



Prayer - Planning - Possibilities



Liturgical Resources for Parish Restructuring



January 23, 2017

Dear Pastor or Parish Administrator,

All parishes are asked to pray for a successful restructuring of the parishes of the Diocese of Erie. The resources in the following package are meant to help in this regard. They include aids for parishes that face no immediate change as well as communities being merged or partnered with other parishes. Please feel free to modify these resources to meet the specific needs of your community.

For parishes facing no immediate change, ongoing use of the intercessions and introductions at Mass included in these resources is advisable in order to bring otherwise unaffected parishioners into solidarity with parishioners in parishes undergoing significant change. For partnering parishes, these resources may be used in advance of and following the February 13th transition date. For merging communities, resources are specifically designed for the last community gatherings before joining another parish and the first gatherings of the newly formed community. In all situations, intercessions and introductions might be used leading up to and following the changes in an attempt to reach as many parishioners as possible.

In addition, the series of prayer services created by the Liturgical Commission and the Office of Worship to smooth the pastoral planning process is still available on the diocesan web-site. Smaller parish groups, such as, committees, councils and prayer groups, may find these prayer services helpful as they approach the scheduled transition date.

If you have questions about any of the prayers, Eucharistic liturgies or prayer services, please don't hesitate to call the Office of Worship. We can help you to modify these resources to meet your specific needs. With prayers for a smooth and blessed transition, we pray with you and thank you for your pastoral efforts to support your communities during this transition.

Peace,



Matthew Clark
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LITURGICAL RESOURCES FOR PARISH RESTRUCTURING

I. FOR PARISHES NOT EXPERIENCING RESTRUCTURING AT THIS TIME

(February 11, 12, 18, 19)

- A. Sample Introduction to the Mass – praying in solidarity with communities undergoing change.
- B. Intercessions to pray for and with the parishes of the diocese
- C. Sample Closing Remarks before the Dismissal – go forth, remember to pray for others
- D. Solemn Blessing

II. FOR PARTNERING PARISHES

(February 11, 12, 18, 19)

- A. Sample Introduction to the Mass
- B. Intercessions to honor what is lost, pray for openness to new opportunities and collaboration
- C. Sample Closing Remarks before the Dismissal
- D. Solemn Blessing

III. FOR COMMUNITIES BEING MERGED INTO AN EXISTING PARISH

(February 11, 12)

Suggestions for a Final Community Weekend Mass

- A. Sample Introduction to the Mass
- B. Mass Suggestions with applicable Scripture readings
- C. Intercessions
- D. A Procession of Thanksgiving following the Prayer After Communion to honor the history of the church, its major symbols, devotional images, current and past clergy and lay leadership
- E. Sample Closing Remarks before the Dismissal
- F. Solemn Blessing

IV. FOR PARISHES WELCOMING NEW PARISHIONERS (Mergers)

(February 18, 19)

Suggestions for a First Community Weekend Mass
with an optional Procession of Welcome

- A. Sample Introduction to the Mass
- B. A Procession of Welcome-to honor the history and people of the merged parish
- C. Mass Suggestions with applicable Scripture readings
- D. Intercessions
- E. Sample Closing Remarks before the Dismissal
- F. Solemn Blessing

I. FOR PARISHES NOT EXPERIENCING RESTRUCTURING AT THIS TIME

(Celebrated the weekend of February 11, 12, 18, 19)

A. Sample Introduction to the Mass

[This week] communities of our diocese will begin a new life. Some, will partner and learn to build closer bonds through teamwork and collaboration. Others will merge, one community becoming part of an existing parish community. Each will face change and loss and need our prayers. Each will be challenged. Some may experience for the first time the feeling of being a stranger or an outsider in a new community. Others will be asked to welcome the stranger in their midst. Aware that this is what our liturgy asks us to do each week, let us pray for ourselves and in unity with all the communities of our diocese today.

B. Intercessions – In unity with all of the parishes of our diocese during this time of parish restructuring, we pray for the needs of our brothers and sisters.

1. For Bishop Persico, that a spirit of wisdom may guide him in leading the diocese through this time of change.
2. For newly appointed pastors and for pastoral leaders of all diocesan parishes, that the Holy Spirit may strengthen them and help them to minister to the needs of their people.
3. For the faithful of our diocese, facing change now or in the future, that we may be open to personal conversion, spiritual formation and a commitment to cooperation and collaboration.
4. For those who feel like an outsider or a stranger in a new community, that they may receive compassionate support from fellow parishioners.

