



**OUR LADY OF THE
BLESSED SACRAMENT
PARISH**

PRE-RETREAT ASSESSMENT

PARISH RENEWAL

**THROUGH
ENCULTURATED
REVERENCE**



Renewing the Parish through Encultuated Reverence

Parish renewal is a focal point of nearly every diocesan strategic plan. But this renewal often focuses too much on strategy and not sufficiently on the spiritual renewal that is required to think anew about the mission of parish life in the 21st century, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. We invite you to participate in a retreat to discern how we may cultivate a deeper encultuated reverence before the Eucharistic mystery, and to see this reverence as the privileged source of parish renewal here at Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Parish.



FIVE DIMENSIONS OF ENCULTURATED REVERENCE

Before participating in the Retreat, we invite you to participate in a celebration of the Mass at Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, paying close attention to whether and to what degree the Five Dimensions of Encultured Reverence are present. Use the prompts provided to complete your assessment, writing down your responses in the notes area provided, or a notebook or journal. Plan to complete this assessment in the month before the retreat, over the course of three or four Masses (Sunday or weekday) at Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament. You do not need to have an in-depth answer to every question.

Dimension 1: Remembering Why We Are Gathered

The Church must never forget that the celebration of the Mass is the privileged manner in which God sanctifies and redeems the human race. Men and women respond to this sanctification through learning to offer their lives in return as a sacrifice of love.

The first task of assessing the Eucharistic culture of a parish is getting a sense of the reason that the People of God are coming to Mass in the first place. First, ask yourself these questions:

- Do parishioners across the lifecycle know the *kerygma*, why the Church calls the Eucharist the source and summit of the Christian life?
- Do you think that many people in the parish could tell their neighbor why they go to Mass? If so, what might they say? If not, why do you think this is the case?
- Think about the celebration of the Mass at Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament. In the context of the Mass, is it clear that God is being glorified and the human race being sanctified? If so, how? If not, what would need to change?

If a parish believes that an encounter with Jesus Christ changes everything, then that parish will live with a joyful sense of hospitality. In such a parish, there will be a desire to welcome every person into the encounter with Jesus Christ that unfolds in the celebration of every Mass. Therefore, also ask the following questions:

- Are people greeted warmly when they enter the church for Mass? How so?
- Are regular parishioners missed when they are not present? Have you reached out after COVID-19 to those parishioners who have not been back to Mass since the pandemic?
- Does your parish especially welcome children and those with physical and intellectual disabilities? How so?

- Is there a sense that the final blessing sends us forth on mission, or is it seen as more of a permission to leave?
- Does the sense of hospitality continue after Mass is over? How so?

Dimension 2: Praying, Not Talking

This second dimension of enculturated reverence is to communicate the importance of our relationship with Jesus Christ, to show everyone who walks through our parish doors that Jesus is the reason for our gathering.

As you consider this dimension, ask yourself: if someone who had no concept of prayer randomly walked into our parish's celebration of the Sunday Mass, would he or she have a sense that something special was taking place? Or would it just seem like any other public gathering? Reflect on whether and how your parish practices each of the following:

Balancing Sung and Spoken Prayer

- How often are the dialogues and/or acclamations sung? If they were not sung during the Mass you observed, are there particular times of year when sung prayer is more common (e.g., Advent, Lent)? How comfortable are your parishioners in singing the responses to the dialogues and/or acclamations? How comfortable are your priests and/or deacons in intoning them?
- How lengthy or brief is the Universal Prayer (Prayers of the Faithful) in your parish? Is the structure of the intercessions simple to follow? Are alternate or seasonal responses ever utilized?

Proclaiming the Scriptures

- How do the lectors in your parish approach the ambo? How do they handle the Lectionary?
- Is the Book of the Gospels processed and enthroned? Is it honored with incense or adorned by candles?
- Do lectors prayerfully study Sacred Scripture?
- Overall, how would you describe the manner in which the Scriptures are proclaimed in your parish? Do those listening have a sense of the joyfully serious story of salvation that we remember at each Mass?

Distributing and Receiving the Eucharist

- How do people approach the altar to receive the Eucharistic presence of Jesus Christ?
- Observe the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. How would you describe their approach to distributing the Eucharist? What kind of formation do they receive to engage in this ministry?
- Has your parish leadership ever offered formation (written or verbal) on the dispositions one should foster in approaching Holy Communion?

Dimension 3: Room for Contemplation and Silence

As you consider this third dimension of enculturated reverence, ask yourself: how comfortable are you with silence? (Be honest!) How comfortable are our parishioners? What dispositions might need to be cultivated within your own heart and the hearts of those in our pews in order for silence to become a more welcome, normative part of the Mass? Reflect on whether and how our parish practices each of the following:

Formation into Silence

- Has there been any intentional effort to help your parishioners embrace silence during the liturgical celebration? If so, how?

Proportions of Silence, Speech, and Music:

- Does your parish keep a period of silence at the Penitential Rite? After the readings and homily? After the reception of the Blessed Sacrament? How would you characterize each of these moments of silence?
- Does instrumental music serve as a constant cover for moments in the liturgy when no prayers are being spoken (e.g., preparation of the altar, purifying of liturgical vessels)? Could there be a better balance between music and silence?

Announcements

- How are weekly announcements handled in your parish?
- If announcements are made by the priest or by a lector, how long do they usually take?
- Are announcements made during Mass also printed in the bulletin?

