



NEWS ARCHIVE:
Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

Editor: Kiply Lukan Yaworski, Communications
Phone: 306-242-1500; Toll Free: 1-877-661-5005
communications@saskatoonrcdiocese.com

Bishop Lahey facilitates session about liturgy for the diocese of Saskatoon

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

Liturgy is firstly the work of Christ, and then our work of praise, Antigonish Bishop Raymond Lahey said during a “day for liturgy” held recently in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

In addition to providing an overview of changes coming from a new translation of the Roman Missal (*see related article*), the bishop of Antigonish, Nova Scotia reflected on the nature and the meaning of liturgy.

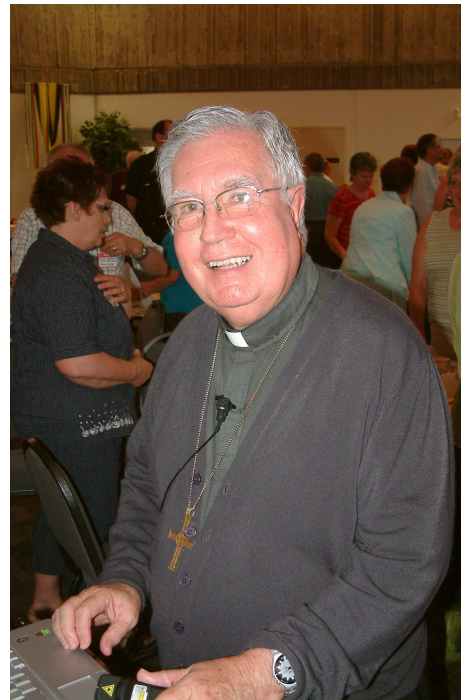
“We don’t ‘do’ liturgy: Christ is the one who acts,” Lahey said at the June 16 gathering of parish and diocesan leaders in Saskatoon.


It is Christ’s paschal victory that we celebrate, his prayer brought before God, his body that gathers, Lahey described. “He is the Word who is proclaimed, he is our priest and our offering.”

Our role in liturgy is to proclaim our “amen” to Christ’s action, he said.

Liturgy is always a communal action, and never an individual one, Lahey stressed, noting the difference between individual devotions and liturgy. “Liturgy is always done together.”

At the same time, liturgy is never passive, Lahey stressed, describing the Vatican II call for “full, conscious and active participation” of all the faithful in the celebration of the Eucharist. “Indeed, the council called this ‘the aim to be considered before all else.’”



 In all things we are *rooted in Christ*,
in His desire to bring God’s love to all peoples.

Liturgy is not like watching a play or attending a concert, he said. “If we are to be members of Christ’s body, we have a duty as baptized people to participate,” he said.

The “sacrifice of praise” offered to God in the liturgy is a faith stance, and not a feeling, Lahey emphasized. “Lots of people go out of our churches on Sunday and never really realize that they are there to praise God. That wouldn’t be the word they use,” he said. “There’s a difference between being happy and giving God praise. We can praise God in the depths of our sorrows.”

Just as God’s embrace was there for Jesus even at the moment of death, he is there in all the suffering we experience – and that is what we are celebrating, Lahey said. “Praise knows that even in the darkness of our lives, God is there with us. Praise remembers God’s compassionate presence.”

Lahey stressed the uniqueness and the interconnected relationship between the assembly and the priest. “The presence of Christ in the assembly and the presence of Christ in the one who presides must be understood together. It does no service to our understanding to subordinate one to the other,” he said. “There are different roles, but the two are never separate.”

The Holy Spirit is present in every Eucharist as the agent of transformation and the agent of communion, Lahey said. “The Holy Spirit comes down first to change the gifts and second to change us, so that we become what we eat, as St. Augustine said: we become the body and the blood of the Lord because the Holy Spirit changes us into the body of Christ.”