C. Sample closing remarks before the Dismissal

Before being sent forth, let us remember to keep in prayer those communities facing the changes of partnering or merging this weekend. Let us pray with compassion, aware that in the future we may experience a similar change. (pause in silence) As I conclude our prayer with the solemn blessing, please respond “Amen” to each invocation.

D. Solemn Blessing – See Solemn Blessing #13, Ordinary Time IV
(attachment 3)

II. FOR PARTNERING PARISHES

(Celebrated the weekend of February 11, 12, 18, 19)

A. Sample introduction to the Mass

[This week] communities of our diocese will begin a new life. Some, like us, will partner and learn to build closer bonds through teamwork and collaboration. Others will merge, one community becoming part of an existing parish community. Each will face change and loss and need our prayers. Each will be challenged. Some may experience for the first time the feeling of being a stranger or an outsider in a new community. Others will be asked to welcome the stranger in their midst. Aware that this is what our liturgy asks us to do each week, let us pray for ourselves and in unity with all the communities of our diocese today.

B. Intercessions

1. For Bishop Persico, that a spirit of wisdom may guide him in leading the diocese through this time of change.
2. For newly appointed pastors and for pastoral leaders of all diocesan parishes, that the Holy Spirit may strengthen them and help them to minister to the needs of their people.
3. For the faithful of our diocese, facing change now or in the future, that we may be open to personal conversion, spiritual formation and a commitment to cooperation and collaboration.
4. For those who feel like an outsider or a stranger in a new community, that they may receive compassionate support from fellow parishioners.

C. Sample closing remarks before the Dismissal

Before being sent forth, let us keep in prayer those communities who are facing the changes of partnering or merging this weekend. And let us be hopeful as we seek to work together with our partner community to grow in faith and fellowship as members of the Body of Christ. As I conclude our prayer with the Solemn Blessing, please respond "Amen" to each invocation.

D. Solemn Blessing – See Solemn Blessing #13, Ordinary Time IV (attachment 3)

III. FOR COMMUNITIES BEING MERGED INTO AN EXISTING PARISH

(Celebrated the weekend of February 11, 12)

A. Sample introduction to the Mass

Next week, communities of our diocese will begin a new life. Some, like us, will be merged into another existing parish community. Others will partner, and learn to build closer bonds through teamwork and collaboration. Each will be challenged. Each will face change and loss and need the support and prayers of others. Some of us may experience, maybe for the first time, the feeling of being a stranger or an outsider in a new community. Keep in mind the Genesis passage about Abraham and Sarah. In welcoming three travelers passing by, they found themselves welcoming angels and received great blessings.

Aware that this is exactly what our liturgy asks us to do each week, let us pray for ourselves and in unity with all the communities of our diocese today.

B. Mass Suggestions with applicable Scripture readings

On Sundays in Ordinary Time, *Masses for Various Needs and Occasions* and *Votive Masses* may be celebrated at the direction of the diocesan bishop or with his permission in cases of serious need or pastoral advantage. Bishop Persico has given such permission because of the pastoral needs of the parishes during this time of parish restructuring in the diocese. There are several options in the Roman Missal for a final community weekend Mass within Ordinary Time. Choose options for Mass formularies and Scripture readings that will work best for your community.

1. Votive Mass # 9, The Holy Spirit, options A, B, C (attachment 1)
 - a. Choose Scripture readings of the Holy Spirit from Lectionary # 62-63 (Pentecost) or Lectionary # 764-768 (Confirmation)
2. Mass for Promoting Harmony, # 15, from *Masses for Various Needs and Occasions* (attachment 2)
 - a. Choose readings for the "Promotion of Charity" or "To Foster Harmony," Lectionary # 953-956
3. Mass for Giving Thanks to God, # 49, from *Masses for Various Needs and Occasions* (attachment 2)
 - a. Choose readings from Lectionary # 865-869, In Thanksgiving to God

C. Intercessions – select appropriate intentions or adjust as needed

1. For Bishop Persico, that a spirit of wisdom may guide him in leading the diocese through this time of change.
2. For newly appointed pastors and for pastoral leaders of all diocesan parishes, that the Holy Spirit may strengthen them and help them to minister to the needs of their people.
3. For the faithful of our diocese, facing change now or in the future, that we may be open to personal conversion, spiritual formation and a commitment to cooperation and collaboration.
4. For those who feel like an outsider or a stranger in a new community, that they may receive compassionate support from fellow parishioners.
5. For all of us here, that we may recognize the presence of the compassionate Christ in our changing situation.

