

August 2004

Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist DIOCESAN GUIDELINES

My dear sisters and brothers,

After several months of consultation and discussion, I have pleasure in releasing the long-awaited Diocesan Guidelines for Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist.

While we know only too well that nothing can replace the celebration of the Eucharist, we also know that there will be times when to celebrate the Eucharist is not possible. At such times, people will still gather to celebrate their lives in Christ and their belonging to a unique faith filled community.

The following Principles, Norms and Guidelines are for the use of all communities in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle to assist them in their discernment regarding times and occasions when due to the absence of their priest, the community needs to celebrate Sunday with a liturgy which is not the Mass.

I commend this document to you and urge a conscientious and consistent application of its provisions throughout the Diocese. We can never be complacent about having fewer priests to celebrate Mass. Our need for vocations to the priesthood is great - pray that men will accept God's invitation to his people.

With Love,



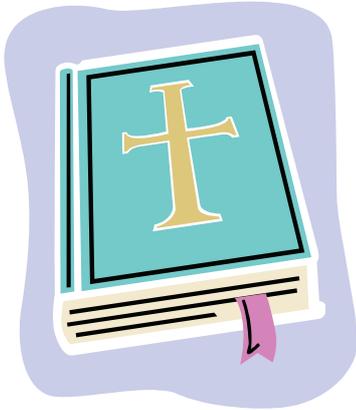
Most Reverend Michael Malone
Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle



**Towards
the Dawn**

Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist

INTRODUCTION



In our dealings with God, humanity's first obligation, both individually and communally, is to worship God. It is also our first and most wonderful privilege. This is the basic stance of the human in the face of the Divine. We are a dependent as well as a grateful and a needy people standing before our Maker and the Arbiter of our fates. No matter what our creed, no matter what our worship pattern, the basic obligation and privilege is to worship God.

Within the Catholic tradition, the centrality of the Eucharist¹ on Sunday is so powerful and so ancient an element in our worship pattern that there can be no adequate substitute. However, for the isolated shepherd guarding his flocks in the Swiss Alps, the boundary rider on an outback station, or for the village on the isolated Pacific atoll, the obligation and the need to worship remain, even though attendance at and participation in Sunday Eucharist in community may be difficult or impossible for substantial periods of time.

Our situation, as that of many parts of the Western Catholic Church, is that the declining numbers of priests is rapidly moving our worshipping communities to the point where weekly Eucharist for many will be very difficult if not impossible.

As the title of these Guidelines shows, Eucharist remains the goal and the climax of our worship lives. When it is not available, we will worship as God's People, in other ways, but always looking forward to the Eucharist, always drawing strength from the last Eucharist in which we participated.

Regular Occurrences:

Some worshipping communities will experience this situation as a regular occurrence. An example of a regular occurrence would be when Eucharist is celebrated in local communities fortnightly or even monthly. *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* would become a regular occurrence on those Sundays when Eucharist is not available.

Rare Occurrences:

Some worshipping communities will experience this situation as a rare or irregular occurrence. Two examples of a rare occurrence for a community might include the following:

- * when at short notice, the priest becomes sick, is called to an emergency, or is unable to get to a community due to some unforeseen circumstances;
- * when the priest is away.

This document seeks to address both the regular and rare occurrences of *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist*.

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1. Eucharist: In this document Eucharist refers to the celebration of the Mass.

“Within the Catholic tradition, the centrality of the Eucharist on Sunday is so powerful and so ancient an element in our worship pattern that there can be no adequate substitute.”

Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist

The following **principles**, **norms** and **guidelines**² are for the use of all communities in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, to assist them in their discernment regarding times and occasions when, due to the absence of their priest, the community needs to celebrate Sunday³ with a liturgical celebration, which is not Eucharist. They are designed to ensure that communities in this situation 'have the opportunity to gather together on Sunday, in a way that coincides with the celebration of the liturgical year, and that unites them with a community that is celebrating Eucharist with their own parish priest.'⁴

This document aims to assist people to:

- * know and understand the options available to them when they are unable to celebrate Sunday with Eucharist;
- * discern the best way to respond to both the regular and rare occurrences of this situation;
- * provide practical information and guidance for a community's preparation and celebration of *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist*.

PRINCIPLES

1. Theological

1.1 There are three important dimensions to the Catholic understanding and celebration of Sunday -

- * The nature and significance of Sunday as the Lord's Day; Sunday is a special day, Resurrection Day, the day on which for 1800 years the Church has celebrated and entered into Christ's Covenantal Paschal Mystery. As part of the universal Church we join all our brothers and sisters in embracing Christ's resurrection, and the hope of our resurrection on Sunday.
- * The gathering of the community; The local community, which gathers to worship is not only a physical sign of God's family in this place and this time: that gathered community **is** God's family here and now. That is why we work so hard to build community in our parishes. That is why that worshipping community prays for the intentions of its own locality. That is why, even when Eucharist is not available, Christ's "local" Body still needs to assemble, to continue building their community and praying for the needs of their own area.

