



Word on Worship

Newsletter of the Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark, NJ

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The General Intercessions in the Mass: Part I

Editor's Note:

This article will appear in two parts. The second part will be printed in Volume 20, Number 1, the Spring 2002 issue.

- Seasoning Sundays

Payer. If there is one thing that all sides of any discussion could agree on regarding the liturgy of the Church it would be that the purpose of liturgy is prayer, or to be more specific, ritualized prayer. During the celebration of the Mass and other liturgies, there are normally several prescribed prayers for use, some as brief as the prayer after communion and others as long as the Roman Canon. Perhaps the most unique form of prayer in the liturgy is found in the required but not prescribed "Universal Prayer" also titled the "general intercessions" or "prayer of the faithful." The purpose of this article will be to delve into some history and pastoral reflection on these prayers and how they can best be implemented in the Mass.

WHERE THEY CAME FROM

Around the year 150 AD, Justin Martyr, an early Christian from Samaria, recorded his experience of the eucharistic celebration in his First Apology. Justin notes that "...the records of the apostles or the writings of the

prophets are read as time allows. Then, when the reader has finished, the president in a discourse admonishes and exhorts us to imitate these good things. Then we all stand up together and send up prayers..." He also mentions the use of intercessory prayer after the newly baptized are brought into the assembly, "to make common prayers earnestly for ourselves and for those who have been enlightened and for all others everywhere..." It is clear from this and other sources that the early Christians, after hearing the word of God explained to them, took time to "send up prayers" in their own words to God, no doubt in response to what they just heard explained to them about the scriptures and for their own needs. This tradition seems to have been passed down through the centuries. Prayer "after the delivery of the homily is a common term in the third and fourth century in Egypt. Later on we meet the prayer after the readings in all the liturgies of the East. In the West, it is plainly indicated in Hippolytus... In Augustine's time a large number of sermons ended with... common prayer followed upon the sermon."³

The New Testament provides us with earlier encouragement for the first Christians to pray for others: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5:16) and

"Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another...The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective" (James 5:16). The first letter to Timothy explicitly states the need to pray for everyone, even those who are not part of the Church: "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and for all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:1-4). The New Testament also indicates that the Church prays for all people, regardless of their relationship with the Church: "I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45).

Over the centuries, the style and use of the general intercessions has varied greatly, from taking on the form of a litany to virtually disappearing from the liturgy all together. When looking for an original ancient text of actual intercessions, however, one may not need to look any further than the Celebration of the Lord's Passion for Good Friday found in the 1970 Roman Missal or Sacramentary. In his 1951

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commentary on the liturgy, Joseph Jungmann wrote that “In the Roman liturgy...this general prayer is still in use once a year, on Good Friday...It is a well grounded hypothesis that in these Good Friday prayers, whose echo goes back to the first century, we have the general prayer of the Roman Church in the exact wording in which it was performed after the readings and the homily in the Roman congregation at their regular services since the third century.”⁴

The format for these intercessions is for a deacon or lector to chant or read an introduction inviting the assembly to pray for a particular intention. After the invitation, sufficient time is to be allowed for silent prayer and then, “if desired, an appropriate acclamation by the people may be introduced before each of the solemn prayers of intercession.” Each intercession is concluded with the prescribed prayer read by the presider. The petitions cover several areas of prayer for the Church and for the world: for the Church itself, for the pope, for clergy and laity, for civil authorities, for the catechumens, for the unity of Christians, for the Jewish people, for those who do not believe in God or Christ, and for those in special need. It is easy to see how the prayer of the faithful used during the liturgies of the Church today comes from the Good Friday format.

The reform of the liturgy after the Second Vatican Council called for the return of the regular use of the prayer of the faithful at Mass and other liturgies of the Church. In the 1975 *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), the

reasoning for its return is explained: “In the general intercessions or prayer of the faithful, the people, exercising their priestly function, intercede for all humanity. It is appropriate that this prayer be included in all Masses celebrated with a congregation...”⁵ The use of intercessions is clearly a necessary component of the reformed liturgy and should never be omitted for any reason.

Number 47 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* states: “It belongs to the priest celebrant to direct the general intercessions, by means of a brief introduction to invite the congregation to pray, and after the intercessions to say the concluding prayer. It is desirable that a deacon, cantor or other person announce the intentions. The whole assembly gives expression to its supplication either by a response said together after each intention or by silent prayer.”⁶ Using this directive as an outline, methods of composing the different parts of the general intercessions will be explored below.

