

Flowers and Decoration

A noble simplicity should be ensured

Flowers

The use of fresh flowers is encouraged as a way of engaging in the beauty and dignity of celebration. Discerning use of flowers can indicate the relative importance of particular occasions, and signify the keeping of particular seasons.

- During Advent the floral decoration of the church should be in keeping with the season, not anticipating the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord.
- During Lent the church is not to be decorated with flowers. Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent), Solemnities, and Feasts are exceptions to this rule. Flowers used on these days should be removed after Evening Prayer II.

Artificial flowers and plants should not be used. Dried flowers, ferns and sprays may be used, particularly in winter months.

Care should be taken to use flowers to guide the eye to the various centres of liturgical action – for example the entrance to the Church, the ambo, the altar, the presider's chair; on other occasions the font, the place for reserving the sacred oils etc.

Moderation should be observed when decorating altars. Floral decorations should always be modest and placed around the altar rather than on top of it.

Banners

The whole environment of the church can be enhanced through the use of banners and other visual media. These can be used to give focus to a particular liturgical season or occasion. Care should be taken that these complement and do not detract from the liturgical celebration or design of the building itself. Banners and other materials should not be fixed to the altar, ambo, font, as this leads to a secondary symbol obscuring a primary one.

A parish might commission a series of banners, for example, for the liturgical cycle and its patronal Feast which can be used annually and so become part of the way that parish enters into the keeping of each season.

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Some Questions

- What centres of liturgical action are highlighted by the flowers and other seasonal decorations used in the church? Which are not highlighted?
- Are those preparing the decorations part of the liturgy preparation group? Or in good working relationship with them?

Further References

General Instruction of the Roman Missal:
305, 319–351

Celebrating the Mass: 52–3, 106–125

Practical Points

- Keep a photographic record of decorations and arrangements to assist in review of what has helped and what may not have done.
- Set aside time to review parish resources (condition of banners etc) and to sort out what gaps there are in current provision.
- Encourage those engaged in this work to experience what others have done and to extend their skills.

**Liturgy
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Questions for Groups

1. What is good about current practice?
What concerns do you have?

4. Who is most directly involved in these matters, e.g. liturgical ministers?
What formation/information is necessary to engage them in the renewal of current practice?

2. In what ways does the documentation affirm or challenge your current practice?

5. How will the assembly be engaged in the process?
What, in particular, needs addressing at Sunday and/or weekday celebrations?

3. Prioritise the issues you have identified.

6. How will you know whether the formation has worked?