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2. Norms are a legal directive, mandating what is, or is not to happen. Guidelines have a more pastoral orientation, offering the community a wisdom which they must discern how best to appropriate to their communal situation.

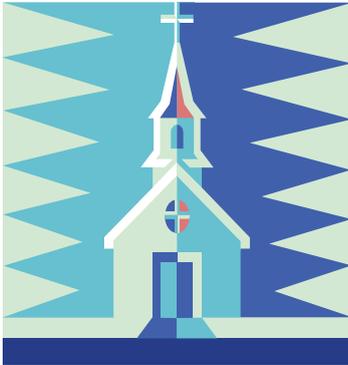
3. Note that the references to "Sunday" throughout this document include the Saturday night vigil.

4. Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest (hereafter referred to as Directory), Introduction.



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Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist



“Sometimes we ought participate in the community’s Worship in Anticipation of Eucharist so we can help build that sense of community. At other times we may feel the need to travel to participate in Eucharist even though it is outside our worshipping community. Both choices are good.”

* The celebration of Eucharist;

Eucharist is the high point of our lives and makes present Christ’s Covenant for us. There will be times in the lives of each of us when we will need Eucharist even more than usual. Hence, faced with a Sunday or Sundays on which there will be no Eucharist in our community, our choice will vary from time to time. Sometimes we ought participate in the community’s *Worship in Anticipation of Eucharist* so we can help build that sense of community. At other times we may feel the need to travel to participate in Eucharist, even though it is outside our worshipping community. Both choices are good. At different times, most of us will probably make both choices.

- 1.2 The most perfect form of Sunday Worship for the Catholic community is the gathering of the whole community – priest and people – to celebrate Eucharist.
“The Church exists to promote the Kingdom of God on Earth. This it does by proclaiming Christ – the Good News of God’s love for all people – and by working in the world for justice, peace and reconciliation. This mission finds its source and summit in the Eucharist which, when lived in everyday life and celebrated in the liturgy, is both the living symbol of Christ’s life, death and resurrection and celebrates the deepest identity of the Church as a communion of life, love and truth.”⁵
- 1.3 *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* must be a form of worship other than Eucharist. They are a substitute, and as such are celebrated looking forward to the community’s next Eucharist.⁶
- 1.4 *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* aim to ensure that ‘the riches of Sacred Scripture and of the Church’s prayer be amply provided to the faithful gathered on Sundays in various ways even apart from Mass’, and to ‘increase the desire of the faithful to take part in the celebration of Eucharist.’⁷

2. Pastoral

The weekly gathering of the established local worshipping community on Sunday is integral to the community’s Christian identity, life and mission, within the broader society in which it exists.⁸

5. Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. Diocesan Pastoral Plan 1.00. 1992-1993.

6. Directory a.21.

7. Directory a 19,22.

8. Directory a.14,15.

Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist

NORMS

Catholic communities within the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle are to discern their particular need for *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist*.

1. Decisions regarding both regular and rare occurrences of *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* are to be arrived at in consultation with the community concerned, and according to the discernment model which lies at the heart of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan.
2. The administration of *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* belongs to the pastoral ministry of the Parish Priest or Moderator, in collaboration with the People of God.⁹
3. *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* are an option for established worshipping communities only. An established worshipping community is understood to be a parish, or the several Mass centre communities, which cumulatively form the parish community such as the situation in Taree, where there are five worshipping communities and in Newcastle parish, where there are three worshipping communities. *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* are to be celebrated only when it is not possible for a community to celebrate Eucharist on a given Sunday.¹⁰
4. From the publication of this document, *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* is the diocesan response to situations where a worshipping community is not able to celebrate Eucharist on Sunday. Other responses – such as shifting the celebration of Sunday Eucharist to another time of the week such as Saturday morning – are not to be adopted.
5. Pastoral Regions are to work together to ensure that all efforts are made to assist individual parishes to gather for Eucharist on Sunday.¹¹
6. *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* must not become the sole or habitual way a worshipping community celebrates Sunday. There must always be a Eucharist to anticipate – be that fortnightly, monthly or even bi-monthly.
7. The worshipping community is to be appropriately prepared for the experience of *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* - whether this is to be a regular or rare occurrence for their community – by appropriate catechesis and formation.¹²

9. Directory a.24.

10. Directory a.21.

11. Directory a.21.

12. Directory a.26.



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Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist

The forms of Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist which are options for worshipping communities in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle - and which appear in the ritual books – are:

(1) Liturgy of the Word– without communion.

