**Parish Partnerships and Liturgy**

**What can we do together?**

**Introduction**

Several initiatives are already in motion that express what parish partnerships can mean in a practical way. Joint meetings of Parish Pastoral Councils, Finance Committees and the rationalisation of Mass Timetables are the most notable.

What about our liturgies? Could parishes share resources around liturgy formation, music and musicians, use of technology, art and environment elements or co-ordination of seasonal services. Let us sit in prayer with the possibilities, in the spirit of the early Christian communities.

**Chant There Is One Lord (Taizé)**

 **All sing: There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism,**

 **there is one God who is Father of all.** *(Ephesians 4***)**

**Reading Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47**

**42**They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. **43**Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. **44**All the believers were together and had everything in common. **45**They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. **46**Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, **47**praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

**Quiet Time**

**Building Hope Pentecost Prayer**

 **All say: Come, Holy Spirit, revive and renew us**

 **Come, Holy Spirit, inspire and enthuse us**

 **Come, Holy Spirit, unbind and release us**

 **Open our eyes to see God’s grace around us**

 **Open our ears to hear God’s voice within us**

 **Open our hearts to welcome God among us**

 **Send us out with joy to live the Gospel**

 **Send us out with peace to act as one**

 **Send us out with love to build up hope**

**Unity v Uniformity**

Each parish church has its own unique atmosphere and character. People have devotion to particular shrines or enjoy praying with the stained glass images. We all know those who sit in one particular seat each time they come to the church. A wise wag was speaking about these new partnerships and remarked about the variety of postures taken up at different parts of the Mass. He asked ‘Where is the unity there?’

We always take into account the ability of people to stand/kneel/sit and never embarrass anyone with limited or no mobility. Some churches have comfortable chairs that are reserved for people with particular needs.

With these things in mind, we explore unity of posture across the partnerships.

In **2008**, the Rev. Martin Browne OSB addressed the topic of posture at liturgy.

‘Did you ever think about why we stand or sit or kneel at particular parts of the Mass? If you’re like me, probably not. It’s just a case of doing the same thing the rest of the folks are doing, and at the same time. If they stand, I stand, if they kneel, I kneel. Even though that sounds like a lazy attitude, it’s not all bad. At least we are all doing the same thing, and that in itself is a good idea. The Roman Missal puts it like this: **A common posture, observed by all, is a sign of the unity of the assembly and its sense of community. It both expresses and fosters the inner spirit and purpose of those taking part in it.**

The problem lately has been that while everyone in any one assembly might be adopting the same posture at Mass, not all parishes have the same customs. And so, while I might be used to standing for the Introductory Rite in my own parish, when I visit a different parish one weekend, I might find that they kneel for this part of the Mass. The whole thing has great potential for confusion. It might help if we looked at the significance of the various postures and gestures.

**Standing** is the traditional posture for communal prayer in the Christian tradition. It can be a sign of respect. But it also emphasises our dignity as baptised and redeemed people. We are God’s beloved children, in whom he is well-pleased, and so we have the courage to stand in his presence as we pray.

**Sitting** makes us ready for listening. We read in the Bible of how people sat at the feet of rabbis, to listen to their teaching. Likewise, we sit down for the readings and the homily - though respect for the Gospel reading suggests that we stand to hear it - as we listen to the Word of God and seek to discern its message for our lives.

**Kneeling** is a posture for private prayer, for that direct personal encounter between ourselves and God. It is also a sign of humility and an appropriate way of expressing sorrow.
Despite the fact that different communities adopt different postures at the Eucharist, there are official directives on this question, published by the Bishops Conference in **1974** and **1986**. Many of the postures determined in these documents still haven’t become widely observed, and so in Advent of **1999**, the Dublin Diocesan Liturgical Commission decided

to draw attention to them once again.

**Guidelines on Posture (Dublin Diocesan Liturgical Commission – 1999)**
**Introductory Rite:** The appropriate posture for the entire Introductory Rite, from procession and greeting to the Opening Prayer, and including the Penitential Rite, Kyrie and Gloria, is standing. This may surprise some assemblies, where kneeling is the current norm, but when you look at it, standing makes much more sense. Kneeling probably stems from an over-emphasis on the penitential part of this rite, while under-emphasising the praise element. Kneeling for something like the Gloria seems to make no sense at all. Instead, we should stand throughout the Introductory Rite, whose primary focus is to prepare us to hear the Word of God.

**Liturgy of the Word:** The community sits to hear the first two readings proclaimed, and during the singing of the Responsorial Psalm. We stand as a mark of respect for the Gospel, while it is being read, then sit to listen to the homily. We then stand again, as we communally profess our faith in the Creed and pray for our needs in the General Intercessions (Prayer of the Faithful).

**Liturgy of the Eucharist:** The assembly sits while the gifts are being presented and prepared, and during the Prayer over the Gifts. The guidelines suggest that we kneel for the Eucharistic Prayer, which begins with the Preface Dialogue and continues until the Great Amen (what about the energy needed to sing the Holy Holy?) In special circumstances though, it might be appropriate to stand for the Eucharistic Prayer, so that the entire community is observing a common posture. Once again, as the Lord’s Prayer is a communal prayer of all the people, we stand, and continue standing right through until communion, and again for the Prayer after Communion.

