

Welcome
to the Catholic Parish
of the Wairarapa



‘A community living and sharing the Good News of
Jesus Christ.’

MINISTRY FOR LITURGICAL ENVIRONMENT GUIDELINES



THE MINISTRY

The history of the Liturgical Environment Ministry within the Catholic Church has evolved alongside the development of the Church's liturgical practices. The ministry focuses on creating and maintaining a worship space that enhances the liturgical experience, reflects the sacredness of the rituals, and uplifts the congregation's spirit.

Early Church

In the early centuries of Christianity, worship spaces were usually simple and fostered a sense of community. Churches were often informal gatherings in homes or catacombs, and the focus was on the Eucharist and the reading of Scriptures. The arrangement of these spaces was practical, with little emphasis on a formal ministry for environment.

Constantinian Era and Roman Basilica

Following the Edict of Milan in AD 313, the construction of dedicated churches became more widespread. The architecture became more elaborate, promoting a greater sense of the sacred. However, the specifics of liturgical environment were still largely unstructured.

Medieval Period

During the Middle Ages, a rich tradition of liturgical art emerged, incorporating stained glass, frescoes, and elaborate altars. The beauty of the church environment became closely tied to theology—aiming to inspire awe and facilitate the congregation's worship. However,

formal roles dedicated specifically to managing these environments were still rare.

Renaissance to Baroque

The Renaissance and Baroque eras saw a further enhancement of church spaces, with a focus on grandeur and visual splendour. This period solidified the connection between liturgy and environment, but duties related to environment management were typically carried out by clergy or volunteers.

20th Century Liturgical Movement

The modern Liturgical Movement, particularly in the early to mid-20th century, emphasized a more active participation of the laity in the liturgy, including the aesthetic and spiritual aspects of worship environments. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) greatly influenced this change, calling for worship spaces that reflect and facilitate the liturgical rites (Sacrosanctum Concilium).

Post-Vatican II Developments

In the wake of Vatican II, parishes began to recognize the importance of the liturgical environment. The development of Lay Liturgical Environment Ministries became more common in many parishes, with laity being encouraged to participate actively in the design and preparation of worship spaces, seasonal decorations, and the overall aesthetic of the liturgy

Contemporary Practices

Today, Liturgical Environment Ministries focus not only on decoration but also on creating spaces that communicate the themes of the liturgical seasons, embody the Church's teachings, and enhance the worship experience. This includes careful consideration of elements such as colour, artwork, lighting, and natural elements.

the Liturgical Environment Ministry is a relatively modern development rooted in a desire to enhance the worship experience by thoughtfully arranging and decorating church spaces. It reflects a deeper understanding of the role that the environment plays in the spiritual life of the community and the liturgical celebration, following centuries of liturgical development and community engagement.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHURCH

The church is a place for the People of God to come together to offer worship to God and to receive His grace in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. When we enter a church, we should immediately sense that it is “different” than other places, that it is sacred, a place for prayer, where our whole being is oriented to God. “Indeed, the nature and beauty of the place and all its furnishings should foster devotion and express visually the holiness of the mysteries celebrated there” (General Instructions of the Roman Missal 294).

While the whole church is a space set apart from ordinary life, the various places within the church have different functions and levels of sacredness. The following are the four major areas of the church: the Narthex, the Nave, the Sanctuary, and the Sacristy.

The Narthex

The narthex is the area directly inside the front doors of the church before one enters into the main body of the church itself. It is a transitional space from the secular to the sacred. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: “When we enter the house of God, we must cross a threshold, which symbolizes passing from the world wounded by sin to the world of the new Life to which all men are called” (CCC1186). The narthex represents this threshold. It is a transitional space where we mentally prepare to leave behind all the cares and anxieties of ordinary life in order to be refreshed and filled with God’s life and love.

The narthex is where we welcome people into the church; it should be inviting and well-kept, never dingy or cluttered. It is the place for informational items and/or displays which do not directly relate to prayer or sacred worship. The narthex is a good place for flags, banners, displays, and sacred art. It is important that the narthex have its own simple beauty which begins to orient our hearts toward God.

