

# Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest



## Diocese of Jackson Policy and Training Manual Advent 2010

## Table of Contents

### Acknowledgements

Diocesan Directives.....4

Preface.....6

Introduction.....8

Chapter One.....10  
    Questions and Answers

Chapter Two.....13  
    Outline: Morning/Evening Prayer  
    Rubrics  
    Setup of Seating

Chapter Three.....20  
    Creativity

Chapter Four.....22

- History
- Mission Diocese
- Sunday Obligation and *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*
- Bishop's Role
- Lay Minister's Role

## Acknowledgments

*The Diocese of Jackson Office of Liturgy would like to thank the students of St. Joseph High School in Madison for their assistance in developing this training manual. We appreciate very much their giving up a Saturday morning to help with this project. This manual will provide a basic understanding of the Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest ritual, its history and its implementation and use in our diocese.*

*The ritual itself has very detailed instructions for those planning the celebration.*

*We see this form of prayer as an opportunity to get parishioners more involved in the actual preparation and flow of a community prayer experience.*

*We hope this manual and worship aid will assist you in developing a deeper sense of community and Catholic identity for the faithful.*



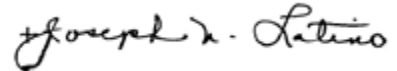


Diocese of Jackson  
Directives for Implementation and Use of  
*Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of A Priest*

In the Diocese of Jackson the following directives are promulgated on this day and effective November 28, 2010.

1. *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* should not be celebrated in the cities and towns where two or more churches are located and Sunday Mass is celebrated in at least one of those (SCAP Directory 18).
2. If Mass is available at another church on Sunday within a reasonable driving distance then *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* should not be celebrated and parishioners should attend Mass in the nearby church (SCAP Directory 18). [15-20 miles is suggested]
3. Ideally *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* should be celebrated only once in a community on a given Sunday (SCAP 15).
4. When celebrated, *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (SCAP) shall be celebrated in the form of Morning or Evening Prayer given in the SCAP ritual in all parishes, missions and institutions.
5. Because of the richness of the tradition of the Liturgy of the Hours and the opportunity for the faithful to become more familiar with all Scripture, the entire Psalmody will be used at such celebrations in the Diocese of Jackson.

6. Lay Leaders of Prayer must be properly trained and then delegated by the Bishop of the Diocese of Jackson and Pastor before conducting a *Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest*.
7. Lay Leaders of Prayer must be delegated by the Bishop in order to have the capacity to offer a reflection on the Scriptures at a *Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest*.
8. In the Diocese of Jackson the vesture for Lay Leaders of Prayer will be Sunday dress or attire befitting the dignity of the distribution of Holy Communion. An alb may be worn. A cassock and surplice should not be worn.
9. During a *Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest*, Lay Leaders of Prayer should be seated outside the sanctuary near or among the faithful during the celebration (GSF 55D) facing the altar. The presider's chair should not be used.



Bishop of Jackson  
October 18, 2010  
Feast of St. Luke

## Preface

### *The Song of the Church*



The collection of psalms found in Scripture, composed as it was under divine inspiration, has, from the very beginnings of the Church, shown a wonderful power of fostering devotion among Christians as they offer to God a continuous sacrifice of praise, the harvest of lips blessing his name. Following a custom already established in the Old Law, the psalms have played a conspicuous part in the sacred liturgy itself, and in the divine office. Thus was born what Basil calls *the voice of the*



*Church*, that singing of psalms, which is *the daughter of that hymn of praise* (to use the words of our predecessor, Urban VIII) *which goes up unceasingly before the throne of God and of the Lamb*, and which teaches those especially charged with the duty of divine

worship, as Athanasius says, *the way to praise God, and the fitting words in which to bless him*. Augustine expresses this well when he says: *God praised himself so that man might give him fitting praise; because God chose to praise himself man found the way in which to bless God*.

The psalms have also a wonderful power to awaken in our hearts the desire for every virtue. Athanasius says: *Though all Scripture, both old and new, is divinely inspired and has its use in teaching, as we read in Scripture itself, yet the Book of Psalms, like a garden enclosing the fruits of all the other books, produces their fruits in song, and in the process of singing brings forth its own special fruits to take their place beside them*. In the same place Athanasius rightly adds: *The psalms seem to me to be like a mirror, in which the person using them can see himself, and the stirrings of his own heart; he can recite them against the background of his own emotions*. Augustine says in his Confessions: *How I wept when I heard your hymns and canticles, being deeply moved by the sweet singing of your Church*. Those voices

*flowed into my ears, truth filtered into my heart, and from my heart surged waves of devotion. Tears ran down, and I was happy in my tears.*

Indeed, who could fail to be moved by those many passages in the psalms which set forth so profoundly the infinite majesty of God, his omnipotence, his justice and goodness and clemency, too deep for words, and all the other infinite qualities of his that deserve our praise? Who could fail to be roused to the same emotions by

the prayers of thanksgiving to God for blessings received, by the petitions, so humble and confident, for blessings still awaited, by the cries of a soul in sorrow for sin committed? Who would not be fired with love as he looks on the likeness of Christ, the redeemer, here so lovingly foretold? His was *the voice Augustine heard in every psalm, the voice of praise, of suffering, of joyful expectation, of present distress.*

From the apostolic constitution *Divino afflatu* of Pope Saint Pius X.



