

Celebrating the Paschal Mystery

A Syllabus of Liturgical Formation for those setting up courses in Liturgy

The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

1991

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Foreword

Why a syllabus?

This syllabus should be seen as part of the movement of liturgical formation required by Vatican II:

The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations called for by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people' (I Pt 2:9, see 2:4-5) is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.

In the reform and promotion of the liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else. For it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit and therefore pastors must zealously strive in all their pastoral work to achieve such participation by means of the necessary instruction. (Liturgy Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC), §14).

In the period since the Council various efforts have been made in England and Wales to implement the Council's mandate, most notably in Mgr Anthony Boylan's detailed plan *Living Liturgy* (1981). He recommended a wide range of provisions for liturgical formation, starting from the ideal of a liturgy institute as envisaged in SC 44. For various reasons it has not been possible to realise this ideal in England and Wales, but the need for liturgical formation and guidance remains and must be met in some way. The need will become all the more pressing as lay people take a more active part in all aspects of parish life and worship.

A core syllabus

This syllabus, prepared by the Liturgy Committees of the Bishops' Conference in consultation with the Diocesan Liturgy Commissions, is a response to the need for formation and guidance. It provides, in the form of a series of topics and notes, the framework for a programme of study. It is not a worked-out study course; such working-out should be done at local level. It is a core syllabus which can be developed and used at a variety of levels. The adaptation of the syllabus to take account of local needs, pastoral circumstances, and above all, the background and experience of the participants, is most important.

It should be emphasised that the aim of this syllabus and any study course based on it is not the mere imparting of knowledge. Worship is action and commitment, and the purpose of acquiring an informed understanding of the liturgy should be to lead people into a renewed experience of prayer and to foster the practical skills needed in the community's worship.

How the syllabus might be used

There are many ways in which the syllabus could be used. It could, for instance, provide the basis for a home-study course under the direction of a tutor, or it could take the form of parish or deanery sessions.

The timing and order in which the units are studied is not definitive, and could be varied according to the requirements of each group or student. The units are designed to be relatively independent, and any of them could stand on their own to form a course on a particular topic.

An outline to be filled out at local level

At this stage the Liturgy Committees do not have the resources to provide a fully worked-out syllabus so it is recommended that local agencies (in this case, the Diocesan Liturgy Commission or Liturgy Centre) have the primary responsibility for implementing and overseeing the programme.

How the Syllabus started

The idea of a Liturgical Syllabus was mooted at the 1989 National Liturgical Conference in Cardiff. Subsequently an ad-hoc Formation Subcommittee with a member from each of the three Committees on the liturgy (Pastoral Liturgy, Art and Architecture, and Music) met under the chairmanship of Bishop McMahon to decide on the work to be done. In early 1990 a brief outline draft of the syllabus, containing nine units, was drawn up and individual units were assigned to experts in the field to work on.

The compilers were asked to present their Units at a working week at Plater College, Oxford, in July 1990. The units were discussed and criticised by a group of fifty representatives from most of the Dioceses of England and Wales. What appears in this booklet is the result of that meeting and consists of the presenters' drafts re-written in the light of comments made. One of the units was subdivided, to make a total of ten.

The bishops of the Department for Christian Life and Worship approved the syllabus in principle at their meeting in November 1990. It is now presented to the Church in England and Wales for a trial period of two years. During this time a national Co-ordinator will monitor its use and at the end the Committees will decide whether it is in need of modification. The principal agencies for its implementation are the Diocesan Liturgy Commissions, but any parish or group is free to use it. If they do, it would be of great assistance if they reported to their Diocesan Commission or, in the absence of one, the National Co-ordinator (care of the Liturgy Office) on their experience of using the Syllabus.

The Liturgy Office, 30 September 1991

Basic Bibliography

(a) Documents

The Constitution on the Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council [Sacrosanctum Concilium] (SC) is essential reading for all parts of this syllabus.

Documents of the Second Vatican Council, ed. Austin Flannery (2 Vols.) contains the above Constitution and some other subsequent liturgical documents

Documents on the Liturgy 1963-1979: Conciliar, Papal and Curial Texts, ed. ICEL. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1982. Very detailed; a valuable work of reference.

The Liturgy Documents: A Parish Resource. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications. Contains the fundamental liturgical documents in a handy format, with background notes. Also contains the (oustanding) US Bishops' documents on Environment and Art, and Music. A useful and practical book.

Instructions on the Revised Roman Rites, C.J. Walsh (ed.), Collins 1979. Parts of this collections are. now out of date, or will be soon, but still a useful source.

(b) General Works

The following works cover most of the ground of this Syllabus.

Donald A. Withey **Catholic Worship: An Introduction to Liturgy** Kevin Mayhew 1990. Suitable as a course book.

J. D. Crichton **Christian Celebration** (3 vols in one.) Geoffrey Chapman, 1981.

A. G. Martimort (ed) **The Church at Prayer** New edition, 4 vols. Geoffrey Chapman, 1986-8.

Jean Lebon **How to Understand the Liturgy**. SCM Press 1987.

James L White, **Introduction to Christian Worship**. Ashville: Abingdon Press 1980. An ecumenical work. Very useful.

The series **American Essays in Liturgy** published by The Pastoral Press, Washington DC, is strongly recommended.