The Nave

The nave is the main body of the church where the congregation sits. The primary purpose of the nave is to provide a worship space for the faithful to pray and to actively participate in the Mass. It should also be a place that “invites us to the recollection and silent prayer that extend and internalize the great prayer of the Eucharist” (CCC1185). The nave should have a noble simplicity that is entirely free of clutter and distraction.

The Sanctuary

The sanctuary is the most sacred place in the church where the altar, ambo (lectern), presider’s chair, and tabernacle are placed. The sanctuary should be a visible reflection of heaven and the heavenly liturgy; it should be the most beautiful space in the church, where our eyes are attracted. Of all the places in the church, it must be decorated with the greatest dignity and beauty, which corresponds to its significance for our faith.

The Sacristy

The sacristy is the room where the priest gets ready and preparations are made for Mass. This area must be neat

at all times. It is important to think of the practical aspects of preparing for Mass when arranging items in the sacristy.

THE LITURGICAL YEAR

The liturgical year serves as the Catholic Liturgical Calendar. It consists of the cycle of liturgical seasons that determine when feast days and other holy days are observed, and which Scripture and Gospel readings are used at Mass. Aside from the readings, the liturgical calendar also determines the interior decoration of a church, the priest's vestment colours, and the timing of spiritual seasons. The liturgical year begins on the first Sunday of Advent. It is divided into the following six seasons:

Advent

The four-week period of preparation before the celebration of Jesus' birth. The Advent season is a time of waiting and preparing for the coming of Jesus. This refers both to the anniversary celebration of the Incarnation and the Second Coming of Christ.

Christmas

The season celebrating the Nativity of Jesus Christ.

Lent

A six-week period of penance before Easter. Lent is a penitential season that recalls the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert and the 40 years that the Israelites

wandered in the desert on their journey to the Promised Land.

Triduum

The holiest "three days" of the Church's year, where the faithful recall the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Easter

The 50-day period of joyful celebration of the Lord's resurrection.

Ordinary Time

This season is divided into two sections (one span begins after the Christmas season until Lent and the other begins after the Easter season) wherein the faithful consider the fullness of Jesus' teachings and works among his people.

The mystery of Christ, unfolded through the liturgical year, calls us to live his mystery in our own lives. This call is best illustrated in the lives of Mary and the saints, celebrated by the Church throughout the year. There is no tension between the mystery of Christ and the celebration of the saints, but rather a marvellous harmony. The Blessed Virgin Mary is joined by an inseparable bond to the saving work of her Son. The feasts of all the saints proclaim the wonderful works of Christ in his servants and offer the faithful fitting examples for their imitation. In the feasts of Mary and of the saints, the Paschal Mystery of Christ is proclaimed and renewed.

The following are some important feast days throughout the liturgical year:

- Mary, Mother of God January 1
- Ash Wednesday (Date changes from year-to-year)
- Divine Mercy Sunday Second Sunday of Easter
- Ascension Seventh Sunday of Easter
- Pentecost Date changes from year-to-year
- Trinity Sunday First Sunday following Pentecost
- Corpus Christi Second Sunday following Pentecost
- Sacred Heart of Jesus (Date changes from year-to-year)
- Saints Peter and Paul June 29
- Assumption of Mary August 15
- All Saints November 1
- All Souls November 2
- Christ the King (Date changes from year-to-year)
- Immaculate Conception December 8