## Introduction

From the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of the Second Vatican Council

### Christ is present to his Church



Christ is always present to his Church, especially in the actions of the liturgy. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, in the person of the minister (it is the same Christ who formerly offered himself on the cross that now offers by the ministry of priests) and most of all under the Eucharistic species. He is present in the sacraments by his power, in such a way that when someone baptizes, Christ himself baptizes. He is present in his word, for it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church. Finally, he is present when the Church prays and sings, for he himself promised: *Where two or*

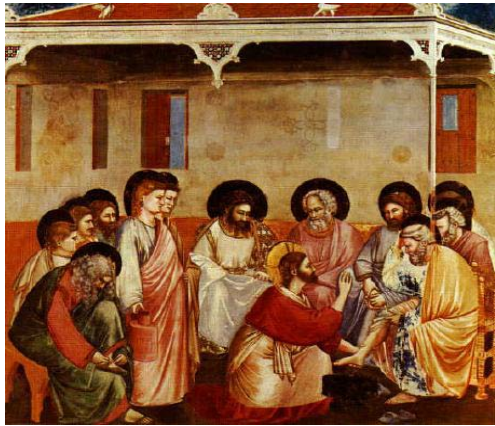
*three are gathered in my name, I am there in their midst (Matt. 18:20).*

Indeed, in this great work which gives perfect glory to God and brings holiness to men and women, Christ is always joining in partnership with himself his beloved Bride, the Church, which calls upon its Lord and through him gives worship to the eternal Father.

It is therefore right to see the liturgy as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ, in which through signs addressed to the senses man's sanctification is signified and, in a way proper to each of these signs, made effective, and in which public worship is celebrated in its fullness by

the mystical body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the head and by his members.

Accordingly, every liturgical celebration, as an activity of Christ the priest and of his body, which is the Church, is a sacred action of a preeminent kind. No other action of the Church equals its title to power or its degree of effectiveness.



In the liturgy on earth we are given a foretaste and share in the liturgy of heaven, celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem, the goal of our pilgrimage, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, as minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle (Cf. Rev. 21:2; Col. 3:1; Heb. 8:2.). With the whole company of heaven we sing a hymn of praise to the Lord; as we reverence the memory of the saints, we hope to have some part with them, and to share in their fellowship; we wait for the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, until he, who is our life, appears, and we

appear with him in glory (Cf. Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:4).



By an apostolic tradition taking its origin from the very day of Christ's resurrection, the Church celebrates the paschal mystery every eighth day, the day that is rightly called the Lord's day. On Sunday the Christian faithful ought to gather together, so that by listening to the word of God and sharing in the Eucharist they may recall the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and give thanks to God who has given them a new birth with a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3). The Lord's Day is therefore the first and greatest festival, one to be set before the loving devotion of the faithful and impressed upon it, so that it may be also a day of joy and of freedom from work. Other celebrations must not take precedence over it, unless they are truly of the greatest importance, since it is the foundation and the kernel of the whole liturgical year. (SC 7, 8, 106)

## Chapter One

### Questions and Answers

#### What is a Communion service?

Communion services are intended to link the faithful attending them to the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist of a parish community. It is not meant to be a replacement or substitute for the Sunday or weekday mass.



#### What are some distinctions between a Eucharistic liturgy (Mass) and a Communion service?

The fundamental difference is “sacrifice”. Mass is an action. The priest (who takes the place of Christ) offers on behalf of the people our Mass. Through it we are united to the eternal sacrifice of Christ on the cross. By offering the bread and wine which is transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ we offer anew Christ crucified, the perfect sacrifice that redeems us and the whole world. A communion service is not an “action” nor is it “sacrifice”. Though we receive the Body of Christ, we do not take part in the salvific act of Christ (the sacrifice offered by our priest).

#### What are some concerns about Communion services?

The concern in official documents about the proliferation of communion services has to do with our understanding of the Eucharist. We must strive to find a balance between building community and maintaining our Catholic identity through the celebration of the Eucharist. In one part our understanding of Eucharist can so focus on community that we become almost Protestant in nature. On another part we so focus on receiving communion that we forget that the Mass is about taking part in the sacrifice. We fulfill our Sunday obligation by attending Mass, not by receiving communion.



