

An Online Communal Celebration of the Word

Before you Begin

As many dioceses decide to cancel Sunday Masses to help limit the spread of the corona virus, it is important that we all remember that we are the Church and that we can gather on our own initiative. The Church is not primarily a building, it is the people of God gathered together.

This model is based on a Sunday Liturgy of the Word. The ritual has been adapted to work well within the advantages and limitations of a video-communication medium. We cannot reproduce the experience of being physically together in a common space (hearing the voices of others in a song, for example) but we can use the tools provided by this different instrument to foster a community experience.

We have found that the easiest online gathering tools for this model of communal prayer that have been Zoom and Google Hangouts. We have experimented with this form of prayer, and we recommend the following:

- This ritual will be useful for groups of 6 to 10 people, if you use the method of shared conversation over the Scriptures. For groups larger than 15 people, one person should share a reflection, which is followed by a time of silence; after the time of silence, people can be invited to share in one sentence what has moved them from the reflection.
- Times of silence are important moments of presence to one another, and a strong time of communion. They should not be shortened or avoided.

- It will also be useful for all members of the group to have the participant's copy of the celebration in front of them, so that they can follow properly.
- It is important for participants to turn off their microphones when they are asked to do so. You should include a simple reminder to this effect in your instructions at the beginning.
- Before starting, each member of the group should also have the texts of the Sunday readings at hand, ideally <https://livingwithchrist.ca/> in hard copy: either a copy of Living With Christ or similar worship aid, or else a printout of the Sunday readings you will have found online and sent to them ahead of time.

When everyone is gathered, the person who is acting as “presider of the assembly” or facilitator takes the time to review the flow of the prayer, give any instructions, and assign roles (readers, cantor(s), prayer of the faithful, etc.).

Then everyone is invited to introduce themselves by first name.

Finally, the presider invites everyone to take a moment of silence.

Introductory Rites (ALL MICROPHONES ARE ON)

After a moment of silence, the Presider says (making the sign of the cross):

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...

All answer:

Amen

Presider:

Let us celebrate together in joy

this day that the Lord gives us.

He has risen from the dead.

He is alive among us forever.

When we gather together,

he stands in our midst.

It is he who opens our intelligence to the Scriptures.

It is he who inspires our prayers and praise.

We hope for the day

where we will be able to celebrate the Eucharist

in remembrance of the death and resurrection of Christ

and share in the sacrament of his Body and Blood.

Our community gathers in communion with the whole Church.

We are also united to our pastors

to our brothers and sisters in neighboring communities

who sanctify this Lord's Day by celebrating the Lord's supper.

Presider:

Lord Jesus, source of love, you know us and call us to follow you, have mercy on us...

All:

Have mercy on us

Presider:

O Christ, source of love, you give us sisters and brothers to love, have mercy on us...

All:

Have mercy on us

Presider:

Lord, source of joy, you teach us to build a better world through our gestures of sharing, have mercy on us.

All:

Have mercy on us.

Presider:

We give thanks to God who has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

All:

Amen.

First Reading

Is read by one of the members of the group. (THAT PERSON'S MIKE IS ON, ALL OTHERS OFF)

Psalm

You have two choices:

- Ask a member of the group to read the psalm in the same way as one of the readings.

- The presider proclaims the antiphon of the psalm and then reads the first stanza, and in a predetermined order, the group members each read one stanza. (IN THIS CASE, MIKES ALL ON)

Second Reading

Is read by a member of the group. (READER'S MIKE ON, ALL OTHERS OFF)

Gospel

Proclaimed by the Presider or a member of the group. (READER'S MIKE ON, ALL OTHERS OFF)

Time for silent reflection

The presider invites each member of the group to a time of silent reflection on the meaning of the scriptures for him or her at this time. Is there a phrase, a word, an image that speaks to him or her, that appeals to him or her in particular?

Two-part sharing

First round: The presider invites each person, one at a time, by naming them one by one, to share the fruits of his or her reflection. It is always possible to pass his turn. During this first round, each person is attentive to what the others bring to the conversation, and how they feel as they listen to the others: What affects me as I listen to the members of the group, what gives me hope and inner peace? (ONE MIKE ON AT A TIME)

Second round: we reflect on the sharing of the first round. What brought me comfort, peace, hope in what was shared? The presider invites the group members to share their experience of the first round of sharing, in no predetermined order, but rather as inspiration comes to them. (ALL MIKES ON)

Baptismal Profession of Faith (optional)

*The Presider asks each question, and the members of the group respond
(ALL MIKES ON):*

Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

We believe

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord?
who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered the Passion,
was buried, rose from the dead,
and who sits at the right hand of the Father?

We believe

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, in the Holy Catholic Church,
in the communion of saints, in the forgiveness of sins,
in the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

We believe

May Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who brought us back to life by water and the Holy Spirit,
and granted us forgiveness of all sin,
still keep us by his grace in Christ Jesus,
our Lord, for everlasting life.

Amen

Prayer of the Faithful (MIKES OFF)

You'll have to prepare this in advance: you can find something online, or in the Liturgy of the Hours, or in a worship aid.

A member of the group announces each prayer (READER'S MIKE ON). Rather than answering each invocation, the group members observe a time of silence between each prayer. After the formal prayers, ALL MIKES ON and invite spontaneous prayers one at a time.

Our Father

There are three options:

- Only one person recites the prayer, which the others accompany by reciting it inwardly...
- The presider recites the prayer, and the others, having shut their microphones, also recite aloud.
- The presider proclaims "Our Father" and all recite the rest in silence, as is done in some monasteries.

Prayer of thanksgiving

The Presider says:

To you, God, our praise!
we acclaim you, you are Lord!
To you, Eternal Father,
the anthem of the universe.

You are the one the Apostles glorify,
you the prophets proclaim,
you to whom the martyrs bear witness;
it is you that all over the world
the Church announces and recognizes.
God, we adore you:
Infinitely holy Father,
eternal and beloved Son,

Spirit of power and peace.

Christ, the Son of the living God,
the Lord of Glory,
you were not afraid to take flesh
in the body of a virgin
to free captive humanity.
By your victory over death
you have opened up to every believer
the gates of the Kingdom;
you reign at the right hand of the Father;
you will come for judgment.
Show yourself the defender and the friend
Of the men saved by your blood:
Take them with all the saints
in your joy and in your light,

You who live and reign with the Father
in the communion of the Spirit
for ever and ever

All:
Amen.

The Presider says (making the sign of the cross):
May God Almighty bless us
May he keep us safe from harm
And leads us to eternal life.

All:
Amen.