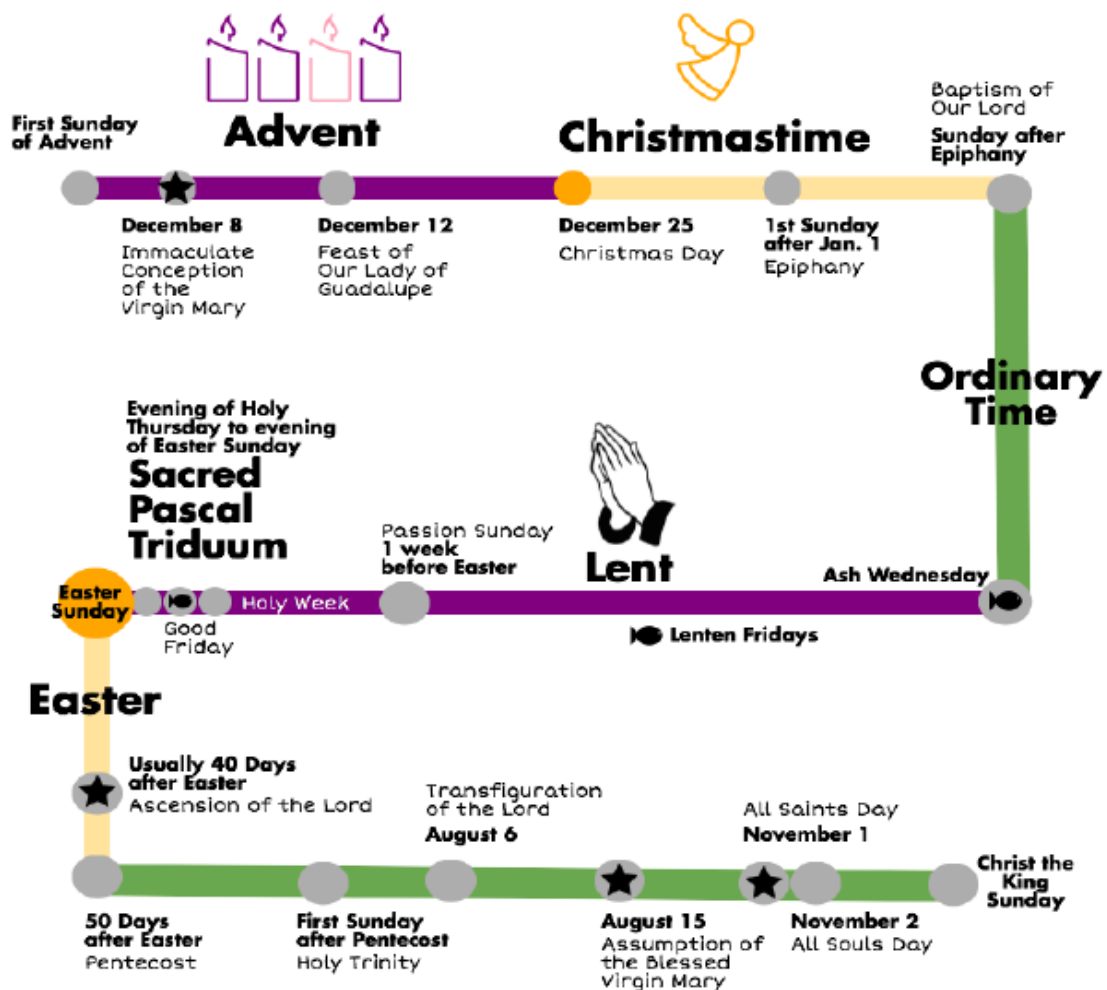
The Catholic Liturgical Year

Seasons

★ Holy Days of Obligation

☾ Days of Abstinence

The Liturgical year begins on the first Sunday of Advent. It is divided into six seasons. The shortest but most holy season is the three-day Sacred Pascal Triduum leading up to Easter.



LITURGICAL COLORS

The liturgical year dictates both the Scripture Readings and the Liturgical Colours of the day. There are five liturgical colours. Each liturgical colour reflects a certain meaning.

Purple

This colour is used during the seasons of Advent and Lent. Purple represents a spirit of Penance.

Red

This colour is used during Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday), Good Friday, Pentecost, and feasts of martyrs. It can also be used for the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation. The colour red represents a spirit of sacrifice and the burning love of God.

Rose

This colour is used on the Third Sunday of Advent and on the Fourth Sunday of Lent. Rose represents a spirit of anticipation.

Green

This colour is used throughout Ordinary Time. Green represents a spirit of hope, life, and growth.

White/Gold

This colour is used during the seasons of Christmas and Easter. It is also used for feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary, angels, and saints who were not martyred.

DECORATING POINTS

General

The altar should be the clear focal point where everyone's attention is naturally drawn therefore decorations should be simple and beautiful.

At least two candles are required for any Mass; however, four or six are appropriate for Sunday Masses.

The tabernacle should be treated with the utmost reverence and surrounded with beauty; it should be worthily decorated. The tabernacle is one of the things that most clearly identifies a Catholic church, as Catholics are the only Christians to adore the reserved Eucharistic species outside of Mass.

