



A HARVEST LITURGY ¹

The Focus of the Liturgy is on giving thanks for all of God's gifts to us - the rich harvest of land and sea, the bounty of garden and orchard as well as the achievements of people and groups in our local community.

Invitations are extended to those who work on the land or at sea and to any groups or individuals in the parish who've had special achievements this year e.g. sporting success, work on tidy towns or environmental issues, prize-winning gardens, etc. Consider an invitation to artists in the parish and those who have special creative gifts. Invite groups who serve the community such as sea rescue services, apostolic workers, etc.

People may be invited through parish website, local papers, social media, etc. Use clipart and décor on the parish newsletter to reflect a harvest theme. If appropriate use a harvest colour paper.

THE SACRED SPACE

A suitable sacred space is created in the sanctuary area with the fruit, vegetables, turf, a bale of hay or straw - anything which represents the fruits of the harvest - on display. Suitable foliage in the aisles or at the door of the Church can help create an atmosphere.

Before the harvest liturgy, invite the children from one of the classes in the local primary school to create posters on the theme of harvest. Perhaps check with the primary school teachers to see if there is a harvest theme in the Alive-O Programme and let the children's posters reflect this theme. Have the posters displayed prominently around the Church. (For example, inviting the children who received First Holy Communion the previous year to take part in the poster campaign keeps a link with this age cohort.)

A poster with words from a suitable psalm may also help set the scene, e.g. "You crown the year with your goodness." (Ps. 65) "Give success to the work of our hands".(Ps. 90) "The earth has yielded its fruit, for God our God has blessed us." (Ps 66).

If there is someone with photographic video-making expertise in the parish, ask him/her to take some images that reflect the colours and fruits of harvest. Use a projector to display these images in the Church.

Use reflective/traditional music to create an atmosphere as people enter the Church.

Music for the Liturgy: Hymns which reflect themes of praise or thanksgiving for creation are very suitable. The hymn *Ag Criost an Siol* is especially apt. (The words of this

¹ The ideas for this Harvest Liturgy were generated in a meeting with liturgy people from the Inis Cathaigh Cluster of Parishes in September 2014.

hymn were written by Fr Michael Meehan (1810 - 1875), known as the priest of the Little Ark of Kilbaha, Co Clare. It was set to music by Sean O' Riada).

1. GATHERING RITES

The symbols of harvest are brought as part of the entrance procession (without commentary). The gifts brought have been harvested in the gardens, bogs, orchards, home baking and home produced jams etc. in the parish. Include some symbols which represent special achievements within the parish during the past year. Include those who work the earth, or at sea, anything that reflects artistic or creative expression and different areas of success/achievement in the parish during the past year. If the setting of the church lends itself, the procession of the fruits of the harvest may come from three different directions, from the side isles and main aisle of the Church.

As part of the incensing rite, include the sacred space with the gifts of harvest.

Penitential Rite

"The earth has yielded its fruit for God, our God has blessed us;" (Ps 67: 6)

For our lack of awareness of your blessings.	<i>Lord have mercy.</i>
For our lack of care for the world you have given us.	<i>Christ have mercy.</i>
For the ways in which we take your goodness to us for granted.	<i>Lord have mercy.</i>

Opening Prayer

If the harvest is celebrated as part of the Sunday Eucharist, the Collect of the day is used. If celebrated at another time the following collect may be prayed:

God of life and love,
we offer you our thanks and praise in this season of Harvest.
We thank you that you are Creator and Provider,
the source of all goodness.
We thank you for the sunshine and the rain,
for the land and the soil.
We thank you for the miracle of fertility and growth,
for the rhythm of nature and life.
We thank you for crops and livestock, farmers and growers.
We thank you for our calling to be co-creators with you
and we pray especially for all who share with you
in the task of growing and supplying the food we eat.
God of life and love,
we offer you our thanks and praise. Amen.

2. LITURGY OF THE WORD

Readings of the day

or Lectionary Vol. III, No. 20

for Masses for Various needs and Occasions.



Homily Suggestion

Give people time to reflect on the harvest in their own lives.

