

TIMELY TOPICS



DIocese OF COLUMBUS, OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND CATECHESIS

Liturgy in Transition: Part One

Liturgical catechesis is a central element in the religious formation of any group of learners of any age and in any setting. The celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy is the very *heart* of our lives as Catholic Christians, and is a powerful force for our formation and transformation, as individuals and as a people.

The symbols and rituals of liturgy express, celebrate, form and transmit our fundamental beliefs.

Liturgy (Greek, “the work of the people”) refers to

- ☞ the official, public and communal worship
- ☞ for which the Church has set forth a prescribed form (*ritual*),
- ☞ which includes an element of obligation

Liturgy includes the **Eucharistic liturgy**, or Mass, and the **sacraments**, as well as the **Liturgy of the Hours**. As the “work of the people,” it involves our *active* participation; liturgy has no audience!

Throughout the 2,000 years of Christianity, the Eucharistic prayer of the Church has grown, evolved, changed, all the while rooted in a core, ritual form that grew out of the earliest days of communal prayer and the breaking of the bread. (*Acts 2:42-47*) We are reminded of that organic, ongoing process in the development of our liturgy by the recently confirmed changes in language which will be fully implemented on the **First Sunday of Advent, 2011**.

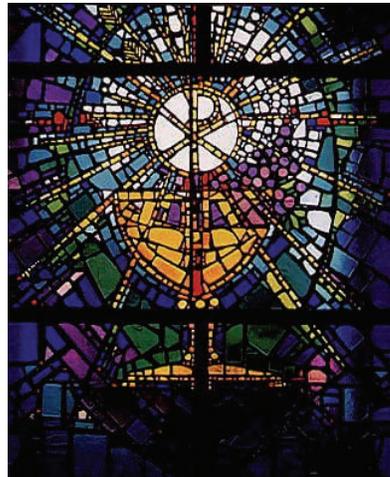
The Second Vatican Council was neither the beginning nor the end of changes in the Eucharistic liturgy. After the time of Constantine, liturgical rites grew more “courtly” and gradually more removed from the people;

Latin, no longer the common language, remained the official language of the Church in the West. Around the beginning of the 20th century, the Liturgical Renewal movement emerged. One of its goals was to make participation by the people a renewed practice. With the documents of Vatican II, many changes were put in place to make that participation more possible. One of the most influential changes was the translation of the Latin into the vernacular in languages around the world.

The current, revised *Roman Missal* actually is the third translation into English since Vatican II. Each has been an attempt to express more clearly in English the full theological meaning and the beauty of the Latin prayers. The earlier attempts (1975, 1985) tried to convey more of the *spirit* of the word, rather than the more precise translation in the current edition. Bishops from the 11 English-speaking conferences in the Church worked with Latin scholars, Scripture scholars, theologians and liturgists for the last 10 years to develop this most recent edition.

It is important to keep in mind that **English is here to stay**. This is not an attempt to “return to Latin” or to “throw out Vatican II.” It is the next step in that constantly unfolding, organic development of our liturgical prayer. It offers us a new opportunity to grow as a praying people.

(Look for Part Two, at a later date.) ☞



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In-service Suggestion

Preparation Make copies of the following page, “What Did the Early Liturgy Look Like?” for each person. Set up a “prayer-space” with a cloth appropriate to the liturgical season (e.g., green for Ordinary Time, purple for Advent/Lent, etc.) and such items as a candle, flowers or green plant, an icon, an open Bible, etc.

Open with a brief introduction emphasizing that while the Mass itself has long retained its basic form, the various prayers, words, rubrics have continued to change and develop (use information from the front page of *Timely Topics*) over the centuries and across cultures.

Read aloud from the Bible, **Acts 2: 42-47**, a description of the early Christian community. Invite participants to comment among themselves (2-3 minutes, several small groups if needed) on words or phrases that may have caught their attention as they heard the reading.

Distribute the sheets with the brief description by St. Justin, Martyr. Ask them to read the description, then follow the directions at the bottom of the page. When it appears they have had enough time, invite them to discuss at their table/in their group (app. 5 minutes) the similarities and the differences they found, in both the passage from Acts and St. Justin’s commentary.

Conclude by inviting them to stand and together, slowly and thoughtfully pray the Sign of the Cross.

Ideas for Any Age

With adult faith-formation groups or teens: use the in-service idea on page 2

With older elementary/junior high students: *(also teens and RCIA members)*

- ☞ Prepare and post 2 large newsprints (or use a whiteboard with 2 columns or a smart-board) with the headings – “Acts 2:42-47” and “St. Justin, 155 AD”
- ☞ Assign a group of learners to the reading from **Acts** and the other group to the reading from **St. Justin**. Each group reads their reading and posts on their newsprint the parts of the liturgy *in the order given in the reading*.
- ☞ Depending on the size of the group, break the group into clusters of 5 (or less if it’s a small group). Each cluster is given their own newsprint with the heading, “**Today**.”
- ☞ Under “Today,” clusters list elements from both Acts and St. Justin, combining them and lining them up in the order of today’s Mass. Drawings as well as words can be used.
- ☞ When the groups are finished, check their list against a missal to see how much is correct.
- ☞ Ask each cluster to add illustrations to their completed list – symbols, gestures, etc.

Correlation to Certification Standards, the Course of Study, & the Six Tasks of Catechesis

National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers

3.4: Know and integrate into ministerial practice a theology of liturgy/worship.

Religion Graded Course of Study

Standard III-B: Examine liturgy as the official public worship of the Catholic Church by which it expresses its faith.

Six Tasks of Catechesis

Liturgical Life

What did the early liturgy look like?



“On the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things.

Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.

And they who are well to do, and willing, gives what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need.

But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to his apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.”

St. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* (155)

What similarities and differences do you see between this account and our Mass as it is celebrated today?
List and discuss them with your group.

Resources

- ⌘ Mick, Lawrence. “Changing How We Pray: A Guide to the New Translation of the Roman Missal” C0810 (August, 2010)
- ⌘ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: www.usccb.org/, follow link for Roman Missal
- ⌘ Diocese of Columbus, Liturgy Commission: www.colsdioc.org/Offices/Liturgy/NewRomanMissal.aspx
- ⌘ Liturgy Training Publications: http://revisedromanmissal.org/Roman_Missal.aspx
- ⌘ Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions: http://fdlc.org/Roman_Missal.htm
- ⌘ Turner, Paul. *Understanding the Revised Mass Texts, 2nd ed.* Chicago, IL: Liturgical Training Publications, 2010
- ⌘ Coffey, Kathy & Paul Turner. *Understanding the Revised Mass Texts, Leader’s Guide, 2nd ed.* Chicago, IL: Liturgical Training Publications, 2010
- ⌘ *With One Voice: Translation and Implementation of the Third Edition of the Roman Missal.* Washington, DC: Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, 2010
- ⌘ Pecklers, Keith. *The Genius of the Roman Rite: On the Reception and Implementation of the New Missal.* Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009
- ⌘ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Parish Guide to Implementing the Roman Missal, Third Edition.* Washington, DC: USCCB, 2010