#### When is it permissible to have a Communion service?

Communion services are intended strictly for those Catholics legitimately unable to attend Mass on Sunday (the homebound, those who reside in nursing homes, hospice centers, hospitals, prisons or other such

institutions). As mentioned earlier, the policy also allows for the canonical pastor of a parish without a resident priest to petition the bishop to use *Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest*. If permission is granted by the bishop, it may or may not include permission to distribute communion.



### **What if there is no priest at my parish, and we are unable to celebrate Mass?**

There are several different realities here. First we must remember, that Catholics have a “right” to have Mass celebrated for them on Sunday, if there is a priest available. In some dioceses, one priest may be responsible for 5 or more parishes/missions. It is clear that he can only celebrate Sunday Mass at these places once or twice a month. In our Diocese of Jackson, this is becoming more and more the case.

Recent documents from the Holy See remind bishops and priests how important it is to celebrate Mass for the faithful in such circumstances regularly. Bishops, priests, and LEMs are encouraged to enlist the help of religious priests and retired priests in the diocese to assist in places where there is no resident priest. In parishes without a resident priest, bishops may appoint someone to gather the

community and lead them in prayer. The prayer used at these gatherings is *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (2007). This ritual has several forms which may or may not include the distribution of Holy Communion. **In the Diocese of Jackson, Bishop Latino has mandated the form of Morning/Evening Prayer as the form to be used in parishes, missions and institutions in the diocese.**

This ritual may not be used without the bishop’s ongoing permission. The Holy See reminds bishops that permission for the use of this ritual should not be given easily and that it should never be used if Sunday Mass has already been celebrated at the parish.

As for Masses during the week, we must remember that having Mass celebrated for us during the week is a privilege that many Catholics throughout the world and indeed in our own diocese do not enjoy. We do not have a “right” to have Mass celebrated for us during the week. Though it is a noble practice for priests to celebrate Mass daily, they are not required to do so.

If Mass is not celebrated during the week at a parish, it is often possible for people to attend Mass elsewhere. We reserve communion for the sick and those confined to their homes or institutions, in order to unite these people to the Sunday celebration of the parish Mass. For this reason

Pastors, LEMs and Pastoral Ministers should consider avoiding Communion Services during the week. In places where Daily Mass is available in a nearby parish, Communion Services should not be held.



**What should be substituted for communion services, if a parish has gotten used to using them during the week?**

This is up to the pastor and LEM to decide. We recommend that parishes learn to pray morning or evening prayer. Holy Hours with Adoration could be included with this. In other instances, a rosary could be prayed.



**What has changed in the SCAP, and why change now?**

The old policy did not include recommendations and directives from three major documents from Rome and the US Catholic Conference regarding communion services that have been issued since 2000. These include the new *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, and the new *Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest*.

Our new policy incorporates directives made in these new documents.



**Who worked on this policy?**

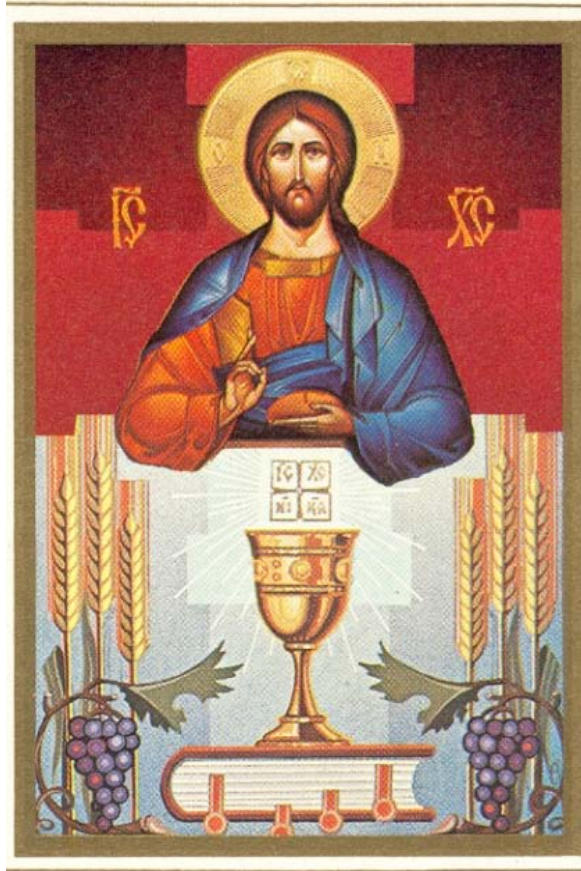
This policy has been worked on for the last two years by the Bishop's Office of Worship and Liturgy. It has been reviewed by the Vicars Forane and leadership at deanery meetings. A separate commission was developed to offer comments and concerns over the policy. Many of these comments and concerns have been incorporated into the policy and training materials. It has been approved by the presbyteral council and the Bishop.



