



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

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To all Priests and Parish and Community Liturgy Committees

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your participation in the recent Fr Paul Turner workshops, whether for priests or for the laity. As was mentioned, these talks were an initiative of the Bishops Conference for all six dioceses, in light of Pope Francis' apostolic letter, *Desiderio Desideravi*.

In his letter the Holy Father wrote, *"One way of caring for and growing in a vital understanding of the symbols of the Liturgy is certainly the ars celebrandi, the art of celebrating. This expression also, is subject to different interpretations. Its sense becomes clear if we refer to the theological sense of the Liturgy described in Sacrosanctum Concilium n. 7, to which I have already referred several times. The ars celebrandi cannot be reduced to only a rubrical mechanism, much less should it be thought of as imaginative - sometimes wild - creativity without rules. The rite is, in itself a norm, and the norm is never an end in itself, but it is always at the service of a higher reality that it means to protect"* (DD 48).

The presentations really asked us to be humble as we reflected on our own *ars celebrandi*. I acknowledge that some felt the presentations focused too much on the rubrics and that they would have liked more on the theological and spiritual dimensions. The rubrics do, however, reflect and point us toward these theological and spiritual underpinnings, and our attention to them should inform the way we pray the Mass as servants of the Liturgy, which the Lord has entrusted to his Church, rather than according to our personal devotional or spiritual style. On a personal note, I have picked up a number of changes to the way I celebrate the Liturgy so that I may, with the people of God, enter and celebrate the sacred mysteries more fully. In particular, I would like to underline Fr Paul's comment that we should not be adding things back into the Liturgy that were part of the 1962 Latin Mass.

As a follow-up to his talks, I would now ask that you start reflecting on the *ars celebrandi* with your Liturgy Committees by working through the General Instruction of the Roman Missal with them and reflecting on what the Instruction says about your celebration of the Mass and your praxis in your community's Mass. It is my hope that this exercise will be formative work for the Liturgy Committee and a way of making our celebration of the Eucharist in the Diocese better, more fully in line with what the Church asks of us and more beautiful. I have asked Randall Ramos from the Liturgy Office to provide a guide for your reflection on this work and the first part is included. As you work on these matters, please make use of Randall who is there to help and support the celebration of the sacred mysteries across the Diocese.

As part of this work, **I would also ask that all versions of the Mass parts — the Gloria, the Holy, Holy, the Memorial Acclamation, the Great Amen, and the Lamb of God — are faithful to (that is, the same as) the text of the Missal.** This was the instruction when the new Missal was issued in 2010, but a number of parishes and schools are still using other Mass settings for these Mass parts. When the new Missal came in, permission had to be sought for new Mass part settings. Sadly, this initiative failed, and now there are many music groups using their own settings, which can result in the people not singing.

In choosing new Mass settings, may I recommend that you use commonly used Mass settings. Music should lead to all the faithful being fully conscious, active participants in the liturgical celebrations, which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy (SC 14).

At the closing of the second session of the Vatican Council (December 4, 1963), Saint Paul VI said of the Council's debates on the Liturgy: *"The difficult, complex debates have had rich results. They have brought one topic to a conclusion, the sacred liturgy. Treated before all others, in a sense it has priority over all others for its intrinsic dignity and importance to the life of the Church... God must hold first place; prayer to him is our first duty. The liturgy is the first source of divine communion in which God shares his own life with us. It is also the first school of the spiritual life. The liturgy is the first gift we must make to the Christian people united to us by faith and the fervour of their prayers. It is also a primary invitation to the human race, so that all may now lift their mute voices in blessed and genuine prayer and thus may experience that indescribable, regenerative power to be found when they join us in proclaiming the praises of God and the hopes of the human heart through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit."*

May our love of the prayer of the Eucharist, that is the Mass, continue to grow so that together, as priests and people, we might enter more profoundly into the mystery of Him who offers himself for us. May we ever sing his praises.

Yours sincerely in Christ the Good Shepherd

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Steve Lowe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

✠ **Steve Lowe**
Bishop of Auckland