

TELEVISIONING THE MASS

Guidelines for Broadcast Worship

Pastoral Liturgy Committee
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET...

This booklet has been produced in response to requests from those involved in the televising of worship from Catholic churches and communities. It has been prepared by the Broadcast Worship Subcommittee of the Pastoral Liturgy Committee of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

Although there is a variety of liturgical celebrations in which Catholics engage, these guidelines are focused around the celebration of Mass. Clearly, the broader principles which are set out here are equally valid for all worship occasions.

Sections are provided for the priest and ministers in the parish, for the particular ministry of the musicians, for those whose expertise lies with the technical side of broadcasting, and for those who liaise between the parish community and the television company. To avoid duplication of material, some suggestions of common interest are to be found only under one section heading.

These guidelines are offered so that those concerned with the televising of an act of worship may be encouraged to promote a worthy and dignified broadcast in which a witness of faith is given and the Gospel of Christ is proclaimed.

TELEVISIONING THE MASS

Guidelines for Broadcast Worship

A. FOR THE PRIEST AND OTHER MINISTERS

1 Preliminaries

The transmission of an act of worship from a parish is probably the greatest single opportunity for evangelisation that the parish will have. Hundreds of thousands or even millions of people can be reached with the Gospel. It is clearly important, therefore, that every effort be made to take account of the outreach aspect of the broadcast.

Similarly, the parish can benefit from the occasion by seeing it as an opportunity for its own pastoral renewal; the priest can use it as a chance to re-examine his presiding skills, and other ministers may choose to evaluate their style and quality of service. In fact, a televised broadcast ought to be an occasion for re-examining what happens at a parish's regular weekly liturgy.

In presenting a model celebration of liturgy the parish will also reflect a variety of liturgical forms, both eucharistic and non-eucharistic. These liturgies in turn will show the full spectrum of parish life which includes witness to the local community, its service to those in need and its ecumenical endeavours. All of this takes its impetus from the liturgy, and in worship finds its true fulfilment.

2 Remote Planning

It is essential that those who will be playing a major part in the liturgy, particularly those exercising a specific ministry, should have some prior training in the media implications of the broadcast. This will involve learning those skills which allow a person to be at ease and feel natural before a camera or microphone.

Equally desirable is that the whole congregation be sensitive to the importance of the event.

From the outset the liturgical quality of the celebration must be uppermost. This will manifest itself in a clarity of structure, a judicious use of the variety of ministries and an understanding of the necessary differentiation of places of action within the liturgy.

Realistic expectations need to be set. Whilst encouraging the parish to strive for its best, people should not be challenged to go beyond their limits, or to engage in any form of artificiality.

By appreciating the drama of the liturgy and learning how to enlist the skills and talents of the media personnel, a parish can begin to prepare itself for a worthy broadcast.

The Diocesan Liturgical Commission should be consulted in the planning of the celebration. Their advice on texts, music, movement and environment may provide a valuable outside stimulus in determining the overall shape of the liturgy.

3 Preparations

From the outset priests and ministers need to be clear about what exactly will be taking place. This will involve discussion about normal items (e.g. Which Eucharistic Prayer?), special items (e.g. Will there be an Asperges?), and matters of personnel (e.g. Who will do what before, during and after the broadcast?).

The priest will help the media personnel by providing at an early stage an outline of the running order of the service. This may contain a script of the Mass and the priest's homily, all texts including repetitions, and all major movements and actions.

To preserve the integrity of the liturgy it is required that a careful timing be done which will allow an entire service to be presented rather than being cut off before its completion.

Early attention to practical matters such as sanctuary layout, church lighting, and organ tuning is to be recommended.

A timetable of rehearsals needs to be drawn up in advance, with rehearsals undertaken both separately by the various ministers, and together (e.g. if the reader is to read the Bidding Prayer intentions over music).

Close collaboration with the director/producer will reveal how to derive maximum benefit from the TV rehearsal. Some television companies will make use of a commentator, and most directors/ producers will be pleased to help and advise the priest on the style and delivery of the homily.