Outward signs of this “unity of the Holy Spirit” in the liturgy include praying the Lord’s Prayer as one family, exchanging the Sign of Peace, sharing the one bread, walking in one procession, and singing the communion song, Lahey listed. “Even in our silent thanks afterwards, we give thanks as one Body of Christ.”

The presence and transforming power of the Spirit is also a call to live in communion with others in the Church and in the world, he said. “It is a unity in diversity, not a unity that makes everyone the same, but a unity that respects diversity of languages, of skin colour, of male and female, of rich and poor,” he said. Every Eucharist should also include prayers for unity with other Christians, he added.

Lahey presented an overview of a liturgical celebration, discussing what it means to celebrate liturgy. He explored elements such as the welcome, full assemblies, the lectors, the homily, and the music, as well as efforts at building community and undertaking outreach.

Proper liturgical celebration does not require anything fancy, he said, speaking in favour of simple and dignified celebrations. Areas of the liturgy in which require effort today include the proclamation of the Word of God, the music and a greater spirit of reverence, he said.

Lahey said that the Word of God should be read from faith, with proclamation prepared in advance and presented clearly and slowly so listeners can absorb what they hear. Silence should be provided after the reading for reflection, he added.

The psalm is a scriptural text tied in with other readings and should be clearly sung so that the assembly can hear and reflect on the words, and the people should be able to sing a response. The homily should be a well-prepared exposition of the scriptures of the day, presented in clear and simple language, drawing from life and relating to life, and including all people and all ages, Lahey added.

Intercession prayers should be true prayers to God, “rather than telling him what to do.” Rather than being drawn from missalettes, the prayers should relate to the community and the country, addressing real needs, including the needs of those who are overlooked. Ideally there should be a time for people to add their own intentions, he said.

When it comes to music, Lahey said that leaders of song should “start from the inside out,” by stressing preparation of the sung Mass responses and liturgical elements such as the Kyrie and Gloria, the Psalm refrain, Gospel acclamation, and sung parts of the Eucharistic prayer, rather than approaching music ministry as choosing four hymns. There is also a clear priority of hymns, with a communion hymn being “a must” and a gathering hymn more important than either a hymn for the procession of the gifts or the conclusion of Mass.

The choir should never be a barrier to the participation of the assembly, even by their excellence, he stressed.

Lahey also noted the difference between religious songs and liturgical music. The popularity and development of praise and worship music is wonderful for other occasions, but is not necessarily appropriate for a liturgical celebration, he said. “Very careful discernments need to be made,” he said. Music should be chosen seasonally, and with an understanding of the community – if the music selection involves an established hymn that everyone will sing, use it, he advised. “We should build up a repertoire over time so that people get to know a piece. But don’t change everything every week.”

A reverent celebration is one of noble simplicity, not rushed, with provision for silence, for instance, before and after the readings and after communion, added Lahey.

Reverence for the Word of God and for the Body and Blood of the Lord should be evident in our liturgical celebrations, he said. “How do our outward actions reflect that awe?” he asked. Reverence for God is a matter of attitude, that includes reverence for God’s people and for God’s creation.

“We don’t have to be spectacular, we just have to do what we do well,” said Lahey. “



Representatives from across the diocese gathered June 16, 2009 to hear more about upcoming changes to the Roman Missal and the GIRM.

Changes to Roman Missal and General Instructions (GIRM) addressed by Bishop Lahey at Saskatoon workshop

Parish and diocesan leaders from across the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon recently gathered for a day on liturgy that included an overview of expected changes in a new English translation of the Roman Missal and to the general instructions that will guide its practical application.

Liturgy expert Bishop Raymond Lahey of Antigonish, Nova Scotia, explained that the upcoming changes to prayers and responses for the Mass, and to the GIRM (General Instruction of the Roman Missal) are proceeding through a complex and intricate process of translation, approvals and revision.

Described by Lahey as “coming to a church near you,” implementation of the new translation and the revised GIRM in Canada is still about two years away. It is estimated that new English translation of the Roman Missal will receive final approval by the end of 2010, which means it may be ready for implementation in Advent 2011, he said.

