

THE LITURGICAL MINUTE

To inspire greater participation and fulfillment among the gathered people, your Parish might want to institute an introduction to the Mass that we called the Liturgical Minute.

The purpose of the Liturgical Minute is to provide opportunities to remind, and inform the parishioners about some of the basic procedures and significance of the Liturgy. It is designed to be a one-minute talk (180 words) given from the lectern just before Mass begins. It is expected to be an ongoing process for many months. It can be read by the Leader of Song or the Lector.

To reinforce the “minute” the text can be published in the bulletin, summaries might be available in the back of the church and there might be an occasional liturgy night in which all topics would be discussed in greater depth. The hope is that after this initiative better awareness might inspire better participation and a more rewarding liturgy experience for the members of the church.

The primary sources of the material are the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and Built of Living Stone. If you have any questions or suggestions, you may contact me at 914.941.2657 or michael@molinelli-aia.com

Sincerely,

Michael Molinelli

The Liturgical Minute was written by Michael Molinelli with the assistance of the Liturgical Committee of Saint Theresa Parish in Briarcliff Manor, NY. It is copyrighted only to protect the integrity of the contents. Otherwise we encourage any Parish to institute, copy and freely use the contents.

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In our Parish during August when attendance declines, we repeated some of the Minutes with the following leaders: 1) Like second helpings at a summer BBQ, we are repeating our favorite liturgical minutes during August. 2) In the spirit of summer reruns, we are repeating our favorite liturgical minutes during August. 3) Like a summer Baseball Doubleheader let's do it again with our favorite liturgical minutes. 4) Like a summer blockbuster that deserves a second viewing, we will revisit our favorite liturgical minutes.

Wk	Date	Topic	GIRM	Summary
1		Introduction		Inform people what will happen over the next several months.
		Liturgy in History		
2		Ancient Forms		In homes & catacombs; the gathering unique in roman basilicas
3		The Latin Mass	Preamble 7	Institution, awe but distance
4		Vatican II – why		Uninvolved people
5		Vatican II - what		Renew rites as in a home
		Parts of the Liturgy		
6		Summary all parts		Review and names the parts
7		Entrance - Greeting	46-50	Establish unity and commonality
8		Penitence - Gloria	51-54	Cleans ourselves to prepare for Christ in word and as Eucharist
		Liturgy of the Word		
9		Listening / 3 year		listening – interactive / cover 90%? of Bible
10		1 st – Psalm – 2 nd	57-61	Ministerial from ambo
11		Acclamation –Gospel - Homily	62-66	Acclamation sung not recited; Presidential Gospel and Homily
12		Creed & Prayer	67-71	Together stated belief and common prayer
		Liturgy of the Eucharist		
13		Preparation	72-81	Institution by Christ
14		Eucharistic Prayer	78-80	Center of action & mass: miraculous - transubstantiation
15		Lords Prayer & Peace	81-83	Reinforce the idea of daily bread
16		Communion	84-89	Reverence / both species
17		Concluding Rites	90	Sent out with a mission to live as Christ
		Music in the Liturgy		
18		Music from Assembly	39, 40	Sing and pray twice, not a concert
19		Types of Music	41	More variety, but not popular
		Art and Architecture		
20		Assembly	292-294	In one space see each other
21		Three pieces	295-310	Altar, ambo, chair
22		Font Tabernacle Reconciliation	BLS Chapter 2	Immersion; venerate but not central
23		Vestments	346	Colors for different times
24		Conclusion		Invitations to learn more

Week 1: Introduction

For the next few months we will feature a Liturgical Minute at each Mass. The intent is to help remind and inform you of the significance and meaning of the prayers and gestures that occur every week when we assemble as the people of God. Most of the information is from the official General Instruction of the Roman Missal, which is the primary document the Church uses to guide the form of the Liturgy.

