prayer at meetings and other gatherings.
- When introducing people to the *Prayer of the Church*, it is important to pray it reflectively. People find the prayer less engaging when it is prayed at top speed.

Both the *Prayer of the Church* and a *Liturgy of the Word* provide the community with other forms of liturgical prayer that deepen faith and enrich the community's celebration of Sunday Eucharist. Perhaps it is time to consider how we might provide our communities with opportunities to experience some of the other liturgical and prayer treasures that are in our Catholic Tradition. Let us bring out our treasure old and new.

Rev Andrew Doohan

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

on behalf of the Diocesan Liturgy Council. December, 2014

