



# Word on Worship

Newsletter of the Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark, NJ

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The General Intercessions in the Mass: Part II

Editor's Note:

This is the second part of the article on the General Intercessions. Part I appeared in Volume 19, No. 4.

- Promulgation of the second volume of *Lectionary for Mass*
- Remembering Rev. Godfrey Diekmann, OSB

## RESPONSE

“The whole assembly gives expression to its supplication either by a response said together after each intention or by silent prayer.”

There are several ways in which the community can respond, some of which are mentioned here. Regardless of the chosen style of response, the proper posture of the assembly during the prayer of the faithful is always to stand: “The assembled congregation takes part in the prayer of the faithful while standing and by saying or singing a common response...”<sup>19</sup> As referenced earlier, the intercessions can be sung, and this requires the congregation to respond in song as well. A simple chanting of a line such as “Lord, hear our prayer” works quite effectively, even without musical accompaniment. More complex settings are available, but the simpler it is to sing, the more people in the assembly will participate. Singing the intercessions has the advantage of making use of multi-lingual settings in which the assembly may chant

or sing the response in more than one language. This can be very helpful in multi-cultural settings.

More common to the liturgy is the simple spoken response recited at the end of each intercession. These can vary throughout the year, but again, more of the assembly will respond if the phrase is brief and commonly used. It would probably be most advantageous to keep the response the same for a period of time, perhaps changing it with the liturgical seasons. The following are some examples — Advent: “Come, Lord Jesus.” Christmas: “Dwell with us, Lord.” Lent: “Lord, have mercy.” Easter: “Renew us, Lord.” A good source for responses can be lines found in the psalms, but again, they ought to be used for a period of time so the assembly can take ownership of them. There is something to be said for the power of repetitive ritual and the gathering of any group of Catholic Christians for whom, once the lector says, “We pray to the Lord,” all know to respond, “Lord, hear our prayer!” For this reason, it may be wise to use this tried but true response, “Lord, hear our prayer,” throughout the longer season of Ordinary Time. Given the wide acceptance of this response, it may not even be necessary for the lector to announce it before beginning the intercessions.

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) also allows for a period of silent prayer to follow each intercession rather than an oral acclamation. Throughout the Mass, there are several periods of silence that are to be observed, such as during the opening prayer and after communion. It takes a concentrated effort for both the presider to maintain a period of silence and for the people to become accustomed to praying at these times. If one wishes to pursue a moment of silent reflection after each intercession in place of an oral response, it would be necessary to educate the assembly beforehand as to the practice and to set a defined amount of time — such as 10-15 seconds — for the lector to wait between each intercession. As with the sung response, it might be best to engage in this practice for a limited time such as during the seasons of Advent or Lent.

Another format for the intercessions can be found in the *Liturgy of the Hours* where it is presumed that every member of the assembly has a copy of the intercessions. Each intercession is divided in half so that the lector proclaims the first part and the assembly the second. After the presider has called everyone to prayer, for example, the lector would read, “With your own blood, you ratified the new and eternal covenant...” and the entire assembly would

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# SENDING UP PRAYERS

## *THE GENERAL INTERCESSIONS*

### *IN THE MASS, PART II*

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conclude, "...may we remain faithful to that covenant by following your precepts."<sup>20</sup> The lector would then proceed to the next intercession. The obvious issue here is supplying the entire assembly with a copy of the general intercessions so they can say their "half" of the intercession. Perhaps this type of intercession should be reserved for times when the parish makes use of a worship aid for a special occasion in which the entire text of the intercessions could be included.

It should be said here that the content of the general intercessions found in the *Liturgy of the Hours* is not the same as those used at the celebration of the Eucharist. "The intercessions, restored in the Mass of the Roman rite, have their place also at evening prayer, **though in a different form...**"<sup>21</sup> (emphasis added). The intercessions for morning and evening prayer are closely linked to the time of day at which they occur, which is not usually the case at Mass.<sup>22</sup> Because the *Liturgy of the Hours* is often prayed in private, the intercessions are directed to God, not to an assembly.<sup>23</sup> Finally, the intercessions do not end with a collect style prayer but with the Lord's Prayer. These differences should be kept in mind if using the Hours as a resource for Sunday intercessions.

### CONCLUDING PRAYER

"It belongs to the priest celebrant to direct the general intercessions...and after the intercessions to say the concluding prayer."<sup>24</sup>

It is the role of the priest celebrant to say the concluding prayer, just as he prays the opening prayer, prayer over the gifts and the prayer after

communion. As with these presidential prayers, the proper posture for the concluding prayer after the prayer of the faithful is for the hands to be extended.