The sanctuary lamp should always be burning near the tabernacle. It is sometimes customary to have a number of larger candles near the tabernacle. Flowers may also be placed near the tabernacle.

Flowers and plants may be set near the ambo to highlight its significance.

The liturgical colour for Marian feasts is white; however, blue accents may be used.

Focus on liturgical themes rather than secular ones.

Always keep in mind that the sanctuary is a reflection of heaven. Because of this, beauty, loveliness, sacredness, and grandeur must always be the rule. Anything lacking quality or evoking the secular must be avoided.

Flowers and plants must be real; no artificial plants and flowers are to be used.

Banners may be used; however, they are most effective when they do not have words.

Less is more.

Advent

Decoration of the church during Advent should use the colours violet and rose; any semblance of Christmas colours (red, green, and gold) should be avoided.

The advent wreath may be displayed in the narthex or in the sanctuary. However, it should be visible to the congregation without interfering with the celebration of the liturgy, nor should it obscure the altar, the ambo, or the presider's chair.

Flowers are permitted during Advent, but only in moderation. The character of Advent is one of waiting and expectation for the full joy of Christmas and decoration should express this concept.

Christmas

The Nativity set may be placed either in the front of the nave or in the sanctuary. It may be set up in advance of Christmas (beginning on or after December 17), but the baby Jesus should not be placed in the crib until the first Christmas Mass is celebrated.

Poinsettias are the traditional plant of the Christmas season. Gold, red, green, and white are the traditional Christmas colours used to decorate. The atmosphere should be very festive.

Christmas trees can be used in the sanctuary. However, the narthex can be the best place for them. They should not obscure the altar, ambo, presider's chair, or tabernacle. The trees should not be decorated with

blinking or flashing lights. No ornaments are to be used on the Christmas trees.

Elegance, beauty, and glory are the keywords when decorating for the Christmas season.

Lent

The liturgical colour of the Lenten season is violet (purple).

It is forbidden to use flowers during Lent, except on Laetare Sunday (the Fourth Sunday of Lent) and on solemnities.

Any live plants should be removed from the sanctuary and nave. Cacti may be used during Lent to emphasize the desert journey.

It is appropriate to use violet or black fabric to give a sense of the season.

It is not appropriate to remove the holy water from the fonts during Lent. Lent is a time specifically to recall our baptism and holy water is a special sign of baptism.

Beginning on the Fifth Sunday of Lent, the Church has a tradition of covering sacred images and crosses with violet cloth. However, this tradition is not a requirement.

On Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday), red cloth may be used in place of violet cloth. Arrangements of palm branches may be placed in the sanctuary, but flowers are not to be used. After Mass, the red cloth and palms should be removed from the sanctuary and the penitential violet colour returned for the first three days of Holy Week.

Holy Thursday

The season of Lent ends with the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening. All violet cloth used to decorate during Lent must be removed before this Mass.

The altar of repose, to which the Eucharist is transferred at the end of Mass, should be beautifully decorated with white or gold cloth, many candles, and flowers. When the time of solemn adoration ends, the candles are extinguished, and the flowers and other decorations removed. All other decorations in the sanctuary or nave are to be removed.

After the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the altar is stripped of the altar cloth, candles, and crucifix. The altar is left bare.

Holy water is removed from all holy water fonts immediately after the Mass of the Lord's Supper.

After the time of solemn adoration, no candles should be lit anywhere in the church, including at votive shrines.

Good Friday

The character of this day is one of mourning and penance. The church environment is stark and bare. The altar is bare and the ambo should have no ornamentation.

The crucifix for veneration during the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion should be of appropriate size and beauty. Only one cross should be used for the Veneration of the Cross.

After the veneration, the cross is placed in the centre of the sanctuary in front of the altar, propped in such a way that it is visible to the people. This cross is the visual focal point of the celebration so no other decoration in the church should detract attention from it.

Easter Season

The liturgical colour for the Easter season is white/gold.

The liturgical environment should be the most lavish with a concentration on elegance and beauty. No secular decorations (bunnies or pastel eggs) are to be used.

The Paschal (Easter) Candle represents Christ who is the Light of the World. Therefore, the Paschal Candle remains in the sanctuary near the ambo for the entire Easter season. It is appropriate to surround the Paschal Candle with flowers.

