
MEMORANDUM FROM THE OFFICE OF WORSHIP

TO: PRIESTS AND LITURGICAL LEADERS
FROM: PATRICK GORMAN
SUBJECT: MASSES ON SEPTEMBER 11
DATE: AUGUST 29, 2011

Bishop Morlino is allowing for the use of a different Mass formulary on Sunday, September 11, 2011 (Patriot Day and the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attacks).

This is done in accord with number 374 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* which grants authority to the Diocesan bishop to allow the use of other Mass formularies on Sundays in Ordinary Time (among other days).

Please read the attached information from the USCCB's Secretariat for Divine Worship which provides suggestions regarding which Mass formularies are most appropriate. [The USCCB has a page devoted to liturgical considerations](#) for the day which includes intercessions, homily helps and other resources. Click on the link above to visit that page. I have attached some of this information to this memo.

You are not required to use this permission. You may, of course, retain the appointed texts for the Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Liturgical Considerations for Sunday, September 11, 2011

from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Introduction

Patriot Day is observed every September 11 to mark the anniversary of the terrorist attacks against the United States. The date falls on a Sunday in 2011, and this year's observance commemorating the 10th anniversary of the attacks will be a cause of much reflection and remembrance. To help clergy and pastoral ministers prepare for this anniversary, the Secretariat of Divine Worship offers a few considerations on how best to observe Patriot Day within the context of the Liturgy.

Sunday, September 11, 2011 will be the Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time. All things being equal, the Mass of the day is celebrated, with appropriate intercessions and chants or other liturgical songs chosen to mark the observance of Patriot Day. In cases of serious need or pastoral advantage, however, the Diocesan Bishop may direct or allow for the celebration of a Mass formulary from the Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 374).

Several formularies would be fitting for the occasion: the Mass for Peace and Justice (with white vestments) or the Mass in Time of War or Civil Disturbance (with purple vestments). In some circumstances, a Mass for the Dead might be appropriate as a memorial Mass for the victims of the terrorist attacks, especially at churches and oratories with particular ties to individuals who died that day or are closest to the sites of the attacks (New York, NY, Arlington, VA, and Shanksville, PA).

The assigned Lectionary readings for the Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (no. 130) are particularly poignant, but may provide a particular pastoral challenge for preachers, as they address questions of forgiveness, vengeance, and God's mercy. The first reading (Sirach 27:30—28:7) states, "The vengeful will suffer the Lord's vengeance, for he remembers their sins in detail. Forgive your neighbor's injustice..." In the Gospel (Mt 18:21-35), Jesus addresses the question of forgiveness ("[H]ow often must I forgive?") with the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant.

Liturgical Resources

Intercessions for Sunday, September 11, 2011

These may be included among the intercessions at Masses on September 11, 2011.

- For the Church, that she may continue to provide care and healing for all, especially those affected by the attacks on September 11, 2001, we pray to the Lord...
- For all victims of violence and terrorism around the world, and for their families, that they may find comfort and peace, we pray to the Lord...
- For the safety of our service men and women abroad, for civil servants who protect us and keep us safe, and for all who live with war and violence, we pray to the Lord...

- For our leaders and for the leaders of nations, that they may work together to address the problems that provide fertile ground for the growth of terrorism, we pray to the Lord...
- For the ability to forgive and for an end to all hatred, beginning in our own hearts, we pray to the Lord...

September 11, 2011 Homily Notes

Today's readings offer an uncomfortable, but clear challenge to us on this anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks: the challenge of forgiveness.

The first reading from the Book of Sirach reminds us to release or turn over to the Lord our anger and desire for vengeance, for it is God's role, not ours, to punish those who have done evil. We are not to be vengeful; we are to forgive. "The vengeful will suffer the Lord's vengeance, for he remembers their sins in detail," Sirach writes. But as for us, we must forgive: "Forgive your neighbor's injustice; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven."

It is important to remember, however, that forgiving another does not mean absolving them of responsibility. To forgive another is to confirm that they have done wrong and are in need of forgiveness. Mercy does not cancel out justice or the need for conversion, but it does open up a path of charity that encourages and promotes conversion and justice. For the Christian in the world, we live in mercy and we long for justice, but we entrust final justice (final conversion) always to God. As long as we believe in the power and mercy of God, we always hope for this.

