

Beauty in the Liturgy

Elements of celebration



TARGET AUDIENCE

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Overview

This Object provides an overview of the environment, the art, and the liturgical ministries involved in creating the liturgy. It highlights the importance and significance of the different aspects the liturgy incorporates and why they should express beauty.

The multimedia element of this Object is a graphic depicting 25 aspects of the liturgy and their innate beauty. Clicking on the image enlarges it and reveals the associated text.

Teacher Background

Teachers are encouraged to review the 'Crafting the Art of Liturgy' section of the DVD Rom *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* to deepen their understanding of the art, beauty and celebration as well as the roles of the ordained ministry and of the liturgical assembly.

In particular, the following aspects of *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* provide entry points and context for this Learning Object:

- Within the pathway 'Liturgy as Art' watch the video 'Rediscovering the Art of Liturgy'. The content of the video is developed further in the excerpts taken from the essay *Presidential Prayers and Practice: Towards An Ars Celebrandi* by Canon Alan Griffiths. The excerpts can be accessed by clicking on the 'Read More' arrow, or else you can download the essay by clicking on the 'View Essay' button.
- Within the pathway 'Liturgy as Art' watch the video 'Noble Simplicity'. The content of the video is developed further in the excerpts taken from the essay *Presidential Prayers and Practice: Towards An Ars Celebrandi* by Canon Alan Griffiths. The excerpts can be accessed by clicking on the 'Read More' arrow, or else you can download the essay by clicking on the 'View Essay' button.
- Within the pathway 'Art in the Liturgy' watch the video 'Bringing Beauty to the Liturgy'. The content of the video is developed further in the case studies: the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles, USA; and the Cathedral of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Hamilton, New Zealand. The case studies can be accessed by clicking on the 'View Case Studies' arrow.

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Where appropriate, use this material with the students.

Supporting Content

This text supports the focus of the multimedia element.

The well-planned liturgy, brought to life through the prayerful ministry of gifted and experienced people, is a work of art. It flows, it has integrity, it is beautiful. At such a liturgy our attention is drawn to the Scriptures, the rituals, the music, the rich silence, the prayers of the assembly, the worship of God.

T. Cotter Called to Preside

The word 'liturgy' comes from the Greek *leitourgia* meaning a public service or voluntary work of the people. People create liturgy, and good liturgy requires the bringing together of many talents and ministries. The music, art, furnishings and vestments need to be the best and most worthy we can bring before God. And to our proclamation of scripture, our processions, liturgical actions and prayers we must bring a most authentic spirit.

Liturgy is about more than words. Everything that is visible needs to communicate something of the mystery we are celebrating: the altar cloths, the Priest's vestments, the flowers, the images and statues, the furnishings, the colours of the liturgical season ... all of these help to create the atmosphere of prayer and silently convey an invitation to worship. Those entrusted with creating the environment for liturgy have the task of providing the People of God with a beautiful and worthy place for worship. The key to the ideal liturgical environment is noble simplicity. Any form of clutter is to be avoided. Noble simplicity does not necessarily equate with expense. It equates with what is genuine, simple and beautiful.

Within the Mass, music serves a variety of needs. It gathers the voice of the assembly into one. It accompanies processions. It invites people to listen and to praise, but it never dominates. It expresses the mood of the liturgical season. Music has the power to enrich the liturgy and to bring depth to the prayer of the assembly. It involves people. Singing together expresses our unity in prayer and the Church's unity as the Body of Christ. Liturgical musicians, whether instrumentalists or cantors, bring their faith and talents to serve the Church's worship. In this way they invite the assembly to full, conscious and active participation in liturgy.

Noble simplicity is the key to good liturgy. Everything that is seen, heard,

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Supporting Content

touched, and tasted in liturgy has to bear the weight of divine mystery and needs therefore to be beautiful in the true sense of beauty. The altar, vessels, books and furniture are to be worthy of what they represent: the altar must be the most beautiful table the community can provide because it represents Christ himself; the vessels (the chalice and paten) are to be worthy of holding the Body and Blood of Christ; the Book of Gospels that is held high needs to convey that here, in this book, are the sacred texts to be proclaimed as the living Word of God. Even the seating in the place of worship is important because the people are the Body of Christ gathered, in full view of one another, around the altar. The People of God are as holy as the Word of God and the Body and Blood of Christ because together they are, by their baptism, Christ's Body.

Everything, therefore, needs to be taken into consideration. Nothing is too small. Even the way people are welcomed as they enter the place of worship is important. Everyone has a part to play because, together, we are the Body of Christ and each person is a significant part of it.

For Reflection and Discussion: Ideas for Use

Select one or more of the following activities for students to complete.

1 Invite the students to reflect and share with the class their responses to the following questions:

- List the ways you participate and contribute to making the liturgy 'a work of art'.
- Can you think of other ways you can contribute to enhance the liturgy?
- Define your understanding of the term 'art'.
- The Priest and assembly are artists. What is this statement implying?
- What are the different elements of liturgical prayer?
- Discuss the relationship between *ars celebrandi*, the art of proper celebration, and the call for the full, conscious and active participation of all the faithful.

2 Discuss with the class.

What are the different elements of liturgical prayer? In pairs, prepare a liturgy which includes these elements.

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**Teacher Professional
Development Resources**

Pope Benedict XVI, [Sacramentum Caritatis](#), 38-42

Fr Nariculam, Anthony, ['Liturgy and Ars Celebrandi'](#)0