



Liturgical Considerations

Basic principles

Through Partners in the Gospel, we are seeking to become one community. This does not mean we seek uniformity, but that we foster communion with one another. The liturgy is the place where that communion starts and where it leads. Coming together in prayer and worship builds and fosters our communion with God and with one another.

As parishes journey together, there will be many opportunities to share liturgical gifts and practices. At the same time, we know there may be some challenges as we begin implementation of Partners in the Gospel. Since each community has a liturgical character, it is important to build upon this as parishes come together.

Help is near

The Liturgy team is ready to help you navigate the liturgical impact of Partners in the Gospel. The team is significantly increasing formation opportunities for liturgy leaders with regular webinars on the liturgical impact of Partners in the Gospel. This will provide an opportunity for liturgy leaders to get to know one another, ask questions, and share experiences and best practices.

Name the challenges

Liturgical changes, whether large or small, can be disruptive in parish life. Some changes – including changes to Mass times – can be contentious. Transitioning to a new pastor is a hopeful time, and pastoral transitions can bring a change in liturgical “style.” As Partners in the Gospel begins, many parishes will be encountering all these changes at the same time.

Bringing parish communities together in a family means bringing together communities with different parish traditions, different liturgical practices, and different cultural backgrounds. Even when there is a strong commonality (a similar musical repertoire, for example), coming together liturgically may be difficult. And if there are widely divergent styles, it may be hard to find common ground.

Handle with care

The liturgy is where we encounter Christ, and the parish church is the place where that encounter happens. Thus, whenever we make changes that impact how, where, or when we worship, we are treading on holy ground. Any changes to the way the liturgy is celebrated must be rooted in liturgical principals and not in mere aesthetics, style, or convenience.

Name the opportunities

Parish families can share resources in new ways, allowing increased access to Mass, confessions, devotions,

and cultural expressions. Parish families may be able to share liturgical leadership and improve the quality of their liturgical life. Parishes within a family can also begin to come together for special celebrations. (See below.)

Think interculturally

No two parishes are alike. Each parish has its own unique history, traditions, musical ensembles, and ways of doing things – its own culture. Over the years, the Church has learned much about intercultural encounter and ministry and about the importance of inclusion. It might be helpful to think of the different parishes in terms of culture. As parish families join for events, plan carefully to honor the presence and gifts of each community, so that they feel not only welcome but also fully included.

As parishes come together as families, it is important to reflect on the ways those with unique language needs are (or are not) able to participate. Consider ways to incorporate the languages spoken in your community into the liturgy on a regular basis. By incorporating the different languages spoken by the community, those who speak the languages will feel welcomed and truly a part of parish life.

Some years ago, the Archdiocese of Seattle published a pastoral plan for Hispanic ministry titled [From Guests to Hosts](#) (2007). Mere welcome is not enough. Every member of the parish family needs to feel at home – not just a guest, but a host.

Pray for each other

Pray regularly for the other communities in the parish family in the Prayers of the Faithful at Mass. For example:

- For the parishes of St. N, St. N, and St N – our family – that we may truly become Partners in the Gospel. We pray to the Lord.
- For our parish family – St. N, St. N, and St. N – that we may grow together as one family of faith and live as faithful disciples of Jesus. We pray to the Lord.

Liturgical consultation

During Phase 1, pastors might consider assembling a joint liturgical commission. This group could conduct a self-review process, allowing each parish to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and an inventory of personnel, whether paid or volunteers, their gifts, and abilities. Such a process could help the pastor identify specific challenges and opportunities in bringing diverse communities together. This group could also collaborate on the first shared liturgies of the parish family.

Music is an integral part of a parish's worship experience. Music directors might come together separately, or with the liturgical group, to have similar conversations about the strengths and assets – and the gaps – in each parish's musical life.

Shared liturgies

During Phase 1, most changes will be administrative as pastors figure out effective ways to work with their team and navigate the family. Shared liturgies will be one of the first ways parishioners from the different parishes encounter one another. These are some of the liturgies that can, and perhaps should, be shared

early on.

- **Confirmation**

If the number of confirmations and the size of the church buildings in the family allows, Phase 1 is a good time to offer a joint celebration for the entire parish family. In some parish families, this may not be possible because of the size of the confirmation groups or the existing schedule for formation programs. In many places, however, this could lead to a richer experience for the confirmandi as they see themselves as part of a broader Church. This will need to be discussed early in Phase 1 because the scheduling for confirmations happens toward the end of the summer. Whenever sacramental celebrations are shared, some of the formation and preparation should be shared as well: not just the rehearsal, but perhaps also a retreat or some formation sessions.

- **Penance services**

Communal penance services in Advent 2024 and Lent 2025 could be scheduled as family-wide celebrations in Phase 1. The hosting church building should vary to encourage people to feel welcome to pray and worship in every parish that is part of the family.

- **OCIA rites**

Some of the rites of Christian Initiation of Adults could be celebrated together. For example, it would make sense for all the parishes in the family to attend the same Rite of Election together.

- **Holy Week**

If possible, avoid any changes to the schedule for Holy Week and Easter in Phase 1. (See the [Mass time considerations](#) for Phase 0 starting page 13.) There are many special considerations around Holy Week liturgies. Full guidance will be provided to help parish families navigate those challenges.

Shared liturgies require much intentionality. It is not enough for the hosting parish to welcome people from other parts of the family; they need to “enlarge the space of the tent” (cf. Isaiah 54:2) and make room for them. For parishioners, that means greeting unfamiliar faces and perhaps letting go of favorite places to sit. For liturgical ministers, it means fostering a culture of hospitality and flexibility, making room in liturgical ministries – usher/greeter, music, extraordinary minister of holy Communion, altar server, reader, MC, sacristan – for new people.

When shared liturgies happen, the hosting church should intentionally invite ministers from the other parishes in the family to assist with the liturgy. In this way, shared liturgies become a visible sign of the new reality of the parish family and help the whole community realize a shared future.