As you know, the liturgy, or Mass, is the central celebration of the Catholic Church. It is a time for us to come together as a group. Private prayer is always encouraged but at the Mass, we are expected to pray together. It is a unique way to pray established by Christ. Jesus said when two or more are gathered in his name, he would be there. At the last supper Jesus instituted the Eucharist and asked us to perform the same action in remembrance of Him.

We hope you find these minutes inspiring. They will be printed in the bulletin and eventually there will be summaries with additional information available.

Thank you.

Week 2: Ancient Forms

Here is this week's liturgical minute.

The earliest liturgies in the first centuries after Christ were in the home because Christianity often had to be practiced in secret. What we know of them comes from the Gospel of Luke, some of Paul's epistles and some Roman historians.

Even the earliest forms had two parts: Synaxis (the gathering) and the Eucharist (thanksgiving.) The gathering included a greeting, readings from the Hebrew Testament, chanting of Psalms and readings from the Gospels. This was based on the Jewish synagogue traditions.

The second part, the Eucharist was derived from the Last Supper in which Jesus transformed the Jewish meal among friends (cha-bur-ah) into the New Covenant whereby Jesus would return to us in the presence of the bread and wine becoming his body and blood.

By the fourth century, Christianity became acceptable. Christians could gather in large groups in public. For this they need buildings that could contain many people. They borrowed the Roman equivalent of a shopping mall – the basilica – to create the domus ecclesia – the house of the church.

Week 3: The Latin Mass

This week we continue the discussion on older forms of liturgy.

The liturgy we commonly call the Latin Mass (or Tridentine Rite) was instituted at the Council of Trent around 1570 AD. It reflected an effort to standardize a liturgy that was in common practice for the previous few centuries and protect it from contemporary heresies. Their intent was to provide restore the liturgy “to the original norm of the holy Fathers.” Their access to archive only permitted them back in the medieval period and not more ancient and approved authorities. Even at the council of Trent, many argued for the Mass to be celebrated in the vernacular language of the people attending mass.

What was then standardized was a reverent beautiful and majestic ritual that is still celebrated today, with special permission. It is of course celebrated in Latin which was and is the official language of the church. The core of the Tridentine Rite is the core of the current Rite as renewed by the Second Vatican Council and delineated in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal.

Week 4: Vatican II –Why?

This week we will speak of the inspiration for the Second Vatican Council. Upon his election as Pope, John XXIII instituted the council not to change the church but to “let in a breath of fresh air.”

While the Latin mass was and is a powerful and inspiring form of worship there was a great distance placed between the clergy the assembled people of God. A railing physically split them apart. Most readings and prayers were said privately by the Priest. in a language that no one spoke. The choir sang; the people listened. The true church – the people – were only observers in the central ritual of their faith.

When you go to a wedding reception are you told cannot sing or dance? At thanksgiving, does everyone sit on one side of the table or do you face each other?

After many years, prayers and deep thought, the canon of the mass was renewed. We say renewed, not changed, because the modifications actually brought the Mass that we now celebrate much closer to the original Christian celebrations.

Next week we will discuss the nature of the renewed liturgy.

Week 5: Vatican II – What?

One mission of Vatican II was to renew the symbols and rites of the church to be closer to the community based liturgies of the ancient past that involved greater participation among the faithful.

These liturgies were celebrated in the home at the table. Years later, the table had become the altar on one wall of the church. Vatican II instructed the altar to be free standing with the celebrant and assembly gathering around it; more like a celebration less like a show.

In the first centuries, baptism (which means to dip) required total submersion, but by the Middle Ages, that became a trickle of water. Today we are instructed that the church must provide for both options: the forehead baptism and total immersion.

As Jesus had instituted, the early Eucharist had both bread and wine. In the interest of efficiency, that was reduced to a wafer. Today, communion with Christ is encouraged under both species.

Finally, ministries were open up allowing laity to do some readings, distribute the Eucharist and singing was meant for everyone, not just the choir.

Week 6: Summary of All Parts

In the last few weeks we have discussed the liturgy throughout history. This week, we will quickly summarize the parts of our liturgies.

