

## A Time to Lead...

Liturgy Seminar, Clonliffe, September 2018

May I heartily recommend a fine resource which comes from our own Irish Bishops' Council for Liturgy, much of it written by lay people:

**"IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE – Gathered on a weekday when Eucharist is not celebrated"**, *National Centre for Liturgy, Veritas, 2015.*

\*\*\*\*\*

***Remembering: the World Meeting of Families Opening Prayer, RDS.***

**Lay leadership of Liturgical prayer:** Leading weekday parish liturgies in the absence of a priest or in homes, funeral homes and in cemeteries at the time of the death of a Christian, as part of the funeral rites.

**Why?** Because of your baptismal identity, the Spirit of the Risen Christ is praying in you. We discover, like St Paul, that: "It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me" (**Galatians 2:20**) The Spirit is welling up within us in our communal and personal prayer, coming to help us in our weakness (**Romans 8:15-16**).

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood.... (**1 Peter 2:9**)

**Romans 12:1-2:** Worship ultimately consists in making 'in our bodies' a living offering of praise and thanksgiving to God. Offer your very selves to him.

**Hebrews 13:15** "Through Him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name".

**Acts 1:12-14 12** "Then the disciples returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet... All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers."

**Acts 2:42 ff** "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.... All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people."

"Then Jesus told them a parable about their need **to pray always** and not to lose heart."  
[Luke 18:1]

**"Pray in the Spirit at all times** in every prayer and supplication." [Eph 6:18]

"Rejoice always. **Pray without ceasing**, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." [1Thessalonians 5:16-17]

"Be filled with the Spirit as you **sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.**" [Ephesians 5: 18b-20]

**"From the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations"**

[Malachi 1:11] **"O Lord in the morning you hear my voice**, in the morning I plead my case to you and watch." [Psalm 5:3] **"Let my prayer arise before you like incense, my hands like the evening offering"** [Ps 140/141: 2]

How do we fulfil this mandate from the Lord to pray always in our parishes without a priest?

**SACROSANCTUM CONCILIUM on Liturgy of the Hours ([www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va))**

**83.** Christ Jesus, high priest of the new and eternal covenant, taking human nature, introduced into this earthly exile that hymn which is sung throughout all ages in the halls of heaven. He joins the entire community of mankind to Himself, associating it with His own singing of this canticle of divine praise. **For he continues His priestly work through the agency of His Church, which is ceaselessly engaged in praising the Lord and interceding for the salvation of the whole world. She does this, not only by celebrating the eucharist, but also in other ways, especially by praying the divine office.**

**84.** By tradition going back to early Christian times, the divine office is devised so that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praises of God. **Therefore, when this wonderful song of praise is rightly performed by priests ... or by the faithful praying together...** then it is truly the voice of the bride addressed to her bridegroom; it is the very prayer which Christ Himself, together with His body, addresses to the Father.

**85.** Hence all who render this service ... by offering these praises to God... are standing before God's throne in the name of the Church their Mother.

**88.** Because the purpose of the office is to sanctify the day...

The daily prayer of the Church consists in the celebration of the Eucharist AND the Liturgy of the Hours. "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them"

**Matthew 18:20**

The Lord is also present when the Scriptures are proclaimed (GIRM27, 29).

**Bishop's Conference Statement September 2015**

**Gathered on a weekday when the Eucharist is not Celebrated:**

(Gathered on a Weekday #41)

"Easter people, Sunday people seek to be together for worship on weekdays"

**#46 GOW:** "When the Church gathers to celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours (especially Morning, Evening or Night Prayer) or the Liturgy of the Word, which has been assigned to a particular day, the Lord truly is with his people. He is teaching them. He is nourishing them. He is sustaining them. He is increasing their appetite for their communion with him in the *taking, the blessing, the breaking and the giving and receiving* at the celebration of the Eucharist, the sacrifice of the Mass, especially on Sundays." *We do not live on bread alone...*

**#48 GOW:** "It is good practice to have lay faithful in each parish to serve and assist those who wish to gather and pray on weekdays when the celebration of the Eucharist is not possible."

**#49:** "It will also be useful and important to provide resources and assistance for weekday assemblies to sing the Word of God, namely, psalms, canticles, hymns and acclamations in praise of the Lord."

**#50:** "have occasional celebrations of the Word of special intercession and community focus... attuned to the liturgical season and day... opportunities to identify new gifts in and for the community... the invitation and means to a renewed participation in Sunday's celebration of the Eucharist."

