

OFFICE FOR WORSHIP

November 2016



The Principle of Progressive Solemnity: Part 1

There is a big difference between planning Saturday lunch for the kids, a dinner party for the neighbors, breakfast for overnight guests, and Thanksgiving dinner for extended family. Although each of these events is a common meal, each calls for a greater or lesser degree of simplicity, formality, or festivity depending on the type of meal (breakfast, lunch, dinner); the participants (children, neighbors, guests, extended family); and the occasion (ordinary day, overnight visit, Thanksgiving Day).

Lunch on Saturday is likely to be an informal affair at the kitchen table or a fast food restaurant—or like it was in my house growing up—fend for yourself! Thanksgiving dinner might require the addition of extra tables and chairs and the use of cloth napkins, candles, seasonal decorations, the best dishes, and lovingly prepared traditional foods.

Preparing the environment for liturgical celebrations requires similar attention to the occasion and the participants. Priests, musicians, and liturgy planners are quite accustomed to making choices regarding the various parts of the liturgy to be sung and about simpler or more elaborate musical settings of the various liturgical texts.

The principle of *progressive solemnity* is not new. In the pre-Vatican II Church, we had Low Masses and High Masses and these degrees of festivity were clearly differentiated for virtually every day of the liturgical year. Throughout the Roman Church, it was quite common to find feasts ranked as principal feasts, duplex feasts, semi-duplex feasts, etc. These common designations were standardized after the Council of Trent (1545-1563), and although officially this language of “duplex” or “semi-duplex feasts” was suppressed after Vatican II, current ordos (the liturgical calendar of the Church) still distinguish between solemnities, feasts, memorials, and optional memorials. Practically speaking, these distinctions translate into whether or not there’s a “Gloria” sung at Mass.

In order to understand how this applies to those planning liturgy, we must first understand what each of the distinctions mean.



DIOCESE OF DES MOINES

In This Issue

- Principle of Progressive Solemnity
- November 6, Lutheran-Catholic Common Prayer
- Important Dates

Solemnity: pronounced—so·lem·ni·ty / sə'lem-ni-tē/

By definition, solemnity is the state or quality of being serious and dignified. In liturgy, a formal, dignified rite or ceremony, such as Christmas and Easter, or even Epiphany and Ascension, is “ranked” as a solemnity.

A solemnity is the highest of all the days on the Church calendar. It is usually commemorating an *event* in the life of Jesus or Mary (December 8: Mary’s Immaculate Conception—Mary being conceived without sin), or other important saints, like All Saints’ Day. A parish’s patron saint is usually celebrated in that parish as a solemnity as well as the anniversary of the day of dedication of the parish’s church. *All Holy Days of Obligation are celebrated as Solemnities.*

Feast

Feast days are special days, though not as “solemn” or “festive” as solemnities. Feasts usually commemorate a particular saint, like an apostle, evangelist, or martyr—like the feast of St. Luke on October 18 or the feast of St. Stephen the Martyr on December 26. They are days which are celebrated in commemoration of the sacred mysteries and events recorded in the history of our redemption—like the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on September 14th.

Days *commemorating* the Virgin Mary in general are usually feasts—Our Lady of Guadalupe—unless you’re from Mexico, then it’s a solemnity.

Memorial

Memorials are celebrations of other saints and events in the life of the Church. These are days in the calendar when the Church recognizes it’s universality and that not all individual saints are equally important to all members of the Church. For that reason, some memorials of saints are commemorated by the universal church, others by smaller groups for whom those saints have a special significance. Memorials are of less liturgical importance/festivity than feasts or solemnities.

Weekdays/Ferial Day

Finally, weekdays or ferial days are just your ordinary days during the week when Mass is celebrated but not in remembrance of any particular saint or event in the life of the Church.

Like the various types of lunches we prepare, there are days of greater and lesser liturgical importance. Sundays are always celebrated as Feasts of the Lord, though not always with the same importance or festivity as a solemnity.