Note that the reason given for why we should forgive, both in Sirach and in the Psalm, is that none of us are free of sin and guilt. We are all sinners, we have all done wrong. Yet, God forgives us, and so we must forgive others. The Psalm proclaims that God "has not dealt with us as our sins merit, nor requited us as our deeds deserve." God treats us with forgiveness, love and compassion, and we must do the same. As we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Again in the Gospel, the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, we hear the story of the master (representing God) who forgives the servant of his debt (the servant represents us). The message is that God forgives us not because we deserve it, but because God is merciful. Yet, when that servant does not extend the same forgiveness to others, he gets himself into trouble, for he has not acted toward others the way the master acted toward him. We are called to forgive those who sin against us. This message is made clear by Peter's question to Jesus, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus answers, "Not seven times but seventy-seven times" (Mt. 18:21-22).

We have probably heard this instruction many times and we can sometimes take it for granted. It may be easy to apply to everyday situations: I will forgive you for leaving your dishes in the sink, being late to pick me up, forgetting my birthday, etc. But in fact, these everyday situations are ultimately about developing an attitude of forgiveness that can define our lives. Without that kind of attitude, what will we do about the really difficult situations in life:

- ...the close friend who says something hurtful behind your back;
- ...the spouse who cheats;
- ...how about the priest who abuses a child;
- ...the murderer on death row;
- ...the terrorists who plotted and carried out the attacks on September 11, 2001?

Our inclination may be simply to say that some things are too terrible to forgive. Certainly, it is only human that we must often go through a period of anger, bitterness, and mourning. Perhaps, we will never forget some wrongs.

But there is great wisdom in Jesus' words about forgiveness. Our human experience tells us that when we hold on to anger and hatred, it eats away at us. It can begin to change us and make us into persons we never wanted to be. In some ways, forgiveness frees the one who forgives from carrying that burden. We can let it go and entrust the other to God who is better able to deal with them. The teaching on forgiveness is about being like God, who is merciful. It is about recognizing something of ourselves in those who commit the greatest evils, for no one is free of sin. Finally, this teaching on forgiveness is about being able to live with the peace of love instead of hate, which tears and destroys.

Jesus is not urging us simply to be passive in the face of evil. We must still work to protect the innocent and to hold those who perpetrate crimes against humanity accountable. But at the same time we are called to forgive even while asking, in love, how we can move forward in truth and love. Forgiveness requires that we address the situation in a positive and loving way, instead of with fear and hatred.

This may be a hard message to hear, but Jesus' words today are challenging us in a big way. When something that is dearest to us has been attacked, how will we respond? The Gospel challenges us to consider what a Christian response might be. Our response will have long-lasting implications on us as persons and as a society.

What has been your response to September 11, 2001, and how can you act positively and lovingly as we move forward? How about your prayer response?

The U.S. Catholic bishops wrote in their statement shortly after the attacks that in difficult times it is our faith that can sustain us. They reminded us then, as they do now, that instead of fear and hatred, we must make this:

- A time for prayer: for victims and families; for leaders; for the military; for an end to violence; for the Afghan people; and for our adversaries as well.
- A time for fasting: for justice, peace and the protection of innocent human life.
- A time for teaching: to better learn Catholic teaching on war and peace.
- A time for dialogue: with Muslims, Jews, fellow Christians and other faith communities.
- A time for witness: to live our values of mutual respect, human dignity, respect for life, and security without resorting to discrimination.
- A time for service: to continue to provide assistance to those still hurting both here and abroad.
- A time for solidarity: with all who live under the threat of violence and uncertainty each day. And...
- A time for hope: in God's grace, in ourselves, and in one another.

Remember, forgiveness does not mean doing nothing. The bishops name many tasks that must be achieved in the work for peace, forgiveness and reconciliation. We all must play a continuing role to make it happen. We can pray, teach, engage in dialogue, and urge our leaders to work together for peace and to eliminate injustice.