The concluding prayer, unlike the introduction which speaks to the assembly, is a prayer directed to God. A good model for this prayer would be the opening prayers used at Mass in which God is praised for his presence among us and his saving activity in the world. Most importantly, the concluding prayer should sum up the intercessions by asking God to hear the prayers which have just been voiced:

Father, have mercy on your Church in its need, hear the prayers we offer with all our hearts, and never abandon the people who share your life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.<sup>25</sup>

The practice of concluding the intercessions with a *Hail Mary* or any other prayer other than a collect style prayer has no connection with the format of the prayer of the faithful and should not be done. This is not to say that references to the Virgin Mary in the concluding prayer are not appropriate depending on the Scriptures of the day or the current feast or season being celebrated. See for example the concluding prayer for the intercessions of Christmas found in the sample formulas in the appendix of the Sacramentary which states:

Lord God, Mary gave birth to your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, in purity and love. May she bring our prayers before you, for we make them in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.<sup>26</sup>

The concluding prayer should always end with a line that

will indicate that these prayers are made through the great intercessor, Jesus Christ, and which will illicit an "Amen" from the congregation e.g. "We ask this through Christ our Lord" and all respond "Amen." The concluding prayer reminds us that it is because of the person of Jesus Christ that we are able to make these petitions. In this way, we are also reminded that as members of the Body of Christ, we too are called upon to cooperate in the fulfillment of these prayers. As Ronald Rolheiser explains:

As Christians, we have a set formula for ending all of our prayers — "We ask this through Christ our Lord." This formula is more than a formality, a ritual signal to God that the prayer is over. When we pray "through Christ" we are praying through the Body of Christ, which then includes Jesus, the Eucharist and the body of believers (ourselves) here on earth. We are praying through all of these. Thus, not only God in heaven is being petitioned and asked to act. We are also charging ourselves, as part of the Body of Christ, with some responsibility for answering the prayer. To pray as Christ demands concrete involvement in trying to bring about what is pleaded for in the prayer.<sup>27</sup>

### RCIA

There is at least one liturgy which calls for the use of intercessions twice during the Mass, and that is the celebration of the scrutinies during Lent for the elect who are participating in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. The rite calls for the intercessions to be prayed with the catechumens present — for their needs and continued

strengthening as they approach baptism. After they are dismissed, the community prays its own prayer of the faithful. The rite, recognizing this repetition, allows for the intercessions to be combined if so desired,<sup>28</sup> but by separating them it makes clearer to the community the difference between those preparing for initiation and those who already are full members of the Church. It also allows the focus of the intercessions during the scrutinies to be completely focused on those preparing for baptism.

The name of these prayers itself, the “prayer of the faithful,” indicates that these intercessions are to be prayed by the fully initiated and not the catechumens or even the elect. As early as the third century, Hippolytus notes that after baptism:

Then the newly baptized shall pray together with all the people but they do not pray with the faithful until they have carried out all these things first.

Until the catechumens are fully initiated, they should not participate in the prayer of the faithful, so it is better to use two different sets of intercessions during the celebration of the scrutinies: the first for the scrutinies themselves and the second for after the elect are dismissed. To help with the differentiation and to avoid the feeling of repetitiveness, it would be helpful if one set of the intercessions was sung while the other was recited.

#### **USING RESOURCES**

There are many resources available for preparing the prayer of the faithful. Remember that the primary resource for these prayers is





always the Scripture of the day and the feast or season in which the liturgy takes place. Religious bookstores and catalogs from Catholic publishers can provide many books which give possible intercessions for the entire year (e.g. Liturgy Training Publications' *Prayers for Sundays and Seasons*). Monthly publications are also available which are updated and sent regularly to subscribers (e.g. Oregon Catholic Press' *Prayer of the Faithful 2002*). Not to be overlooked are websites such as liturgyhelp.com and others which, for a subscription fee, will provide resources through the internet. It would be wise to obtain a variety of these sources, but they absolutely must be adapted, changed or added to according to the current needs of the local community and the world.

The *Book of Blessings* provides an excellent resource for intercessions as well. Most of the blessings for celebrations like liturgical ministers, items to be used at Mass, the advent wreath, Christmas manger, Mother's Day, Father's Day, etc. all include well-composed intercessions which could be incorporated into the Mass. Different offices throughout the Archdiocese of Newark send out intercessions to be incorporated into the Mass (Vocations, Pro-Life, AIDS awareness, Ecumenism, etc.). These should be carefully considered for use whenever appropriate.

