

“The Liturgy Moment can be a way to provide ongoing, sustained liturgical catechesis for all of the faithful.... I have found a real deepening not just in liturgical knowledge but also liturgical participation through these Liturgy Moments.”

## A Creative Approach to Liturgical Catechesis

One of the responsibilities we carry as clergy is not only to preside at worship services but also to facilitate the spiritual formation of our parishioners. This formation includes areas ranging from the Scriptures, theology, ethics, liturgy and many other important topics. With all of these competing priorities, liturgical catechesis can often take a backburner in our formational priorities. However, I have found a deep hunger among my parishioners for greater reflection on the mysteries we celebrate each Sunday.

In order to meet this hunger for deeper liturgical catechesis within the time constraints of my parishioners' over-programmed lives, I had to come up with a creative solution. The result of that creative process is what I call “The Liturgy Moment.” Every second Sunday of the month after each of our three services (8:00 am, 9:30 am and 5:00 pm), we have our “Liturgy Moment.” Immediately after the service, those folk who are interested gather at the front of the nave, and I share some information about a liturgical topic for about five to ten minutes at the most.

## The Approach: “Liturgy Moments”

I deliberately keep the presentation brief so as not to require a major time commitment. The topics have ranged from the history of Lent to the theology of sacrifice in the Eucharist. I have sometimes done a series over the course of two or three months, but I usually let each Sunday stand on its own. I try to keep my comments relevant to the current liturgical season. And during the summer, I opened up our sessions to questions about which they may have been wondering.

These brief episodes - Liturgy Moments - have been quite successful in providing a regular means of liturgical catechesis. Otherwise, I would find it difficult to set aside time every month for liturgical catechesis. But because these Liturgies Moments really only require a moment of their time, my parishioners find them easily accessible and enjoyable. They do

not need to make a commitment any greater than an additional five to ten minutes after the service.

Having suggested this approach, I in no way want to discourage more in depth and sustained catechetical approaches. Like many clergy, I lament the oftentimes last minute, ill-prepared and seemingly arbitrary baptismal catechesis that so many people receive. I dream of the opportunity to provide full-length catechetical programs like St. Paul's Episcopal Church's Pilgrims in Christ program or the Roman Catholic Church's Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. These longer, more in-depth and liturgically grounded programs are wonderful examples of liturgical catechesis at its best.

However, they pose two important challenges. First and most obvious, they require a major time commitment. I do not want to suggest that we shy away from asking folk to commit time to their discipleship with Christ, especially those folk who are contemplating joining the Body of Christ. A single catechetical session on the Saturday morning before a baptism does a great disservice to the importance of baptism. But not everyone can commit to a weekly meeting for several months. In some communities that expectation may be too unrealistic.

Additionally, these catechetical programs are primarily meant for persons discerning baptism. While they do extend beyond baptism at the Paschal Vigil into mystagogia during the Easter Season, they typically end by Pentecost. Therefore, they are not suitable for ongoing liturgical catechesis throughout the year. Also they are geared to people wishing to convert to the Christian faith. They do not address the needs of those persons who may have been baptized for quite some time.

## **Keeping It Succinct**

The Liturgy Moment can be a way to provide ongoing, sustained liturgical catechesis for all of the faithful. Initially, the Liturgy Moment may feel too superficial. You might ask, "How could I possibly cover the intricacies of the liturgy in just five to ten minutes?" You cannot. But you can as you go month to month over the course of many months. I have found a real deepening not just in liturgical knowledge but also liturgical participation through these Liturgy Moments.

In conclusion, let me just reiterate - keep it brief! We clergy too often enjoy hearing ourselves talk. The key to success with the Liturgy Moment is that it is just A MOMENT, not a mini-sermon or forum. Also, keep it interesting and relevant. Solicit questions from time to time from the congregation. I find this very fruitful. For example, I did a three month

series on sacrifice in the Eucharist after a parishioner asked me about the Fraction Anthem, “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast.” She said she had never understood what that meant. So, we spent three sessions on Christ as Passover, sacrifice and feast. There are innumerable riches that you can glean from our liturgy to share with your parishioners - and it only has to take moment!

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