The first part of each liturgy is the act of gathering together. Then we collectively have a penitent rite so that we may cleanse ourselves before we receive God during the Mass. Next is the word of God proclaimed in three readings, a psalm and a homily. After that is the recitation of the Creed in which we together proclaim our belief in the Trinity and the church of the Apostles. The liturgy of the Eucharist follows with the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. We are invited to pray together in Jesus' words to Our Father and we are offered the chance to received Jesus. Finally, we are instructed to leave and bring the good news of Christ to all people.

There, that's the whole hour summed up in one paragraph. Certainly there is more to it and we will go into more depth in the next few weeks.

Week 7: Entrance - Greeting

The first parts of the Mass are a means for the faithful to gather and dispose themselves in preparation for the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The Mass begins with an entrance chant to signal that the people have gathered and are ready to foster their unity. During this, the people stand and the Priests, Deacon and ministers enter. In diocese in the United States, acceptable chants include antiphons or psalms or a suitable liturgical song approved by the Conference of Bishops. If there is no singing the antiphon is recited.

To greet the altar, the Priests, deacon and ministers reverence it with a profound bow except for the Ministers processing with the Cross. Then the Priest and Deacon will kiss the altar and on special occasions incense it.

The Priest stands at the presider's chair and together with the gathering makes the Sign of the Cross. The Priest recites the formal greeting for the Mass. Afterwards, the Priest Deacon or a lay minister may briefly introduce the faithful to the Mass of the day.

Week 8: Penitence – Gloria

Once assembled and greeted and while standing, the gathering pauses in silence and then is invited to take part in the Act of Penitence. While a means to prepare our souls for reception of the Eucharist, it is not as efficacious as the Sacrament of Penance. Occasionally the Act of Penitence may be substituted with the sprinkling of holy water on the people.

The penitential rite may be the prayer "I confess to almighty God..." or it may be the chant known by the original Greek "Kýrie Eléison" which means "Lord. Have Mercy." If a form other than the "kýrie" is used, the "kýrie" still follows.

Except for Sundays in Advent and Lent, next the people recite the Gloria one of our most ancient hymns. It should be intoned but can be recited.

Next, the priest invites the people to pray for a silent moment. The Priest then chants the prayer called "the collect" which ends with an address to God the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit. The people acclaim their unity with this entreaty by saying "Amen."

Week 9: Listening / 3 Years

Our next topic is the Liturgy of the Word.

After Vatican II, the Church instituted a 3-year cycle for the readings. (There is a 3 year cycle for daily Mass.) Each cycle- A, B, C emphasizes the Gospels of Mathew, Mark and Luke respectively. John's Gospel appears generously throughout all cycles. If you attended Mass daily for the entire 3-year cycle, you would hear over 80% of the Bible. This format has been so successful that many Protestant churches have adopted it.

From the earliest days of the church, before literacy was the rule, the Word of God was spread by preaching. It is a rich oral tradition that relied on the preacher and the active listener. During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus did not hand out notes.

For this reason, the Church encourages active listening to the readings while they are proclaimed from the ambo. Active listening increases the connection between the people and the Word of God proclaimed. The missalettes are for those who might need assistance or wish to consider the readings before and after Mass.

Week 10: 1st – Psalm – 2nd

The first parts of the Liturgy of the Word include the 1st reading, the psalm and the 2nd reading. All come from the Bible. We sit for these readings which should be proclaimed from the ambo. This ministry is offered to the people and the preferred form is for a lector to do them, not the priest.

The first reading is from the Hebrew Testament because we are acknowledging Christ's fulfillment of the old promises. Beginning with Easter and during its season, the reading is from Acts of the Apostles because the calendar recognizes the early days of the church. The reading usually parallels the Gospel in some manner.

The Responsorial Psalm is a meditation on the readings. It is preferably sung but can be recited. It is also a chance for the assembly to participate.

The second reading is from one of the epistles. While insightful, it often is not as closely paralleled as the first reading and the Gospel.

