

# PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICALITIES FOR PREPARING THE LITURGY

## I. THE FIRST RULE OF LITURGY IS CHARITY.

Charity is the first rule of the Christian life and the first rule of the liturgy. We prepare for our roles and choose among various options out of love for God and for the people of God.

## II. CHRISTIANITY IS NOT A CONGREGATIONALIST PHENOMENON.

The Church spans all history, includes every culture and welcomes its members into human experience in all its fullness.

*ALWAYS BEGIN WITH THE RITE. Our starting point is the rites as they are given in the liturgical books - the structure, the content, the ceremonies, the texts - because these are the common inheritance of all the members of the church and our gift to future generations. Furthermore, God's people have a right to be formed by the prayer of the church, not by the personal tastes and spirituality of the planners. The rites should be altered only out of genuine pastoral need, or if demanded by the Gospel.*

## III. LITURGY COMES NEITHER FROM US NOR AT US BUT THROUGH US.

The liturgy is the prayer of Christ enacted in a particular assembly in the name of the entire communion of saints.

### *BEGIN PREPARATION FOR THE LITURGY BY PREPARING YOURSELF.*

*Each member of the assembly - especially the liturgical minister - must prepare her/himself through living the Christian life, ongoing prayer and recollection and so enter into the prayer of Christ.*

## IV. LITURGY IS THE WORK OF ALL THE BAPTIZED.

Clericalism - whether by priests, committees, or interest groups - and exclusionism - of the poor or rich, young or old, learned or simple, democrats or republicans, strong or weak in faith, is antithetical to the liturgy and the surest route to its demise.

*THINK AND BEHAVE AS MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY WITH PARTICULAR ROLES, NOT AS ENTERTAINERS OR PROVIDERS. Liturgy is neither a "service" nor a form of entertainment provided by the ministers for the assembly. There are no consumers and no audience; all present have responsibilities and roles.*

## V. LITURGY IS NOT PERFORMANCE - IT DEMANDS FAITH AND SELFLESSNESS.

Those who minister in the assembly must be so imbued with the spirit of Christ and so immersed in the tradition and on-going life of the Church that nothing in them will stand in

the way of the prayer. This hoped-for transparency is the only legitimate reason for study, planning, choreography, rehearsal, and subsequent critique of liturgical celebrations.

*STRIVE FOR TRANSPARENCY THAT ALL ATTENTION MAY BE FOCUSED NOT ON YOURSELF BUT ON GOD. Every choice that is made in preparing the liturgy, everything that is done or said during the liturgy should be so motivated and guided by a sense of the presence of God that participants feel themselves ushered into a more intense experience of this saving and healing Presence.*

- VI. LITURGY IS NEITHER PRIVATE PRAYER NOR COLLECTIVE PRAYER BUT COMMUNAL PRAYER. Individualism plagues American culture and strongly influences our approach to religion and worship. The liturgy is erroneously conceived as inspiration for private prayer or as the joint expression of individuals praying privately in the same place at the same time.

*MAKE THE PRAYER OF THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY THE GOAL OF YOUR PLANNING. The prayerful participation of the Assembly is primary in all preparations. The assembly must be able to hear, see, and/or imaginatively enter into everything that happens; must be provided with an environment that is conducive to prayer and with worthy participation aids which contain all they need to fulfill their role in the liturgy.*

- VII. LITURGY TAKES UP ALL THAT IS HUMAN AND SHOWS IT TO BE A REVELATION OF THE DIVINE. Liturgy is more than texts; it includes the silence, gestures, postures, movements, aromas, tastes, visual images, objects, and the entire complex which is our liturgical tradition.

*CREATE A CONTEXT IN WHICH INTERIOR SILENCE AND RECOLLECTION CAN BE THE BEGINNING AND END OF PRAYER. Silence - the most neglected element in the liturgy - conveys like nothing else an awareness of the presence of the Transcendent; it is the stage upon which the liturgy unfolds, the context and depth of every utterance, the ground from which the Word emerges and the home to which it returns.*

*USE SYMBOLS AND OBJECTS IN THE LITURGY THAT ARE AUTHENTIC AND BEAUTIFUL.*

*That which is artificial or merely suggestive does not have the substance and depth needed to sustain the weight of the mystery or bear the awaited Presence which emerges from the ritual use of that object.*

*LET YOUR MOVEMENTS AND GESTURES BE GENUINE AND FULL.*

*Movements and gestures are to be done fully with dignity and reverence. When those moving or gesturing are not caught up in the core of reality which seeks expression through those gestures, the meaning - the Presence - must struggle against the inadequacy of the gesture in making its reality felt.*