

Creating a Service of the Word

A service of the word can be created by looking at the structure of the Sunday Liturgy of the Word. The center of this type of prayer is the proclamation of the word of God and discerning what it means in our life today. By following the basic structure of the Liturgy of the Word, adding elements to make it unique to the gathered assembly and being attentive to the use of symbols, music, and environment, you can create an appropriate celebration of God's word for any gathering.

There are some simple rules to remember when presiding over a service of the word. When speaking, do not use words that are reserved for the ordained minister. Instead of saying, "The Lord be with you," say, "Blessed be God," with the assembly responding, "Blessed be God forever." When offering a blessing, change "May God bless you" to "May God bless us." Choose prayer texts from the Sacramentary or from resources that offer tips for lay presiders, such as *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (Liturgical Press, 1997).

Constructing Prayers

One way to create opening and closing prayers is to use the following simple formula:

You: Address God.

Who: Connect Christ with an image or action of Scripture.

Do: Ask God to assist the assembly in some action.

Through: Conclude with a simple Trinitarian formula.

A Service of the Word

- **Invitatory:** Begin with the Sign of the Cross and a greeting.
- **Introduction:** Describe simply the purpose for the service in your own words.
- **Opening Prayer:** This may be from the Sacramentary or written for the occasion.
- **Scripture:** This is the center of your service of the word. Choose a Scripture reading of the day or choose one that is appropriate for your specific assembly.
- **Reflection:** This may be simply a time of silence or the lay presider may first discuss the reading(s) and then share a personal reflection. Allow time for the assembly to share their thoughts silently or aloud.
- **Intercessions:** Modeling the Prayer of the Faithful at the Sunday Eucharist, these prayers are prayers for the needs of others. They may be written for the specific assembly.
- **A Traditional Prayer:** Use the model of the Lord's Prayer from Sunday worship or use other traditional Catholic prayers.
- **Sign of Peace:** Using the model from Sunday worship, invite the members of the assembly to offer one another a sign of Christ's peace.
- **Closing Prayer and Blessing:** You may take the prayer from the Sacramentary or write one fitting the assembly. There are many wonderful blessings found in the Sacramentary or in the *Book of Blessings* (Liturgical Press, 1988). The latter book also contains explicit guidelines for lay presiders.
- **Conclude:** End your prayer as you began—with the Sign of the Cross.