

Guidelines
FOR THE USE OF VIDEO
TECHNOLOGY IN CHURCHES



ARCHDIOCESE
of MILWAUKEE

March 3, 2018

I. INTRODUCTION

The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 4, 1963, remains the foundation for liturgical reform. It emphasizes that the Church “earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people’ (1 Peter 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, n. 14).”

Technology is playing an increasing role in worship and communal prayer. Its use can enhance the ability of the assembly to more fully, consciously, and actively participate in the liturgy. When technology is used, however, it also means that the focus of the liturgy moves and attention is focused on where the action is taking place; consequently, guidelines on the proper use of video are essential so that the dignity of the liturgical action can be preserved and technology can be used to its maximum potential to support the liturgy.

It is in this spirit that these guidelines have been developed.

Because media use is so prevalent in the American culture, all parishes should become familiar with these guidelines and take the time to reflect and discuss the questions in “Section V” before introducing any additional uses to the parish.

II. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION WHEN CONSIDERING THE USE OF VIDEO TECHNOLOGY

Those parishes contemplating the use of video in church can reflect on these questions and discuss them as a part of the decision-making process.

- A. *Will the frequency of use of video in church justify the cost of the equipment?*
- B. *Will the use of video during Mass distract from where the action of the Mass is taking place? If so, are there changes which can be made?*
- C. *Is the design of the church such that a screen and/or projector detracts from the aesthetics of the building? If so, can changes be made to help?*
- D. *Will print, video or a combination of both technologies best help parishioners to more consciously, actively and fully participate in the liturgy?*
- E. *If your parish projects hymns or religious art, are the copyright requirements properly met?*
- F. *Are there trained parishioners/staff who will be able and willing to set up and use video equipment on an ongoing basis?*

III. PLACEMENT/USE OF VIDEO EQUIPMENT IN CHURCHES

- A. The focus of the liturgy moves and attention must be focused on where the action is taking place.**
1. Careful attention must be given so that the liturgical action, which takes place at different locations in the sanctuary during Mass, remains the focus of the assembly rather than a screen or projected image.
 2. Exceptions to this principle can be when the assembly has difficulty viewing the action, e.g. baptism during the Easter vigil and the font is located at the front of the church or the reception of the body at the door of the church during the funeral liturgy.
- B. The architecture/aesthetic of a church is primary in the placement of screens or the use of wall space.**
1. Where possible, it may be preferable to project onto a wall rather than a screen.
 2. When designing liturgical spaces with screens, the screen and/or projector should be hidden as much as possible so they blend into the aesthetics of the church. Plans for the placement of screens should be reviewed by the Archdiocesan Office of Worship prior to their installation.
- C. The appropriateness of images in the church must be considered.**
1. Religious art can be used to enhance the liturgical environment but it should be simple and appropriate.
 2. Copyright permissions must be obtained as necessary.
- D. The ability of all members of the assembly to view video clearly is essential.**
1. If a parish is projecting on a small screen or monitor in church, it is preferable to use the audio or show the video at another location, at another time.
 2. Parishes should regularly assess the potential for video usage in church. Today's obstacles may be tomorrow's opportunities. Limitations with the size of screens and the brightness of a projected image are continually being addressed as the technology evolves and improves.
- E. The use of video technology requires expert support.**
1. Properly trained personnel are essential to ensure that the technology functions properly.
 2. The technology personnel should also have some liturgical training and possess a basic understanding of the liturgy.

IV. EUCHARISTIC LITURGY – POTENTIAL USES OF VIDEO

A. Viewing videos from the Archbishop

1. The most popular use of video in the diocese is in conjunction with the annual Catholic Stewardship Appeal.
2. Per the recommendation from the Archdiocesan Synod to use media more effectively, there may be additional opportunities for the Archbishop to address issues of pastoral importance with parishes in the future.

B. Closed circuit broadcasts

1. The second most-used video application is for a live video feed of the Mass to an overflow location adjacent to the church.
2. These broadcasts require the additional use of a video camera and a trained technician.
3. Closed circuit video can be used for special occasions, like Christmas and Easter. Closed circuit broadcasts can also be used when the assembly cannot clearly see the liturgical action (see section II, A, 2).
4. The Guidelines for Televising the Liturgy (see VI, C) should be followed for these broadcasts.

C. Translations of texts

1. Parishes celebrating bi-lingual or multi-lingual liturgies may project the readings in an alternate language to the one in which the reading is proclaimed.
2. Parishes with large numbers of hearing-impaired parishioners may project the readings.

D. Participation aid

1. Readings in the language of the assembly and prayers spoken by the presider should not be projected.
2. Lyrics and music of songs may be projected, provided all copyright permissions have been obtained.
3. For projection of printed materials, the background color and font colors should be contrasting. Background graphics and animation should be avoided.
4. Simple fonts should be used and the font size should be large enough to be read from the back of the church.
5. As with the introduction of any new technology, provision should be made for those who prefer a printed participation aid.

E. Art and environment aid

1. Projection of simple, appropriate religious art before and after Mass may be done to enhance the liturgical environment of the sacred space.
2. Single slides are recommended rather than rotating slides which may be distracting for some.

F. Homily aid

1. Projection of key points in a homily is permitted.
2. Appropriate, brief video clips, religious art pertinent to the readings or maps of biblical lands may be used to enhance the homilist's message.

G. Interactive aid with the assembly

1. Smart phones can allow for quick tallies of responses on a screen. Quick surveys may be conducted before Mass and during the announcements.
2. When appropriate, a homilist may use survey results gathered before Mass as part of his homily material and presented on a screen.

V. SACRAMENTS, PRAYER AND FORMATION – POTENTIAL USES OF VIDEO

A. The celebration of other sacraments

1. For the sacrament of reconciliation, appropriate art may be projected in the church to assist those assembled in their meditation and reflection.
2. For the sacrament of marriage without a Eucharistic liturgy, appropriate art may be projected in the church during the service.
3. Rehearsals for sacraments may benefit from the use of video by illustrating where participants should be located and any responses they should know.

B. Funeral vigils

1. Religious art or a photo of the deceased may be shown on the screen in church.
2. Video collages should be reserved for a smaller monitor in the gathering space of the church.

C. Prayer services

1. Prayer services in the church may incorporate any of the approved uses of video.
2. Devotions in church, such as the Stations of the Cross, may be enhanced by using video slides to project a larger image of each station to the assembly.

D. Faith formation

1. When the church is used for retreats or faith formation sessions, appropriate videos may be projected, along with slides, to aid the session facilitator.
2. Appropriate interactive use of smart phones may also take place as part of a session.

VI. RESOURCE DOCUMENTS

- A. Diocese of Christchurch, New Zealand, 2012
- B. Diocese of San Bernardino, California
- C. Guidelines for Televising the Liturgy, USCCB, 1997

VII. PARISHES TO CONTACT

Contact parishes in your area of similar size and similar church aesthetics to discuss what may be appropriate use of video in your church.