COMPOSING GENERAL INTERCESSIONS TODAY

As mentioned above, the GIRM gives a basic outline for the general intercessions based on the Good Friday prayers. In addition, the Sacramentary does provide several sample intercessions and while the Church is by no means limited to their use, they do provide an excellent example of the style that the intercessions ought to follow. The *Liturgy of the Hours* provides another resource when constructing these prayers, and all of these will be looked at below. The format of this section will be to take each of the parts of the

general intercessions and discuss various ways of composing them: Introduction, Intercessions, Response and Concluding Prayer.

INTRODUCTION

“It belongs to the priest celebrant to direct the general intercessions, by means of a brief introduction to invite the congregation to pray...”

The introduction to the general intercessions is a call to prayer addressed to the assembly. It is not addressed to God. It is an invitation to all present to raise their prayers to heaven, not for God to listen to us. Note the tenor of this introduction from the sample formulas for the general intercessions for Lent found in Appendix I of the Sacramentary: “My brothers and sisters, we should pray at all times, but especially during this season of Lent: we should faithfully keep watch with Christ and pray to our Father.”⁷ Clearly this introduction, as with the others found in the appendix, is addressed to the assembly, not to God. The introduction is not a time to ask God to listen to us, but rather it is a time to draw the people’s attention to the need for everyone to pray together to God for ourselves and the world. The introduction is always proclaimed by the presider of the liturgy from the chair. “For the prayer of the faithful the celebrant presides



at the chair.”⁸

INTERCESSIONS

“It is desirable that a deacon, cantor or another person announce the intentions.”

After the recitation of the creed, the deacon⁹, (or in the absence of a deacon another minister, or if necessary, a cantor when sung) moves to the ambo¹⁰ or another appropriate place to proclaim the universal prayer. It is ideal that one person proclaim the intercessions and that they be done by a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church. Using the intercessions to showcase children — or anyone else for that matter — is inappropriate. The purpose of liturgical ministers is not to honor the minister, but to lead people in prayer. Who is doing the leading of the prayer should not be perceived as more important than what is being done since the purpose of liturgical ministers, including the presider, is not to project a

personality but to serve the Body of Christ present in the assembly. As with the scriptures, the most capable people possible should be trained and prepared to proclaim the prayer of the faithful. Normally, it is one of the lectors of the Mass if it is not a deacon or a cantor. It is also ideal that only one person read the intercessions, unless of course the specific requirements of the prayers necessitate multiple readers such as in the case of intercessions written in different languages.

The next question to be addressed is obvious: What ought to be included in these intercessions? General intercessions should be firmly based in the experience of the word of God at that particular liturgy as well as the Christian life of the people at prayer. "General intercessions have been restored within the Roman liturgical reform instituted by the Second Vatican Council. This liturgical prayer form is expressive of the logic of biblical prayer, i.e., the proclamation of God's story is an act of *anamnesis* (remembering) which inspires renewed confidence from which the assembly brings its needs before God."¹¹ In other words, the general intercessions are not simply a nice form of prayer inserted into the Mass just prior to the collection, but rather they are the primary and immediate response by the community to the word of God.

In the general intercessions or prayer of the faithful, the people, exercising their priestly function, intercede for all humanity. It is appropriate that this prayer be included in all Masses celebrated with a congregation, so that petitions will be offered for the Church,

for civil authorities, for those oppressed by various needs, for all people, and for the salvation of the world.¹²

The prayer of the faithful is the very first step that is taken in the response to the scriptures' calling of the community to action as disciples of Christ in the world. This is why it is important that these prayers have an outward-reaching effect and that they be prayers which spur the community on to live as faithful followers of Christ. As a rule the sequence of intentions is to be:

- a. for the needs of the Church
- b. for public authorities and the salvation of the world
- c. for those oppressed by any need
- d. for the local community¹³

If a book is well titled, it can sum up its entire contents in just a few words: the same can be said of the prayer of the faithful. Remember that they are called "general intercessions" and not "specific requests" or worse still, not "specific requests for the agenda of the composer." The prayer of the faithful is a wonderfully unique moment of the liturgy when both creativity and timely relevance are extremely important, but like everything else in the liturgy, their purpose is not to draw attention to themselves but rather to draw us more deeply into a relationship with God as a community of believers.

The wording of these prayers is extremely important in the formation of the community assembled in prayer. It would be worthwhile to take a closer look at the construction of these prayers. In the sample formulas for Easter found in the Sacramentary, we find this

intercession for the Church: "That pastors may lead in faith and serve in love the flock entrusted to their care by Christ the Good Shepherd, we pray..." It is clear in this case that the prayer is asking for something to take effect in which we (in this case "pastors") are called upon to play some role in the activity of God in our world. This is not a prayer simply asking God to come down from on high and do something for us, ("That God will give us good pastors, we pray...") but we are asking that our pastors BE good pastors. Intercessions should not challenge God, they should challenge the people being prayed for, whether they are individual leaders or entire groups of people (the parish, Church, nation, etc.).