**When does the policy begin?**

The policy is promulgated for use on the First Sunday of Advent 2010. In order to give pastors, LEMs and pastoral ministers time to work with parish communities and familiarize themselves with the worship aid and different parts of the Celebration, parishes have until the First Sunday of Lent 2011 to fully implement the Liturgy of the Hours format prescribed in the policy.

## Chapter Two Morning/Evening Prayer Form



*While they are gathered together in church,  
I can think of nothing more useful,  
nothing more holy for Christians to do,  
than to sing the psalms.*  
~ St. Augustine

This chapter provides an overview of the form we will be using in the Diocese of Jackson for the Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest (SCAP). This form, based on either the Morning Prayers or the Evening Prayers of the Liturgy of the Hours, the universal prayer of the church, may be familiar to many of you who pray the Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours. **The SCAP ritual contains essential and easy to follow rubrics for you in leading this celebration.**

The Liturgy of the Hours is a seventeenth century tradition in our Church. It has been prayed in parishes and monasteries from the beginning of its use. The Liturgy of the Hours is a prayer for the whole church, which unites all of us as believers. “For ‘when the people are invited to the Liturgy of the Hours and come together in unity of heart and voice, they show forth the Church in its celebration of the mystery of Christ.’ Holy Communion may be given at the end of either Morning or Evening Prayer.” (SCAP, # 42).

“The texts provided in the SCAP Ritual book [and diocesan worship aid] for Morning Prayer (nos. 118-151) and Evening Prayer (nos. 152-185) are given as a common form and by way of example. The texts proper to each Sunday contained in the Liturgy of the Hours may always be used.” (SCAP, # 44)

“Music is an essential part of the divine office and should be a part of the celebration as often as possible. The amount of singing and the type of music used will depend on the musical resources that are available and the abilities of the members of the gathered assembly to sing.” (SCAP, # 45)

### **Outline of Morning/Evening Prayer Rite**

Morning and Evening Prayer in the SCAP ritual have the same structure and the following elements:

- **Introductory Rite:** (Introduction and Hymn)
- **Psalmody**

#### **Morning Prayer**

Antiphon 1-Psalm - Antiphon 1  
 Antiphon 2 - OT Canticle- Ant. 2  
 Antiphon 3 - Psalm- Ant. 3

#### **Evening Prayer**

Antiphon 1-Psalm-Antiphon 1  
 Antiphon 2 - Psalm- Ant. 2  
 Antiphon 3 - NT Canticle - Ant. 3

- **Liturgy of the Word:** Sunday Lectionary readings, Reflection, (*Dismissal of Catechumens*) Creed and Intercessions
- **Communion Rite:** Lord’s Prayer, Invitation to Communion, Distribution of Communion, Act of Thanksgiving
- **Concluding Rite:** Announcements, Collection of Monetary Offerings, Invitation to Pray for Vocations, Blessing, Sign of Peace, Closing Hymn - Optional

## **Rubrics and Commentary on Morning/Evening Prayer SCAP**

### **INTRODUCTION**

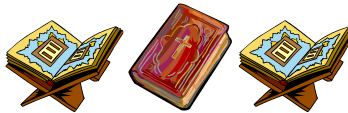
All stand as the Lay Leader of Prayer begins the celebration from her or his chair. See introduction formula in the SCAP ritual.

### **HYMN**

A suitable hymn is sung. The ritual offers the text of a hymn for Sundays in Ordinary Time. This hymn or another appropriate hymn may be sung, especially hymns appropriate to the season or feast.

**PSALMODY** The congregation is seated.

The psalmody is a place where creativity can be used to carry out this part of the celebration. See Chapter Three for more details on this integral part of the Sunday Celebration.



### **LITURGY OF THE WORD**

The readings are the readings proper for the Sunday and are found in the *Lectionary*. The Sunday readings may not be changed. On some occasions a Solemnity will take precedence over the Sunday and the readings of that Solemnity are to be used.

In keeping with the spirit of the SCAP, the readings should be proclaimed by parishioners who normally serve as lectors at Mass.

**FIRST READING:** Proclaimed by a lector from the ambo.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM:** The responsorial psalm should be sung according to the abilities of those assembled. If the psalm cannot be sung, it may be recited. The psalm may be sung by a cantor, choir, or the entire assembly, or it may be lead by the commentator, lector or another person.