#### CONCLUSION

The General Instruction of the *Liturgy of the Hours* reminds us that as God's priestly people, whenever we make prayers of intercession we are one with Christ:

The voice of the Church is not just its own; it is also the voice of Christ, since its prayers are offered in the name of Christ, that is, "through our Lord Jesus Christ," and so the Church continues to offer the prayer and petition which Christ poured out in the days of his earthly life and which therefore have a unique effectiveness. The ecclesial community thus exercises a true maternal function in bringing souls to Christ, not only by charity, good example and works of penance but also by prayer.<sup>29</sup>

With variety, creativity and careful attention to timeliness, the prayer of the faithful should be a moment in the liturgy when the assembly first responds to the word of God by "sending up prayers." In this way, "they are better prepared to proceed to the

liturgy of the Eucharist."<sup>30</sup>

Rev. Thomas A. Dente  
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<sup>19</sup> Introduction to the *Lectionary for Mass* (Catholic Book Publishing, New Jersey) 1998 #31, p 19.

<sup>20</sup> Intercessions from "Friday Morning Prayer," Week II, *Shorter Christian Prayer* (Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York) 1988, p176.

<sup>21</sup> General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours, #180

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, #181

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, #191

<sup>24</sup> GIRM #47

<sup>25</sup> Sample Formulas for the General Intercessions, Appendix 1, Sacramentary (Catholic Book Publishing, New York) 1985.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing* (Doubleday, New York) 1999, p 83.

<sup>28</sup> See the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* # 167 and # 170.

<sup>29</sup> General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours # 17.

<sup>30</sup> 1998 Introduction to the *Lectionary for Mass*, #30.

**CONCERNING THE MANDATORY USE OF THE  
SECOND VOLUME OF THE LECTIONARY FOR MASS**

On June 29, 2001, Bishop Joseph A. Fiorenza signed the following decree, calling for the publication and use of the second volume of the Lectionary for Mass:

**UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DECREE**

In accord with the norms established by decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites in Cum, nostra ætate (January 27, 1966), this edition of the Lectionary for Mass, Volume II: Proper of Seasons for Weekdays, Proper of Saints, Ritual Masses, Masses for Various Needs, Votive Masses and Masses for the Dead, is declared to be the vernacular typical edition of the Ordo Lectionum Missæ, editio typica altera in the dioceses of the United States of America, and is published by authority of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The second volume of the Lectionary for Mass was canonically approved for use by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on June 20, 1992, and was subsequently confirmed by the Apostolic See by decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on June 6, 2001 (Prot. 492/00/L).

*On Ash Wednesday, February 13, 2002, the second volume of the Lectionary for Mass may be used in the liturgy. On Pentecost Sunday, May 19, 2002, the use of the entire Lectionary for Mass is mandatory. After that date no other edition of the Lectionary for Mass may be used in the dioceses of the United States of America.*

Given at the General Secretariat of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C. on June 29, 2001, the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul.

Most Reverend Joseph A. Fiorenza  
Bishop of Galveston-Houston  
President  
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Reverend Monsignor William P. Fay  
General Secretary

**Father Godfrey Diekmann, OSB**, a monk of Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota died on February 22, 2002 at the age of 93. Father Diekmann was a leading voice in the drafting of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. He was the founder and member of the International Committee on English in the Liturgy, a member of the Consilium for Implementing the Liturgical Reforms of Vatican II and a consultant to the United States Bishops' Committee on Liturgy. His biographer, Kathleen Hughes, RSCJ, spoke the following remembrances at a prayer service of thanksgiving hosted by the North American Academy for Liturgy for Godfrey Diekmann.

Godfrey was first and foremost, a monk. And he was so much else besides...  
patristics scholar — exacting translator — passionate teacher — zealous ecumenist — lively speaker — rigorous editor  
— engaging, even sometimes raucous, conversationalist

Godfrey (was) the one who loved to gather people to the table. Godfrey (was) the one who believed that the table was the center of the Christian life and that there the gift became the obligation.

Eucharist, for Godfrey, was dynamic; it was a life that had to be lived. So he worked tirelessly forming others in the spirit of the liturgy and working on translations for 30 years with his ICEL colleagues... . We receive Christ for a purpose, he said once, not to keep him for ourselves but to give him to a world so in need of healing and hope.

Father Diekmann will long be remembered for his many contributions to the life of the Church.

God of endless ages,  
from one generation to the next  
you have been our refuge and  
strength.  
Before the mountains were born  
or the earth came to be,  
you are God.

Have mercy now on your servant,  
Godfrey,  
whose long life was spend in your  
service.  
Give him a place in your kingdom,  
where hope is firm for all who love  
and rest is sure for all who serve.



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