



Diocese of Port Pirie

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Circular to Clergy & Pastoral Associates (27/15)

Dear Fathers, Deacons, Pastoral Associates and Diocesan Liturgy Network

Concerning Services of the Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion in the Diocese of Port Pirie

This Circular results from a discussion of this topic at the meeting of the Council of Priests in the Chancery on Monday, 30th June, 2015.

The topic has been further discussed in the Diocesan Liturgy Network, with drafts of a Template and Instructions Letter from the Network circulated to priests and pastoral associates. The matter was reviewed at the Council of Priests meeting of 14th September, 2015.

I now forward to you the revised template for the Service of a Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion to be used in our diocese whenever such a service is celebrated.

There have been various other compositions in use hitherto, but they are now to be replaced by this template which as Bishop I approve officially.

The use of the Service of the Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion (LWWHC) has become common in our diocese for some years, made necessary by the inability to provide a priest in all parishes each Sunday, and when it happens that a priest must be absent from the diocese.

In the adaptation that was endorsed following the work some years ago of Fr Tony Redden and Sr Robyn Brady, the practice was approved that when the priest is absent on annual leave of four weeks including three weekends, the neighbouring parishes provided a Mass for two of the Sundays, with a LWWHC taking place on the remaining Sunday, with one also taking place in the parish of the priest supplying the Mass for the parish of the absent priest. This practice continues to be endorsed for our diocese.

The LWWHC is not a substitute Mass. There is nothing of the mystical quality of the representation to the saving events of Calvary and Easter that are captured in the theology of the Eucharist. LWWHC is a devotional celebration, an important gathering of the people of the parish to hear the word of God, to pray together, and to receive Holy Communion.

Although it is always important to distinguish the LWWHC from the Eucharist, nonetheless it is the way we gather as a community to worship when we do not have a priest to celebrate the Mass. It is hoped that parishioners would always support their liturgy leaders by willingly attending the liturgy.

The words of the Statement of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in 2004 state clearly:

The Mass remains the proper way of celebrating Sunday, and other celebrations can never equal or replace it. Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest enable the continuance of a community's Sunday worship, but they are never to be used where it would be feasible for the faithful to participate in the celebration of the Sunday Mass.

Pope Saint John Paul II stated that "those who lead their brothers and sisters in prayer exercise in a praiseworthy way the common priesthood of all the faithful based on the grace of baptism. But such solutions must be considered merely temporary, while the community awaits a priest. Sacramental incompleteness of these celebrations should above all inspire the whole community to pray ... that the Lord will send labourers into His harvest."

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. The Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion would normally be reserved for a Sunday. The readings of the Sunday are to be employed. If the priest is absent and there occurs a major Feast Day or Solemnity through the week, then a Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion may be held.
2. The rubrics given in the template are to be observed because they ensure reverence, and also clearly indicate, along with the absence of vestments, that a Service is being held, not a Eucharist being celebrated.
3. The circumstances in which the LWWHC are used:
 - a. When the local priest is on leave, or when the local priest is providing Masses for a neighbouring parish whose priest is on leave, as indicated on page one of this letter. It may also be used when the local priest is ill.
 - b. We are in a situation whereby most parishes have only one priest. It will happen that a priest may be called away on some Sunday, because of a conference, or a family occasion, or whatever sound reason. This will be an occasion for the celebration of the LWWHC. Therefore the celebration of a LWWHC may not be seen as an unusual event, but in a way is a feature of the diocese because of our size and the number of our clergy, and one should not expect a priest to leave his own parish to celebrate the Eucharist elsewhere, except for the circumstances indicated above when a priest is on leave.

4. As a diocese we have a duty of care in regard to highway travel. It is not appropriate to expect a priest to travel long distances to celebrate the Eucharist in another parish, when a LWWHC may be conducted there properly. Safety and the physical drain, especially for someone no longer young, are valid considerations to be entertained.
5. All the above makes it abundantly clear that certain people in the parish should be given the proper training to conduct and lead a service of LWWHC. Attention must be given to a reflection that is based on the Gospel, and the general intercessions that reflect the needs of the Church and the community. Attention must be given to communicating to such lay leaders the appropriate ways of reverencing the Eucharist under the form of the sacred host, and administering Holy Communion. Attention could also be given to formation of the parishioners so that they might support the worship and cooperate with the leaders wholeheartedly.

BLESSINGS FOR THE DIOCESE:

One of the blessings for the Church of our diocese is that the LWWHC is an indication of the priority the parish community wishes to place, in the absence of the Eucharist, on the need to strengthen each other and their community through the hearing of the Word, through prayer together, and the receiving of Holy Communion.

I endorse this template and these instructions for your observance.

Yours in Christ



+ Gregory O'Kelly SJ
Bishop of the Diocese of Port Pirie