Integral to all the readings are moments of silence for us to reflect on the words we just heard.

Week 11: Acclamation – Gospel – Homily

To welcome the Lord who speaks to us through the Gospel the entire congregation stands and sings the Acclamation. It must be sung or it is omitted. Usually it is the “Alleluia,” but during the somber season of Lent when that word is not uttered, another form is used.

The Gospel is only proclaimed by an ordained Deacon or Priest. It is the center of the Liturgy of the Word and is drawn only from one of the four Gospels according to the 3-year lectionary calendar. Each year A, B, and C emphasizes the Gospels of Mathew, Mark and Luke respectively. John is proclaimed in both year B and especially during Easter season in all three years.

The homily is also only proclaimed by an ordained Deacon or Priest – usually the Celebrant. A homily differs from a sermon because it derives its content from the readings already proclaimed. Prior to Vatican II, instructions limited the content. Since then, the subject matter was expanded, allowing the Homilist to explore themes inspired by the readings and the liturgical season of the Church.

Week 12: Creed & Prayer of the Faithful

After hearing the word of God, the assembled people stand to publicly Profess their Faith. The Creed also called the Profession of Faith or Symbolum is always said or sung in unity: celebrant, choir and people together. It may be sung antiphonally – one group responding to another.

Since prayer is communication with God in two directions, having heard God’s word, the people are encouraged to ask God for assistance. The Prayer of the Faithful is an opportunity for the wishes of the people to be openly petitioned to God. They will generally include the recitation of those requests and the affirmation of the people by the phrase “Lord, hear our prayer” or a similar response. The content will usually invoke assistance for the Holy Church and its leaders, civil authorities, for all men and women weighed down by needs, the sick and the deceased, the private intentions of the faithful and the salvation of the entire world. The prayer is initiated and concluded by the Priest. This prayer can be recited or sung from the ambo or some other suitable location.

Week 13: Preparation

After the conclusion of the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the preparations. These preparations parallel the actions of Christ as He readied for His last supper with His Apostles.

The gifts: the bread and wine and the contributions of the assembled process from among the people to the celebrant. He places the water, wine, the Ciborium and the Chalice on altar. The priest may incense the gifts and the cross and may himself be incensed by another priest or deacon. The celebrant then washes his hands to indicate his desire for interior purification.

The other gifts for the poor or from the collection can be suitably placed but not near the Eucharistic table.

The procession should be accompanied by the Offertory Chant which continues until the gifts reach their destination.

Once the gifts have been placed, the priest recites a prayer with his hands over the offerings – the epiclesis. The prayer ends with either the phrase “through Christ our Lord” or with “Who lives and reigns forever and ever.” The gathered people respond “Amen.”

Week 14: Eucharistic Prayer

The summit of the Mass is the Eucharistic Prayer during which the Bread and Wine are transubstantiated into the true presence of Jesus Christ.

The prayer is made of many parts: An expression of *thanksgiving*; the *acclamation* wherein we recite the Sanctus - “the holy holy holy”; the *epiclesis* in which the priest places his hands over the gifts and summons the Holy Spirit to come upon them; the *institutional narrative and consecration* invoking the words of Jesus “This is my Body” and “This is my Blood” to transform the gifts; the *anamesis* during which we recall the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension; the *offering* of the sacrifice of Jesus to the Father; the *intercessions* by which we acknowledge the Eucharist in communion with the entire Church and the *final doxology* which the glorification of God is expressed and affirmed by the people’s Amen.

While this sounds technical, the significance of the prayer cannot be overstated. Each week a miracle of transformation occurs in front of us. This miracle gives us the opportunity to come into communion –oneness- with our God.

Week 15: The Lords Prayer and Rite of Peace

There is one prayer that Jesus gave to us: The Lord's Prayer, The Our Father. Its significance after the Eucharistic Prayer affirms that the daily bread for which we ask is the Bread of Life that the miracle of transubstantiation has just given us. The priest gives an invitation and the prayer is recited together. The priest adds the embolism "Deliver us O Lord from every evil..." and the people respond with a doxology "For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory..."

