

Preparing for ministry

What is the focus?

Often the task to be undertaken is to prepare the church for a series of celebrations during a particular season, sometimes it will be for a particular celebration. A good way of engaging with the spiritual focus of a season or celebration is to prayerfully read the principle liturgical texts for these - perhaps the Prefaces or the Opening Prayers from the Mass, or perhaps the Gospel readings.

It is most helpful to do this together with other ministers, for example the members of the liturgy preparation group. That way your insights can enrich their response to the texts and their insights be a source of fresh inspiration for you. There will also be the great advantage of helping to coordinate the contributions you are all making to your parish's celebration of the liturgy.

Prayer before ministry.

Expressing your love for God, and learning to trust in God's love for us. Praying for the community you are called to serve, that together, and through God's word, all people's might come to live in unity with God and with each other?

from Rite of Dedication of a Church.

The Church is favoured,
the dwelling place of God on earth:
a temple built of living stones,
founded on the apostles
with Jesus Christ its cornerstone.

Here may your children,
gathered around your altar,
celebrate the memorial of the Paschal

Lamb,

and be fed at the table
of Christ's word and Christ's body.

Here may the whole world
clothed in the dignity
of the children of God,
enter with gladness your city of
peace.

Amen

If you would like to find out more about this ministry, or would like to give your time to assist in this ministry, please free

feel to contact any of the Arts & Environment members or Fr. Robert at:

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Preparing the Liturgical Environment for Mass



Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:4-5

The Eucharist is the vital centre of all that the Church is and does. At its heart is the real presence of the crucified, risen and glorified Lord, who continues his saving work among us. The Second Vatican Council reminded us: 'the most holy Eucharist holds within itself the whole spiritual treasure of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Passover and our living bread'. (cf. *One Bread One Body* 3)

All who exercise a liturgical ministry need a proper preparation for their responsibilities. They are to have the competence to perform the particular ministry with which they have been entrusted. (cf. *Celebrating the Mass* 29)

This leaflet is one of a series of leaflets prepared for liturgical ministers to help them refresh their understanding of their role at Mass.

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WHAT THE CHURCH SAYS ABOUT ...

It is important that the place where the Church gathers for worship be kept clean and tidy, fit for its purpose. The church should be decorated appropriate to the mysteries of salvation celebrated through the unfolding of the liturgical year. There is great value in decorating the Church, particularly for Sundays and other principal Feasts, however decoration should be carefully considered so that it complements the liturgy, rather than distracting from it. *Celebrating the Mass (CTM)* 50

Materials and objects used in the Eucharist are to be "truly worthy and beautiful," authentic in their noble simplicity, and well adapted to sacred use. The greatest care and sensitivity are necessary, even in the smallest matters, to achieve "a noble simplicity and elegance." *CTM* 106

Flowers

The use of fresh flowers is encouraged as a way of engaging in the beauty and dignity of celebration. Discerning use of flowers can indicate the relative importance of particular occasions, and signify the keeping of particular seasons.

- During Advent the floral decoration of the church should be in keeping with the season, not anticipating the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord.
- During Lent the church is not to be

decorated with flowers. Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent), Solemnities, and Feasts are exceptions to this rule. Flowers used on these days should be removed after Evening Prayer II.

Artificial flowers and plants should not be used. Dried flowers, ferns and sprays may be used, particularly in winter months. Care should be taken to use flowers to guide the eye to the various centres of liturgical action – for example the entrance to the Church, the ambo, the altar, the presider's chair; on other occasions the font, the place for reserving the sacred oils etc. Moderation should be observed when decorating altars. Floral decorations should always be modest and placed around the altar rather than on top of it. *CTM* 118-121

Banners

The whole environment of the church can be enhanced through the use of banners and other visual media. These can be used to give focus to a particular liturgical season or occasion. Care should be taken that these complement and do not detract from the liturgical celebration or design of the building itself. Banners and other materials should not be fixed to the altar, ambo, font, as this leads to a secondary symbol obscuring a primary one. *CTM* 122