

## Principles of Good Liturgy, esp. for Presiders

1. **PRAY:** Make sure that YOU are actually praying, personally and with the community; let the liturgy truly be prayer with God. Don't just go through the motions and say the prescribed words routinely.
2. **Keep a Pastoral Focus:** Presiders and ministers are there to serve the assembly, to help the whole congregation focus on God and on God's presence in each other; the focus should not be on you! Presiders must set a good example: praying, listening, singing, participating fully in all actions.
3. **Pay Attention to Feasts and Seasons:** Use music, colors, environment, and actions appropriate to the liturgical seasons and/or special feast days on the universal and local liturgical calendars.
4. **Highlight Scripture:** ALL liturgical services include some Scripture readings along with and as preparation for the sacramental action. Highlight the foundational role of the living Word of God.
5. **Respect the Four-fold Presence of Christ:** Be aware that Christ is present in the Word, Eucharist, Presider, and Congregation. Do we reverence Christ's presence enough in all four ways? Does the Assembly of the baptized truly see itself as the "Body of Christ" gathered in worship and prayer?
6. **Promote Participation:** Vatican II stresses the need for "full, conscious, and active participation" of everyone in the liturgy. No one should perform more than one ministry at a particular liturgy, unless *absolutely* necessary. Different people for different ministries; only one role per person!
7. **Promote Reverence:** Use appropriate levels of solemnity or formality in language and gestures; don't be "cutesy"! Provide times of prayerful silence, especially after readings and intercessions.
8. **Don't Rush:** Ministers should never run (unless there's a fire!); always move gracefully. Reciting prayers should not be a race! Speak all texts and prayers clearly, reverently, with sufficient pauses.
9. **Let Music Support the Action:** Processions and preparatory actions should be accompanied by music that lasts as long as the action, if not longer. The Gathering Song need not end the moment the presider reaches his chair, but can continue to "gather" the community in prayerful song.
10. **Let Music Convey the Sense:** Singing "Lord, have mercy" and "Praise God, Alleluia!" should not sound the same. Let "penitential" music be more somber and "praise" music be more joyful!
11. **Don't Sweat the Mistakes:** Small things will often go wrong, so don't draw attention to them. Do the best to keep the ritual action flowing smoothly, so hardly anyone will notice.
12. **Be Prepared:** Plan all details carefully; train all ministers in advance; read all texts thoroughly; memorize short or repeated texts. Rehearse together with all ministers. Practice, practice, practice!
13. **Know the Rubrics:** Know the instructions (about words, postures, etc.), both their letter and their spirit. Apply them carefully, but not too rigidly; always consider the pastoral needs of the assembly.
14. **Let Symbols Speak:** Don't talk or explain too much; let liturgical symbols speak boldly and clearly. The size of symbols should be appropriate to the setting; "large symbols" for large liturgical spaces.
15. **Use Good Body Language:** Pay attention to how you use your hands and arms, your eyes and face; use "large gestures" for large worship spaces, but without being overly dramatic.
16. **Use Liturgical Books Well:** Don't let books or binders get in the way, and never use loose papers. Keep the focus on the people and the liturgical action, not on the books, binders, or worship aides.
17. **Prepare Good Worship Aides:** Consider what will help the congregation participate better? What music, texts, instructions, and artwork would truly "aid" their prayer? Proofread things carefully!
18. **Let Assistants Assist:** Deacons, Acolytes, and MCs should help as needed, anticipating things in advance. Don't hesitate when it's your turn to act; but stay out of the way when it's not.
19. **Review and Evaluate:** Ask for feedback regularly from a variety of different people; don't take things for granted; seek help in improving the liturgy, in big and small ways alike.
20. **Give Thanks:** Before, during, and after the liturgy, give thanks to God for the great privilege of being able to worship God and to serve the Church as a liturgical minister and presider.