It is extremely important that our intercessions do not simply ask God to do everything for us, implying that we do not need to be proactive in the transformation of the world as Christians. It is certainly true that only God can save the world, but we are called to cooperate with God's salvation, and that ought to be reflected in the prayer of the faithful used in our liturgies. Another illustration of this can be seen in the following contrasting intercessions: "For the hungry of the world, we pray to the Lord" versus "For our parish community, that we may be conscious of the needs of the poor and work together to alleviate the suffering of those who hunger, we pray...". We are not asking God to drop out of the sky and make the world a better place, but rather we are asking God to strengthen and inspire us to live out the message of the gospel which the assembly has just heard proclaimed in the readings and the homily so that God's will may become a reality in our world.

This is not to say that there are not times in the Church's liturgy, including during the Mass, in which we do not implore direct divine assistance. This can be seen in the Eucharistic Prayers (e.g. Eucharistic Prayer II: "Let your Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy" and "make us grow in love, together with N. our Pope...") The litany of saints is another prayer in which direct assistance is implored from above. At certain ritual Masses, some or all of the intercessions are directed to God as is appropriate.¹⁴

It should be said that the actual intentions used at Mass are normally addressed to the people and not addressed to God. After the intercession is stated, it is the people who give assent to these needs, make them their own and address them to God when they pray their response. The actual prayer of the "universal prayer" is when the entire community responds, for example, "Lord, hear our prayer." That is why it is so important that although the prayers can be about local needs the general intercessions ought to be kept general, so that they will include the prayers of all present and be worded in a way that is readily understood, accepted and acclaimed by all present.¹⁵ This is where the creative element of writing intercessions is so necessary. Even a community that is divided over an issue can still pray as one over that issue. It is not the role of the general intercessions to express the opinions of the composer, but an effective means of addressing a situation in a divided community through prayer might be to say, "For the town of x, that we may

settle our differences in a peaceful way, pleasing to God, we pray..." All those present in the assembly would certainly be able to acclaim this prayer without feeling polarized while at the same time it causes those present to reflect on what they are praying for and to realize that the answer to that prayer lies in their ability to cooperate with one another.

There are a few further comments, which can be made, regarding the regular use of intercessions. Consistency in the formulation of the intercessions for a particular Mass is important for the rhythm and flow of the liturgy; for example, each one should begin with similar wording such as "For" or "That," and each should be approximately the same length. They should be "short and phrased with a measure of freedom."¹⁶ The intercessions themselves do not necessarily need to be changed on a weekly basis. How many times have we heard some of the eucharistic prayers or even the Our Father before they take on deeper, more significant meaning to us? Some or all of the intercessions could remain the same for a period of time. This is especially true when they are sung. The intercessions are not to be used to make announcements, even if they are in the form of a prayer such as, "For the success of our parish carnival next weekend, we pray..." The practice of inviting all to add a personal intercession either aloud or in silence is one that ought to be handled carefully. In the introduction to the 1998 *Lectionary for Mass* we read, "a deacon, another minister, or some of the faithful may propose intentions..."¹⁷ Before

inviting the assembly to speak an intercession, one must consider several things such as: Can everyone be heard? Will individuals be using this as an announcement time instead of a time of prayer? Is there regard for the timeliness and "flow" of the liturgy? Remember that these prayers are meant to be general, not specific. Well-composed prayers ought to cover the needs of the entire community; also, the nature of the liturgy is one of communal prayer, not private or personal prayer. Perhaps this practice could be reserved for Masses with specific communities such as those occurring at weekday Masses or on retreats.

Although not specifically called for, many parishes have the practice of including an intercession for the sick and the deceased at the end of the intercessions. This practice may be rooted in the celebration of evening prayer found in the *Liturgy of the Hours* in which the last intercession is always for the dead.¹⁸ In addition, the names of the dead and the sick are often included in these intercessions. It is important that parishes have specific policies established so that the same name(s), particularly of the sick, are not being read every Sunday for extended periods of time. It would be impossible and perhaps even inappropriate to recite the names of every sick person in the parish, especially people with chronic illnesses, on a weekly basis. However, a place could be reserved in the bulletin to request prayers for the sick while only those who are recently ill or whose condition has worsened could be read at Mass. Whenever mentioning a name in the intercessions, it is absolutely imperative that the sick persons themselves give their

explicit permission to mention their name at Mass. This avoids violating the privacy of anyone who does not wish their condition announced to the world! Intercessions for the sick and the deceased should always be worded to include "all the sick" as well as those specifically named. It is a perfectly acceptable practice to include the name of the person in whose memory a Mass offering has been made during the general intercession for the dead, which can be a good solution to the sometimes awkward moment of announcing it during the introductory rites.