4 The Setting

Prominence must be given to the worshipping congregation since the assembly itself is the primary minister of the liturgy. A broadcast which concentrated

simply on the activity of the sanctuary would betray a misunderstanding of the nature of the action of the liturgy.

In the sanctuary, care should be taken that the three focal points of the altar, ambo and presider's chair are given due prominence and not obscured by secondary elements. Similar consideration needs to be given to the positioning of personnel in the sanctuary and to their general comportment within the liturgy itself.

The quality and dignity of the liturgical books should be maintained. Both for the presider and the readers, there is no place for missalettes or participation aids. Only the official liturgical books should be used.

The vessels used for communion should reflect their purpose. Matching sets should be available; communion dishes should not look like chalices.

Vestments used should be suitable for the occasion, in harmony with their surroundings. Here, as in other matters, the broadcast is an opportunity to model good practice.

A number of individual elements can enhance the prayerfulness of the broadcast liturgy. The use of incense can be evocative, but it is important to be clear about when this gesture is best used, what sort of censer might be employed and how best to perform the incensation for television purposes.

An often-neglected element within broadcast worship is silence. The presider needs to be aware of how to invite the congregation to participate in a prayerful silence and how to handle this for television or radio purposes.

5 Presiding Skills

Whilst each diocese can offer periodic in-service days which tackle the qualities necessary for good presiding, it can also be beneficial to organise regional training days for groups of presiders who will shortly be involved in televised worship, along with the TV adviser, musicians and director / producer.

B. FOR TELEVISION DIRECTORS

1 Preliminaries

In an act of worship the entire assembly celebrates, not simply the priest. The priest presides over and worships with the congregation. Camerawork should never focus exclusively on the priest and ministers in the sanctuary.

The assembly is not just a collection of like-minded individuals (e.g. like football supporters). They are members of the Body of Christ. We need to be aware that there will be group dynamics in operation, and aspects of this will provide interest and meaning for the viewer. The director is responsible for noticing these opportunities and including them.

2 Personnel

A variety of people will be “doing” things. Directors are asked to be conscious of the following:

Presiding priest
Deacon (if present)
Concelebrating priests (if present)
Musicians and choir
Readers
Servers
Ushers
Minister bearing Book of Scriptures
Those presenting the bread and wine
Lay ministers of the Eucharist

3 Setting

Although the “stage” of the worship is of course the whole church building, there is a clear differentiation between the three central parts of the “stage” or “set”. These are:

The Altar: The director should enquire whether the altar is to be specially prepared or dressed and if so, when and how.

The Ambo: This is the place where the Lectionary (book of scripture readings) and the Book of the Gospels will be enthroned. It is also the place whence the readings will be proclaimed. The homily (sermon) may also be given from here, and often the intentions of the Bidding Prayer are read from the ambo.

The Chair: This is the point or designated area from which the priest presides. This is an important area for the director to establish.

Although not one of the three principal focal points, the Baptistry may often feature in worship. Besides the font that holds the water, the Baptistry also houses the large and often decorative Paschal Candle.

4 Elements Of The Celebration

No part of the celebration of Mass is private. Nothing is denied to the camera. Yet the congregation has precedence at all times over the broadcast and its recipients.

The time during which the assembly comes forward to receive Communion is often the most difficult time for television to fill. Some emphasis can be given to the behaviour of communicants returning to their places. Some may even pause to light a candle before doing so. This makes good television because the pictures are telling an interesting story. If there is to be a general “exploration” of interesting aspects within the building (e.g. stained glass, mosaics, paintings, carvings and fabrics), this may be a good time to do it. Otherwise, while some of the distribution of communion should always be featured, this time may provide an opportunity for a prerecorded insert featuring some aspect of the community’s life, of which communion is a sign.

The religious adviser will be pleased to provide a basic explanation of the Mass for the director and crew in order to help them see which areas and actions are important and significant, and which are not.

There are many actions in the Mass which contribute to a proper understanding of the sacred drama as it unfolds. The following moments must be shown:

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- Gathering of the Assembly
 - Procession of the Book of Scriptures
 - Presentation of the Gifts (bread and wine)
 - Preparation of the Gifts
 - Presiding at the Eucharistic Prayer
 - Breaking of Bread
 - Distribution of Communion to (at least) some
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5 General Considerations

The medium of television tends to feature close-up camera-work because it provides a stronger method of expression. There is always a risk of indiscretion. Directors should avoid shots, however interesting, which are likely to become a distraction or which seem to be exploitive of an individual.