Overall, the new GIRM is an improvement on earlier version, said Lahey, but he stressed the need for catechesis and explanation as the changes come into effect. “If we don’t understand why we’re doing something, we’ll never have good liturgical catechetics.”

The revised GIRM brings together rubrics and liturgical theology in an easy-to-use format, he said, pointing out that the new guidelines are fully in line with a Vatican II understanding of the Eucharist.

“The new GIRM has some real strengths,” Lahey said. The document is better organized; more consistent and coherent; incorporates clearer theological foundations; contains more explanation; is far more readable and ‘user-friendly’; and is much better suited to catechesis, he noted.

The new GIRM also eliminates distinction between male and female lay ministers, Lahey reported.

The revised general instructions emphasize transcendence; continuity and tradition; the ministerial priesthood; unity; communion under both species; dignity, beauty and solemnity; local autonomy; and a more sacred language, he listed.

Lahey noted that the GIRM stresses unity – “unity in spirit, unity in prayer and action, unity in posture.” A new chapter on adaptations and enculturation seeks greater unity of practice in the universal Church, he noted. At the same time, the GIRM affirms the autonomy of the local bishop in such things as concelebration, altar servers, communion under both kinds, the construction of churches and the placement of the tabernacle.

Each national conference of bishops must submit its own adaptations to the GIRM, said Lahey. Although the bishops of Canada have discussed adaptations, the CCCB has not yet definitively voted on them, he said. The implementation of the GIRM in Canada will be common in English and in French for the first time in Canadian history, he added. “The adaptations (by the Canadian bishops) will apply across the whole country.”

Asked for more detail about matters of posture during the Eucharistic prayer, Lahey said section 43 of the GIRM describes the norm of having the faithful seated during the offertory, standing at the invitation to prayer over the gifts and throughout the first part of the Eucharistic prayer, and then kneeling at the consecration. The assembly would rise again to stand after the words of institution “do this in memory of me” and would remain standing for the memorial acclamation, the conclusion of the Eucharistic prayer and throughout communion. “The idea of kneeling at the consecration is for that particular sacred moment of calling down the Holy Spirit,” Lahey said, noting the GIRM emphasis on transcendence.

A country’s conference of bishops can make adaptations to posture, but it would involve an adaptation for the whole country, added Lahey.

With regard to posture, Bishop Albert LeGatt said he has asked that there would be no changes to current practice in parishes until the Canadian bishops have decided what will be the practice across the country. “When it has been decided, then it will be very clear that all parishes in the diocese will follow the one practice that is set forth,” LeGatt added.

In a final talk about the new translation of The Roman Missal, Lahey noted there will be new translations of the Eucharistic Prayers, the universal use of the Apostles’ Creed (which has been used in Canada, but not in other countries); new prayers for Lent, a

number of saints added to the universal calendar, new votive masses, and new dismissals. Feasts added to the church calendar will include the feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus Jan. 3, Our Lady of Fatima May 13, and the Most Holy Name of Mary, Sept. 12.

The new translation of the Roman Missal is characterized by a “noble simplicity”, said Lahey. Principles underlying the translation include a desire to have a single English text for all the world, to have a rich yet accessible vocabulary, to be faithful to the Latin, to retain the language of prayer, and to echo the scriptures and familiar sources. Other principles include achieving an oral quality that permits good proclamation and an aural quality that ensures the words can be heard easily. Another principle is to retain inclusive language where possible, Lahey listed.

With the new translation, presiders will face changes, with all the Eucharistic prayers are being re-translated, noted Lahey. As for the assembly, the changes to the people’s parts will be noticed in a number of the responses and prayers, including “and with your Spirit” rather than “and also with you”; as well as slight changes or addition to the “I confess” prayer, the Gloria, the Creed, the Holy Holy, and the Lamb of God

The translation may complicate things for awhile, acknowledged Lahey, but “by and large, it gives us a wonderful and rich translation of prayers which will lead us forward in the centuries to come.”