

How to celebrate the liturgy fully, consciously, and actively—even when there is no Mass

There are several ways in which the domestic church *can* celebrate authentic Sunday liturgy to keep the Lord's Day holy. None of these are Mass, of course. But since participating in (as opposed to watching) Mass is not possible, these forms of full, conscious, and active participation in the official rites of the church would seem to reflect the lens of the Second Vatican Council. In fact, the Code of Canon Law recommends that families and individuals participate in these kinds of prayer forms in their homes when they are unable to participate in the Eucharistic celebration (see CCL 1248 §2).

Liturgy of the Hours

Sanctifying the hours of the day is an ancient practice in the church. In the early church, the cycle of the day was marked in the domestic church by praying the Lord's Prayer in the morning, at noon, and in the evening.

In more recent times, especially in German and German American households, the day was marked by praying an evening Rosary after dinner.

And Christian households can also mark that day by celebrating Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours. [*Give Us This Day*](#) has granted free access to their online prayer resource, which includes a simple Morning and Evening Prayer that can be used at home.

Liturgy of the Word

The church teaches that the presence of Christ is with us when we proclaim God's word and when the church prays and sings. So when we gather as the domestic church to celebrate the Liturgy of the Word, we are gathered in and as the presence of Christ. [*Give Us This Day*](#) is an excellent resource to use for household liturgical celebrations of the word. Also, the United States Bishops have published [*Tools for Building a Domestic Church*](#).

Blessings

Some of us think of blessings as something a priest does. He blesses us at the end of Mass, for example. Or he might do a quick blessing of a personal rosary or a new car just before Mass begins. But blessings are actually liturgies. And there are many blessings that can be celebrated in the domestic church. [This article](#) gives a good overview of the purpose of blessings. For some blessing prayers you can celebrate, [click here](#).

Reconciliation

Only a priest or a bishop can preside at the Rite of Penance. However, we can celebrate penitential services in the domestic church. While these services do not provide sacramental absolution, they “are very helpful in promoting conversion of life and purification of heart. . . . Penitential services, moreover, are very useful in places where no priest is available. . . .” (Rite of Penance, 37). You can [use this outline](#) to celebrate a penitential service in the home. You would not, of course, include “Individual Confession and Absolution.” But the rest of the liturgy can be presided over by a member of the household.