Diocese of San Bernardino

Guidelines for the Use of Technology in Liturgical Celebrations

Office of Worship-August 21, 2014

1201 E. Highland Avenue ⬥ San Bernardino, CA 92404

(909) 475-5335 ⬥ Fax (909) 475-5334 ⬥ worship@sbdiocese.org

Introduction

1. Technology continues to play a major role in worship. As technology continues to evolve, guidelines on the proper use of technology are essential so that the dignity of the liturgical action can be preserved and respected and so that technology can be used to its maximum potential to support the liturgy. The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 4, 1963, the first document approved by the Council Fathers at the Second Vatican Council, remains the foundation for liturgical reform. It emphasizes that the Church "earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people' (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism." (n. 14). The focus in the celebration of liturgy must still be, in fact, the liturgy itself. If the use of technology enhances the ability of the assembly to more fully, consciously, and actively participate in the liturgy, then the supporting role of technology is accomplished.

Background

2. The use of technology in liturgy today is essential. It serves to enhance the presider's ability to communicate his message to the faithful and it helps the choir to assist the faithful as they lift their voices to God in prayer. If used properly, it can be a tool that helps to contribute to the full, conscious, and active participation of all present for the liturgical celebration. If used incorrectly or inappropriately, it can be distracting and superfluous. It can actually divert people's attention from the essential elements of the liturgical ritual.

3. This guideline and its recommendations serve to provide a framework of what should and should not be implemented with regard to technology in parishes in the Diocese of San Bernardino.

Audio Technology

4. Good acoustics and a good integrated sound system are essential for good liturgical celebrations in church settings. The Mass is a celebration of the parish community. If the people cannot hear what is being proclaimed during the Liturgy of the Word, if they cannot hear the homily being delivered by the homilist, and if they cannot hear the prayers spoken by the priest during the Mass, the celebration as a community is incomplete.

5. The altar, ambo, presidential chair, and choir are the primary areas on which to focus for audio technology. The audio technology should function to support all areas of the worship space including the assembly and sanctuary areas. Where overflow areas and other rooms that are physically separate from the main church area

are also regularly used, the audio needs of their occupants should also be addressed. They are part of the assembly and should be afforded every opportunity to participate in the liturgical action.

a) Parishes should invest in good quality microphone, speaker, and amplification equipment that is appropriate and adequate for their worship space.
b) Wireless lavaliere microphones usually provide the best flexibility for use by the presider and the assisting deacon. They can be used at the presidential chair, at the altar, and elsewhere in the church. They should have the option for clip-on and over-the-ear microphones to accommodate the preference of the presider.
c) At least one wireless hand-held microphone should also be considered for additional flexibility during certain liturgical celebrations and rites.
d) A fixed microphone should be installed at the ambo for use by the lector, deacon, psalmist, homilist, and others.
e) A fixed microphone should be installed at the cantor stand (if used in the church) for the cantor who leads the assembly in singing.
f) A fixed low-profile (flat) microphone should be installed at the altar to be used by concelebrating priests during the Eucharistic Prayer.
g) Sufficient microphones should be available for use by members of the choir in order to support the assembly when singing songs, hymns, and responses during the Mass.
h) Speakers should be positioned within the worship space such that the amplified sound is clearly heard throughout the church by all. This includes those seated in the sanctuary.
i) The parish may want to consider the use of assisted-listening devices for those who are hearing-impaired.
j) Sufficient electrical capacity should be available for all in the choir who require it.
k) Parishes planning new construction or major renovations of their church facilities should engage the services of reputable audio and acoustic consultants in order to ensure the best implementation of available audio technology that will support participation in the liturgy by all. This includes selection of different types of microphones for various applications, speakers, and amplification equipment.

Projector and Screen Technology
6. Many churches now have video projectors and screens installed either as add-ons to an existing structure or integrated into new construction. This technology can be very effective when used appropriately. The primary focus for the assembly should be where the ritual action is taking place, not the projection screen. The use of projection should support the liturgy, not serve as the focus area.