D. A Procession of Thanksgiving following the Prayer After Communion that may be used to honor the major sacramental symbols, devotional images, current/past clergy, lay leadership, and the history of the church.
(attachment 5)

E. Sample Closing Remarks before the Dismissal

Before being sent forth, let us keep in prayer all those communities who are facing the changes of partnering or merging. And let us be hopeful and open ourselves as we seek to work together with our new community to grow in faith and fellowship as members of the Body of Christ. As I conclude our prayer with the Solemn Blessing, please respond “Amen” to each invocation.

F. Solemn Blessing – See Solemn Blessing # 13, Ordinary Time
(attachment 3)

IV. FOR PARISHES WELCOMING NEW PARISHIONERS

(Celebrated the weekend of February 18, 19)

A. Sample Introduction to the Mass

This week, communities of our diocese will have begun a new life. Some will have partnered and are now learning to build closer bonds through teamwork and collaboration. Others, like us, will have merged, one community becoming part of an existing parish community. Each will face change and loss and need our prayers.

Today, we have the blessing of celebrating a newly formed community comprised of members of _____ parish and the parish of _____. Let us welcome one another and support one another in prayer. I remind you of the biblical passage about Abraham and Sarah. In welcoming three travelers passing by, they found themselves welcoming angels and received great blessings.

Aware that our liturgy calls us to offer this sort of welcome each week, let us pray together for ourselves and in unity with all the communities of our diocese.

B. A Procession of Welcome that may be used to honor and recognize any images or symbols coming from the parish being merged. (attachment 4)

C. Mass Suggestions with applicable Scripture readings

On Sundays in Ordinary Time, *Masses for Various Needs and Occasions* and *Votive Masses* may be celebrated at the direction of the diocesan bishop or with his permission in cases of serious need or pastoral advantage. Bishop Persico has given such permission because of the pastoral needs of the parishes during this time of parish restructuring in the diocese. There are several options in the Roman Missal that may be useful to bring a new community together in prayer for a final community weekend Mass within Ordinary Time. Choose options for Mass formularies and Scripture readings that will work best for your community.

1. Votive Mass # 9, The Holy Spirit, options A, B, C (attachment 1)
 - a. Choose Scripture readings of the Holy Spirit from Lectionary # 62-63 (Pentecost) or Lectionary # 764-768 (Confirmation)
2. Mass for Promoting Harmony, # 15, from *Masses for Various Needs and Occasions* (attachment 2)
 - a. Choose readings for the "Promotion of Charity" or "To Foster Harmony," Lectionary # 953-956
3. Mass for Giving Thanks to God, # 49, from *Masses for Various Needs and Occasions* (attachment 2)
 - a. Choose readings from Lectionary # 865-869, In Thanksgiving to God

D. Intercessions – select appropriate intentions or adjust as needed

1. For Bishop Persico, that a spirit of wisdom may guide him in leading the diocese through this time of change.
2. For newly appointed pastors and for pastoral leaders of all diocesan parishes, that the Holy Spirit may strengthen them and help them to minister to the needs of their people.
3. For the faithful of our diocese, facing change now or in the future, that we may be open to personal conversion, spiritual formation and a commitment to cooperation and collaboration.
4. For those who feel like an outsider or a stranger in a new community, that they may receive compassionate support from fellow parishioners.
5. For all of us here, that we may recognize the presence of the compassionate Christ in our changing situation.

G. Sample Closing Remarks before the Dismissal

Before being sent forth, let us remember to keep in prayer all those who are facing change in their lives due to the parish restructuring in the Diocese of Erie. In this parish let us be open and hopeful ourselves as we welcome new members and as together we strive together to build a vibrant community that will grow in faith and fellowship as members of the Body of Christ. As I conclude our prayer today with a solemn blessing please respond “Amen” after each invocation.

E. Solemn Blessing – See Solemn Blessing # 13, Ordinary Time (attachment 3)

9. The Holy Spirit

In this Mass, the color red is used.

A

Collect	O God, who have taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that in the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.
Prayer Over the Offerings	Sanctify, we pray, O Lord, the offerings made here, and cleanse our hearts by the light of the Holy Spirit. Through Christ our Lord.
Prayer After Communion	May the outpouring of the Holy Spirit cleanse our hearts, O Lord, and make them fruitful by the inner sprinkling of his dew. Through Christ our Lord.