The terms used might require some explanation. A doxology (derived from a Medieval Latin word for "laudation") is a prayer praising God. An embolism here refers to a prayer placed within a prayer derived from a Greek word "insert."

During The Rite of Peace the Church asks for peace and unity for herself and the whole human family. The people express a sign of peace to those near them. The nature of the sign can vary with cultural norms. In the United States a handshake or an embrace and/or kiss among more families is fitting.

Week 16: Communion

The Communion rite begins with the Fraction, the breaking of the Bread by the Priest with assistance if necessary. During Apostolic times the Eucharist was called "the breaking of the bread." The Bread is placed on the Chalice symbolizing the unity of Body and Blood. The Lamb of God is sung or recited.

The Priest shows the Eucharist and receives it. Singing should begin and continue until all have received. If there is no singing, the Communion Antiphon is recited.

All are encouraged to receive Communion having fasted for one-hour prior. It is most desirable that the faithful receive the Lord's Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and when possible partake of the Chalice.

Before receiving the Blessed Sacrament the communicant should make a reverent nod of the head as a sign they comprehend its importance. The communicant responds "Amen" as the bread or wine is presented to them. The bread may be received on the tongue or placed in cupped hands and be consumed immediately.

Afterwards, it is appropriate for the Priest and people to pray silently.

Week 17: Concluding Rite

Today's discussion is on the Concluding Rite. It's form is brief. Necessary announcements are made, a blessing from the priest is given, and the celebrant dismisses the people. The Priest kisses the altar, and with the Deacon and Ministers process out, usually to song.

While sparse, the intent is profound. We are entrusted to "Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord." We are commissioned to bring The Word to entire world.

So when you leave, don't rush to the cars as if Mass is the start of some sort of Sunday road rally. Linger and meet your fellow parishioners. You may find the more involved with the people, the more you will get out of church.

During the last few months, we have review the parts of the Liturgy. In the next several weeks, we will turn to other aspects of the Mass that assist us in creating a prayerful atmosphere. It includes discussions on music, art and architecture. Like the review of the parts of the Mass, they are brief and only an introduction to the topics.

Week 18: Music From Assembly

In recent months, we have reviewed specific parts of the Liturgy so that by understanding its parts, we can be inspired by the whole. In the next few weeks, we will examine the liturgical environment that is created by song, art and architecture.

Singing is an important part of the Liturgy. Some parts are required to be sung or they are to be omitted. In Colossians 3:17 Saint Paul writes "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

From the earliest church, the people sang collectively to praise God. Our Catholic tradition in an effort create perfect heavenly music emphasized a singing choir and a passive people. But with Vatican II the opportunity for us to sing as a congregation has been accentuated

God's perfect ears are not offended by our imperfect voices. Do not hesitate to join in and sing. An ancient proverb says that "one who sings, prays twice."

Week 19: Types of Music

Prior to Vatican II there was a great rigidity to the music that could be sung in church. Since then the Vatican has permitted more musical forms than just the Gregorian Chant.

The Church gives great leeway for the songs that can be sung, but they must be sacred music (not secular) and must correspond to the spirit of the liturgical action. They should also foster participation among the faithful. There are numerous recent and contemporary composers whose work is published and acknowledged as appropriate. Native musical forms representing the culture are encouraged especially in mission areas.

The devices of music are not limited to the organ. Many other instruments such as drums and percussion, horns, guitars, and pianos are successfully used with liturgical music. It is important to acknowledge that the music is a means of worship to assist and augment the liturgy. It is not a concert.

If the standards for liturgical music sound ambiguous it is because the Church recognizes that the ethereal quality of music cannot be regulated and gives us freedom to find appropriate forms.