Various musical settings for the intercessions are included in different hymnals and other liturgical music resources. It is important that the music not be too complicated or too much like a song in which the words are not understood — chants seem to work best. Singing the intercessions can be used to mark off a liturgical season as well, so for example, a parish may decide that for the Sundays of Lent the general intercessions will be sung. Another possibility is to have the refrain sung by the assembly after the deacon or lector reads each intercession. *(to be continued)*

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¹ Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers of the Eucharist* (The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota) 1990, p 29-30.

² Ibid, p 28.

³ Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite, vol I* (Thomas More Publishing, Allen, Texas) 1986, p 480-481.

⁴ Ibid., p 481-482.

⁵ General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 45, *The Liturgy Documents*, vol 1 (Liturgical

Training Publications, Chicago, 1991) p 58.

⁶ Ibid., 47.

⁷ Sample Formulas for the General Intercessions, appendix 1, *Sacramentary* (Catholic Book Publishing, New York) 1985, p 998.

⁸ Introduction to the *Lectionary for Mass* (Catholic Book Publishing, New Jersey) 1998, 31, p 19.

⁹ GIRM, 61

¹⁰ See the 1998 Introduction to the *Lectionary for Mass*, 33: "Since the ambo is the place from which the word of God is proclaimed by the ministers, it must of its nature be reserved for the readings, the responsorial psalm and the Easter Proclamation (the Exsultet). The ambo may rightly be used for the homily and the prayer of the faithful, however, because of their close connection with the entire liturgy of the word. It is better for the commentator, cantor, or director of singing, for example, not to use the ambo."

¹¹ Andrew D. Ciferni, "The Liturgy of the Word," *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship* (The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1990) p 1321-1322.

¹² GIRM, 45.

¹³ GIRM, 46.

¹⁴ See for example the *Order of Christian Funerals*, 193 and following.

¹⁵ Note that while intercessions at Mass should be general in tone, "In particular celebrations, such as confirmations, marriages, funerals, etc., the list of intentions may be more closely concerned with the special occasion." GIRM, 46

¹⁶ Introduction to the *Lectionary for Mass* (Catholic Book Publishing, New Jersey) 1998, 30, p 19.

¹⁷ Ibid., 30.

¹⁸ General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours, 186, *The Liturgy Documents*, vol. 2 (Liturgical Training Publications, Chicago, 1999) p 229.

SEASONING SUNDAYS

Chicken is chicken. But is it? If you add certain seasonings, such as oregano, basil, rosemary, garlic powder, parsley, curry powder, sage, pepper, salt, paprika, cilantro, etc. you can make a variety of chicken dishes. There are hundreds, if not thousands of ways, to season chicken to make it more interesting to the palate. Chicken is not just chicken if it's seasoned skillfully.

The same could be said for Sunday Mass. We sometimes think that Sunday Mass is Sunday Mass. Some fifty two times a year the parish community gathers for Sunday Mass, and each Sunday it's pretty much the same. Certainly the scripture readings and prayers are different, but otherwise what occurs one Sunday is very similar to what happens the following Sunday. But Sunday Mass also can be "seasoned" to make it a more enriching liturgical experience.

In this article I would like to offer some suggestions on how to "season" Sunday Mass so that it reflects the Church's liturgical calendar. If we "season" our liturgy, then Sunday Mass during the Advent season will be different from Sunday Mass during Christmas season; and Sunday Mass during the season of Lent will be different from Sunday Mass during the season of Easter, and Sunday Mass during those particular seasons will not be the same as Sunday Mass during Ordinary Time. By

"seasoning" our liturgies we will not only respect the liturgical calendar of the Church, we will also enrich the spiritual experience of the assembly. Like food we eat, Sunday Mass can benefit with a little "seasoning."

ADVENT SEASONING

"Advent has a twofold character: as a season to prepare for Christmas when Christ's first coming to us is remembered; as a season when that remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ's Second Coming at the end of time. Advent is thus a period for devout and joyful expectation." (*General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar* [GNLYC], 39)

The first weeks of the Advent season focus our attention on the Second Coming of Christ and are related to the final weeks of the previous liturgical year, which also speak of Christ's return in glory. Beginning with December 17, our attention shifts from eschatology to the first coming of Christ, as we remember the events that preceded his birth at Bethlehem.

The four Sundays of Advent should reflect the meaning of this particular season of the Church's calendar. This could be done in the following ways:

- The purple vestments and altar cloth used for Advent should be used exclusively for this season. The purple of Advent should be different from the purple of

Lent. The color of the vestments and altar cloth should proclaim, "It's Advent."

