TEN PRINCIPLES FOR PREPARING THE LITURGY

The following are ten principles that every liturgist should know by heart and apply to every liturgy they prepare:

1. **Scripture is at the base of all liturgy:**
   All of our prayers, almost all of our readings, all preaching, commentary, song, intercession should have a scriptural base. God teaches us in the Bible how to pray, so use the Bible as your constant guide.

2. **Baptism is the basis of our call to community, worship and our destiny:**
   Baptism is the door to all the sacraments, it is the basis for the gift of our prayer together, and it is the gateway to eternal life.

3. **Sunday is the Lord’s day, the day for the whole community to worship:**
   Sunday is first day of creation, the day of resurrection and the day of the sending of the Holy Spirit. It is a weekly reminder of our origins, our salvation and our mission as individuals and as a church.

4. **Liturgy is the source and summit of a life of prayer and service:**
   All of our lives, all of our prayer needs to find an echo in the liturgy we celebrate. At the same time, we need to have a life of prayer and service to bring to the summit of the liturgy so that we can more fully celebrate the gifts we have received.

5. **Liturgy always celebrates one theme: the paschal mystery:**
   The passion, death and resurrection of Christ make up the paschal mystery. The incarnation, sending of the Holy Spirit and second coming all support and show the power of the mystery. There is no other theme of the liturgy, and so all liturgy should hold the paschal mystery as its central theme.

6. **Know the sources:**
   Anyone involved in preparing the liturgy must know the basic sources of liturgical information: the introductions in the ritual books, the rituals themselves, the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the current Code of Canon Law, Vatican instructions and in the US the BCL (Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy) instructions, etc.

7. **Liturgy is marked by noble simplicity:**
   In the liturgy we are gathered in praise of God for our sanctification. We should never do anything fake or shoddy, ostentatious or simply for show. Do the noblest things with an air of simplicity and the simplest things with an air of nobility and you will usually hit close to the mark. And remember the value of silence in showing how important a liturgical moment is.
8. **Progressive solemnity determines how a liturgy is celebrated:**

While Christ is always present in the liturgy, people do not experience any two celebrations in the same way. The more important an event is in the life of Christ and the church, the more solemn the celebration. This is based on the human reality that we cannot sustain the highest level of celebration for long. Even though God is always blessing us, we simply cannot be shouting for joy at the top of our lungs all day every day.

9. **Liturgy is musical in its essence:**

Music and singing is part of how we express our deepest feelings of love, joy and thanksgiving. Liturgical worship is about expressing exactly these feelings to God. Music and singing are therefore not something added to the liturgy to make it pretty, they are at the very core of what liturgy is for. We don’t sing at liturgy, rather we sing the liturgy.

10. **Enabling the full, conscious and active participation of all the faithful in the worship of God is our ultimate goal:**

We do not dedicate our lives to preparing liturgies just to make people like us, we do it to create a space in which each member of the family of faith can approach the living God and receive from the throne all the graces needed to live the baptismal call. In this sense, the liturgy belongs to the people of God, it is the means of grace given them by the Church. In the actual celebration, all those concerned with preparing liturgies need to get out of the way, and let the rites work.

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**Dallas Ministry Conference 2013: How To Start A Liturgy Committee in your Parish (and How to Improve It)**

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