



COURAGEOUSLY
Living the Gospel

Diocese of St. Petersburg

Guidelines for Visual Display Systems

In Liturgical Celebrations

1. Introduction

- a. Music, art, environment, and technology play an essential role in fostering active participation and promoting the proper dignity of the liturgy. Visual Display Systems within the Mass are recent developments that can assist the faithful in “full and active participation” as described by Pope Paul VI below:
 - Mother 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 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, #14).
- b. While presentation technologies provide music, text and visual displays that aid in the prayer and participation of the faithful, care must be taken so that the focus of the participant remain first and foremost on the liturgy itself. The proper dignity and character of the liturgy must always be maintained. If used incorrectly or inappropriately, Visual Display Systems can become a superfluous distraction which can quickly and easily diminish the essential dignity of the liturgy.
- c. The following guidelines are meant to serve as a foundation for the proper implementation of technology within the Diocese of St. Petersburg.

2. Projector and Screen Technology

- a. Many churches now have video projectors and screens integrated into new construction or installed later as an add-on to existing structures. This technology can be very effective when used properly. However, the primary focus of the assembly should be where the ritual action takes place, not the projection screen. The use of projection should support the liturgy, but not serve as a focal point.
- b. External light at different times of the day can make even the best screens and projections difficult to see. The use of strongly contrasting background and text colors can minimize this effect. Ambient light rejecting screens are helpful for improving presentation quality in a variety of lighting conditions.

3. Size and Position of Screens

- a. The sanctuary is a sacred space. Screens should not encroach upon or block the altar, ambo, presider's chair or main crucifix in any way.
- b. Projection and screen equipment should be located in an area that easily accessible for maintenance and repair.
- c. The Screens should be placed so that parishioners can view them without turning away from the sanctuary.
- d. Retractable screens may be an option if projection is only occasionally used or when projecting mostly black and white text. If retractable screens are used during a liturgy, they should be in place and fully extended before the liturgy begins and remain in place until the conclusion of the liturgy.
- e. Projection onto a blank, unobstructed and flat wall is permissible. However, projection onto the wall directly over the main altar should be avoided.
- f. Screens and wall projections should be large enough for easy reading. TV monitors are not recommended for this use since even the largest available screens are far too small for most liturgical spaces. Unnecessarily large wall projections should also be avoided. Discuss your needs with multiple vendors, so they can recommend the appropriate size and style, allowing you to compare estimates and avoid paying for more than you need.
- g. Even by implementing the above best practices, focus from the main liturgical action cannot always be avoided. To minimize distractions, project only what is necessary to help the congregation achieve a fuller participation in the liturgy.
- h. Screens and projectors are not usually visually appealing. It takes dedicated effort to blend this technology in to the art and environment so that it does not intrude on the liturgical space.

4. Backgrounds and Colors

- a. Background graphics should be avoided since they may make text and music more difficult to read and usually become a distraction.
- b. Background colors and text colors should sharply contrast to improve readability.
- c. Garish or multiple colors and backgrounds should be avoided so as not to become a distraction. The selection of a color palate should be sensitive to the art and environment of the church and be aesthetically pleasing.
- d. The use of a consistent theme throughout should be implemented. The use of one background color, one text color and size, discreet ornamentation, and the consistent position and placement of text and music throughout a presentation minimizes distractions and eye fatigue. Screens

should dip or switch to a black screen, which creates a jarring effect. Software is available that keeps a subtle background on the screen at all times.

5. Motion and Transitions

- a. Distracting motions should be avoided. Bouncing balls, moving cursors, animated pictures, flashing text, and the like will definitely cause the congregation to focus on the screen rather than on the liturgical actions.
- b. Transitions between screens should be simple, quick, and as transparent as possible. Elaborate dissolves, fly ins and fly outs, spinning our bouncing text and music should be avoided as these will also cause the congregation to focus on the screen rather than on the liturgical actions.

6. Projection of Text

- a. Fonts should be simple and easy to read. Script, fancy, or ornamented fonts should be avoided. Use only one or two fonts throughout a presentation.
- b. Font colors should be in sharp contrast to the background to increase readability. Use only one or two font colors throughout a presentation
- c. Font sizes should be large enough to read from the back of the church but small enough to provide sense and structure to the text.
- d. Prayers spoken by the presider (e.g., the Collect, Prayer of the Offerings, Eucharistic Prayer, Prayer After Communion, etc.) should not be projected. However, it might be helpful to project responses spoken by the assembly (e.g., “And with your spirit”).
- e. For the Liturgy of the Word, the readings should not be projected. The congregation is encouraged to listen to the Proclamation of the Word. An exception may be warranted when readings are proclaimed in different languages during bi- or multi-lingual liturgies. When hymnals and missals are not used, such as during a pandemic, the faithful can be encouraged to bring their own Sunday Missals or reference the readings on their electronic devices.
- f. Texts should be provided only when necessary. When no responses or instructions are required, blank screens should be provided so that the focus can remain on the liturgical actions. (see 4-d)
- g. When large text blocks are used (e.g., the Nicene Creed) ensure that the text is formatted according to proper sense lines in accord with the Roman Missal to ensure easier reading from line to line and screen to screen.