**SECOND READING:** Proclaimed by a lector from the ambo.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:** The congregation stands.

The Gospel acclamation is sung as on Sunday. If it is not to be sung then it should be omitted.

## **GOSPEL:**

The Leader of Prayer should normally read the Gospel. If the Gospel is proclaimed by a lay person, the greeting, “The Lord be with you” is not said. The Gospel reading begins with “A reading from the holy Gospel according to *N.*”

## **REFLECTION ON THE READINGS: The congregation sits.**

- The Bishop may delegate a lay person to preach a reflection on the Scriptures at *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*.
- When the leader of prayer is a layperson who has not been delegated by the Bishop to preach, the pastor may prepare a homily to be read by the lay leader.
- After the preaching, there is to be a period of sacred silence.

## **[DISMISSAL OF CATECHUMENS:**

If the parish dismisses the RCIA catechumens, they are dismissed at this time by the leader of the celebration facing the people. See dismissal formula in SCAP ritual.]

## **PROFESSION OF FAITH: The congregation stands.**

The Nicene Creed is used; however, the Apostles Creed may be used during the Easter Season. A simple introduction to the Creed such as: “**Let us stand and together profess our faith.**” **Note:** When the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Roman Missal is promulgated Advent 2011 then the new translation of the Creed should be used.

## **PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL:**

Texts for the Prayer of the Faithful are contained in **Appendix I** of the SCAP ritual. These may be adapted, added to, and other prayers composed.

The leader of prayer introduces the Prayer of the Faithful. He/she or another member of the congregation may recite or sing the intentions.

The leader of prayer concludes the Prayer of the Faithful with the prayer of the day found in **Appendix III** of the SCAP ritual.



## **COMMUNION RITE**

The leader of prayer goes to the place where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, genuflects, takes the ciborium containing the Blessed Sacrament, and places it on the corporal on the altar.

#### OUR FATHER:

The leader of prayer then returns to her or his chair and facing the altar invites all present to sing or say the Lord's Prayer using the introductory words in the SCAP or something similar.

#### INVITATION TO COMMUNION:

The leader of prayer then goes to the altar and genuflects.

Taking the host, the lay leader raises it slightly over the ciborium and recites the invitation formula found in the SCAP ritual. The people respond in the usual manner. **Note:** When the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Roman Missal is promulgated then the new translation of the formula should be used.

#### DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION:

The leader of prayer consumes the Body of Christ, then takes the ciborium and goes to where Communion will be distributed. If necessary due to the size of the gathered community, other Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may assist in the distribution of Communion.

The leader of prayer takes a host, holds it over the ciborium and as each communicant comes forward, says: "**The Body of Christ.**"

Communicant responds, "**Amen.**"

**Note:** As specified in the GIRM, the name of the individual approaching should not be included in the phrase: "The Body of Christ." Ideally all should remain standing until everyone has received Communion. Then all may sit or kneel for a period of sacred silence.

An appropriate communion hymn may be sung during the distribution of Communion.

After Communion, the lay leader returns the ciborium with remaining hosts to the tabernacle. After placing the ciborium in the tabernacle, the leader of prayer genuflects and returns to her or his chair for a period of silent prayer.

#### ACT OF THANKSGIVING: **The congregation stands.**

The leader of prayer stands and with the gathered assembly faces the altar and leads the Act of Thanksgiving. The antiphon and canticle are sung or recited. All make the sign of the cross as the canticle is sung or recited by all. After the Canticle all are seated.

**Note:** The antiphon may be the general one given in the ritual, a seasonal antiphon or the antiphon proper for the Sunday or feast day. The Canticles are also available in many hymnbooks in hymn form, which is also suitable for this celebration.



### **CONCLUDING RITE**

After the Canticle is prayed, the lay leader invites the congregation to be seated for the concluding rite which begins with the parish announcements.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

The announcements are read by the commentator or another person.

#### **COLLECTION:**

The weekly collection may be taken up at this time.

#### **INVITATION TO PRAY FOR VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD:**

The Ritual does not give a specific prayer or any other direction beyond the invitation given. A brief period of silent prayer would be appropriate.

#### **BLESSING:**

A deacon uses the blessing proper to his office. A lay person uses the designated blessing for lay leaders of prayer.

#### **SIGN OF PEACE:**

The lay leader invites the people to exchange the sign of peace.

There is no formal dismissal, sending, or recessional. The celebration may end with a hymn or instrumental music.



## SET UP OF SEATING

Seating for the SCAP may be arranged in a couple of different ways depending on the set up of your church or worship space. Ideally all should be seated together in a way that the Leader can lead the celebration and remain a part of the community. The theology of the ceremony is that the community is gathered in the absence of the priest presider to join in prayer and union with the whole church. The focus should be on the altar and the ambo so seating should be arranged so that all face the altar and ambo.