(2) Prayer of the Church – without communion.

(3) Liturgy of the Word - with communion.

Worshipping communities choose from these three options.

8. Because the ministry of the Lay Presider has a significance beyond other lay liturgical ministry, the worshipping community is to engage in a process of prayerful discernment regarding who, amongst them, is most suited to this ministry.
9. Members of the community who are to exercise specific ministries within these celebrations, particularly the ministry of Leadership, are to participate in the initial and ongoing formation and training recommended and established by the diocese.
10. In this diocese *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* are not to take the form of 'Liturgy of the Hours' with Communion.¹³



Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist

GUIDELINES

1. General.

- 1.1 All forms of *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist*, are to ensure that any confusion between them and the celebration of the Eucharist, is to be avoided.¹⁴
- 1.2 The forms of *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* which are options for worshipping communities in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle - and which appear in the ritual books – are:
 - Liturgy of the Word – without communion;
 - Prayer of the Church – without communion;
 - Liturgy of the Word - with communion.Worshipping communities choose from these three options. Any choice is not a “once and for all” decision.¹⁵
- 1.3 In the same Mass Centre, *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* should not be multiplied without necessity.
- 1.4 The format – structure and elements – of these celebrations is found in the ritual books.
- 1.5 *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* are to take the form of a genuine liturgical celebration, and not that of a meeting.¹⁶
- 1.6 *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* require the same measure of careful and thorough preparation as the community’s Sunday celebration of Eucharist. e.g.
 - * general preparation of the liturgy;
 - * allocation of ministries;
 - * arrangement and decoration of the worship space.
- 1.7 It is recommended that the various ministers involved in the liturgy work together as a team in a way that ensures:
 - * thorough preparation of the liturgy;
 - * support for each other in their ministries;
 - * evaluation of the experience of the liturgy as a whole, and how each minister is going in the development of their ministry skills.

2. Particular.

- 2.1 As a general rule, the texts and readings for the relevant Sunday or Solemnity – as found in the Sacramentary and the Lectionary for Mass – are to be used.

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14. Directory a 22, 35.

15. Directory a 20, 33.

16. Directory a 35.

Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist



**“Lay Leaders
preside as ‘one
among equals’ at
Sunday
Celebrations in
Anticipation of
Eucharist.”**

- 2.2 For the most part *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* are presided over by Lay Leaders. Deacons are also able to preside at such celebrations.
- 2.3 As distinct from the Presidency of Priests at Eucharist, Lay Leaders preside as ‘one among equals’ at *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist*.

The Lay Leader therefore:¹⁷

- * does not use the priest’s chair. Rather the Lay Presider uses a different chair which is outside the sanctuary and with the assembly;¹⁸
- * does not use the Altar unless circumstances require it. The Altar may be stripped of cloths and left bare;
- * ensures that the Lectern is decorated so as to highlight the centrality of the Word in this celebration;
- * does not wear any official vesture;
- * uses slightly different forms of Greeting and Blessing. These differences are clearly set out in the Ritual Books;
- * may read a homily prepared by the parish priest or moderator, or give a reflection on the readings in place of a homily. Specific arrangements for this are to be decided in conjunction with the Parish Priest or Moderator.¹⁹

RESOURCES

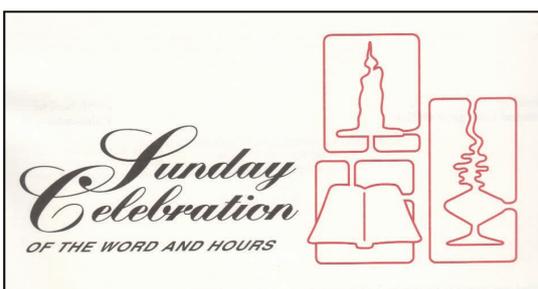
Currently, the two most accessible ritual books for *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* are the United States version and the Canadian version. Use of the Canadian ritual book *Sunday Celebrations of the Word and Hours* is recommended for use in this diocese.

Further information regarding *Sunday Celebrations in Anticipation of Eucharist* is available in Appendix A - the Directives for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest - published by the Australian Catholic Bishop’s Conference (May 2003) and the accompanying Pastoral Handbook available from the Liturgical Commission in Brisbane.

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17. Directory a.39.
18. Directory a 40.
19. Directory a. 43.

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Recommended Resource

	<h3>Sunday Celebration of the Word and Hours</h3> <p>Edited by: National Liturgical Office Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops Ottawa, Ontario, CANADA. 1995.</p>
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