- Christmas decorations should not be placed in the church during the Advent season. While malls may begin to look like Christmas as early as late October, the environment of our churches should look like Advent.
- An Advent wreath may be placed in the church and lighted during the liturgies of the season. "If the Advent wreath is to be used in church, it should be of sufficient size to be visible to the congregation. It may be suspended from the ceiling or placed on a stand. If it is placed in the presbyterium (sanctuary), it should not interfere with the celebration of the liturgy, nor should it obscure the altar, lectern (pulpit), or chair." (*Book of Blessings*, 1512). The lighting of the wreath takes place in a simple way during the liturgy, or it may even be done before Mass begins. (*Book of Blessings*, 1513). See Chapter 47 of the *Book of Blessings* for further information.
- Form C(ii) of the penitential rite is most appropriate for Advent as it proclaims that the Lord Jesus came in the past, continues to come today, and will come in glory.
- The Gloria is not used at Sunday Mass during the Advent season.
- One particular responsorial psalm might be used throughout the Advent Season. "To make it easier for the people to join the response to the psalm, the Order of Readings lists certain other texts of psalms and responses that have been chosen according to the various seasons." (*Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass*, 89) See 174 (1) of *Lectionary for Mass*, Volume 1 for common responsorial psalms for the Advent season.
- The same set of general intercessions might be used for all the Sunday Masses of the Advent season. One or two petitions might be changed to reflect specific needs and situations that arise.
- Advent Preface I is used until December 16, then Advent Preface II is used for the remainder of the Advent Season.
- The introduction to the Our Father might remain constant through the season, and reflect our waiting in hope for the coming of God's kingdom. For example, "Using the words that Jesus taught us, let us pray that God's kingdom of love, justice, and peace may come into our world."
- The invitation to share the sign of peace might also remain constant and reflect the Advent season. For example, "Waiting in hope for the coming of God's kingdom of peace, let us offer each other the sign of peace."
- Consider using the same solemn blessing or prayer

over the people for the four Sundays of Advent. The solemn blessing for the First and Third Sundays of Advent are appropriate for the other Sundays as well. The blessing speaks of our belief that the Jesus who once came to us, will come again to bring us the light of his holiness.

- Music is the best way to “season” the Masses of Advent, or for that matter any part of the liturgical year. It would be wise to use the same musical settings for the acclamations during the four Sundays of Advent. Consider using the same gathering, communion, and recessional song for the season. The less often we change music, the greater the chance that people will participate in our sung prayer. Also having “Advent” music immediately sets the mood and proclaims that this is Advent.
- Remember “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” is not the only song of the Advent season, nor is it appropriate for the entire season.
- “During Advent musical instruments should be played with moderation that is in keeping with the spirit of joyful expectation characteristic of the season; but does not anticipate the fullness of joy belonging to the celebration of the nativity of the Lord.” (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, 41)

CHRISTMAS SEASONING

“Next to the yearly celebration of the paschal mystery, the Church holds most sacred the memorial of Christ’s birth and early manifestations. This is the purpose of the Christmas season.” (GNLYC, 32)

The Sundays and feasts of Christmas should reflect the meaning of this particular season of the Church’s calendar. This could be done in the following ways:

- The white or gold vestments and altar cloth used for the Christmas season should be used exclusively for this season. They should be different from those used during the Easter season. Special seasons deserve special vesture.
- Consider using additional candles at the altar, instead of two candles, use four candles during the Christmas season. “On or near the altar there are to be candlesticks with lighted candles, at least two but even four, six, or, if the bishop of the diocese celebrates, seven.” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 1975 edition, 79)
- The Christmas decorations that enhance the worship space should remain in place until the Christmas season comes to a close, namely, until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. “Since the Christmas season begins with the Vigil Mass on Christmas Eve and ends with the Baptism of the Lord, the placement and removal of Christmas decorations should coincide with these times.” (*Built of Living Stones*, 125)
- The manger or nativity scene is a very visible reminder of the Christmas season. It may be located inside or outside the church building. “If the manger scene is set up in the church, it must not be placed in the presbyterium (sanctuary). A place should be chosen that is suitable for prayer and devotion and is easily accessible by the faithful.” (*Book of Blessings*, 1544) See

Chapter 48 of the *Book of Blessings* for further information.

