

FIVE VALUES

I make the request in the context of five basic values of which I have already spoken at the Priests' Convocation and the Spring Ministry Day.

1. We are all participants in the risen life of Christ through the grace of baptism and our participation in the sacraments. The pattern of dying and rising⁸, in each of our lives as well as in the life of the community, is incorporated into the dying and rising of Jesus Christ especially through the Eucharist. It inspires us to bring a sense of hope and life to all we meet in the course of our daily living.
2. We are joined to one another in Christ. We are called to be alive to the reality that we are not just individuals standing before God, but rather a community of people brought together as the Body of Christ.
3. Our Diocesan Mission Statement⁴ and our statement of Synod values⁵ represent the deepest, most systematic expressions of the hopes of the people of our local church. We need to embrace them joyfully, for they give us direction on how we are called to preach, worship, build up community, and serve those in need. Any discussion of future planning needs to continue to be informed by the values of collaboration, lay leadership, rich diversity, open, trusting and respectful dialogue and ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and cooperation which we have already laid out for ourselves.
4. We must be aware that for the immediate future the presbyterate⁶ will be fewer in number and older. How do we place our energies so as to provide the best pastoral and sacramental life for the Church of Rochester?
5. The basis for all our dialogue and guide for our pastoral practice must be the documents of the Church⁷ which provide the basic norms for our liturgical and sacramental life. These documents, beginning with the **Constitution On The Sacred Liturgy** and continuing through to the most recent **Sunday Worship In The Absence of a Priest**, inform and free us. The decisions we make need to be drawn from, and not contradict, these documents that represent the best of our Tradition.

DIVERSE ISSUES

The issues that face us are many and diverse. They include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

1. Our need to understand that the reception of Communion⁸ can never replace the action of celebrating the Eucharist⁹, especially our understanding that the Sunday Eucharistic liturgy is at the core of our life and nothing can equal it;
2. The quality of our Sunday celebration of the Eucharist and the expectations of the Church in this matter, as Church documents set forth:

3. The number of Masses within an area and the impact those numbers may have on the quality of Eucharistic celebration;
4. The appropriate place of communion services and the development of alternative celebrations¹⁰ when a priest is not available for the celebration of the Eucharist;
5. The development of leadership for alternative celebrations;
6. The recognition of the value of the local community gathered in prayer, and the question of when, or if, it might become advisable to ask particular, local communities to join with others for the celebration of the Eucharist;
7. The appropriate use of the marriage and funeral rites outside of the Eucharist;
8. The recognition of what can be expected from the individual priest that balances the norms of the church with real, human needs, i.e., vacation, retreat, study, day off;
9. The development of appropriate Eucharistic devotions.

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RESOURCES FOR STUDY AND DIALOGUE

I call upon all pastors, pastoral administrators, parish staffs and parish councils to engage the Church of Rochester in this dialogue through homilies, bulletin and group discussions within the parish, the region and other natural groupings. Some materials, particularly the Liturgy Documents, are already at our disposal for this purpose. Study guides, homily curricula and other materials will be forthcoming to assist in this dialogue. Informed by the discussion, we will be able to make the decisions necessary for the future life of the diocesan Church.

A PLAN FOR EACH COMMUNITY

We will continue to give the highest priority to the Sunday celebration of Eucharist in all our parish communities. This is the norm for the church except in a situation of emergency. Prudent planning must take place so that each community will have direction in the event of such an emergency.

These issues and discussions call us to renewed ways to be the Church of Christ, and new and better ways to be a parish. May we continue to be open to the Holy Spirit who walks with us and leads us as we search for the best response to the opportunities and challenges before us.

Matthew Strank

6. In formal Church documents it is customary to refer to the community of priests as the presbyterate and an individual priest as a presbyter. The word is Latin in origin and means one who is authorized to lead and perform the sacred rites of a religion.

7. Liturgy Documents:

Documents for the Universal Church

- Constitution on The Sacred Liturgy - 1963
- General Instruction on the Roman Missal - 1969, rev. 1983
- Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass - 1969, rev. 1981
- General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar - 1969
- Directory for Masses with Children - 1973
- Sunday Celebrations In The Absence of a Priest - 1988

Documents for the Church in the United States

- Appendix to the General Instruction for the Dioceses of the United States - 1969
- This Holy and Living Sacrifice - 1984
- Music In Catholic Worship - 1972
- Liturgical Music Today - 1982
- Environment and Art in Catholic Worship - 1978
- Fulfilled In Your Hearing: The Homily in the Sunday Assembly - 1982

8. The receiving and sharing of the Body and Blood of Christ by the act of eating and drinking.

9. The actions of the assembly of gathering, listening and responding to the Word, giving praise and thanks, eating and drinking, and finally going forth in love and service. By these actions we remember and re-enter Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

10. Alternative Celebrations:

Two options are provided for Sunday celebrations when a priest is not available to lead the community in the celebration of Eucharist. They are Morning or Evening Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours, or the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word. It is optional at these alternative celebrations to also distribute Communion.