*"I too by God's grace may be brought to harvest
And proud as the bowed reapers at the Assumption
Murmur thanksgiving." (Patrick Kavanagh)*

Invite people to reflect on the blessings of the past year and the little harvests for which they are grateful. Acknowledge that for some people the experience may be of failure or lack of success. If this is our experience, God promises us a future rich in hope. (Jer. 29: 11).

Prayer of the Faithful

The Psalmist tells us that God's hand is open, ready to grant the desires of all who live. Trusting in God's goodness to us, we offer the prayers of our hearts:

1. We give thanks to the Lord of the Harvest for food and nourishment, fruit of the labours of all who work on the land. Lord, bless all who provide for our needs.
Lord Hear us.
2. We pray for the leaders of our Church that they may recognise and encourage the gifts and talents of their people, and use them for the good of the community.
Lord hear us.
3. We pray for those who work to build Community amongst us. We remember especially those who give their time in a voluntary capacity in our communities. May they be blessed in their service to us.
Lord hear us.
4. At this time of harvest, we pray for those who are experiencing hardships and difficulties of any kind. We pray that they may retain hope and may find support in their difficulties.
Lord hear us.
5. We remember parts of the world where crops have failed and people are hungry. We pray that we and our governments may be moved to help them.
Lord hear us.
6. We pray for all our loved ones who have died, we remember especially (names of those for whom Mass is offered or those who have died during the week)..... May they reap the eternal harvest of heaven.
Lord hear us.

Gracious God, you desire what is good for us. Hear us and bless us as we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

3. LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST



Link the Liturgy of the Eucharist and Preparation of the Gifts

"Be a gardener.
Dig a ditch,
toil and sweat
and turn the earth upside down
and seek the deepness
and water the plants in time.
Continue this labour
and make sweet floods to run
and noble and abundant fruits to spring.
Take this food and drink
and carry it to God
as your true worship".
(Julian of Norwich, Medieval Mystic)



Preparation of the Gifts

Bread and grapes accompany the gifts of bread and wine.
Incense is used to bless the gifts prepared for Eucharist (to include the incensing of the people).

(Perhaps on this occasion when we thank God for the gifts of the harvest, people might be reminded that in the early Church the Eucharistic Prayer was the Great Thanksgiving Prayer).

Rite of Communion

God has gifted us with food for our bodies in the harvest. God now gifts us with food for our soul. *(Receiving under both species where possible brings home to us sacramentally the reality of God's gifts to us).*

Post-Communion Reflection

To Autumn by John Keats

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,



Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Other suitable poems include *Picking Blackberries* by Seamus Heaney.

Litany

Reader: For the beauty of your creation, in earth and sky and sea.

All: *We thank you, O God.*

Reader: For the ways you bless us with all that is good and life-giving

All: *We thank you, God.*

Reader: For all that has come to harvest and been fruitful in our lives

All: *We thank you, God.*

Reader: For those who nurture and sustain us with their love

All: *We thank you, God.*

Reader: For minds to think, and hearts to love, and hands to serve,

All: *We thank you, God.*

Reader: For health and strength to work, and leisure time to rest and play,

All: *We thank you, God.*

Reader: For those who put their gifts at the service of community

All: *We thank you, God.*

Reader: For the giftedness of artists and the newness of creativity

All: *We thank you, God.*

Reader: For those who keep going with projects, despite tiredness and opposition.

All: *We thank you, God.*

Reading: For the gifts of your creative Spirit among us,

All: *We thank you, God.*

4. Sent Forth to Love and Serve

From what we have received we give...

In this Eucharist we have been celebrating God's goodness to us at this time of harvest. We have been nourished in body, mind and spirit. The Eucharist calls us to extend God's goodness to us to other people. We take a moment before we finish our Eucharist to think about one practical way in which we will mirror God's goodness to us during the coming week. Two suggestions came in our planning meeting which flow from our celebration of the gifts of harvest:

1. You might consider making a small contribution to an organisation which is working with those less well off than you or a group helping to relieve hunger in the developing world.

2. Take on to do a 'random act of kindness' for someone this week passing on a blessing you have received to another person unobtrusively and without seeking attention.

Final Prayer and Blessing

Lord, of the seedtime and the harvest,
you have blessed us with many things.
Send us from this place
further blessed and strengthened
so that we might live and grow and bear good fruit
to your praise and glory. Amen