- Form C(iii) of the penitential rite is most appropriate for Christmas as it proclaims Jesus as mighty God, Prince of Peace, Son of God, Son of Mary, Word made flesh, and splendor of the Father.
- Choose an appropriate, festive setting of the Gloria and use it throughout the Christmas Season.
- One particular responsorial psalm might be used throughout the Christmas Season. “To make it easier for the people to join the response to the psalm, the order of readings lists certain other texts of psalms and responses that have been chosen according to the various seasons.” (Introduction to the *Lectiary for Mass*, 89) See 174 (3, 4) of *Lectiary for Mass*, Volume 1 for common responsorial psalms for the Christmas season.
- The same set of general intercessions might be used for all the Sunday Masses and major feasts of the Christmas season. One or two petitions might be changed to reflect specific needs and situations that arise. It would most appropriate to sing these intercessions during this festive season.
- Use the appropriate prefaces for the season, P 3-7. Singing the preface could highlight the Christmas season.
- Eucharistic Prayer I, the Roman Canon, has appropriate inserts for the season.
- The introduction to the Our Father might remain constant through the season, and reflect our belief in the incarnation. For example, “The Son of God took on

flesh and came among us that we might know the depth of God’s love. Moved by that love we have the confidence to pray.”

- The invitation to share the sign of peace might also remain constant and reflect an aspect of the Christmas season.. For example, “Reconciled to one another and to the Father by the Prince of peace, let us offer each other the sign of peace.”
- Music is the best way to “season” the Masses of Christmas, or for that matter any part of the liturgical year. It would be wise to use the same musical settings for the acclamations during the Sundays and feasts of Christmas. The setting should be more festive than that used for Advent. If the same setting is used, perhaps it could be enhanced by a richer musical accompaniment.
- Remember that the Feast of the Holy Family, the Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God, the Epiphany, and the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord are all part of the Christmas season. Christmas music should not end December 25. Choose Christmas carols whose text reflects the particular aspect of the incarnation being celebrated.

LENTEN SEASONING

“Lent is a preparation for the celebration of Easter, for the Lenten liturgy disposes both catechumens and the faithful to celebrate the paschal mystery: catechumens, through the several stages of Christian initiation; the faithful, through reminders of their own baptism and through penitential practices.” (GNLYC, 27)



The six Sundays of Lent should reflect the meaning of this particular season of the Church's calendar. This could be done in the following ways:

- The purple vestments and altar cloth used for Lent should be used exclusively for this season. The purple of Lent should be different from the purple of Advent. Vestments decorated with symbols of the Passion of the Lord are more appropriate for the later part of the season, namely, from Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion onward.
- The season of Lent should be highlighted by the absence of decoration. "Flowers should not adorn the altar from Ash Wednesday until the Gloria at the Easter Vigil. Exceptions to this rule are Laetere Sunday (the Fourth Sunday of Lent), solemnities

and feasts" (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, 48).

- The Lenten season would be the appropriate time to highlight the penitential rite. Forms C(iv) and C(v) of the penitential rite are most appropriate for Lent as they proclaim the saving work of Jesus Christ. The deacon or cantor could sing the invocations of the penitential rite, and the assembly could sing its response.
- Form A, the Confiteor, could also be used during the Lenten season. The Kyrie that follows might be sung.
- The Gloria and Alleluia are not used at Sunday Mass during the Lenten season.
- One particular responsorial psalm might be used throughout the Lenten season. "To make it easier for the people to join the response to the psalm, the Order of Readings lists

certain other texts of psalms and responses that have been chosen according to the various seasons."

(*Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass*, 89) See 174 (5, 6, 7) of *Lectionary for Mass*, Volume 1 for common responsorial psalms for the Lent.

- The same set of general intercessions might be used for all the Sunday Masses of the Lenten season. One or two petitions might be changed to reflect specific needs and situations that arise. Consider using a sung version whose tone reflects the spirit of Lent.
- Use the appropriate Lenten preface.
- The Eucharistic Prayers for Masses of Reconciliation might be used on the Sundays of Lent that are not assigned a particular preface.
- The introduction to the Our Father might remain constant through the season, and reflect Lent's call to repentance and forgiveness. For example, "Using the words that Jesus gave us, let us ask the Father to forgive our sins, and to bring us to forgive those who sin against us."
- The invitation to share the sign of peace might also remain constant and recall Lent's challenge to reconciliation. For example, "Mindful of Lent's call to reconciliation and peace, let us now share the sign of peace."
- Music is the best way to "season" the Masses of Lent, or for that matter any portion of the liturgical year. Consider using the same musical settings for the acclamations during the Sundays of Lent. Consider using the same gathering, communion, or recessional song. The more often we

change music the more we can discourage people from participating in sung prayer during Mass.

- "From Ash Wednesday until the singing of the Gloria at the Easter Vigil... the organ and other instruments should be played only to sustain the singing." (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, 41) Instrumental music is not appropriate for Lent, and its absence will help to call attention to the season.
- Songs whose theme is the suffering and death of Christ are more appropriate for the later weeks of the Lenten season.
- It might be very appropriate to recess in silence at the conclusion of the Masses of Lent. The liturgy does not require a closing song, "a recessional song is optional." (*Music in Catholic Worship*, 49)
- The Masses of Lent are also "seasoned" by the presence of the elect who are preparing for the Easter sacraments. The celebration of the rite of sending and the scrutinies powerfully remind the assembly of its continuing call to conversion.

