

The worship belongs to the whole community in their active participation. But ministerial leadership belongs to a number of leaders of the Sunday worship.

i.e. Leader of prayer, proclaimers of the Word, ministers of Holy Communion, music ministry, hospitality, finance, commentary etc.

Those who are appointed as leaders need to appreciate and accept the responsibility which accompanies it.

The necessary training for all the Ministers of the Liturgy will be given by the Director of Liturgy or members of the Diocesan Liturgical Commission.

DIOCESAN NORMS AND PROCEDURES FOR THE DIOCESE OF SANDHURST

Sunday Celebrations in the Expectation of a Priest.

It belongs to the diocesan bishop, after hearing the council of presbyters, to decide whether Sunday assemblies without the celebration of the eucharist should be held on a regular basis in his diocese. It belongs also to the bishop, after considering the place and persons involved, to set out both general and particular norms for such celebrations. These assemblies are therefore to be conducted only in virtue of their convocation by the bishop and only under the pastoral ministry of the parish priest.

Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest #24

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1: WHAT HAS BROUGHT US HERE?

It is a reality that there is a declining number of Catholic priests available for ministry in our Diocese. This means that not every Parish can have a resident priest and therefore not every mass centre can celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday.

A limitation in the number of Masses a priest may celebrate * at and the tyranny of distance experienced in our country areas means we simply cannot have a priest everywhere that is convenient for everyone.

This situation is not unique to our Diocese, and while some may see this situation as a crisis, it can also be an opportunity for each of us to further respond to our Baptismal call.

** The Code of Canon Law (905 §2) directs that “The local Ordinary may for a good reason allow priests to celebrate twice in one day or even, if the pastoral need requires it, three times on Sundays or holydays of obligation”. This does not include the Saturday Vigil celebration (The third Mass needs to be negotiated between Bishop, Priest and Community according to pastoral needs and the capacity of the particular clergy involved)*

2: WHEN DO WE CELEBRATE?

“By a tradition handed down from the apostles and having its origin from the very day of Christ’s resurrection, the Church celebrates the paschal mystery every eighth day, which, with good reason, bears the name of the Lord’s Day or Sunday”
Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy #106

This does not exclude a Eucharistic gathering through the week, but these gatherings do not replace or fulfil the Sunday obligation. As a Catholic community we are called to gather on a Sunday or Saturday evening.

Then the Profession of Faith, Prayers of Intercession and a Prayer of Thanksgiving are included. A Prayer of Thanksgiving comes at this point as we have no Eucharistic Prayer, which is when we give thanks in a eucharist.

Communion Rite

This is the place for the Lord’s prayer. A Benedictus, Magnificate or another prayer of praise from the psalms or canticles can be used here. The invitation to prayer reminds us that we anticipate the full communion.

Concluding Rite

Any brief announcements may be made here. The collection for the needs of the community is taken now. Then a final blessing and Dismissal.

Hymns may be included throughout the Ceremony in the same way as any Sunday celebration.

7: WHO LEADS THE LITURGY?

The parish priest will work with the local parish to determine those lay people best suited to the role of leader in the various ministries of the worship.

There will be a suitable celebration to offer prayers for the leaders, and their ongoing formation will be seen to by the parish priest responsible for the parish. *(not a direct quote refer to Directory for Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest #30)*

6: WHAT DOES THE LITURGY LOOK LIKE?

In 2002 the Sandhurst Diocesan Liturgy Commission, issued a “Manual for Celebrations of the Word with and without Communion”, which was forwarded to each Parish. This supplies a full liturgical Rite with various prayer options. Copies of that manual are still available from the Chancery and can be sent to parishes, on request. The Commission is planning to supply more seasonal options in the future. Additionally, some brief liturgical notes are...

- There is no entrance procession, but there may be an opening hymn. After which leader of prayer comes from the assembly, takes his/her place and the worship begins.
- It should be noted that the leader of prayer does not use the presidential chair (that is kept empty as a sign of our anticipation). The leader may not wear an alb, stole or chasuble as this is a lay-led celebration.

