

# **“All things should be done decently and in order.”**

*1 Corinthians 14:20*

LAYREADERS' WORKSHOP • DIOCESE OF QUEBEC • LENNOXVILLE, QC • 3 OCTOBER 2009

---

## **1. Pray**

- “One who leads in common prayer must be more than prayerful.”  
*(Robert W. Hovda)*
- Often our temptation is to dive into the preparation of our worship services, as if they were any other kind of menial planning task. But our preparation of common prayer must itself be rooted in prayer.
- This can include praying over the scriptures appointed by the lectionary for the Sunday for which you are preparing, or simply ensuring a time of prayer or meditation before sitting down to the task of preparing the service of worship.

## **2. Prepare**

- “There is no such thing as unplanned liturgy. All liturgy is planned, either well or poorly.”  
*(Paul Gibson)*
- Liturgy of the well-planned kind is obviously what we’re aiming for. Since the Anglican worship tradition is one rooted in prayer books and fixed liturgies, our faulty assumption can sometimes be that we don’t need to do very much worship planning at all: It’s already all there in the *BCP* or the *BAS*, after all.
- Having well-planned liturgy, in part, that our preparation for Sunday morning’s service(s) doesn’t begin on Saturday night. Such preparation ahead of Sunday necessarily includes:
  - ✓ Looking up the appointed readings and collect
  - ✓ Selecting canticles (if using the *BAS* for morning or evening prayer)
  - ✓ Preparing the sermon (and children’s story)
  - ✓ Choosing appropriate hymns
  - ✓ Crafting the prayers of the people (including cycles of prayer)
  - ✓ Designating liturgical roles (readers, prayers of the people, etc.), ensuring they have an opportunity to read their texts ahead of time
- Preparation is also necessary in the church, before the service begins. For example:
  - ✓ Marking the scripture readings to be read
  - ✓ Having your own prayer book marked
  - ✓ Checking that the hymns numbers are indicated on the hymn board
  - ✓ Ensuring the consecrated elements are appropriately prepared, if being administered from the reserved sacrament
  - ✓ Looking in the mirror to make sure everything is in place
  - ✓ Saying a final prayer of preparation (vestry prayer)

### 3. Preside

- “To be consumed with worry over making a liturgical mistake is the greatest mistake of all. Reverence is a virtue, not a neurosis, and God can take care of himself.”  
(Aidan Kavanagh)
- If steps 1 and 2 have been seen to, then this third step should be reasonably free of fuss and anxiety. Still, there are some basic guidelines to follow as you step before the congregation to lead them in their worship of God:
  - ✓ Start the service on time
  - ✓ Speak loudly, clearly, and unhurriedly
  - ✓ Preside from a place visible to the assembly
  - ✓ Preach from the pulpit
  - ✓ Resist the urge to announce everything
  - ✓ Strive to do things “decently and in order,” but don’t become preoccupied with “mistakes” (see above). Roll with it.

**“Never be comfortable with shoddy worship.** The biblical story of Cain and Abel can be interpreted as a story about authentic versus shoddy worship. Abel presented the best to God—thus his sacrifice of praise was accepted. Cain was comfortable with second best—his sacrifice was not accepted. How often in our [liturgical] gatherings are we comfortable with second best, or even worse?”

**Dennis C. Smolarski, SJ**  
*How Not to Say Mass*

### Some Useful Resources

**Comité liturgique épiscopal francophone de l’Église anglicane du Canada.** Official French-language translations of the eucharist, baptism, wedding, and funeral rites according to the *Book of Alternative Services*, available online at <http://www.montreal.anglican.org/francais/index-01-en.html>

**Liturgy for Living** (revised edition), by Charles P. Price and Louis Weil (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2000)

**Make Preparation: Liturgy Planning Notes**, by Paul Gibson. Available online at <http://www.abcpublishing.com/site/wp-content/uploads/make-preparation1.pdf>

**McCausland’s Order of Divine Service**, David Brinton OGS, editor. Published annually by ABC Publishing.

**Revised Common Lectionary**, available online at <http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/>

**The Word Today: Reflections on the Readings of the Revised Common Lectionary**, by Herbert O’Driscoll. Available in nine, separately sold volumes from ABC Publishing.