7. Projection of Music

- a. If hymnals or songbooks are available in the pews, a simple slide reference to the name of the song and its number in the proper book would be sufficient.

- b. If music is to be projected on the screens, both lyrics and musical notation should be projected. Even though many members of the congregation may not be able to read music *per se*, standard musical notation is intuitive enough for the people to easily recognize the natural rise and fall of pitch of notes and a general sense of which notes are longer and shorter.
- c. Font colors for musical notation and lyrics should be in sharp contrast to the background to increase readability.
- d. Font sizes should be large enough to read from the back of the church but small enough provide sense and structure to the music and to provide a natural flow from line to line and screen to screen.

8. Projection of Artwork

- a. The use of simple and appropriate artwork or pictures should be limited to pre- and post-liturgy projections. Artwork and pictures displayed during the liturgy are distracting and clearly move one's focus from the liturgical actions taking place.
- b. Simple, tasteful, and small ornamentation may be used to highlight a text block or a place in the liturgy (e.g., a small cross or a simple banner behind the title).
- c. Animated artwork or pictures should usually be avoided to limit distractions and confusion.

9. Projection of Live Video

- a. The focus of the assembly should be on the ritual actions taking place, whether they are at the altar, ambo, or presidential chair. Live projections of the liturgical actions should not be simultaneously projected onto the projection screens.
- b. Live video feeds of the Mass may be projected in overflow locations outside of the main church, if appropriate for the occasion.
- c. However, live video feeds may not be used as a mere convenience. A need for overflow space must be present. Otherwise, all attendees are encouraged to join the assembly in the main church.

10. Projection of Pre-recorded Video

- a. Occasionally, video presentations are recorded by the bishop or others to promote certain programs or communicate essential information to the congregation. Occasionally, the bishop will request that a video is shown during Mass. Parishes are asked to make every effort to accommodate this request. Pastors should decide which videos, if any, should be shown before Mass, after the Prayer after Communion, or at other times when announcements are appropriate.

- b. Appropriate videos to celebrate ordinations, weddings, funerals, or other special occasions may be projected prior to or after Mass, but are not to be shown during a Mass.

11. Copyrights

- a. Any necessary copyright permission must be obtained, and all copyrights must be respected. This includes music, liturgical texts, artwork, and computer software. Contact the diocesan Office of Worship for assistance with questions regarding copyright laws and guidelines.
- b. Video projection and/or live-streaming of music often require a separate copyright license from a printed music license. Contact the diocesan Office of Worship for assistance if there are questions.

12. Pre- and Post-Service Projection

- a. The projection of simple and appropriate religious art before or after Mass may be done to enhance the liturgical environment. Artwork based on the Gospel of the day is recommended. A single slide is recommended since multiple, rotating slides may be distracting.
- b. The projection of parish announcements before or after mass is permissible. However, they should be kept to a minimum so as not to intrude upon one's ability to prayerfully prepare for the liturgy or to give thanks after the liturgy. Still, it would be appropriate to project a prayer of preparation before Mass or of thanksgiving after the Mass has concluded
- c. Video projections before or after mass are permissible. However, they also should be kept to a minimum so as not to intrude upon one's ability to prayerfully prepare for the liturgy or to give thanks after the liturgy. The sense of providing entertainment or parish commercials should be avoided.
- d. Any sound from video presentations should be tested prior to Mass to ensure that it's compatible with the "Loop" or other hearing aid devices.

13. Additional Challenges

- a. The preparation of slides for a liturgy can take considerable time, especially in the beginning. Proper training is essential. Staff and/or volunteers need a realistic sense of the time and commitment necessary to produce regular, high quality presentations.
- b. Last minute changes to the music and text can be quite difficult, especially if the appropriate staff and/or volunteers are not available on short notice before a liturgy.
- c. Cheaper and/or outdated equipment might save money in the short term; however, quality and longevity of equipment is essential. Equipment failures during a liturgy will not only interrupt the flow of the liturgy but provide a permanent distraction for the remainder of the liturgy.
- d. Proper maintenance of the equipment is essential. Fans and proper airflow must be constantly cleaned and maintained. Projection light bulbs must be regularly replaced. Computer equipment must be kept up to date. Regular backups are essential.
- e. Even the best equipment relies on a properly trained AV team. Training should encompass not only the technical aspects of the equipment, but an emphasis on liturgical sensitivity as well, including proper advancement of slides. The team must be large enough to cover all Masses and parish celebrations at which projection is used.

14. Vendor Considerations

- a. It is best to obtain quotes from two or three vendors to compare pricing. The diocesan Office of Construction has a list of A/V companies who perform work in the Diocese of St. Petersburg. It is helpful to request that a vendor set up the proposed equipment for a demonstration prior to finalizing your decision.

Created January 2021 - These guidelines have been adapted from the Diocese of Orlando.