Introductory Rite

This includes a greeting, reason for gathering, recalling that this community is part of a wider Church and the anticipation of eucharist. An opening prayer is included plus a prayer of praise may replace a Penitential Rite

Liturgy of the Word

The normal readings for the Sunday of the Liturgical Year are to be used. The structure is the same as any Sunday liturgy. Words of reflection may be included after the Gospel, by the person who has proclaimed the Gospel. This is not encouraged without this person receiving suitable training in giving reflections. The Parish Priest may send a message to his community which could be read now.

3: WHAT IS THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS?

A Celebration of the Word with Communion is a necessary alternative but not a substitute for a Eucharistic celebration. However, the Church does give us guidelines and recommendations for these celebrations, realising that circumstances lead the community to gather without Eucharistic consecration.

If there is no Eucharistic celebration “either because no sacred minister is available or for some other grave reason, the faithful are strongly recommended to take part in a liturgy of the Word” *Code of Canon Law 1248§2*

“On this day Christ’s faithful must gather together, so that, by hearing the word of God and taking part in eucharist, they may call to mind the passion, resurrection, and glorification of the Lord Jesus” *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy #106*

Pope John Paul II reminded us that “one of the essential points of reference for Christians from which they draw both light and strength, has been since the beginning the Sunday assembly, the gathering of the faithful in one place to celebrate the risen Lord” *Address to the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship, 1987.*

It is important to gather together as a worshipping community as our gathering gives witness to each other and our wider community, beyond the walls of our church building.

Gathering as a community maintains the bond between the community and the universal church. It brings about a sense of cohesion, continuity and vitality. Gathering on a Sunday is not “playing eucharist” but it should leave people yearning for full eucharist. This is not a substitute.

4: WHAT ARE THE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS?

As already mentioned the “Code of Canon Law” directs us to gather for the Word. The “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy – Sacrosanctum Concilium”, “The New General Instruction of the Roman Missal” and “The Acta Apostolicae Sedis” are some of the Roman documents which specifically mention Sunday Worship in the expectation of a Priest as the means to gathering together as a worshipping community.

The “Rite for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest” (National Conference of Catholic Bishops – North America 1994), has the liturgical ritual, and also carries a directory citing all the supporting documentation and references for the use of the Rite, however, this document is being updated at present. The “Ritual for Sunday Celebration of the Word and Hours” (Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Ottawa, Ontario, 1995)

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference “Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest” and our local Diocese also have directory references for the Sunday Celebrations in the Expectation of a Priest.

5: WHAT ARE THE NORMS?

There are two types of Sunday Celebrations in the Expectation of a priest.

- One is in the occasion of emergency. *A one-off Sunday when suddenly there is no eucharistic presider.*
 - Where there is a foreseen short term absence of a priest (holiday, retreat, etc) and a serious effort has been made to obtain a supply priest

- The other is the Sunday celebrations in an ongoing manner. *Where there is no resident priest and restrictions make it impossible for there to be, in the foreseeable future, a priest available each week.*

There needs to be formation in parishes for both eventualities.

A Sunday Celebration in the Expectation of a Priest cannot be celebrated if there is a Mass celebrated in a place nearby, which is accessible to the faithful by reasonable means of transport. *(not a direct quote refer to Directory for Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest #18)*

A Sunday Celebration in the Expectation of a Priest cannot be celebrated on a Sunday where there has been a mass on the previous Saturday night *(not a direct quote refer to Directory for Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest Dir #21)* and vice versa.

Sunday Celebration in the Expectation of a Priest will only be celebrated in a parish where there is sufficient numbers to make a suitable number of ministers and assembly.

The practice of Sunday Celebration will only continue with a commitment from the people for ongoing formation and education

Eucharistic celebrations will occur in each parish at least once a month.

The Sunday Celebration in the Expectation of a Priest is to follow the standard liturgy as determined by the diocesan bishop.