

How well do we prepare for our gathering?

*As we gather around the 'table of the Lord'
the reality of our common life is recognised and demonstrated.*

At Mass — that is, the Lord's Supper — the People of God is called together, with a priest presiding and acting in the person of Christ, to celebrate the memorial of the Lord, the Eucharistic Sacrifice. For this reason Christ's promise applies in an outstanding way to such a local gathering of the holy Church: 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst' (Mt 18:20). For in the celebration of Mass, in which the Sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated, Christ is really present in the very liturgical assembly gathered in his name, in the person of the minister, in his word, and indeed substantially and continuously under the Eucharistic species.

For this essential communal act to be truly authentic it must give expression to the common life of the gathered community; the implication being that there is a common life to draw upon. The idea of strangers gathering for Eucharist, and remaining strangers thereafter, does not sit easily with the Gospel message.

CTM 8, 14; GIRM 27

Some Questions

- How does the parish exercise its responsibility for welcoming people to the church?
- Is the front and entrance to the church welcoming? Are noticeboards up to date and tidy? Newsletters etc. available?
- Does the physical access to the church make it difficult for anyone to gain entry?
- What space is there for people to 'meet and greet' before they enter into the main body of the church?
- What encouragement is given to people to begin their preparation for the liturgy before they come to the church?

Further References

Sacrosanctum Concilium
7-13, 26f

General Instruction of the Roman Missal
16-18, 34, 46

Celebrating the Mass
1-17, 22-24, 48, 50, 139-150

Practical Points

- Preparation can begin at home and families can begin to prepare together as well as individually – perhaps by reflecting on the Sunday readings together.
- Reflecting on what one gained (or did not gain) from a celebration of Mass this week can be the beginning of preparation for Mass next week.
- Giving the references to next week's readings in this week's newsletter gently suggests to people might prepare for Mass by reading them.
- Meeting in a small group to reflect on the coming liturgies is something some ministers do every week. It can be helpful to offer the opportunity more widely before major feasts and seasons.
- Teams of 'ministers of hospitality' can support but not replace the welcome offered by the community as a whole.

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Questions for Groups

1. What is good about current practice?
What concerns do you have?

4. Who is most directly involved in these matters, e.g. liturgical ministers?
What formation/information is necessary to engage them in the renewal of current practice?

2. In what ways does the documentation affirm or challenge your current practice?

5. How will the assembly be engaged in the process?
What, in particular, needs addressing at Sunday and/or weekday celebrations?

3. Prioritise the issues you have identified.

6. How will you know whether the formation has worked?