

Liturgy Alive, Models of Celebration (Sundays) (Year B)

Introduction

This is the second volume of **Liturgy Alive**, the book for Year B of the three-year cycle of readings for Sundays and some solemnities and feasts. We apply the same basic principles as we did in Year A to bring the liturgy close to the life of the people and to integrate that life into the liturgy, so that the life of the pilgrim people of God can be the basic worship we give to God, as it is meant to be. This is what we explained in the first volume as a demand of scripture, of the liturgy itself, and of the whole of our faith. The first volume also describes the origin and development of the periodical *Pastoral Service* on which **Liturgy Alive** is based and of which it is the continuation.

Our liturgy should be incarnate in the life of the people and therefore also involved in and committed to people's concrete, actual life situations, their aspirations, hopes and problems. Liturgy is not just a "God and me" affair but a "God and we" incarnational offering to and dialogue with God of his pilgrim people in their real life, both individual and communal. That does not mean that the liturgy should be used to express ideologies, as in "protest liturgies." We do not "use" the liturgy for or against people or situations or any ideology. The purpose of the liturgy is to worship God with the whole of our lives. The whole of our lives is our basic worship, and the celebration of the liturgy comes as the crowning moment and a summing up of that basic worship. Our life is situational, and therefore the liturgy too is situated, involved and committed. This is why the challenges of justice and service and love and witnessing should be there, as they are present in the scriptures we read at our liturgies and as they are also very prominent in the communal and individual lives of our people.

In relation to this incarnational approach, the issue of inclusive language has been given careful attention. Terms in liturgical (and, as occasionally quoted,) biblical language must be applicable to both men and women. When it comes to terms speaking about God, however, I am very well aware that God is both father and mother in his relationship with people, but I still call God "Father" because it is

the term used by Jesus, and what was good for him is good enough for me too. Do not forget that the basic orientation of the liturgy is that it gives worship to the Father and prays and offers to him through Christ in the Spirit. I do not accept to call the Spirit "it." I still call God "Lord" and speak of king and kingdom and other male attributes and references because they are at the core of the Bible and until theology and scripture scholarship would provide us with other terms that are at the same time accurate and not controversial I will keep using these traditional ones.

In the models of this second volume of **Liturgy Alive** I will continue to use the principles of adaptation as stated in the previous volume. Let us briefly recall the principles and then repeat the concrete applications as expounded in the first volume.

Whenever the **Missal** or **Lectionary** says, "*in these or similar words,*" or whenever the official liturgy gives two or more options, the presider can choose words perhaps better adapted to the understanding and needs of the people, provided we respect the nature and purpose of the text, whether an introduction or admonition or other nonessential part. In several instances, mentioned in n. 11 of the Missal's General Introduction (GIRM), the presiding celebrant is explicitly assigned to give himself in his own words certain introductions and other parts because they belong to his office as presider (see below). The Directory for Masses with Children mentions other parts that are optional or adaptable. The Instruction on Translations of 1969 recognizes that more adapted presidential prayers ought to be created, which should learn from and organically flow from the older, traditional texts.

Here again are the parts that we have adapted in our models, with the reason why:

The **Greeting** is adaptable, because the liturgy itself gives at least three models. This greeting should be preferably biblical. One can often find a good text in one of the readings of the day.

The **Introduction by the Celebrant**: in GIRM n. 11, the liturgy assigns it to the presider. Another minister may take over for special reasons, but normally the presider should do it, for he knows what and how he is going to

celebrate. For Sunday Masses he should not yet explain the readings as such but refer to the occasion and key message of the day and link that to the life of the people.

The **Penitential Act** lends itself very well for tying it to the life of the people. It is adaptable because the liturgy itself gives three forms. We prefer the most expressive form with "Lord, have mercy." Be aware, though, that, though it asks the Lord to have mercy on us, its main aim is not penitential but to *acclaim Christ*, who brought us God's mercy. And yes, this triple acclamation, though it is threefold, is directed to *Christ*, not to the Trinity. The concluding part of the Penitential Act should end in the words, "lead us to everlasting life," so that the faithful will not mistake this prayer for the Opening Prayer and then sit down.

The **Opening Prayer** can help to make the people reflect on their lives if we begin by concretizing the invitation in relation to the day's central message, for example: "Let us pray for trust in God's promises," followed by a silent pause long enough to let the people do their own short praying for faith and trust in God. Then comes the model prayer itself, which is like a summing up of the prayers of the people, asking God through Christ that the Good News of the day may be fulfilled in them. Keep in mind again that the general orientation of the liturgy in its prayers is that they are directed to the Father, through Christ the mediator in the unity of the Holy Spirit; therefore in a presidential prayer we address the Father; in a few occasions Christ, but never the Holy Spirit.

For the **Introduction to the Readings** there are two approaches. One is that according to GIRM n. 11, the presider gives a general introduction for the readings of the day. This is not easy, as usually there is no clear unity between the three. The Old Testament reading is chosen in function of the gospel, but the second reading agrees in its message only by accident, as it is a semi-continuous reading for some weeks from one or the other apostolic writing. Practice shows that it is better to introduce each reading separately by briefly calling attention to its key point. To avoid having the priest go back and forth to the lectern and the microphone, it may be better to let the lector give that introduction and to train him or her to do so by using for this introduction an explanatory tone of

voice, different from the proclaiming tone of voice used for announcing the Word of God itself.

