



Guidelines for Lay Leaders of Liturgy

Archdiocese of Brisbane, Feast of All Saints 2001

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INTRODUCTION

There are many different gifts, but it is always the same Spirit. There are many different ways of serving but always the same Lord (1 Cor 12:4-5).

Ordination. By ordination, a priest is anointed by the Holy Spirit to preach in the name of Christ, to carry out the ministry of Christ the priest in the sacraments and, as pastor, to follow the example of Christ the Good Shepherd in bringing people together and leading them to God. By ordination, a deacon is called to help the bishop and priests in the

ministry of the word, the altar, and charity, becoming a servant to all. One of the things therefore which ordination does is to designate a baptised person to lead the Church in liturgy.

People of God. By baptism, each Christian is called to continue the work of Christ, proclaiming the reign of God to all the world. Empowered by the Holy Spirit and strengthened by the sacraments, the baptised are called to active participation in the life of the Church and to carry forward the mission of the Church to evangelise the culture, institutions and values of the society in which they live. Not least among the various fields of the lay apostolate is ministry within the Church, in catechesis, in liturgy, and in works of charity.

Collaboration. The Archdiocese of Brisbane has sought to exercise these different ways of serving the Lord according to a model of mutual respect and collaboration. This is seen especially in liturgy because the assembly for worship reflects the nature of the Church, structured according to a diversity of ministry. Lay people authentically share in the pastoral responsibility for the care of those to be baptised or married, of those who are sick or bereaved. They are involved in sacramental catechesis and the preparation for the rites, in the follow-up after the rites, and have a role in the liturgy itself. Lay roles in liturgy include

those of communion minister, reader, server, usher, cantor and musician, but not presider. Because the ordained minister acts in the name of Christ and the Church, he presides at the Church's worship, initiating new members into the Church, celebrating eucharist, forgiving sins, anointing the sick, witnessing the exchange of consent in marriage, and commending the dead to the Lord.

Lay Leadership. However as the new century dawns, the Church of Brisbane is facing trends which require a broader pastoral response: a growing Catholic population has fewer and older priests. Various strategies of pastoral planning are being implemented. One question which cannot be avoided is lay leadership in liturgy, for *where the needs of the Church require and ministers are not available, lay people can supply certain of their functions...* (CCL 230.3).

PRINCIPLES

Sunday. The Lord's Day is the day of the resurrection when the Church celebrates the paschal mystery. It is the day when the Christian people assemble to offer God thanks and praise and to make present the body of Christ, the Church.

Eucharist. It is through the celebration of eucharist that the Church participates in the one sacrifice of Christ. The Mass is normative on Sunday because in it we share in Christ's Passover from death to life. This is much more than just receiving holy communion.

Parish. The particular community of the parish is a concrete expression of the local church of the diocese which in turn belongs to the catholic Church around the world. Because the parish provides people with the actual experience of belonging to the Church, it is important to preserve the identity of particular congregations but they do not exist as autonomous units independent of the

surrounding parishes and of the local Church of the diocese.

The norm. The normative pattern for Catholic worship therefore is for the community to assemble for the celebration of eucharist each Sunday. Every effort should be made to achieve this ideal, promoting a good and worthy celebration of the Mass, reviewing Mass times and schedules, and developing collaboration between parish communities to enable people to celebrate eucharist on Sunday.

Daily Prayer. The Liturgy of the Hours is the daily worship of the whole church and celebrates the mystery of Christ. It is specially recommended for communal celebration in parish communities. It *extends to the different hours of the day the praise and prayer the memorial of the mysteries of salvation and the foretaste of heavenly glory, which are offered us in the eucharistic mystery* (GILH 12). From the time of the early Church, the eucharist has also been celebrated on weekdays.

WHEN

1. Sunday Worship

One of the pastoral planning strategies which the Archdiocese of Brisbane has been following is to reduce the number of times each Sunday that the community assembles by rationalising Mass times. Even so in some places there are Sundays when the community assembles but there is no priest available to permit the celebration of eucharist. This can happen *on particular occasions* (for example, when the priest falls sick or is absent on annual leave) or *on a regular basis* (for example, in a country town where the priest is only able to be present fortnightly or monthly). In these situations, parishes should have trained and delegated lay people available to lead liturgy other than eucharist.