Week 20: The Assembly

The most dramatic change in sacred architecture came when Christians chose to worship as an assembly during the early church. They discarded idea of temple, a place for an animal sacrifice, and emphasized their oneness as a community of God. They used the Roman office and shopping mall building – the basilica – because it could economically accommodate a lot of people under one roof. Over time, the church form stressed the separation of the holy items from the people.

The house of God, the “domus ecclesiae”, the church, should create a unity among the gathered people and the action of the Liturgy that occurs at the altar and the ambo (the pulpit.) They should be in a single space, no longer separated by rails or screens.

The people should be able to appreciate each other as they pray together. A church should not be like a theater where everyone regards only the entertainment, for we are participants and not observers. In the same way we gather around the Thanksgiving Table so too should we gather around the altar – the Eucharistic Table.

Week 21: Three Pieces

The actions of the Mass, occur at three locations within the single sanctuary that holds the people of God. These special places are marked by three liturgical furnishings: the altar, the ambo and the presider's chair.

The altar recalls the table of the Last Supper and should appear as a table. Stone tops are preferred and can be consecrated with oils. They do not need relics. The altar is the center of the Liturgy of the Eucharistic. It is both a table for a meal and a table of sacrifice.

The pulpit is formally known as the ambo. It is reserved for the readings and psalms, the homily and the prayer of the faithful. The ambo is the center of the Liturgy of the Word.

The presider represents Jesus' presence at our Liturgy therefore his chair should be prominent and have suitable stature.

Since these three elements are the core of the Liturgy proper design should emphasize them with other liturgical components and art placed elsewhere. They do not need to be elevated but should be visible to the assembly.

Week 22: Fonts, Tabernacles, Chapel of Reconciliation

In addition to the central actions of the weekly Liturgy a properly accoutered church should also have reserved places for other sacramental functions.

The Tabernacle is the place where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. It should be in a chapel or area dedicated to prayer, but should not be near the altar. It is to be a place for people to pray intimately in the true presence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Baptismal Font should be in a place where new Catholics are initiated in the company of the assembled people of God. It should allow for the option of total immersion for infants and adults in addition to the tradition of christening the forehead. It could also be placed so that people entering the church can bless themselves each week from the main font.

Reconciliation should be in a chapel solely dedicated to this sacrament. It should allow the option of a face-to-face encounter or an anonymous encounter. The room should be open and bright and be appropriately decorated for one of the precious sacraments God has instituted.

Week 23: Vestments

Throughout the liturgical calendar many items change to mark the time. The outermost vestment of the priest, the chasuble, changes colors according to the period.

Ordinary time, that is Sundays outside of feasts or preparations for feasts, are green. Purple or violet is used for periods of preparation such as Advent or Lent or for funereal masses. Rose or pink is used in the United States on Gaudete Sunday, the third Sunday of Advent to indicate that the time for Christ is nearer.

Red is used on Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Pentecost Sunday. It is also used for feasts of the Apostles, Evangelists and Martyred Saints. The white chasuble is used during the Easter and Christmas seasons and on celebrations of the Lord other than his Passion. It is also used for feasts of the Virgin Mary, Holy Angels, Saints who were not martyred and other joyous miscellaneous feasts.

In the United States other colors for other occasions are permitted but are seen less often. They include use of Black or white for funerals or gold on very solemn occasions.

Week 24: Conclusion

In the last several months we have shared with you the Liturgical Minute. This is the last one. It is impossible to summarize 2000 years of the history and theological understanding in less than 30 minutes spread across six months. It is hoped that these minutes have inspired you to consider more carefully the reasons for and the richness of the parts of the Liturgy. For your convenience, a booklet of all the minutes and additional material is available in the church to take home.

By learning more it is hoped that you will participate more fully. By participating more fully you may reap greater benefits from coming to Mass each week. We invite you to make this a first step to better understanding of your faith. With a better understanding of our faith, we might find greater resolve as we go into a world often hostile to the word of Christ. Through the weekly and daily Mass we can develop strength to exercise our faith – to show love and understanding – as we live in God's world.

Thank you.