

Liturgical Guidance

When the Bishop, Vicar General or the Bishop's delegate is presiding

Catholic Liturgy

All that follows is grounded in our understanding of Catholic Liturgy as a gathering of the faithful with Christ to participate in Christ's dying–rising paschal mystery. Liturgists are preparing a ritual space and action that facilitates this encounter with Christ. Liturgy is always an expression of faith that forms the Church for life and mission.

Introduction

'The Bishop's coming! What do I need to do?' is a common cry heard echoing in communities across the diocese.

The Bishop is the chief liturgist in the diocese, and, therefore, the liturgical life of a diocese is centred around him. Liturgies at which he presides, especially, though not only in the cathedral church, are a 'principal manifestation of the Church' and a model for all liturgical celebrations. The *Ceremonial of Bishops* opens with a chapter on the 'Character and Importance of a Liturgy at which the Bishop Presides'.

Consequently, when the Bishop is presiding, we pull out all the stops and do the very best possible. 'The best possible' is shaped by our context. 'The best possible' in the Cathedral and 'the best possible' in a small country parish, school or church agency is different. This difference is respected. It expresses our diversity and enriches our diocesan church.

The following information seeks to help your community prepare the liturgy at which the Bishop, Vicar General or delegate will preside.

For the purposes of this document and ease of language, we will refer to the Bishop/Vicar General. Unless indicated, what is said applies to a delegate.

This document concerns liturgies that are outside the usual liturgical life of a parish. When the Bishop is on parish visitation and presiding at the usual schedule of Sunday Masses and other sacraments, the normal parish processes for liturgy preparation would be followed without reference to the Office for Worship and Prayer.

The Diocesan Office for Worship and Prayer is your point of contact for support and assistance and can be contacted at E: louise.gannon@mn.catholic.org.au P: 02 4979 1135.

Helpful things to know and think about

The liturgical life of the Catholic Church comprises a rich treasury of rites. The Bishop can and will preside at any of the Catholic rites. Some people make the erroneous presumption that he will only preside at Mass.

WHICH TYPE OF LITURGY

Give careful thought to the type of liturgy that will best suit your celebration and the people who will participate. People often lock themselves into having Mass and then get frustrated when what they want to do can't be done within Mass. There is much more flexibility in a Liturgy of the Word or Blessing. When discerning the type of liturgy to be celebrated, a helpful rule of thumb is: **if you think you need to provide all the dialogue and responses in a booklet or PowerPoint because the people don't know them, then the liturgy you have chosen is not the best expression of the faith of that community.**

TABERNACLE USE

If the Bishop/Vicar General is presiding at Mass, in keeping with best liturgical practice, the people should all be given **communion from the altar**. The tabernacle should not be used. Please refer to the document [Holy Communion from the altar](#) from the ACBC Commission for Liturgy.

Considering this practice is an invitation to think more deeply about what we are doing when we celebrate Eucharist, particularly with our Diocesan Bishop. [Celebrants or Consumers? It matters!](#) is a helpful resource to engage the community in reflection and dialogue.

COLLABORATIVE PREPARATION

Liturgy preparation takes time and is best approached in a circle, giving careful thought to who needs to be sitting in the circle. Such a collaborative approach allows for dialogue, from which emerges the best way forward.

Sometimes there are **diocesan and/or parish customs** to be considered and respected. For example, there are diocesan customs about who is commissioned in a Mass and by the Bishop.

Because liturgy at which the Bishop presides is a model for all liturgy, there may be times when a local custom will need to be reconsidered, most particularly when he presides at the Sacraments. This can provide the local community – parish, school, agency or community group – with an opportunity and additional support to reimagine some aspects of its liturgical life.

ROLE OF THE MANAGER OF WORSHIP AND PRAYER

The preparation of liturgy involving the Bishop/Vicar General is negotiated with the **Manager of Worship and Prayer**, not the Bishop/Vicar General or delegate. The Manager of Worship and Prayer consults with the Bishop.

All liturgies at which the Bishop/Vicar General preside are to be **finalised with the Manager of Worship and Prayer no later than two weeks prior to the event**. There is a lot of to do, including communication with various ministers, that can only take place after the liturgy is finalised. Once

finalised, changes are not to be made beyond minor tweaking on the day, and that is negotiated with the Master of Ceremonies.

ROLE OF THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Customarily, for special liturgies, the Bishop/Vicar General will be accompanied by a member of the [College of Assistant Master of Ceremonies](#) who will serve as his Master of Ceremonies. **The Master of Ceremonies is additional to and does not replace the need for local servers.** He/she supports both the Bishop and the community and becomes a key reference person for those preparing the liturgy. Once the liturgy is finalised, the Master of Ceremonies will work with the community to ensure the celebration of the liturgy goes as planned. At a liturgy, the Master of Ceremonies speaks for the Bishop and is the one to make any final decisions. This leaves the Bishop/Vicar General free to prepare to preside.