The provisions of the *Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest (1988)* must be observed:

- Where possible a suitable substitute priest should be found and the eucharist celebrated. (nos. 12-13)
- If possible, people should adopt a broader view of the ecclesial community and go to a nearby church to take part in Sunday Mass. (no. 18)
- Because the Sunday Celebration of the Word with Communion is neither the optimal solution to new difficulties nor a surrender to mere convenience, it can never be held where a Sunday Mass is celebrated (even on a Saturday evening), and can never be repeated on the same day. (no. 21)
- Regular use of a lay-led Sunday liturgy requires the permission of the archbishop. (no. 24)

Notwithstanding paragraph 21 of the *Directory*, when lay leaders of liturgy are used on particular occasions, it may be necessary to repeat a Sunday Celebration of the Word on the same day or to hold it in a place where Mass is being celebrated that day. For example, it may be necessary on particular occasions to maintain the normal schedule for worship lest people be confused or arrive for worship which has been cancelled.

A community where a Sunday Celebration of the Word with Communion takes place regularly must celebrate the eucharist at least once a month, have the resources and ministers to celebrate the liturgy well, and have a significant number of people who cannot travel to a nearby Mass without serious disadvantage. When a Sunday Celebration of the Word with Communion takes place in a community, it is understood that those who attend are dispensed from the obligation to take part in Sunday Mass.

2. *Weekday Worship*

Apart from a few special days, a priest may not celebrate eucharist more than once a day, though for good reason he may be allowed to celebrate twice in one day or even, if pastoral need requires it, three times on Sundays (CCL 905). This includes requiem and nuptial Masses, school Masses and so on. Given that many parishes have more than one church, it is obvious that few churches will be able to maintain a schedule of daily Mass. It is recommended that weekday Masses be organised cooperatively on a regional basis to ensure a wide availability of Mass on weekdays.

Many communities will choose to supplement their several weekday Masses with other regular public worship. This may take the form of morning or evening prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours, or a liturgy of the word. These liturgies may be led by a lay person in the absence of the priest or deacon.

3. *Funerals*

The usual minister for funeral rites is the priest or deacon (obviously, if there is a requiem Mass, the priest must preside). However, if there is no priest or deacon, a lay person may lead the vigil and the rite of committal at the graveside or crematorium, and may also be deputed by the archbishop to lead the funeral liturgy itself. Lay people may also be involved in preparing the rites with the bereaved and in the pastoral care surrounding the funeral.

Lay leadership of funeral rites, in whole or in part, is a necessity in the Archdiocese of Brisbane because funerals commonly arise at short notice. The parish priest may not be available and a substitute priest sometimes cannot be found. One can imagine this occurring regularly in country parishes when the priest is away from town, but even in city parishes it may sometimes be necessary for lay people to assist with the vigil and committal rites. When the entire funeral is led by a lay

person, it may be possible for the priest to celebrate a requiem Mass for the deceased and the family on the morning of the funeral or on another day before or after the funeral rites.

4. Baptism and Marriage

For the sacraments of baptism and marriage, there is ample scope for lay ministry in catechesis, sacramental preparation and pastoral care both before and after the celebration of the rite.

Baptism. In an emergency, anyone (though preferably a Christian person) may baptise when a priest or deacon is not present. People such as nurses or ambulance officers who are likely to encounter emergency situations should be especially ready for this role when a desire for baptism is expressed.

Lay people who are deputed by the bishop may also minister the sacrament of baptism (CCL 861.2). However the present pastoral situation of the Church in the Archdiocese of Brisbane does not warrant such delegation and it is not given. A priest or deacon must preside over the celebration of baptism in parishes of the archdiocese. This expresses the strong ecclesial significance of the sacrament and expresses the role of one who is ordained to act in the name of Christ and the Church. To enable the clergy themselves to celebrate the baptism of infants, it is the policy of the diocese that normally baptism be celebrated collectively on one or two Sundays a month in each parish.