Projection of Text and Images
7. The following are guidelines for the projection of text and images.

a) For projection of printed materials, the background color and font colors should be contrasting. For example, if the background color is light (e.g., white, light yellow, light green, light blue), the printed words should be dark (e.g., black, navy blue, etc.) and vice versa. Background graphics should be avoided since they may make the text more difficult to read and may actually be distractive.

b) Simple fonts should be used and the font size should be large enough to be read from the back of the church.

c) For the Liturgy of the Word, the readings should not be projected in the language in which they are being proclaimed. Exceptions could be made for assemblies with large numbers of hearing-impaired parishioners. However, other accommodations such as assisted-listening devices or Mass booklets containing the readings should be used instead.

d) Prayers spoken by the presider (e.g., the Collect, Prayer Over the Offerings, Eucharistic Prayer, Prayer After Communion, etc.) should not be projected.

e) For bilingual liturgies, the readings may be projected in an alternate language of the language being proclaimed. For example, if the First Reading is proclaimed in English, it can be simultaneously projected in Spanish (or Vietnamese, Tagalog, Korean, Igbo, etc.). If the Gospel is proclaimed in both English and Spanish, it should not be projected. Worship aids and Mass booklets should reduce the need to project the text of the readings.

f) Generally, the spoken and commonly known prayers and responses of the assembly should not be projected, e.g., "And with your spirit", the Gloria, the Creed, the assembly response before the Prayer Over the Offerings, the Preface dialogue, the Holy, Holy, Holy, the Mystery of Faith, the Great Amen, and the Our Father. If these prayers and responses are not familiar or are in a language not common to a majority of the assembly, they may be projected.

g) The lyrics of songs may be projected if it is necessary to promote the participation of the assembly. Providing music books for the assembly is preferable to projecting the lyrics since many in the assembly can participate better if they have the music as well as the lyrics.

h) Any necessary copyright permission must be obtained and all copyrights must be respected.

Projection of Live Video

8. The following are guidelines for the projection of live video.

a) The focus of the assembly during Mass should be on the altar, the ambo, or the presidential chair depending upon the ritual action taking place – not the projection screen. Live projections of video, e.g., during the proclamation of the Word, during the homily, or during the Eucharistic Prayer, should *not* be shown on screens during the Mass. Exceptions to this can be made when the ritual action is not taking place in the sanctuary, e.g., baptisms during the Easter Vigil when the font is not in or near the sanctuary; reception of the body at the door of the church during the funeral liturgy.

b) A live video feed of the Mass may be shown in an overflow location adjacent to the church.

Projection of Pre-recorded Video

9. The following are guidelines for the projection of pre-recorded video.

a) Occasionally, video messages are recorded by the Bishop or others to promote certain programs or communicate essential information to the faithful of the diocese. These videos may be projected at an appropriate time during the Mass (usually before the Mass begins, after the Prayer After Communion, or during the announcements).

b) Appropriate videos to celebrate an ordination, wedding, or other occasion may be projected as a prelude to the Mass, but not during the Mass.

Additional Technology Guidelines

10. The following are some additional technology guidelines.

   a) When designing liturgical spaces, the technology (screens, projectors, speakers, etc.) should be hidden as much as possible so that they "blend in" to the liturgical environment. It is essential that the design and planning efforts be coordinated through the Diocesan Building Commission. It is especially important that both the Technology and the Liturgical sub-committees be consulted when new churches are being designed and when renovation of existing churches is planned.

   b) The use of pre-recorded music during Mass and other liturgies should be avoided. If a choir or musician is not available to assist the assembly, familiar songs should be led by a competent member of the assembly or by the presider or deacon. For liturgical movement, it may be necessary to use pre-recorded music if the choir is unavailable or unable to provide the musical accompaniment but these circumstances should be avoided.

   c) The use of cellphones, flashlights, or other artificial lights as a substitute for candles during the Easter Vigil or other nighttime or pre-dawn liturgies is not permitted.

   d) The Roman Missal, Lectionary, Book of Gospels, or other suitably prepared written texts and books are to be used during the Mass. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, notebooks, tablets (iPads, etc.) is not permitted for use by the presider, deacon, or lector. If these types of electronic devices are used by musicians or choir members, they should not be a distraction for the assembly with regard to their placement and visibility (e.g., they may be placed on music stands, out of sight of the assembly).

   e) Projection of simple, appropriate religious art before and after Mass may be done to enhance the liturgical environment of the sacred space. A single slide is recommended since multiple rotating slides may be distracting for some. Appropriate copyright permissions must be obtained as necessary.

   f) The use of technology in liturgical spaces presents new challenges in terms of support. Properly trained personnel are essential to ensure that the technology functions properly. It is also important that the technology support personnel have some liturgical training and possess a basic understanding of the liturgy.