## **A TIME TO LEAD 2:**

- As you set this up in your parish, would it be good to have a discussion about it in your parish grouping, where parishes work together for mission.
- Try to build teams of lay leaders, so as to avoid any future sense of some people in the parish 'taking over' or being part of a 'clique'.

## **What qualities do we need?**

A group to share the task of leading prayer - not one person, various voices, various ages. St Paul's image of the Church being the Body of Christ made up of many parts compels us to collaborate. There's also then the need for co-ordination, that all the key people know what's to be done and when.

## **What do we need to consider:**

Imagine what's involved in a liturgy besides the text.

There's setting up (and set down), heat microphones, light, candles, incense.

Welcome, hospitality, handing out of worship leaflets/aids and gathering them up afterwards.

Ministers for music (with or without instruments), cantors, where are they singing from?

The pacing (no rush), allow the word of God to resound, give plenty of space for silence, to bring people deeper into prayer.

'Mean what you say'

Posture and gestures, engaging all the senses, hand gestures.

Standing, sitting, leading everyone in making the sign of the cross.

Will we carry in the Lectionary during a Celebration of the Word?

Attentiveness to the particular needs of our community: who do we need to pray for? The sick, the discouraged, the bereaved, those whose anniversaries occur. This is crucial to maintaining a healthy prayer life in our community.

## **From where will we lead these elements of the prayer?**

The leader does not sit in the presider's chair (the priest's chair) – that is the place for the one who is ordained to serve the worship of the community.

Walk up from your place in a front row of the congregation?

We stand: to honour the presence of the Risen Christ who gathers us together.

“O God, come to our aid.” – God help us!

**Sign of the Cross** – deliberate, not just a flap of the hand.

Choose tunes for hymns that are very well known.

**Psalms and Scripture readings and intercessions can be led from the AMBO** – as they are integral to the Word of God.

Where are the other microphones (if needed) positioned?

Where can they be plugged in?

**What are the qualities that would be helpful among our prayer leaders?**

We don't expect them all in each person – working together, the Lord will provide. A good question to continually be aware of is: 'how are the people experiencing this prayer?'

A disposition of heart that loves prayer, both private and communal.

A willingness to work with others

A commitment to welcome and collaboration in the Church

Sensitivity to the needs of others

An ability to communicate well with everyone on the parish team

An understanding of prayer leadership as an act of service and not of domination and control

Someone who is reliable and a good time keeper

Someone who is organised enough to know what is needed to be done and doing those things in such good time that there's little or no last minute rush.

A person who is not overly loud now too familiar and has a sense of what's appropriate to be said or not to be said (*“Howarya Mrs Kennedy, wearing the new coat this morning, Penny's is it? And did the missing cat turn up yet?” – that's grand for the cup of tea and hospitality afterwards but not just as we're about to start the prayer.*)

Familiarity with using microphones, lectionaries, the texts that we're praying.

Setting the right pacing for the prayer – allow the message of God in all its richness to breathe and impact upon us.

A sense of presence with the people gathered in prayer and an ability to engage with them, including inviting people to read or take a particular part.

Praying aloud: diction, clarity, soul, timing, projection, good phrasing, familiarity with the whole text and the flow of it, how it begins and how it ends.

The ability to look at the people from time to time and not just have your head buried in the text.

Leading, helping the people focus on the prayer and at the same time avoiding drawing attention to yourself.

Leaders of prayer must be people of prayer.

### **Other skills:**

Brief words or announcement before a prayer moment:

'Would you be so kind as to make sure you're phones are switched off so as not to disturb our prayer together.'

Announcements after: e.g. *'The Reilly family would like to invite you to a light lunch in the Liffeside Inn following our time here together.'* "Now that this time of prayer has concluded, could you please gift the Kelly family some time alone with the deceased as we move on to the Church."

Being able to discreetly ask who from a family gathering might be able to read a piece of Scripture or lead a Decade of the Rosary.

Being confident enough to say – "the people to this side of the room, if you could please lead the verses in normal text and the people on this other side – could you please lead the verses in italics."

Knowing how to give people 'the reassuring nod' as to when to lead their part.

Beginning with a confident clear voice and 'coming in to land' at the end.

Slowing down appropriately, helping everyone with gestures.

### **Useful things to have**

A simple folder – have a LARGE full text of the prayer printed off for yourself

Helpful too to stop prayer leaflets sliding around, waterproof for graveyards.

Funerals: a small bottle of holy water, rosary ring or rosary beads

Make sure all the KEY people have a full text.

Post-it sticky notes to help remember key names – a pen.

Dress appropriately and respectfully.

Avoid doing anything that draws attention away from the prayer and to yourself