Getting Started

1. Book the Bishop or Vicar General by contacting Elizabeth Doyle in the Bishop's Office. P 4979 1109 E elizabeth.doyle@mn.catholic.org.au. Please note that you can book the Bishop to preside without specifying the type of liturgy.
2. It is your responsibility to book a church, whether that is your own parish church, a stational church within the parish or the cathedral. The cathedral is booked through St Benedict's Inner Newcastle Parish Office. P 4979 1101, E newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au Website <http://www.newcastlecatholic.org.au> or access the [online booking form](#).

Depending on the liturgy, sometimes a venue other than a church might be appropriate.

3. If the liturgy is part of a larger event, ensure all the people and resources you need are available and booked.

Preparing the Liturgy

4. If in doubt or you have questions, contact the [Office for Worship and Prayer](#). All questions are welcome.
5. **Start early.** How early depends on the nature of the liturgy. Two months is recommended as a minimum for the preparation of a standard liturgy. If your event is significant, preparation is best begun 10 -12 months before the celebration. This allows time to consider important questions and issues, such as the best type of liturgy to celebrate your event.
6. Consult the Ordo to check whether the readings and proper are set by the **cycle of liturgical seasons and feasts**. The liturgical seasons are an important part of our Catholic life, so any liturgy would be shaped by the season in which it is celebrated.
7. Preparing a **Master Order of Service** is recommended. It is the easiest way to prepare a liturgy and enables the team preparing the liturgy to 'see' the whole thing:
 - how the readings, prayers and hymns fit together
 - how the structure and elements flow in a good ritual pattern
 - the primary symbols and all requirements needed for the liturgy
 - the rubrics that outline how things will work best in your liturgical space

- particular elements and actions associated with the Bishop
- what you might have forgotten.

It also helps the team preparing the liturgy to consult with and receive meaningful input from various ministers and others who need to be consulted.

The Manager of Worship and Prayer is available as a reference person throughout this process.

Depending on what liturgy you are celebrating, the Office for Worship and Prayer may be able to provide you with a template for your liturgy.

The main function of a Master Order of Service is to serve the Bishop, who is sometimes presiding at four or five different liturgies in a week. It becomes invaluable if the Bishop is called away suddenly, as happens occasionally, and someone else has to step in to preside.

The Master Order of Service also assists in communicating with other liturgical ministers so they know exactly what is required of them for the celebration of the liturgy. All those exercising a liturgical ministry should be directed to meet with the Master of Ceremonies at least thirty minutes before the liturgy begins.

8. Send the Master Order of Service to the Manager of Worship and Prayer, who brings another set of eyes to your liturgy to make sure everything is good to go.

Once finalised by the Manager of Worship and Prayer, the Master Order of Service functions to look after both the community and the presider. The community can expect the presider to follow the liturgy they have prepared. The presider knows what is expected of him. No surprises for anyone! Except those organised by the Holy Spirit!

9. It is best practice and most efficient to prepare People's Booklets or PowerPoint only after the Master Order of Service has been finalised. Ideally, People's Booklets are made from the Master Order of Service. This ensures that the two printed versions of the liturgy are the same. Such aids for the Assembly should not include anything that takes people's attention away from the liturgy itself. The liturgy is not in a book. The liturgy, and therefore the place of encounter with Christ, is the action – what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch.
10. Once the Manager of Worship and Prayer has finalised the liturgy, you will be put in touch with the Master of Ceremonies for your liturgy.

The Master of Ceremonies will assist you in the final preparation and celebration of your liturgy. She/he will arrive an hour before the liturgy is due to begin and is your reference person for any final tweaking and any remaining questions. All final details are negotiated with the Master of Ceremonies, not the presider. The Master of Ceremonies' word is final.

As a rule, the Master of Ceremonies works with the Office of Worship and Prayer to prepare the folder for the presider and her/himself and will bring other copies as may be needed for the good order of the liturgy. The local community is responsible for printing People's Booklets and other copies as required by the community. The Office of Worship and Prayer can assist with this if required.

11. When assigning liturgical ministries, it is important to remember that the liturgy is a celebration of the faithful and liturgical ministry is exercised by the faithful who have been fully initiated.

Finally

Celebrate your liturgy! Once you've done all you can to prepare, hand it over to the Holy Spirit, and the liturgy takes on a life of its own. The final responsibility for all liturgy rests with the Assembly and their full, conscious and active participation.

Reviewing liturgies is the best way to keep learning and growing the liturgical life of your community. A simple review would note:

- What went well?
- What could be improved? How?
- What have we learnt that would be good to apply to other liturgical celebrations?
- Actions from here?

This document

This Liturgical Guidance has been prepared in response to requests over several years. It has been drafted to respond to questions commonly asked by those preparing liturgies for their community to celebrate. It has been given to a range of people for comment and has been refined in light of feedback.

We are now sending it out for you to test-drive. We hope it is helpful. Your [feedback](#) is welcome. We shall continue to refine it to ensure it is most helpful to you.

Louise Gannon rsj

Manager of Worship and Prayer

E: louise.gannon@mn.catholic.org.au | Ph: 4979 1135

With the Diocesan Liturgy Council and the College of Assistant Masters of Ceremonies.

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