The Leader of Prayer may sit among the community, in front of or to the side of the community but always on the same level. No one should be seated in the sanctuary or

the priest presider's chair. If a Leader of Prayer sits in front of the community then her/his chair should be facing the altar as is everyone else's chair or pew.

When addressing the community during prayers and introductions to parts of the ceremony, the Leader of Prayer may face the altar or turn to the people from her/his chair depending on acoustics and the comfort level of the Leader. The Leader should not go to the ambo for prayers or introductions. All of these moments should be carried out from the Leader's chair.

Again seating will depend on the size and set up of your current sanctuary space and also the comfort level of the Leader of Prayer.



## Chapter Three

### Creativity



#### Psalmody

As stated earlier, St. Augustine teaches us that “while they are gathered together in church, I can think of nothing more useful, nothing more holy for Christians to do, than to sing the psalms.” Thus Bishop Latino has asked that when celebrated the *Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest* be done using the format of the Liturgy of the Hours prescribed in the SCAP ritual so that more and more of our people will be exposed to even greater amounts Sacred Scripture through the psalmody.

The psalmody consists of two psalms and one scripture canticle set up as seen in the explanation below. **Hymnals in English and Spanish also provide sung versions of the psalms with options for antiphons and psalm tones.**

**Prior to beginning the celebration, a brief explanation of how the psalmody will be done that particular day would be appropriate.**

#### Arrangement of Psalmody



##### A. Antiphonally

The psalmody may be sung or proclaimed **antiphonally**. The congregation can be divided into two groups that alternate psalm strophes or verses. The groups may be selected by location in seating, by gender, age, language, etc. This may also be done by having the congregation alternate verses with the cantor, small chorus or full choir. This is an opportunity to be creative and flexible.



##### B. Responsorially

The psalmody may be sung or proclaimed **responsorially**. This is as the Responsorial Psalm in the Liturgy of the Word is normally done. The psalmist, choir or lector sings or recites the antiphon, which is then repeated by the congregation; the psalmist or lector reads a verse or strophe of the psalm and the congregation repeats the antiphon. The psalm could then conclude with the Glory Be and antiphon repeated by all.



### C. Recitatively

The psalmody may be sung or proclaimed **recitatively**. The lay leader or a designated psalmist sings or reads the antiphon, the people repeat the antiphon then the designated psalmist or lector reads or sings the entire psalm and the people repeat the Glory Be and antiphon at the end.



The psalmody may be done as a mixture of these options. Creativity and the ability of the congregation and musicians is the key. It is a good idea to start in a simple fashion and work one's way into more challenging settings. The Diocesan Worship Aid offers a simple starting point.



The **antiphon** may be sung or recited before and after each psalm by the cantor, the choir, or the entire liturgical assembly depending on the abilities of the congregation. Each psalm and canticle should be followed by a period of sacred silence.



The **psalmody** may be the general one contained in the worship aid or the psalms proper to the given Sunday, season or feast. The people will need copies of the psalmody to participate in praying it. The psalmody may be sung or recited according to the abilities of the congregation. The diocesan worship aid offers two psalmodies from the Psalter for Sunday weeks I and II.

## Chapter Four

### History of SCAP

In 1988 the Congregation for Divine Worship promulgated *The Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*. This was followed in 1994 by the publication of *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of Priest: Leader's Edition*, prepared by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1989.

In 2001 the US Bishops' Committee on Liturgy convened a task group to revise the *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*, based on thirteen years of pastoral experience. The revised text of *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* was approved in 2003 and submitted to the

Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for review. In 2004 the Congregation suggested editorial changes in view of the recently published instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (*The Sacrament of Redemption* is an instruction from Rome regarding the celebration of the Eucharist). The final text of the revised edition was published in 2007 by the US Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy for use in the dioceses of the United States under the direction of the diocesan bishop.



### *Mission Diocese*

*The spirit of the community should be so fostered as to embrace not only the local church, but also the universal Church. The local community should promote not only the care of its own faithful, but, filled with a missionary zeal, it should prepare also the way to Christ for all. In a special way, catechumens and the newly-baptized who must be educated gradually to know and to live the Christian life are entrusted to his care. (Vatican II Decree on Ministry and Life of Priests, #6)*

The history of our diocese is a long and storied one filled with missionary zeal to go along with its

mission territory. Bishop John Joseph Chanche, SS, arrived in the diocese around midnight on a May night in

1841. He had no real church building and a couple of priests to help him minister to the entire state of Mississippi. Starting in Natchez, which was then the seat of the diocese, he together with the help of these few priests and priests that came over the next several years and with the enthusiasm of the Catholic population, began to establish the Catholic community in a state that had had a Catholic presence since the Spanish explorers came in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Over the next 170-plus years, bishops, priests, religious and laity have worked together to build the church in the diocese. For much of that history, Catholic communities have outnumbered available priest personnel. Many locations that are now considered long-established parishes began their existence by being served from another location perhaps three or four times a year. These locations were able to support themselves throughout the lean years until a pastor could be assigned. Today we find ourselves facing very similar circumstances.