Dimension 4: The Body Matters

As you consider this fourth dimension, you may wish to spend time in the church before Mass and make note of the “stuff” that is or is not present. Then, during the Mass, pay attention to whether and how the celebration engages your physical senses and invites you to pray through your body. Afterward, reflect on each of the following:

Art

- What is the most distinctive artistic or architectural feature of your church (e.g., stained glass windows, crucifix, altar, tabernacle, baptismal font, etc.)? Do your parishioners know the story behind that feature? If it includes any symbolic visual language (e.g., a pelican feeding her young carved into the front of the altar, a Pietá on the tabernacle doors), has that symbolism been unpacked for your parishioners to aid their contemplation and prayer?
- If multiple cultures are represented in the parishioners of your parish, does the art in your church reflect this? For example: are there any images of Our Lady as she has been honored and represented throughout the world? Is the richness and diversity of the Communion of Saints represented?

Architecture

- In what shape was your church built? Is it cruciform? In the round? How does this impact the reverence of the liturgy?
- If your church has statues or devotional images (e.g., the Sacred Heart, the Blessed Mother, the saints), are parishioners able to pray quietly before them? To light votive candles? If payment is asked for votive candles, are instructions provided and/or donation receptacles clearly marked?

Music and Sound

- The General Instruction for the Roman Missal notes that chant is given pride of place in the liturgy because it allows for the singing of texts and dialogue. What parts of the Mass are chanted?
- How would you describe the music at your parish? Do the selections ever fall into the category of kitsch (created to appeal to popular or undiscriminating taste)? Are different styles of music selected to align with different modes of prayer (e.g., proper antiphons or congregational hymns for Sunday Mass, devotional songs for Eucharistic Adoration)?
- Are Sanctus bells ever rung during the Eucharistic Prayer at the invocation of the Holy Spirit and/or during the elevation of the consecrated Eucharistic species? Is the Blessed Sacrament itself ever reverenced with incense and candlelight during the Eucharistic Prayer?

Fragrance

- Are fresh flowers or greenery used to decorate your church? Could a parishioner place an offering of fresh flowers before a statue of Our Lady or another saint? Are parishioners ever invited to honor deceased loved ones by purchasing a poinsettia or Easter lily that they can then take home at a certain point in the season?
- Is incense used in your parish? How often?

Movement

- What processions do you include as part of each and every Mass? How are these processions celebrated?
- Does your parish celebrate the processions that are part of the Mass during the liturgical year on Palm Sunday or Candlemas?

Touch

- Where is the holy water located in your church? Are parishioners ever invited to take small bottles of holy water from the parish home with them (and to bring these back to be refilled when they're empty)?

Dimension 5: Eucharistic Devotion

Love for the Eucharist grows when devotional practices outside of the celebration of the Mass are fostered and encouraged among the faithful. Consider the following questions:

Accessibility

- Does your church building remain unlocked during the day so that people might spend time before the presence of Jesus Christ in the tabernacle? If the building is only open at certain times, are these prominently displayed onsite, online, and in the bulletin?
- Does your church have a dedicated chapel or space for Eucharistic Adoration? How easy/difficult would it be for a visitor to find this space? Is there adequate security for the safety of those praying and of the Blessed Sacrament?

Devotional Practices

- Is Eucharistic Adoration regularly offered at your parish? Are there opportunities for larger groups to gather in the church on occasion to adore the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament?
- Has your parish ever organized a 40 Hours Devotion? Could your parish partner with a nearby parish in coordinating such an effort?
- Does your parish host a Eucharistic procession for the Solemnity of Corpus Christi? What does this look like? Does the procession engage the broader neighborhood around the church? How might fun and festivity be incorporated to complement the solemnity and beauty of the procession?
- Is there cultural diversity relative to Eucharistic devotion in the parish? What does this diversity look like?
- Are any simple devotions encouraged among your parishioners (e.g., making the Sign of the Cross when driving or walking past a church to acknowledge Christ present in the Eucharist)?

Language

- Think about how the Blessed Sacrament is referred to in your parish, both inside and outside of the Eucharistic celebration. Does this language communicate the truth of the Real Presence of Christ, or does it imply that the Blessed Sacrament is merely an object?
- Consider the language utilized in the Eucharistic hymns used during Mass and Adoration. Is the language poetic? Rich in meaning and beauty? Does it lead the heart to deeper contemplation and love of the Eucharistic Lord?

Conclusion

Now that you've made some observations about how the Mass is celebrated in Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, what one thing stood out to you most in each of the five dimensions of enculturated reverence? Be prepared to share these with fellow parishioners and parish staff members during the retreat day.

Additional Notes



OUR LADY OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT PARISH

Worship Sites

Queen of the Rosary Church
750 W. Elk Grove Blvd
Elk Grove Village, IL

St. Julian Eymard Church
601 Biesterfield Road
Elk Grove Village, IL

Current Mass Times

Daily

Mon/Wed/Fri | 8:15am | St. Julian Eymard Church

Tue*/Thu/Sat | 8:15am | Queen of the Rosary Church

*Tue is the School Mass, when our Queen of the Rosary School is in session (*roughly mid-August to early-June*)

Sunday

Sat | 5pm & Sun | 9:15am | St. Julian Eymard Church

Sun | 8am and 10:30am | Queen of the Rosary Church

Questions?

Contact the parish office at:
(847) 979-0901 or info@olbsegv.org.