

9. Liturgy as Prayer

God has gathered us as a holy nation and members of Christ's Mystical Body so we can participate in his work of salvation.

Key terms:

Prayer:	A relationship of love in which we lift our minds and hearts to God. An earnest request; entreaty; supplication.
Worship:	See Session 1: Introduction to RCIA and the Church as a Place of Worship.
<i>In persona Christi:</i>	A priest acts only by the power of Christ acting through him when the priest is celebrating the sacraments.
Liturgy:	
Liturgical Prayer:	Formal, vocal prayer offered in community by the Church.
Liturgy of the Hours:	Hymns, Psalms, prayers and readings assembled by the Church that are prayed in community or alone at set times every day; Also known as the “prayer of the Church”.
Mystery:	See Session 1: Introduction to RCIA and the Church as a Place of Worship.
Paschal Mystery:	The central events of Christ's redemptive work, specifically his Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension.
Rite:	See Session 1: Introduction to RCIA and the Church as a Place of Worship.

The Church gives praise, glory, and thanksgiving to God the Father (Rev. 7:9-12)

- From all eternity, God intended for us to participate in his divine life through the liturgy.
- We give the Father his due as the source of all blessings and the end for which we were created.
- We seek the Father's grace: blessings, sanctification, mercy and forgiveness.
- The prayers of the Church are offered to the Father in union with the eternal liturgy of Heaven.

The purposes of liturgical prayer: the privilege and dignity of worshipping God as he desires (1 Pt. 2:4-10)

- Liturgy is directed to God, the Father, through his Son, by the inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit gathers together the Church to pray as a people with one voice, a true participation in the creative work of God, the redemptive work of Jesus' Paschal Mystery, and the company of the Heavenly Host.

- Liturgical prayer continues the work of our redemption and sanctifies us as the entire People of God.
- Liturgical prayer allows us to pray with our entire being, involving our bodies (posture), our souls, and our spirits through readings and prayer, hymns and songs, gestures, and engaging all the senses.
- Liturgical prayer is the authoritative prayed expression of our common belief (we pray what we believe)
- Liturgical prayer ensures that our communal prayer is the most appropriate expression of worship of the Triune God, rooted in Jewish worship.

The liturgy is led by Christ as Head of the Body and our High Priest (Heb. 10:19-22)

- The liturgy is always centred on Christ and celebrates his Paschal mystery.
- In the liturgy, Christ continues the work of our redemption.
- Through the sacrament of Holy Orders, the celebrant acts *in persona Christi*.
- The liturgy accomplishes the most intensely intimate union of the Holy Spirit and the Church.

Forms of liturgy

- The source and summit of liturgy is the Eucharistic celebration of the Mass (Heb. 9:11-26)
- The sacraments give us spiritual birth, food, strengthening, forgiveness, healing and vocation.
- In the liturgical year, we re-present the Paschal mystery, the mystery of Christ's life is unfolded, and we honour the Blessed Virgin Mary, the martyrs and the saints.
- The Liturgy of the Hours sanctifies the hours of the days.
- The variety of rites within the universal Church reflects various traditions and cultures.

The Liturgy of the Hours: (Acts 3:1)

- The Church sanctifies the hours of the day through the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours.
- The Liturgy of the Hours is centred on the reading of Scripture and the praying of the Psalms.
- The Liturgy of the Hours promotes union with God from morning until night using God's own words to us, and a deeper understanding of the Word of God.

The Holy Spirit makes the liturgy efficacious (2 Cor 3:17-18)

- He gives us grace so that we might lift up our hearts to the Father (Gal. 4:6).
- The Holy Spirit pours out grace to sanctify the Church and her members.
- The liturgy accomplishes the most intensely intimate union of the Holy Spirit and the Church.

EXPLORE!

Explore the various forms of personal and communal prayer that enrich the spiritual lives of the candidates.

How has their prayer life deepened their relationship with the Lord.

Liturgy as Prayer— Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is personal prayer essential preparation for communal worship?
2. What can we learn from the example of how and when Jesus prayed?
3. Why is the church, the house of God, the proper place for the liturgical prayer of the parish community?
4. How does the liturgy help the individual and the community grow in holiness?
5. How does Christ continue to work of redemption in the liturgy?
6. Why is the liturgy more than a “gathering of people”?