Marriage. The marriage of Christians in the Catholic Church not only establishes a bond and covenant of mutual love, but also constitutes a sacrament of the Church. For such a marriage to be valid, it needs to be contracted in the presence of a priest or deacon, though, where there are no priests and deacons, the bishop can delegate lay people to assist at marriages if the bishops conference has given its prior approval and the permission of the Holy See

has been obtained (CCL 1108ff). No Australian diocese has received the required permission of the Holy See; indeed such permission has been refused. Because weddings can be planned well in advance, it is possible to arrange for a priest or deacon to be present to receive the consent in the name of the Church. Consequently, in the Archdiocese of Brisbane, no delegation is given for lay people to preside at the celebration of marriage.

5. Penance and Anointing the Sick.

There is no possibility in liturgical or canon law for lay people to lead the liturgy of these sacraments. They are both reserved to the priest. Lay people however often minister to others as spiritual directors. They frequently carry out an extensive ministry to the sick, whether in their homes or in hospitals and other facilities; this ministry includes pastoral care, prayer, and bringing communion to the sick.

WHO

1. Lay People

In the Archdiocese of Brisbane, explicit delegation from the archbishop is required for all lay leaders of liturgy. Lay people so delegated to lead worship in Catholic communities may include any baptised person whose way of life is consistent with the Gospel and who would be acceptable to the local community (*Directory no. 30*). They may include religious sisters or brothers, those with a leadership role in the community (e.g. parish councilors), or those who already exercise a liturgical ministry (e.g. readers or special ministers of communion). A Pastoral Associate or other Parish Pastoral Minister who already has a leadership role would be an obvious choice for a lay leader of liturgy.

In Catholic parishes in remote areas, lay leadership of Sunday worship or funeral rites may be supported or even supplied by the

resident pastor of the local Anglican, Uniting or Lutheran Churches.

2. *Discernment*

Parish communities need to undertake a double discernment. Firstly, there should be an assessment of the parish, its liturgical/pastoral needs and resources. Secondly, there should be a prayerful discernment of those who would best lead the community's worship in the absence of a priest or deacon. Care is required to ensure that the ministry does not become one person's exclusive domain. On the other hand, parishes do not need a large number of people for this ministry.

The *qualities* needed by lay leaders of liturgy include:

- an understanding of leadership as service,
- a sense of prayer, both private and communal,
- a commitment to inclusiveness and collaboration in the Church,
- the ability to consider a situation, make a decision, and act confidently on it,
- the ability to communicate with clergy and parishioners alike,
- a pastoral sensitivity to the needs of others.

The *competency* which lay leaders need to develop includes:

- a knowledge of the liturgy, its rites, structures and symbols,
- skills in presiding at public worship, including public speaking,
- a sound theological, scriptural and ecclesial background,
- skills in pastoral care, especially with the bereaved.

3. *Presiders and Preachers*

Two roles need to be distinguished within the lay leadership of liturgy. In the Archdiocese of Brisbane, the leader delegated to preside does

not necessarily receive a delegation to preach on the Scripture readings. The latter requires additional competency in Scripture and theology. While normally those delegated to preach will also be delegated to preside, it is preferable to differentiate these roles in the actual celebration.

Likewise, depending on the needs of the parish, a lay leader may receive delegation for Sunday and weekday worship but not for the liturgies of the Order of Christian Funerals. The latter require special pastoral skills in dealing with the bereaved, and particular formation in the theology, Scripture and liturgy of the funeral rites.

4. *Selection, Review and Delegation*

- The parish priest and the parish decide what is needed by way of lay leadership of liturgy.
- The parish priest ascertains the willingness of suitable people to undertake the lay leadership of liturgy and discusses with them the best ways of acquiring the competency to do so.
- The parish priest requests of the archbishop delegation for each individual. The request should set out evidence of competency for the delegation requested. Application forms are provided to assist in this task.
- The archbishop will be assisted in reviewing the requests by the Office for Lay Pastoral Ministry which has the responsibility of administering these guidelines.
- To assist in evaluating the request, the Office for Lay Pastoral Ministry may interview the candidate, and/or set written or practical competency tests.
- Acting upon advice of the Office for Lay Pastoral Ministry, the archbishop may request additional preparation or formation before delegation is given.
- The archbishop's delegation of a lay leader is sent to the parish priest.