Recognizing this need for providing opportunities for communities to gather in prayer on Sundays when Mass is not available due to distance and travel difficulties, the *Mission and Ministry in Mississippi* process emphasized training and

certification for Lay Ecclesial Ministers and Pastoral Ministers who would be able to guide the daily life of the parish and, among other moments of prayer, coordinate and lead *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (SCAP).

The SCAP ritual has been utilized in the diocese for several years, but the ritual was revised in 2007 and because of this and the ever increasing use of the ritual, the Bishop has developed diocesan norms for the SCAP. These norms are developed with the intent of providing a common format for SCAP in the diocese so that the faithful in traveling around the diocese will be familiar with the ritual and able to actively participate.

The two most important commitments discovered during the *Mission and Ministry* process were keeping viable faith communities open as long as possible and providing the celebration of the Eucharist in parishes and missions as frequently as possible. In light of our church's theology on the Eucharist and the Sacrifice of the Mass, the commitment to provide the celebration of the Eucharist in all parishes and missions as frequently as possible has been explored even further.



*No Christian community, however, is built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist; from this, therefore, all education to the spirit of community must take its origin. This celebration, if it is to be genuine and complete, should lead to various works of charity and mutual help, as well as to missionary activity and to different forms of Christian witness. (Vatican II Decree on Ministry and Life of Priests, #6)*

While *Sunday Celebrations* offer Catholics an opportunity to come together and pray, offer praise to God and receive Holy Communion as a local parish community, we do not want to create a culture of “getting” Communion. This is a disservice to our people in terms of catechesis. *Mission and Ministry’s* focus on the Eucharist offers the reality that providing the celebration of the Eucharist as often as possible may mean that parishioners in one local community may have to drive to a nearby parish for Sunday worship.

As stated in the directives and the ritual, *Sunday Celebrations* are reserved for those parishes that are beyond a reasonable distance to travel for Mass. In no way is this meant to denigrate the role of Lay Ecclesial Ministers and Pastoral Ministers in parishes. It is meant to emphasize the central place in our church of the Eucharistic sacrifice that only occurs in the celebration of Mass.

LEM’s and Pastoral Ministers are responsible for the building up of the local parish community’s faith and prayer life. There are many creative opportunities to fulfill this

responsibility in the life of the parish and mission, including *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* when appropriate. LEM’s and Pastoral Ministers in understanding their role and responsibility should be able to guide parishioners to a better understanding of the centrality of the Eucharistic sacrifice at Mass and encourage the faithful to participate in the Sacrifice of the Mass whenever possible. LEM’s should also offer opportunities locally for community worship outside of Mass through Adoration, the Liturgy of the Hours, Stations of the Cross and cultural praise services.

LEM’s and Pastoral Ministers also need to stress that *Sunday Celebrations* are a unique moment in the life of the parish, an opportunity to unite themselves with the universal church when Mass is not available. *Sunday Celebrations* should be offered in appropriate locations as a way of maintaining and building community around the Eucharist in the anticipation of the day when Mass will be available in that local community.



## Sunday Obligation and *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*

**Can. 1248 §1.** *A person who assists at a Mass celebrated anywhere in a Catholic rite either on the feast day itself or in the evening of the preceding day satisfies the obligation of participating in the Mass.*

**§2.** *If participation in the Eucharistic celebration becomes impossible because of the absence of a sacred minister or for another grave cause, it is strongly recommended that the faithful take part in a liturgy of the word if such a liturgy is celebrated in a parish church or other sacred place according to the precepts of the diocesan bishop or that they devote themselves to prayer for a suitable time alone, as a family, or, as the occasion permits, in groups of families.*

A challenge for the Church today is how to maintain Catholic community and identity in parishes where we are not able to provide Mass every Sunday. Catholic identity centers itself on the Eucharist. In parishes and missions where Mass is not available every Sunday, we want to maintain a strong sense of Catholic identity and community.

As stated above, one way we hope to maintain that identity and community is through the celebration of SCAP. Though SCAP is not the same as a Mass, nor it is an alternative to or substitute for the celebration of the Eucharist, it is an opportunity for our faithful in parishes and missions that do not have Mass available on a Sunday to come together and unite themselves with the universal church through song, scripture, prayers and if possible the reception of Holy Communion.