Contact the Worship Office

Have a liturgical question?
Contact

Kim Mandelkow
Director, Office for Worship
601 Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50309

(515) 237-5043

kmandelkow@dmdioocese.org

Visit us on the web at
www.dmdioocese.org

Important Dates

Lutheran-Catholic Prayer: From Conflict to Communion

Sunday, Nov. 6, 2016
4:00 p.m.

St. Ambrose Cathedral

Liturgy Formation Guest Speaker, Rev. Paul Turner

Thursday, Nov. 10, 2016
6:30 p.m.—8:00 p.m.

Location TBD

So what does all this mean for us as we prepare liturgy?

Progressive Solemnity applies to how certain choices we make as we prepare for liturgy affect our overall experience of worship. In other words, since it is humanly impossible to celebrate the worship of God “all-out” all the time we gather, special enhancements are saved for special occasions. These occasions are not determined by the whim of clergy or musicians, but by the liturgical context.

Do we celebrate all solemnities with the same kind of attention and care? Does the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception get the same attention as the Assumption? Does Easter get the same attention as Christmas? What about the solemnity of Christ the King? How does our selection of music or the setting of the liturgical environment reflect these principles?



USCCB document *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* offers the following...

112. Musical selections and the use of additional instruments reflect the season of the liturgical year or feast that is being celebrated.

113. Solemnities and feasts invite more solemnity. Certain musical selections are more capable of expressing this solemnity, adding an extraordinary richness to these special celebrations. Such solemnity should never be allowed to devolve to an empty display of ceremony, however. The most solemn musical expressions retain their primary responsibility of engaging human hearts in the mystery of Christ that is being celebrated on a particular occasion by the Church.

Musica Sacra states the following:

“It should be borne in mind that the true solemnity of liturgical worship depends less on a more ornate form of singing and a more magnificent ceremonial than on its worthy and religious celebration, which takes into account the integrity of the liturgical celebration itself, and the performance of each of its parts according to their own particular nature.” no. 11

Assuming an ordinary Sunday baseline for the above, it is a common practice to add instrumentation appropriate to “bigger celebrations,” like Christmas and Easter. Yet, let’s keep in mind that certain other days also stand out well above the usual Sunday celebration.

Bear in mind too that this not only applies to certain days, but also to seasons too. Certain seasons will naturally rate more attention. The Easter and Christmas seasons, for example, are generally celebrated with great importance and dignity, but what about Advent and lent? In the case of Advent and Lent, it’s not so much the notion of adding instruments to the music, but for choosing musical selections carefully and ensuring the music has no less care than the festive seasons.

From Conflict to Communion

Lutheran – Catholic Common Prayer

Historic Moment for Catholics and Lutherans.

The year 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation. Ever since the Second Vatican Council issued the Decree on Ecumenism, the Church has been moving ever closer to Christian Unity. Pope Francis will be praying with Lutherans and Catholics on October 31 in Lund, Sweden.

Des Moines area Lutherans and Catholics will join together at 4 p.m., on November 6, at St. Ambrose Cathedral. Join Bishop Richard Pates, Bishop Michael Burk, of the Southeastern Iowa Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and priests, pastors, and many Lutherans and Catholics for this historic event.

Kathryn L. Johnson will speak at the service. She is the director of Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Kathryn has been on the board for the document From Conflict To Communion, and she will be in Lund, Sweden, with Pope Francis, just one week before our service in Des Moines. Come and be part of this important effort to help realize the prayer of Jesus, "that all may be one."

Statement of the international Lutheran-Catholic dialogue team regarding commemoration of the upcoming 500th anniversary of the Reformation, entitled From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017 It may be downloaded for free from the Lutheran World Federation website:

<http://www.lutheranworld.org/resources>

Or it may be read on the Vatican website. All of the current Lutheran-Catholic dialogue documents are located under the tab "Promoting Christian Unity" on this page:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/

All singers and musicians are invited to join in the music ministry for this event.

Below is the link for the music for the upcoming Lutheran Catholic worship service at St. Ambrose Cathedral on November 6.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lutheran-catholic-massed-choir-tickets-27947962107>