During the course of the celebration various individuals or groups of individuals will contribute both words and music, (e.g. congregation, choir, cantor, priest, reader etc). It is most desirable that the full variety of sound be highlighted when, for example, a piece of music is sung in four parts.

Advertising of services or wares, the inclusion of trade signs or names of firms etc (e.g. on musical instruments) should be avoided where possible as this can injure the liturgical character of broadcast worship.

Potential directors are always welcome to attend a celebration of Mass beforehand to get a taste of what is to be expected in a particular church. Careful research and detailed rehearsal cannot be underestimated.

C FOR MUSICIANS

1 Pastoral Opportunity

The broadcasting of a parish liturgy provides the parish with an exciting pastoral opportunity. It gives new impetus and motivation to a community, offering a chance for renewal and growth. In exercising their ministry, parish musicians need to be aware of these special opportunities, so that they may be advantageous to the musical and liturgical life of the parish.

2 The Choice of Parish

When choosing a parish from which to broadcast, it is essential that those responsible ensure that its music is of a suitable standard and is chosen and performed in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Church. (see GIRM)

3 Celebration of the Community

The assembled parish community and its liturgical celebration have precedence over the broadcast and its recipients. This must be borne in mind by all involved, not least the musicians. They are not to stage a performance for others, but to celebrate the parish liturgy. There may be a temptation to import extra musicians from outside the community to bolster numbers, but this would only serve to undermine the principle that it is the celebration and prayer of the community.

4 Evangelisation

Music provides an opportunity for evangelisation. It is a powerful medium through which to proclaim the Gospel and move the hearts of people. An awareness of this can inspire and encourage the ministers of music.

5 Planning

i) Seeking Advice

Few parish musicians have experience of broadcasting. From the outset, therefore, they may need to consult those who are more experienced: the Diocesan Director of Music, the Diocesan Liturgical Commission etc. It would be prudent if the choice of music were not finally decided until these consultations have taken place.

ii) Criteria for Choosing Music

- a) The music should be chosen in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Church Music Committee of the Bishops' Conference.
- b) The Scriptures and the liturgical season should provide the inspiration for the decisions.
- c) The parish should seek to achieve its "normal best" and not be over ambitious in its choices
- d) The needs of the viewer/listener must of course be kept in mind. Homegrown music may well serve the preferences of the parish, but selections from a repertoire more widely known may provide a welcome familiarity for the viewer/listener. A broadcast liturgy is not to be employed as a showcase to promote homegrown music. Sensitivity and discretion need to be exercised to achieve a balance.

iii) Time Constraints

This is not necessarily a negative factor. Pastoral liturgists often remark that we should do less in order to mean more. If music is to be cut, the following principles need to be considered:

- a) Integral musical elements, such as the Acclamations, should not be omitted.
- b) When omitting verses of hymns, care should be taken not to disrupt the sense of the text.

iv) Rehearsal Time

The broadcasting of secular programmes is of a very high and professional standard. Religious broadcasting has to be of comparable level of excellence. Consequently, the music will need to be wellrehearsed to minimise the danger of unexpected disaster and to give confidence to the music ministers. However, there is also a danger of over-rehearsing to the point at which the worship becomes stifled. The purpose of the music is to serve the liturgy and enable people to pray.

v) The Music's Function

Music has many functions. It expresses our faith and allows us to praise God. It encourages liturgical celebration, unites us as one voice, and provides beauty and solemnity for worship. Some music is directly associated with the liturgical action (e.g. Psalm, Acclamations) whilst other music has a more independent or accompanimental function (e.g. Choral motet or meditative item). Those involved in worship need to be aware, at any given moment within the liturgy, of the purpose and function of the music being used.