The typical flowers used during the Easter season are: Easter lilies, peace lilies, hydrangeas, chrysanthemums, tulips, and daisies.

Once the flowers from the Easter Vigil are no longer in bloom, additional flowers should be added so that the sanctuary continues to have the festive joy of Easter for the entire fifty days.

First Holy Communion

The image of the host and chalice, bread and wine, wheat, and the Victorious Lamb are appropriate to use in the decoration scheme.

The décor for First Communion must always be elegant, solemn, and beautiful. Surrounding the ceremony with

noble beauty will help children to grasp the dignity and importance of the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

If the children make their own decorations, then they should be displayed in the nave or narthex of the church and not in the sanctuary.

DECORATING STYLES

There are two basic styles of decorating: symmetric and asymmetric. The illustration below is a good visual example of the difference between the two styles.

Symmetry

Symmetrical decorating or balance occurs when you have two identical sides of a design with a central point of axis -- so if you cut the design in half, the left and right are mirror images of each other. To be considered perfectly symmetrical, a design needs to have equally weighted visuals on either side. Symmetrical design allows you to draw attention to all areas of an image equally. Since this form of design is usually very structured and rigid in nature, it's referred to as formal balance.

A good example of symmetry in nature is the butterfly; its right and left sides are highly similar to each other (although not identical). We find perfect symmetry when two mirrored sides are exactly the same. Fortunately, symmetrical design does not depend on identical mirroring. It's only important to get close to the effect; exactitude is not necessary. Remember, you can

manipulate the user's eye easily without worrying about geometric perfection as a consideration in your design.

Symmetry works best when:

1. You are seeking a more serious aesthetic (you want to convey classicism).
2. You want to achieve more order and structure.
3. You don't want to put a lot of thought into the arrangement of elements, but still want to achieve a balance (symmetrical layouts are inherently stable and balanced).

Asymmetry

Asymmetrical decorating or balance occurs when you have different visual images on either side of a design, and yet the image still seems balanced. To be considered asymmetrical, a design needs to have unequal visual weight on either side, but those unequal visuals need to balance each other. Asymmetry is the absence of symmetry of any kind. Whenever we make a design that consists of elements that we've distributed unevenly around a central point or axis, we'll consequently have an asymmetrical design.

We can exploit asymmetry, using it to draw attention to areas in the design or to convey dynamism or movement.

Asymmetrical designs can evoke feelings of movement and seem more modern than symmetrical designs, but it can be more difficult and less straightforward to create relationships between the design's individual elements. It's important to note asymmetrical balance is still

strategic -- placing shapes haphazardly around a space won't create a compelling composition. To create a successful asymmetrical design, you still need to figure out how to balance out all the various elements.

Asymmetry works the best when:

1. You want design to be less stable, predictable, and harmonized since asymmetrical layout tends to be more interesting and dynamic.
2. You are willing to spend extra time arranging elements to find unique ways of achieving balance.
3. You are seeking a more playful design layout.

Combine symmetry and asymmetry in design

Symmetry is not always an either/or decision. It is possible to create the most interesting and aesthetically pleasing designs by combining symmetry and asymmetry. You can break the layout into smaller sections and try to achieve a symmetrical or asymmetrical balance in each section. For example, you can have a symmetrical layout in which asymmetry is used to create points of interest and organize visual hierarchy within a group of similar elements.

FLOWER AND PLANT CARE

It is a part of good stewardship to care for the flowers and plants that are used to decorate the church.

Throughout most of the liturgical year, some people would like to provide flowers for the sanctuary. This requires arrangement and up care from time to time.

These floral arrangements do not need to be watered; however, some minor adjustments (such as removal or trimming of wilted or dying flowers) may be needed during the week to get the most use out of the arrangement. Once a floral arrangement no longer reflects a sense of beauty or reverence, then it needs to be removed and discarded.

Sometimes during the week funerals are celebrated and the family allows the church to keep floral arrangements. If this is the case, the arrangements may be used in front of the altar, by the ambo, or on the carpeted ledges under the Divine Mercy and Our Lady images. During the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Lent, please refrain from using the funeral arrangements in any liturgical worship spaces.

During the season of Easter, a spray can be used to put a shine on the leaves of plants. This is allowed and encouraged because it adds to the beauty and reverence of the worship space.