EASTER SEASONING

"The fifty days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost are celebrated in joyful exultation as one feast day, or better yet as one "great Sunday." These above all others are the days for the singing of the alleluia. The Sundays of this season rank as the paschal Sundays and, after Easter Sunday itself, are called the Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Sunday of Easter. The period of fifty sacred days ends on Pentecost Sunday." (GNLYC, 22, 23)

The eight Sundays that occur during Easter might be “seasoned” in some of the following ways.

- The white or gold vestments and altar cloth used for the Easter Season should be used exclusively for this season. They should be different from those used during the Christmas season. Special seasons deserve special vesture.
- The finest vessels and liturgical books of the parish should be used for the Masses of the Easter season.
- Consider using additional candles at the altar, instead of two candles, use four candles during the Easter season. “On or near the altar there are to be candlesticks with lighted candles, at least two but even four, six, or, if the bishop of the diocese celebrates, seven.” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 1975 edition, 79)
- The Easter candle “should be a genuine candle, the pre-eminent symbol of the light of Christ. Choices of size, design, and color should be made in relationship to the sanctuary in which it will be placed. During the Easter Vigil and throughout the Easter season, the paschal candle belongs near the ambo or in the middle of the sanctuary.” (*Built of Living Stones*, 94) The Easter candle is to be lighted for all liturgical celebrations during the Easter season.
- The Easter decorations that enhance the worship space should remain in place until the season comes to a close with the celebration of Pentecost. “Since the Easter season lasts fifty days, planning will encompass ways to sustain the décor until the fiftieth day of

Pentecost.” (*Built of Living Stones*, 125)

- The baptismal area should be suitably decorated throughout the Easter season. It should go without saying that the font should be filled with an abundance of water. “Water is the key symbol of baptism and the focal point of the font.” (*Built of Living Stones*, 68)
- It would be most appropriate to begin all the Sunday Masses of Easter, and the Mass of the Ascension of the Lord, with the sprinkling rite. Remember that since the renewal of baptismal promises and sprinkling takes place after the homily on Easter Sunday, such a sprinkling rite should not be used on Easter Sunday itself. If the baptismal font is located where it may be seen by the assembly, it would be very fitting for the introductory rite of the Mass to take place at the font. The water for the sprinkling should be taken from the font. As he sprinkles the people, the presider could make his way to the presidential chair for the opening prayer of the Mass. An abundance of water should be used in sprinkling the people. Easter is the season of water, the water of new life!
- Choose an appropriate, festive setting of the Gloria and use it throughout the Easter Season.
- One particular responsorial psalm might be used throughout the Easter season. “To make it easier for the people to join the response to the psalm, the Order of Readings lists certain other texts of psalms and responses that have been chosen according to the various seasons.” (*Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass*, #89) See 174 (10,
- 11) of *Lectionary for Mass*, Volume 1 for common responsorial psalms for the Easter season.
- The same setting of the Gospel acclamation should be used for all the Masses of Easter. This alleluia might also be repeated at the conclusion of the Gospel reading.
- The Gospel procession and Gospel reading might be enhanced during the Easter season with the use of candles and incense.
- The same set of general intercessions might be used for all the Sunday Masses and Easter season. One or two petitions might be changed to reflect specific needs and situations that arise. It would most appropriate to sing these intercessions during this festive season.
- Use the appropriate prefaces for the season, P 21-28. Singing the preface could highlight the Easter season.
- Eucharistic Prayer I, the Roman Canon, has appropriate inserts for the season.
- The introduction to the Our Father might remain constant through the season, and reflect our belief in the resurrection. For example, “Baptized in Christ, and raised up to a new relationship with God, we have the privilege to say.”
- The invitation to share the sign of peace might also remain constant and reflect an aspect of the Easter season. For example, “Let us share the presence and peace of the Risen Lord, as we now exchange the sign of peace.”
- Music is the best way to “season” the Masses of Easter, or for that matter any part of the liturgical year. In choosing the music of

Easter, be conscious that Easter is celebrated as one Great Sunday of fifty days. We should be singing Easter music each Sunday of the season, and not only on Easter Sunday.