Although the SCAP is not intended to fulfill one's Sunday

obligation, it must be noted that the Sunday obligation is removed for that particular Sunday for persons who do not have Mass available to them due to illness, long distance or inability to travel. However, it is very important for parishioners to come together as a parish community and offer prayers and songs, hear the Sunday scriptures and if possible receive Holy Communion. In this way they are united to the universal church.

It is always preferable that Catholics should participate in the celebration of the Eucharist, but we also know that this is not always possible. It should always be emphasized to parishioners that the SCAP is a way to be in union with the whole church, but that the fullness of the sacrament can only be found in the celebration of the Eucharist at Mass.

This being said the Diocese of Jackson is committed to providing quality Sunday celebrations for all its

parishes and missions. Our diocese has many vibrant prayerful communities that are maintaining their Catholic

identity in a culture where Catholicism is small percentage of the population.



## The Bishop's Role

The bishop has the responsibility to issue liturgical norms and directives for his diocese so as to bring about unity of prayer and worship among the faithful in the church entrusted to him. The bishop is responsible for all matters pertaining to the right ordering of the celebration of the Eucharist and adoration and devotion to the Eucharist outside Mass. It is his duty to promote and guide the liturgical life of the diocese. This responsibility in the liturgical life of the diocese comes from his episcopal ordination and the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders.



Some canons related to this are as follows:

- **Canon 375.1** *Bishops, who by divine institution succeed to the place of the Apostles through the Holy Spirit who has been given to them, are constituted pastors in the Church, priests of sacred worship, and ministers of governance.*
- **Canon 387** *...Since he is the principal dispenser of the mysteries of God, he is to endeavor constantly that the Christian faithful entrusted to his care grow in grace through the celebration of the sacraments and that they understand and live the paschal mystery.*
- **Canon 838. 1** *The direction of the sacred liturgy depends solely on the authority of the Church which resides in the Apostolic See and, according to the norm of law, the diocesan bishop.*
- **Canon 838. 4** *Within the limits of his competence, it pertains to the diocesan bishop in the church entrusted to him to issue liturgical norms which bind everyone.*

It is for this reason that these directives on *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* are presented and established. Even though the SCAP comes with national directives, it is the local bishop's responsibility and role to

determine when and how these celebrations will take place in the local diocese.



### Lay Minister's Role

The primary responsibility for preparing the *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* belongs to the lay leader delegated to conduct the service. The lay leader should involve all of the ministers necessary for the service and make sure each knows his or her responsibilities and is familiar with the outline and progression of the SCAP service.

The *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* Ritual and rubrics should be studied by the lay leader and other ministers involved in carrying out the celebration. The *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* using Morning or Evening Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours is new to the majority of Catholics. The lay leader should make sure there are copies of

the psalmody for the congregation so they can participate fully in the service. The Diocesan Worship Aid for SCAP is available to assist LEMs and Pastoral Ministers.

The ritual contains notes and principles of the Liturgical Year to assist in the planning of the celebration. The section contains brief notes on each season and the importance of planning a Sunday celebration in the context of the liturgical seasons. (SCAP, # 68 - 117). The Sunday readings contained in the Lectionary must be used on their corresponding Sunday. On some occasions a Solemnity will take precedence over the Sunday readings and the readings of that Solemnity are to be used.

Below are some quotes from the SCAP ritual on Lay Leaders of Prayer:

“All ministers carry out their responsibilities in virtue of their baptism and the delegation of the diocesan bishop. Lay leaders of prayer are to be chosen in view of the consistency of their way of life with the Gospel and in the

expectation of their being acceptable to the community of the faithful. The appointment of such ministers is made by the bishop for a definite time. Their appointment is to be made known to the community by means of a liturgical celebration in which prayers are offered to God on behalf of those appointed.” The Order for the Blessing of Those Who Exercise Pastoral Service contained in the *Book of Blessings* may be used for this purpose (SCAP, # 27).

“The laypersons appointed as lay leaders of prayer should regard the office entrusted to them not so much as an honor but as a responsibility and, above all, as a service to their brothers and sisters under the authority of the pastor ... They should carry out their office with sincere devotion and the decorum demanded by such a responsibility and rightly expected of them by God’s people.” (SCAP, # 30)

“The leader of prayer is always to be assisted by other ministers who will proclaim the Scriptures, assist in the distribution of Holy Communion, sing the psalms and other songs, provide instrumental music, and prepare the place for the celebration.” (SCAP, # 37)

“Lay leaders of prayer should be well trained to lead the liturgical rites found in the ritual book.” (SCAP, # 38)