PRAYER

Pray Psalm 99, Psalm 150, Psalm 122.

or

Gospel Reflection: Second Sunday of Advent

Year A Mt. 3:1-12

Year B Mk. 1:1-8

Year C Lk. 3:1-6

The following format will be used for all Gospel reflections:

- Read the text aloud.
- Pause for a minute's silence.
- Read the text aloud again.
- Ask everyone to pick a word or a phrase that struck them. They just say the word or phrase without comment or discussion.
- Read the text again.
- Ask those present to comment on their word or phrase. What struck them about it? Why/how is it speaking to them?
- Continue with the discussion.

The following questions may be helpful:

What does this mean to me?

How does it make me feel?

Did I find the text disturbing/hopeful/confusing?

What images of God emerge for me?

What do I think that God is saying in this text?

What impact does this have on my life?

Scripture and Catechism Resources

Liturgy as Prayer

Scripture

- Ex. 25:1-28, 42 God prescribes the precise ways he wants the Ark of the Covenant, sacred vessels, the tabernacle and its tent and veils, the altar, and priestly vestments to be made.
- Lv. 2:1-16, 6:14-18 God makes prescriptions for making a cereal offering of unleavened bread and for its consumption by the Aaronic priests.
- Lv. 23:1-44 God prescribes liturgical feasts for the Israelites.
- Dt. 16:1-8 God prescribes how the Passover is to be celebrated, concluding with a solemn assembly.
- Dt. 16:9-11 God prescribes how the feast of Tabernacles (Booths) is to be celebrated with communal rejoicing.
- 1Chr 29:1-21 David makes provision for the Temple to be built, and the assembly worshipped and made sacrifice in common.
- 2Mc 1:18-30 Communal liturgical prayer during a feast, including responses and hymns.
- Mt. 18:20 Jesus in the midst of the praying assembly.
- Lk. 2:41-52 The Holy Family goes as was its yearly custom to Jerusalem for Passover; Jesus remains behind unknown to his parents to be in his Father's house, the Temple.
- Lk. 22:7-20 Jesus celebrates the feast of Passover in community with his disciples and institutes the Eucharist as a communal liturgy.
- Jn. 2:13-17 Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the Passover, and cleanses the Temple of merchants who are desecrating its holiness.
- Jn. 7:2-39 Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the feast of Tabernacles (Booths) and promises living water.
- Jn. 10:22-38 Jesus is in Jerusalem for the feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) and tells the Pharisees that he is doing the works of his Father.
- Acts 3:1 Peter and John prayed at the Temple during prescribed hours of prayer.
- Acts 10:30 Cornelius kept regular hours of prayer.
- Acts 20:7 Paul and his companions celebrate the Eucharist on the first day of the week.
- 1Cor 11:17-22 Paul rebukes the Corinthians for their profane assemblies in place of worship.
- Eph 5:18-20 Pray in the Spirit, using the Psalms, hymns, and songs to give thanks to God.
- 1Pt. 2:4-10- Become a spiritual house, a royal priesthood, and God's own people.
- Jas. 2:1-7 We are to show honour to the poor and not partiality to the rich in the assembly.
- Rev. 4:2-11, 7:9-12 John witnesses heavenly worship.

Catechism

- 1066-1206 Liturgy: why it is necessary, its various aspects, as a work of the Blessed Trinity, how the Church's liturgical life is centred on the Mass and the sacraments, who are the celebrants, how the liturgy is celebrated, when it is celebrated (days of the week, seasons of the year, liturgical year), where it is celebrated, liturgical traditions and diversity.
- 1069-1073 The meaning of liturgy and the place of liturgy in Christian prayer.
- 1136-1144 Liturgical prayer is an action of the entire Body of Christ.

- 1145-1162 Liturgical prayer includes physical signs and symbols, and uses words, actions, song and music, and holy images.
- 1163-1173 Liturgical seasons, the Lord's Day, the liturgical year.
- 1174-1178 The Liturgy of the Hours.
- 2586-2589 The significance of the Psalms as both individual and liturgical prayer.
- 2650 The importance of learning how to pray and the role of the Holy Spirit as One who teaches the children of God.

(Source: RCIA Catechist's Manual, Association for Catechumenal Ministry, Maryland, 2007)