The **General Intercessions** are a splendid occasion to apply the central message to the general needs of the Church, the world, the needy and Christian communities today. If the keynote of the day is hope, what is the Church waiting for, what are the world, the poor, and our communities waiting for? Note that we should not merely pray to God to fulfill that hope, but that he may also empower us to help fulfill this hope and us to the causes we pray for. More particular intentions are welcome but should be limited to one or at the most two, as these are *General Intercessions*.

The **Prayer over the Gifts** refers either to the bringing forward of bread and wine, or the imminent presence of Christ in a sacramental way or our offering with Christ. Now, how do these express our life too? We try to make this concrete in the model prayer.

Then comes a part, rarely used though highly recommended in n. 11 of GIRM as belonging to the presider's role, namely the **Introduction to the Eucharistic Prayer**. Here we express the day's message in relation to our joining Christ in his thanks to the Father.

The Sacramentary itself gives more than one model for the **Invitation to the Lord's Prayer**. So, what do we want to stress as we join the Lord in his prayer to the Father?

Both the **Deliver Us** and the **Prayer for Peace** belong to a set of secondary prayers preparing us to receive communion. The Directory of Masses with Children declares this part adaptable and even replaceable. In addition, the Deliver Us is an embolism, an expansion on the last petition of the Lord's Prayer, the opposite of an introduction. So, as a few liturgical commissions do, why not specify the evils from which we ask to be delivered? And the peace we pray for could also be made more concrete in the light of the day's message. For an adapted "Deliver Us," we should always end with the words "...Savior Jesus Christ" so that the people will automatically answer with the usual acclamation "For the kingdom, the power ..."

The rite of the ***Breaking of the Eucharistic Bread*** is a very meaningful and expressive part of the celebration. In fact, "the breaking of bread" was the very name of the eucharist in earliest times. Unfortunately, the rite of breaking has been covered by the singing of the "Lamb of God." It would be good to restore it a bit by now and then calling attention to this important rite by postponing the "Lamb of God" and having the presider briefly explain what he is doing and what it signifies.

The ***Invitation to Communion*** is very important to strengthen the feeling of the nearness of the Lord in the lives of the people. As an invitation it is, of course, adaptable. If linked to the message of the day it helps people to see better the presence of the Lord in their everyday lives. Note that often the communion antiphon of the Sacramentary lends itself very well for use as an invitation to communion.

The basic function of the ***Prayer after Communion*** is to ask that the eucharist in which the people have participated may bear fruit in their lives. Thanksgiving is occasionally a secondary motif. Why not suggest in that prayer what these fruits should be, without moralizing? In the light of the occasion and the central message of the celebration we can make these fruits and thanksgiving realistic and concrete, as our models try to do.

For the ***Blessing***, why not use more often the beautiful solemn blessings of the Sacramentary itself? Number 11 of the GIRM recommends that the presider "make comments concluding the entire sacred service before the dismissal." This is an excellent opportunity to sum up the gist of the day's message as something to take home and to live by during the coming week and to do so with God's blessing.

The ***Dismissal*** is adaptable, as the Sacramentary gives at least three models. Again, the presider should "send each member back to doing good works, while praising and blessing the Lord" (GIRM n. 57b). In the shortest possible terms the presider again links this sending out to the good tidings of the day.

For all these adaptations we should respect the nature of the different parts. For prayers are prayers, not mere

statements; and introductions are introductions. Please note the remarks we made, for example, for the presidential prayers and their function in the celebration. By their very nature invitations have to be short. Also introductions are to give the gist of what is to come, but should not be lectures or mini-homilies.

I regret very much that I cannot say anything here about music except that you use it much and well and make it an integral part of your celebrations. Can we have a real celebration without music? But tastes and practices and the language of the songs vary so much from region to region, even from parish to parish, that it is impossible to make recommendations. And many songs, even beautiful ones, come and go. There is also the need for good art to enhance the celebration.

Instead of sending several scattered messages to the People of God, we hope that through our adaptations in **Liturgy Alive** we can concentrate on one basic message and gear the other parts to it. If we do so, there is much more likelihood that the people will take something home from the celebration, one keynote message to inspire and guide them during the coming week. Socio-religious surveys, for example in Germany, France and Canada, confirm the effectiveness of this approach. It is also a fact that churches that "incarnate" the liturgy attract more people, for there is something alive there that makes people feel personally addressed and at home.

A real key point for what this book offers is that I offer only models. Think of your concrete communities, their needs and aspirations, the stage of their faith, their education, their religious and secular culture. Adapt yourself to them. Give them the Good News to the extent they can digest and live it. Bring them closer to God and help them to see and live how near God is to them in their everyday life.

God bless you and your people!

Fr. Camilo J. Marivoet, cicm

Taken from the book, *Liturgy Alive, Models of Celebration (Year B)*. Copyright © 1999 by Claretian Publications.