

Notes: RCIA - FEB 1, 2024

THE LITURGICAL LIFE & CALENDAR

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1. HISTORY

From the very beginning, the Church lived a life of liturgy. Referring back to our discussion about the Eucharist from a few weeks ago, the early Christians first celebrated Jewish rituals, and then “broke bread” together in a structured manner.

Saint Justin Martyr details this in his “First Apology”. Thus, we know that this was always a structured event.

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2. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MASS

Despite a uniform 'outline', the Mass came to be celebrated in many forms, largely dependent upon location.

- » For example, the Church in the East did not use instruments in their worship, instead focusing on chant alone.
- » The choice Readings used at Mass have been adjusted several times.

Most relevant to us: the Church in the West has always maintained the same basic structure, and many of the prayers over-lapped.

However, from place-to-place, city-to-city, the bishop's instructions and additions to the liturgy created a situation in which Mass could seem to be (but was not actually) very different.

This changed following the Protestant Reformation: connected to the Council of Trent in the 1500's, Pope Saint Pius V promulgated the Roman Missal and declared it to be the singular form -- *kind of* -- of proper worship in the Western Church.

This Missal was rooted in the way things 'had always been done in Rome'; that is to say that it was strongly rooted in tradition, and was (even at the time) considered to be the 'typical' form of Mass.

- » This is where we get the phrase "When in Rome, do as the Romans do."

The "Pian" or "Tridentine" Missal was, design, very specific, with the intention of avoiding dissension among priests and faithful alike, which was seen as a catalyst for the Reformation.

In the 400 years which followed, very few changes were made to this Missal. Certain feast days were added, and some Popes added prayers suited to the particular circumstances of their day (the rise of Communism, for example)

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3. THE PAULINE LITURGY

In the 1960's, the world's bishops declared: "in faithful obedience to tradition, the sacred Council declares that holy Mother Church holds all lawfully acknowledged rites to be of equal right and dignity; that she wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way. The Council also desires that, where necessary, the rites be revised carefully in the light of sound tradition, and that they be given new vigor to meet the circumstances and needs of modern times." (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, no. 4)

The constitution goes on to give some more specifics on what they mean by this; examples include:

- » The promotion of liturgical instruction for both clergy and laity
- » Revision of the General Calendar (feasts)
- » The primacy of the local bishop as the "regulator of the liturgy"... a return, in a sense, to the circumstances lived before the Council of Trent.
- » The revision of the lectionary cycle to include more of the Bible
- » Option of local, "incultured" variations to the Order of Mass (Africa)

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THE MOST OBVIOUS CHANGES...

4. PARTICIPATION

The “full, active, and conscious participation” of the laity in the celebration of the Rites.

To facilitate this, all “people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes. And at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence.”

5. LANGUAGE

“the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites. But since the use of the mother tongue, whether in the Mass, the administration of the sacraments, or other parts of the liturgy, frequently may be of great advantage to the people, the limits of its employment may be extended...”

6. ORIENTATION

In January of 1964, Pope Saint Paul VI gave permission for the celebration of Mass either facing the people or the liturgical east.

Facing the Liturgical East - in Latin, *ad orientem* or *ad apsidem* - had been the practice of the Church since the earliest days, and is still the unique mode of celebration in the Churches of the East.

However, Pope Paul saw an opportunity to assist in the directive that all people, ordained and lay alike, should be active participants in the liturgy. The idea was primarily focused on the fact that there were now more dialogues in the Order of Mass; microphones and sound systems were not yet normative throughout the world.

7. THE PRAYERS

The prayers used at Mass on solemnities are much the same, and many Saints' feast days are, as well. But many, many new prayers were added.

Most noticeable is the change from 1 Eucharistic Prayer to 4 principal ones, plus 3 other kinds: Reconciliation, Various Needs, and Children.

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8. THE READINGS

The readings proclaimed at Mass come from the *Lectionary*. Literally, this means “the readings”.

Up until the 1970s, there was a fixed, one-year cycle of readings.

At present, the readings proclaimed at Mass change each year:

- » Sundays and Solemnities have a three-year cycle: A, B, and C
- » Weekdays have a two-year cycle: I and II
- » Total, there are six possible cycles: AI, AII, BI, BII, CI, and CII

9. CONCELEBRATION

Con-celebration, which was a common practice in the early centuries of the Church, was mostly suppressed in the first part of the second millennium.

- » This had to do with how priests, deacons were paid.
- » The tradition survived in the Eastern Rites

In the 1960’s, this became a normal part of the Roman Rite, as well

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10. THE OTHER SACRAMENTS

After the reform of the Mass in the 1960's, the celebration of the other Sacraments were revised "to fit the vibe" - that is, using the same basic methodology.

They were also made to be congruent: responses were reduced to those which would be familiar from the Mass, and therefore, to each other.

In other words, the intention was that a practicing Catholic would feel comfortable at a celebration of another Sacrament, and would thus be enabled to participate actively.

11. THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Priests, Deacons, and Religious sisters/brothers make a promise to pray the Liturgy of the Hours every day. This prayer is ancient, even if the form has changed over time.

The Liturgy of the Hours consists of three major hours and other, more 'supportive' ones:

- » Morning Prayer (Lauds) at 6am
- » Daytime Prayer (Terce, Sext, None) at 9am/12pm/3pm
- » Evening Prayer (Vespers) at 6pm
- » Night Prayer (Compline) at 9pm
- » Office of Readings at any point throughout the day.

The prayer is designed to fulfill the words of the psalmist: "I rejoice at your promise, as one who has found rich spoil. Falsehood I hate and abhor; your law I love. Seven times a day I praise you, because your judgments are righteous."

In the last 50 years, there has been an emphasis on spreading the practice of this prayer, which is the "public prayer of the Church" (the *Divine Office*) among lay people who are not obliged to pray it.

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12. THE LITURGICAL YEAR

As stated before, the Readings of the Mass have their own cycles.

But, underlying that is the “General Roman Calendar” and the particular adaptations to specific areas.

The Calendar also underwent massive reforms in the 1960’s. What we experience today is a simplified system with six seasons:

- » Advent (violet) - the time of preparation for the coming of Christ: both in His incarnation and in His return in glory
- » Christmas (white) - the continued celebration of the Nativity, which lasts... awhile. Length depends on who you ask!
- » Lent (violet) - the time of preparation through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, for the Paschal Mystery of Christ and of His resurrection
- » Triduum (white/red) - Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil
- » Easter (white) - the 50 day long celebration of the Resurrection and Victory of Christ
- » Ordinary Time (green) - we are currently approaching the end of