B

Collect

May the Paraclete who proceeds from you, we pray, O Lord, enlighten our minds and lead us into all truth, just as your Son has promised. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Alternate Collect

O God, to whom every heart lies open every desire speaks plainly and from whom no secret is hidden, cleanse, we pray, the thoughts of our heart by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that we may merit to love you perfectly and offer you worthy praise. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Prayer Over the Offerings	Look, we pray, O Lord, on the spiritual Sacrifice placed on your altar with loving devotion and give your servants a right spirit, so that their faith may make these gifts pleasing to you and their humility commend them. Through Christ our Lord.
Prayer After Communion	Lord our God, who have been pleased to nourish us with heavenly food, pour, we pray, the delights of your Spirit into the recesses of our heart, that we may possess as a gift for eternity. Through Christ our Lord.

9. The Holy Spirit



Collect

O God, who sanctify your universal Church
in every people and nation
pour out, we pray, the gifts of your Spirit
across the face of the earth,
so that your divine grace, which was at work
when the Gospel was first proclaimed,
may now spread through the hearts
of those who believe in you.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Alternate Collect

O God, by whose Spirit we are governed
and by whose protection we are kept safe,
extend over us your mercy
and give ear to our supplications,
that the faith of those who believe in you
may always be sustained by your gifts.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Prayer Over
the Offerings

May the fire of the Spirit, O Lord,
sanctify the sacrificial gifts offered in your sight,
just as it enkindled the hearts
of the disciples of your Son.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Prayer After
Communion

May these gifts we have consumed
benefit us, O Lord,
that we may always be aflame with the same Spirit
whom you wondrously poured out on your Apostles.
Through Christ our Lord.

15. For Promoting Harmony

Collect

O God, who are perfect unity and true charity
grant your faithful one heart and one mind
that the body of your Church,
which rests on the confession of the truth,
may flourish in harmony
and be strong in enduring unity.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reign with you
one God, for ever and ever.

Alternate Collect

O God, who have taught your Church
to keep all the heavenly commandments
by loving you and loving our neighbor,
grant us a spirit of peace and grace,
so that your entire family
may be devoted to you wholeheartedly
and united in purity of intent.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reign with you
one God, for ever and ever.

Prayer Over the Offerings

O God, who renew us in your image
through your Sacraments and your commandments,
mercifully guide our footsteps in your paths,
that through these sacrificial offerings which we bring
we may possess the gift of charity,
for which you have taught us to hope.
Through Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

We have received, O Lord, the Sacrament of unity;
grant us, we pray,
that, living in your house in the holy accord,
we may possess the peace we hand on
and preserve the peace we have received.
Through Christ our Lord.

49. For Giving Thanks to God

Collect

O God, who always listen mercifully
to your servants in distress,
we humbly beseech you,
as we give thanks for your kindness,
that, free from all evil,
we may constantly serve you in gladness.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Alternate Collect

O God, the Father of every gift,
we confess that all we have and are
comes down from you;
teach us to recognize the effects of your boundless care
and to love you with a sincere heart
and with all our strength.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Prayer Over the Offerings

O Lord, who gave us your Son
to rescue us graciously from death and from every evil
accept, we pray, in mercy this sacrifice,
which we offer you in thanksgiving
for our deliverance from distress.
Through Christ our Lord.

Alternate Prayer Over the Offerings

For the gifts you have bestowed, O Lord,
we offer you the sacrifice of praise,
humbly begging
that what you have conferred upon us in our unworthiness
we may give back, to the glory of your name.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Almighty God, who through this Bread of Life
are pleased to free your servants from the bond of sin
and in your compassion to restore their strength,
grant us to advance without hindrance
towards the hope of glory.
Through Christ our Lord.

Solemn Blessing

#13, Ordinary Time IV, RM

May the God of all consolation order your days in his peace
and grant you the gifts of his blessing.

℞ Amen

May he free you always from every distress
and confirm your hearts in his love.

℞ Amen

So that on this life's journey
you may be effective in good works,
rich in the gifts of hope, faith and charity,
and may come happily to eternal life.

℞ Amen

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit,
come down on you and remain with you for ever.

℞ Amen

OPTIONAL PROCESSION OF WELCOME FOR PARISHES WELCOMING NEW PARISHIONERS

This ritual is provided for parishes that are receiving a new community due to a merger. If a statue, or image, is being taken with the community to the new parish because of its importance to the community, this brief ritual acknowledges its presence in the new parish.

