

Living Liturgy review for Worship

Jessie Bazan; Chris de Silva; Verna Holyhead, SGS; Jessica Mannen Kimmet; and Victoria McBride. *Living Liturgy: Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities, Year A 2023*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press 2022. Pages, viii+309. Paper, \$22.95. ISBN 978-0-8146-6608-1.

Living Liturgy: Sunday Missal 2023, Celebrating the Eucharist. Collegeville: Liturgical Press 2022. Pages, iv+468. Paper, \$14.95. ISBN 978-0-8146-6730-9.

Paul-Vincent Niebauer, OSB, with Jessie Bazan, Orin E. Johnson, and Jessica Manner Kimmet. *Living Liturgy: For Lectors, Year A 2023: Celebrating the Eucharist*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press 2022. Pages, 339. Paper, \$16.95. ISBN 978-0-8146-6781-1.

Jessie Bazan; Verna Holyhead, SGS; Orin E. Johnson; John T. Kyler; Jessica Mannen Kimmet; and Victoria McBride. *Living Liturgy: For Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Year A 2023*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press 2022. Pages, 148. Paper, \$16.95. ISBN 978-0-8146-6728-6.

Verna Holyhead, SGS; Orin E. Johnson; Jessica Mannen Kimmet; and Victoria McBride. *Living Liturgy: For Music Ministers, Year A 2023*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press 2022. Pages, 218. Paper, \$16.95. ISBN 978-0-8146-6726-2.

Commentaries on the readings and prayers of Sunday Mass in the Catholic Church abound. Rare, though, is a publication aimed at those who participate as ministers or members of the assembly. Liturgical Press offers an annual suite of five books to aid those who bring the liturgy to life. These are called, appropriately enough, *Living Liturgy*.

The volume that anchors the 2023 series covers spirituality, celebration and catechesis for Sundays and solemnities. Its comprehensive scope presents all the readings, a gospel reflection, proclamation tips, preparation for the psalmist, connections between readings, homiletic points, models for variable parts, such as the penitential act and the universal prayer, as well as musical suggestions and catechetical notes for faith-sharing groups.

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Volumes for readers, communion ministers, and musicians draw from this rich content. Some material reappears in multiple books, such as selections of readings and the freely composed prayer for each Sunday.

The Sunday Missal collects the parts that please many churchgoers—the Order of Mass and the readings, for example. These span a nearly 500-page volume, slim due to its paper stock, its print large and bold for easy reading.

The same Sunday Missal contains both the Order of Mass and the Celebration of the Liturgy of the Word [With Holy Communion], taken uncredited from the USCCB's *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*. Occupying only a few pages, this valuable insertion may reassure discomfited worshipers that their priestless prayer service has ecclesial approval.

In addition to Sundays and solemnities, the main book includes texts and commentaries for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12). Yet this celebration is missing from the other volumes.

All commentary starts from the day's gospel reading. The main book presents the gospel acclamation and gospel first, and then the first reading, psalm and second reading. Only the gospels for the four Masses of Christmas appear in the body of the book. The other readings sequester in Appendix A. The volume for communion ministers offers only the gospels. In truth, many homilists and catechists look to the gospel first for inspiration. However, the other readings deserve attention.

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The book for musicians treats the gospel, first reading and psalm in the main body of the book and in that order, while relegating all the second readings to an appendix. Perhaps this is realistic. Very few of those preparing the music look to the second reading for inspiration. However, during Lent the second reading sometimes relates to the gospel when the first reading does not. The connection between the first reading and gospel typifies Ordinary Time; throughout Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, the lectionary makes different links.

Helping musicians prepare the psalm is a worthy aspiration, but this commentary is often generic. Those who prepared the lectionary chose precise verses of certain psalms to underscore a point from the reading. These go unnoticed.

The introduction to the volume for readers offers practical and technical points. It adds tips for proclamation, a pronunciation guide, and commentary on the readings. Some common proclamatory oversights go unmentioned, however. For example, on the Second Sunday of Easter, the deacon or priest often fails to accent the verb in the pivotal middle verse, “and Thomas *was* with them.” Similarly, on the Ascension, many first readers handle the word “Theophilus” as if it were the name of “the first book” instead of the name of the person to whom Luke is writing.

All in all, this is a wonderful collection of books, brilliantly conceived, lovingly written, carefully edited, and joyfully received by those who will use them to make the liturgy live.

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