- Consider using the same musical settings for the acclamations during the Sundays of Easter. The setting should be the most festive in the repertoire of the parish.
- While the sung dismissal is only required on Easter Sunday, the Second Sunday of Easter, and on Pentecost, consider using this dismissal for all the Sunday Masses of season, and for the Ascension of the Lord.
- The Masses of Easter are also “seasoned” by the presence of the neophytes, the newly baptized. The neophytes might be given a place of honor in the assembly and they might be encouraged to wear their baptismal robes during the Sunday Masses of Easter. “Throughout the Easter season, the neophytes should be assigned their own special place among the faithful.” (*Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts*, 103)
- Easter can also be “seasoned” by the celebration of baptism, confirmation, and first communion during the Sunday liturgies. This is the season for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation. “It is also appropriate that children receive their first communion on one or other of the Sundays of Easter.” (*Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts*, 103)

SEASONING ORDINARY TIME?

“Apart from those seasons having their own distinctive

character, thirty-three or thirty-four weeks remain in the yearly cycle that do not celebrate a specific aspect of the mystery of Christ. Rather, especially on the Sundays, they are devoted to the mystery of Christ in all its aspects. The period is known as Ordinary Time.” (GNLYC, 43)

While it may seem strange to speak of “seasoning” Ordinary Time, we need to remember that ordinary does not mean unimportant, it means “ordered time.” We count the Sundays, one, two, three, etc. We “order” our Sundays outside of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter.

However, Ordinary Time may be the time for us to cut back our “seasoning.” Just as in our eating habits, we sometimes cut back on richer, fancier food, and get back to “meat and potatoes,” Ordinary Time may be the opportunity for us to do the same thing with the liturgy. This season of the liturgical calendar may be our time to get back to “meat and potatoes,” to get back to the basics.

Some of the basics that might be looked at during Ordinary Time include the following:

- Does the parish have written guidelines for all its liturgical ministers that clearly explain their role and function during Sunday Mass? Do such guidelines need to be revised? Written guidelines help people know what to do, and they also create expectations that ministers are expected to meet.
- Are the items used for the liturgy in good quality? Vestments and altar cloths become stained and worn out. Liturgical books become soiled, bindings

break, pages rip. Sacred vessels break, chip, bend, and tarnish with use.

- Are the proper liturgical books being used? Does the parish have a *Book of the Gospels*, does it have the new edition of the *Lectionary for Mass*?
- Is the music at Mass truly sung prayer? Do the music ministers understand themselves as leaders of prayer? Does the parish have a plan for introducing new music and evaluating the music presently being used for the liturgy?
- Are the petitions of the general intercessions well prepared and related to what is taking place in the world, in the nation, in the neighborhood, and in the parish?
- Are the members of the assembly being encouraged to fully participate in the liturgy? Do they have proper worship? Can they hear clearly? Is the church building clean, properly cared for, and comfortable?
- How is the collection being taken up? How are gifts being presented, and who are the people bringing them forward? Do these actions encourage and support the concept of stewardship?
- Are we giving proper attention to the bread and wine, primary symbols in our liturgy? Do we use one plate for all the breads, one large cup for all wine, or if necessary, sufficient decanters?
- Do people receive the Body of Christ from the elements consecrated at the Mass they attend? Or are we still taking hosts from the tabernacle, contrary to the direction given us by the Church. “It is most desirable that the faithful receive the Lord’s body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the instances when it is permitted, they share in the chalice.” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 1975 edition, 56h)
- Are the people given the option that is theirs to receive Holy Communion from the chalice? Communion from the cup should be offered at all regularly scheduled Sunday Masses.
- Is the presider doing his best to lead the assembly in prayer? Is the homily well-prepared, well-delivered, and the result of reflection and prayer? How can the priest be encouraged to develop his skills as a presider and as a preacher?
- Are the various options permitted in the Sacramentary being used? For example, Eucharistic Prayer III is not the only Eucharistic prayer permitted on Sunday, just as Eucharistic Prayer II is not the only one suitable for a weekday Mass.

CONCLUSION

The food we eat is limited in scope—meat, fish, vegetables, fruit, breads, and dairy. Yet we seem to have an endless variety of dishes that engage our palate and nourish our body. What creates such a variety is the way our food is seasoned and prepared. In fact, we have whole industries engaged in seasoning our food to make it more interesting, tasty, and nutritious.

Sunday Mass is limited too. We have an introductory rite, a series of readings, a prayer of praise and thanks, a communion rite, and a dismissal. Yet the Mass is never the same. The readings and prayers change, we come as changed people made

different by what we have experienced in our life, and the liturgy itself is “seasoned” by Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time. May all of us involved in the preparing of the liturgy make good use of our “seasonings” so that we may serve wonderful food to our people, food that will nourish their souls and spirits.

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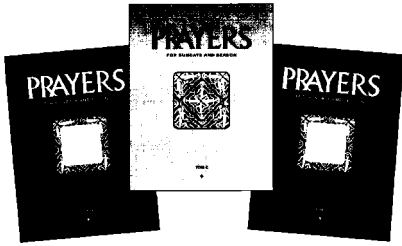
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