- The lay leader of liturgy is publicly commissioned in the local parish.

The archbishop's delegation of lay leaders of liturgy will specify the parish(es) in which the person is to minister and the term of appointment (usually three years). It may be a delegation to lead Sunday and weekday liturgy and/or funeral liturgies and/or preach on the Scriptures. The delegation may be renewed for further periods of time.

These processes will enable lay leaders of liturgy to exercise their ministry confident in the knowledge that they act on behalf of the Church.

5. Formation

Formation for lay leadership of liturgy is not directly a matter of acquiring formal qualifications. A Bachelor of Theology, for example, is not necessary but, for those who have it, not necessarily sufficient.

- For delegation as a lay leader of liturgy on *Sundays or Weekdays*, the candidate must demonstrate competence in understanding the liturgical structures of the Liturgy of the Word, the patterns of public prayer, and the basics of the Sacramentary, Lectionary, and the Liturgy of the Hours. The candidate will also demonstrate the basic skills of presiding at liturgy and coordinating liturgical ministries.
- For delegation as a lay leader of liturgy at *Funerals*, the candidate must demonstrate in addition an understanding of the Order of Christian Funerals some theological understanding of Christian death, and the basic skills of pastoral care of the bereaved.
- For delegation to *preach* at a lay-led liturgy, the candidate must have a much more comprehensive theological background as well as skills in public speaking. Theological competence should include Scripture studies, and general theology (Christology, ecclesiology...). At this level, formation would

usually be equivalent to a Bachelor of Theology or a postgraduate diploma.

People have a number of options for receiving formation as leaders of liturgy and as preachers at lay-led liturgy:

- undergraduate and post graduate studies (at St Paul's Theological College at ACU)
- courses offered in distance mode (such as the Foundations course)
- various seminars, workshops and lectures offered in the archdiocese (for example, by Liturgy Brisbane)
- guided reading course (supervised, for example, by the parish priest)
- an 'apprenticeship' where the lay leader accompanies the parish priest and practices elements of the ministry under his supervision.

HOW

The way in which the ministry of lay leaders of liturgy is exercised in parishes will need to evolve with experience. However some elements can be set down from the beginning.

Parish. The ministry is parish based. Lay leaders are delegated for a particular parish and are under the supervision of the parish priest. So, for example, to arrange a funeral, the parish is always the point of contact, never the individual minister. The parish needs to be prepared for the introduction of lay leaders of liturgy to its worship and, where possible, should be notified in advance that the priest will not be present.

Variety of ministry. When a lay leader of liturgy presides, the full complement of other lay ministers should be used for reading the Scriptures, leading the singing, announcing the prayer intentions, distributing communion. It is also preferable to have different ministers for presiding and preaching.

Vesture. On more formal occasions (e.g. Sundays and funerals), the lay leader of liturgy vests in a well-designed alb, but never wears a stole of any kind. On less formal occasions (e.g. weekdays), the lay leader of liturgy does not need to vest.

Avoid confusion. Any confusion between a lay-led liturgy and the celebration of eucharist must be carefully avoided (*Directory no. 22*). This applies not only to the order of service but also to the behaviour of the lay leader who acts as one among equals (*Directory no. 39*). It is generally inappropriate for the leader to use the presider's chair (*Directory no. 40*), read the gospel, make the sign of blessing over the assembly, etc.

Place. The lay leader of liturgy does not preside from the ambo or altar. A place near the presider's chair will often prove to be suitable but the lay leader will usually sit in the front row with the rest of the people.

Resources. A diocesan resource book is being produced to accompany these guidelines (*expected later in 2002*). It will contain a rite of commissioning lay leaders of liturgy, orders of service for use by lay leaders, and some simplified services that can be easily followed by leaders who are designated on an ad hoc or occasional basis. Also to be included are sample application forms to be used by the parish priest, some sample handouts which can be used to prepare the parish community for lay leaders of liturgy, plans for the formation of lay leaders, and a bibliography of useful books and videos.