



Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

Office of Worship

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From: Sandy Higgins

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Re: **Preparing the Liturgy: A Method**

Each year, the Office of Worship assists in the preparation of more than 400 Masses. A great many of these Masses are for the Rite of Confirmation, which has its own particular requirements. The attached liturgy preparation form has been modified to assist better those who are tasked with preparing for the celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy. We believe this new form will better assist you in the process of preparing the liturgy. A key principal is that the Church has “planned” the liturgy. It is our task to “prepare” it well and with great care.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal reminds us of the importance of the liturgy and the care that should be taken in the preparation of the liturgy:

“The celebration of the Eucharist in a particular Church is of the utmost importance. For the Diocesan Bishop, the prime steward of the mysteries of God in the particular Church entrusted to his care, is the moderator, promoter, and guardian of the whole of liturgical life (*Christus Dominus*, no. 15:). In celebrations that take place with the Bishop presiding, and especially in the celebration of the Eucharist by the Bishop himself with the Presbyterate, the Deacons, and the people taking part, the mystery of the Church is manifest. Hence, solemn celebrations of Mass of this sort must be exemplary for the entire diocese.”

“The Bishop should therefore be determined that the Priests, the Deacons, and the lay Christian faithful grasp ever more deeply the genuine significance of the rites and liturgical texts, and thereby be led to the active and fruitful celebration of the Eucharist. To that end, he should also be vigilant in ensuring that the dignity of these celebrations be enhanced and, in promoting such dignity, the beauty of the sacred place, of the music, and of art should contribute as greatly as possible.” (GIRM, 22)

The Instruction continues: “There should be harmony and diligence among all those involved in the effective preparation of each liturgical celebration in accordance with the Missal and other liturgical books, both as regards the rites and as regards the pastoral and musical aspects” (111).



Process of Liturgical Preparation

1. Identify the Liturgical Season and Day of the liturgy and any special requirements. (Part of this would be to review the prayers for the day is a Sunday, Solemnity or feast day taking note of any key phrases or images expressed in the prayers.)
2. Identify the type of liturgy being celebrated (in this case Confirmation)
3. Identify any special requirements, e.g., number to be confirmed and of the faithful expected to participate in the Mass. This will impact the length of hymns which may be necessary.
4. Selection of Readings: If the liturgy is celebrated on a Sunday, Solemnity or Feast the readings of the day are to be used. Otherwise...
 - a. Select the Gospel reading (Lectionary #768.1-12)
 - i. Found in Lectionary Volume IV under Ritual Masses I. For the Conferral of Christian Initiation, 4. Confirmation. ii. Make a note of why this particular reading is being chosen (theology, images, phrases, etc.).
 - iii. The Gospel Acclamation is chosen as is announces the Gospel reading.
 - b. Select the First Reading (#7641.1-5 unless it is the Easter Season in which case the reading is chosen from 765.1-5)
 - i. The First Reading is chosen as a precursor to the Gospel.
 - ii. Make a note of why this particular reading is being chosen (theology, images, phrases, etc.).
 - c. Select the Responsorial Psalm (Lectionary 766.1-6)
 - i. The Responsorial Psalm is chosen as a “response” to the first reading. The text of the psalm should have a relationship to the first reading, e.g., praise, thanksgiving, or an echo of elements of the first reading.
 - ii. The Responsorial Psalm is a proclamation of the Word of God in the liturgy. As such, the text of the psalm setting should match the text in the lectionary including the refrain. It should be the same verses as well. Very slight deviation from the Lectionary text is permitted to allow the text to fit the meter of the musical setting. However, paraphrases are not allowed for the Responsorial Psalm.
 - iii. Make a note of why this particular reading is being chosen (theology, images, phrases, etc.).
 - d. Select the Second Reading (Lectionary #765.1-12 unless the Easter Season then #765.6-12)
 - i. During the Easter Season, only readings from the letters is possible as two readings from the Acts of the Apostles is not allowed.



- ii. Make a note of why this particular reading is being chosen (theology, images, phrases, etc.).
5. Music - the careful and thoughtful selection of music is now possible having reflected on the season, the day, the Sacrament of Confirmation, the prayers and the readings. Utilizing the notes made, the sung and instrumental music may now be selected.
- a. It is impossible to overstate the importance of good and appropriate liturgical music to a properly prepared and celebrated liturgy. It is integral to the liturgy. Liturgical and Sacred Music is the highest form of art in the liturgy because it is sacred song is bound to text.
 - b. The liturgical music chosen should be closely related to the liturgical action or rite, it should be of good quality and accessible to the assembly (singable), and it should foster a spirit of prayer, oneness, and solemnity. The text of the song should be united with Holy Scripture, the prayers of the rites, or the teachings of the Saints (see CSL 112).
 - c. As Cardinal DiNardo frequently reminds, we do not sing during the liturgy we sing the liturgy. According to Pope Benedict, liturgical music “is not an accessory or embellishment of the liturgy, it is the liturgy itself.”
 - d. At Vatican Council II the Council Fathers reminded us it is essential that “the treasure of sacred music be preserved and fostered with great care” (CSL 114). In an attempt to assist with this a list of music appropriate for the Rite of Confirmation is included.