Any decision to bring an image, statue, etc. from the merged parish should be made in advance in consultation with the pastor of the receiving parish. Such an image or artifact of great meaning to the community might well be incorporated into the entrance procession. If the object is too large to process conveniently it may be placed beforehand and the procession may stop to acknowledge it silently before proceeding to the sanctuary.

In either case, a word of recognition, such as the passage below, might be included in an introduction to the Mass. See # IV. A. in Liturgical Resources for Parish Restructuring

Entrance Procession:

The entrance procession unfolds as usual with crucifix, candles, etc. Following the Gospel book, usually processed by the deacon, the item from the merged parish is carried by a member of the merged parish. The procession proceeds to the place where the item will be displayed and it is placed appropriately. (If the item was placed beforehand, the procession moves to this place, stops before it and all say a silent prayer and then the procession continues on to the sanctuary in the usual manner.)

Sign of the Cross

Greeting

Introduction to the Mass

After the Sign of the Cross and the Greeting, the presider gives a brief introduction to the Mass of the Day. (See suggested text at # IV. A. in Liturgical Resources for Parish Restructuring.)

Recognition of the merged community

As part of the introduction (before the last paragraph "Aware that...") the presider inserts a recognition of the image in these or similar words:

We also welcome the (statue, image, _____) brought from (parish name) and hope that it may become a sign of unity for our combined communities.

The presider concludes the introduction and continues with Mass in the usual way.

Procession of Thanksgiving for a Final Weekend Community Mass

This ritual is provided for parishes being merged into another parish and celebrating a last community liturgy. Typically, this would occur on a Saturday evening or Sunday morning. However, if necessary, it might be celebrated at a weekday liturgy, provided that much of the community is able to be present.

The ritual honors key symbolic elements of the liturgy and devotions of the parish. Additional elements may be added if necessary. If a statue, or image, is being taken with the community to the new parish because of its importance to the community, the optional reference below may be used. Any such decision should be made in advance in consultation with the pastor of the receiving parish.

This ritual follows a period of silence after Communion and the Prayer After Communion.

The Priest, standing at the chair, says

Blessed are You, Emmanuel, God with us. In this place, we have come to know and celebrate Your love for us, Your people. We trust in Your providential care for us and Your guidance to our true and lasting home. Be with us now and always as we reply, "Blessed be God forever!"

All: Blessed be God forever!

Priest: As we leave this place of worship, we give thanks to God for all the blessings we have received here. Blessed be God forever!

All: Blessed be God forever!

The Priest then moves to the baptismal font and says

Let us remember the baptisms celebrated here. **Pause for silence.** We thank You and we praise You for the gift of life for all those who have passed through the waters of new life at this font. Blessed be God forever!

All: Blessed be God forever!

The Priest then moves to the door of the confessional and says

Let us remember the times when we have been forgiven, comforted, and consoled in the sacrament of penance. **Pause for silence.** We thank You and we praise You for the healing and reconciling love that has been given through the sacrament of penance in this church. Blessed be God forever!

All: Blessed be God forever!

The Priest then moves to the statue of Mary and says

Let us remember the generations of prayer and devotion that this sacred image has inspired. **Pause for silence.** We thank You and we praise You for inspiring in us true devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary in this church dedicated to her Immaculate Conception. Blessed be God forever!

All: Blessed be God forever!

[Option: The presider then moves to any other statue, image or artifact that because of its importance to the community is moving to the new parish with the community.]

[Let us remember this (statue, image, artifact) and how it has served as a sign of the identity of this community. Although we go to join with another community, we remember our history when we see this image and therefore, we will move it with us as we move to another parish.]

The Priest then moves to the pulpit and says

Let us remember the power of God's word proclaimed here in Scripture and in preaching. **Pause for silence.** We thank You and we praise You for Your holy word proclaimed here in faith and preached here in sincerity. May it echo always in our hearts. Blessed be God forever!

All: Blessed be God forever!

The Priest then moves to the altar and says

Let us remember the times we have gathered for the sacred banquet: the Triduum kept each year, the Sundays on which we worshiped faithfully, the first communion celebrations, the feast days of saints and martyrs, the marriages witnessed here, the funerals held here in hope. **Pause for silence.**

Let us pray.

God our refuge, our home is in you. You are greater than any temple, church, or cathedral that can be built by human hands, yet in this place we have met Your divine presence. This church building has been a place of blessing for us. Protect us on our way. Lead us to a new assembly of Your faithful people. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

The Priest then returns to the chair for the Introduction to the Dismissal (See Liturgical Resources for Parish Restructuring, section III. E.) if it is being used or the Dismissal itself.