6 Conclusion

It is the guiding principle of those musicians privileged to participate in televised liturgy, that they are a community assembled for worship in the name of Jesus. They are, however, to be aware that others are taking part in their celebration as viewers/listeners. Consequently, they should celebrate the liturgy to the best of their ability, in the hope that it may be fruitful for others.

D FOR RELIGIOUS ADVISERS

1 Role

The role of the religious adviser is twofold: firstly, to act on behalf of the Church in relation to the TV company and, secondly, to interpret the needs of the TV company in mounting a broadcast within the parish.

2 Preliminaries

The religious adviser is involved from the very beginning of the operation. This most certainly includes the choice of venue. While certain professionals will need to vet the premises from a technical/ financial viewpoint, the religious adviser should bear in mind the liturgical, musical and aesthetic features of the communities which may be part of a televised liturgy.

To help in this process, the adviser should make contact with all dioceses in the television region and seek the help of bishops, Diocesan Liturgical Commissions and musical advisers.

3 Planning.

a) The Church Community

Once the choice has been made and approved by central scheduling authority, the adviser, wherever possible, ought to be involved at every stage of the planning. He/she should:

- Liaise with priest and people throughout the project
- Be present and ready to offer guidelines at the initial planning meeting of the community
- Be familiar with the evolving shape of the liturgy televised and ensure that nothing has reached the point of no return. without being highlighted
- Offer constructive and/or restrictive advice
- Call upon the services of liturgical and musical personnel in the diocese without usurping local talent
- Set up a training day for presiders and ministers involved
- Be aware of proper exercise of liturgical ministries
- Be sensitive to the liturgical environment
- Be conscious of musical possibilities
- Attend all rehearsals

b) The Television Company

The adviser liaises and works with the television company in the following ways:

- Collaborating with the programme directors and being aware of their plans from the beginning
- Offering advice, with the aid of a detailed script, ensuring that correct liturgical emphasis is given, from a visual point of view, to the different parts of the celebration

All planning should be done in the context of the liturgical year, bearing in mind that the viewer will be joining a community of faith at worship on a particular Sunday.

4 General Considerations

Televised liturgy must be of the same standard of broadcasting as any other transmission. Anything less is a tacit comment on the seriousness of our intent.

In almost all cases televised liturgy will be “live”. Therefore both the strengths and constraints imposed by live television will need to be borne in mind.

For the community in the broadcast there is a strong sense of witness involved because viewers will gain a sense of the spirit of faith. An opportunity to be engaged in a televised liturgy can be an important bonding exercise for a local Church community. The pastoral benefits may therefore be quite considerable.

5 Pitfalls

Televised liturgy should bring out the best in a parish community. They should be challenged to give of their best but not expected to achieve the impossible. It is important not to attempt certain features just for the sake of offering something different. Parishes should only present those liturgical elements which are regular features of their Sunday worship. This can be especially true in areas such as drama and liturgical dance. Unless the standard of either is going to match what a viewer can normally expect to see on television, that which may be perfectly acceptable within the confines of the church can be an embarrassment on screen.

6 Commentary

Good liturgy should reduce the need for commentary. However, a few words may be necessary at certain points. An introduction before the Mass begins can help to set the Church in its location. If the presiding priest is able to do this it can often be a helpful link with what follows. While signs and symbols should speak for themselves, the adviser will need to bear in mind that there will be certain Catholic practices (e.g. the use of incense, lay ministers of the Eucharist, elements relating to the liturgical year) where a brief explanation may be useful.

7 Conclusion

The various broadcasting acts for England and Wales have given the Churches an opportunity rare in religious broadcasting worldwide: to have free access, on a fairly distributed denominational basis, to regular televised worship. We owe it to our own Church that we make the best use of the opportunity provided.

SOME FURTHER READING...

The Parish Mass: A Resource Book for Clergy, Religious and Laity.
Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. CTS London 1981

Music in the Parish Mass.
Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. CTS London 1981

The Parish Church: Principles of Liturgical Design and Reordering.
Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. CTS London 1984

The Liturgy Documents: A Parish Resource.
LTP Chicago 1985

This book contains a number of useful Roman documents in addition to the US Bishops' own documents on Music in Catholic Worship and Environment and Art in Catholic Worship.

Further copies of this booklet are available from:

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