**Concluding Rite:** We sit during the announcements, which follow the Prayer after Communion, but stand once again for the greeting, Blessing and Dismissal. Some people are set in their ways and may have difficulty in adapting, and some others attend Mass so infrequently that they aren’t sure whether they should be sitting or standing or kneeling. Maybe priests could help them out by tailoring the various invitations to prayer during Mass, with simple things like "Let us stand and pray", or "Let us sit and listen to the Word of God", and so on? Maybe the odd bit of explanation of the significance of the various postures, on the parish website, newsletter or magazine, could help people understand why they sit or kneel? Let’s try to understand our liturgical body language a bit better.

**Time for a Chat**

**The Acclamations of the Eucharistic Prayer – Partnership in Song**

After Vatican II, many liturgical composers took to the task of writing music for the revised liturgy. Up to this time, the Eucharistic Prayer was recited (sometimes mumbled or at speed by the celebrant) with a choral Sanctus/Benedictus going on at the same time.

The ringing of the consecration bells brought bowed heads to life as they were lifted in adoration. The revised liturgy invites all present to be attentive and to accompany with their eyes the gestures and movements of this central prayer of unity.

The composers expressed the unity of the Eucharistic Prayers by the linking of the 3 Acclamations – The Sanctus (*Holy, Holy*), the Mystery of Faith (*earlier called the Memorial Acclamation)* andGreat Amen by use of a common musical phrase or motif. Fintan O’Carroll, Seoirse Bodley, T.C Kelly and Gerard Victory were the Irish composers of this time of renewal. The Mass of Our Lady of Lourdes (Lécot/Décha) added a continental flavour to our celebrations. They were accompanied by recordings and helpful participation cards.

The use of screens today offers an immediate aid and keeps our heads up singing.

Keep in mind the copyright obligations. (*see One Licence Article*).

**Mass Settings**

The collection **Sing the Mass** was published by the National Centre for Liturgy in 2011 to help create a common repertoire of Mass settings throughout the island of Ireland.

There are 4 new Mass settings in this book including the Mass of St. Paul (Ephrem Feeley) Mass of Renewal (Bernard Sexton), Glendalough Mass (Liam Lawton) and Mass of Saint Columba (Columba McCann OSB).

Ephrem Feeley’s **Mass of St. Paul** was used for the Chrism Mass again this year with great congregational participation (especially supported by the assembled clergy). At the funeral of the late Father Mike Drennan S.J. it was again the core Mass setting. Led by the cantor Róisín O’Reilly, there was a great congregational response also strengthened by the religious and clergy present.

The new Parish Partnerships might like to explore singing a common Mass setting for a period of time - maybe from now up to Advent – so that as people move from one church to the next the musical texture will be the same and that they will feel at home no matter where they worship.

p.s. Most of these Masses are in parts and can be sung by choirs or equally led by a cantor.

Some musicians might complain at the same Mass programme for a season or for a few months. We must remember that music is at the service of the liturgy and helps people pray in a very special way. There are many other opportunities in the Eucharistic celebrations for a choir to be challenged musically.

Let’s build unity through music and draw people together in this central prayer of the Mass.

**Time for another Chat**

**Celebrating Special Events Together**

There are many examples of neighbouring parishes sharing or hosting events. The twice yearly **Service of Reconciliation** is a great example when all the priests in a cluster gather to hear confessions in one church after a time of communal preparation rather than replicating the celebration of the Sacrament across many communities. This also provides the opportunity for parish partnerships to pool their resources in the prayerful work of preparation and shaping a liturgy. Sensitive facilitation of such preparation meetings is important to ensure that all voices are heard.

Music resources can also be combined to enrich the celebration. Simpler liturgies can be enhanced by the cantor who fosters participation and also helps reflection. Exposure to different styles of music and instruments can be very refreshing.

**What is planned in your partnership for such communal celebrations?**

We have just concluded the **Season of Creation** with an emphasis on God’s wonderful gifts of nature. Our focus is also on climate change at this crucial time. Did you do anything to mark this season in your own parish/with a neighbouring parish/or across the partnership? It doesn’t have to be a West End production! Something prayerful and simple can be just as nourishing. Do you know that theDiocesan **Laudate** Music Programme for Primary Schools contains 4 pieces on this topic out of the 16 songs chosen? Imagine a service where primary level students from your school led the music at such a celebration.

**What if the combined parish partnership schools joined together to prayerfully celebrate the Season of Creation next year?**

What about **Funeral Teams**. Do you have a surplus of team members and very few funerals or the opposite? Do you think that Funeral Leaders might be shared between partnerships if needed? What about training for the team and the leaders.

**Would a partnership session on this topic address local issues and ensure a more consistent celebration of this important pastoral and family time?**

*The* ***LitMus*** *website –* [*www.litmus.dublindiocese.ie*](http://www.litmus.dublindiocese.ie) *offers a range of resources for the communal celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Common Home Prayer Events, Funeral Liturgies and much more. Our Administrator is Angela McGarry –* *angela.mcgarry@dublindiocese.ie* *01 8087537*

The next **LitMus** event is a service of reflection on the topic of inclusion in our church.

It’s called **‘Come On In’**. It takes place in the Monastery of Saint Alphonsus, St. Alphonsus Road, Drumcondra on Monday 23 October at 8.00 p.m. You can also participate on webcam – [www.rednuns.com](http://www.rednuns.com)

Music and Poetry led by the Dublin Diocesan Music Group and the Full Time Chaplaincy Students of DCU.