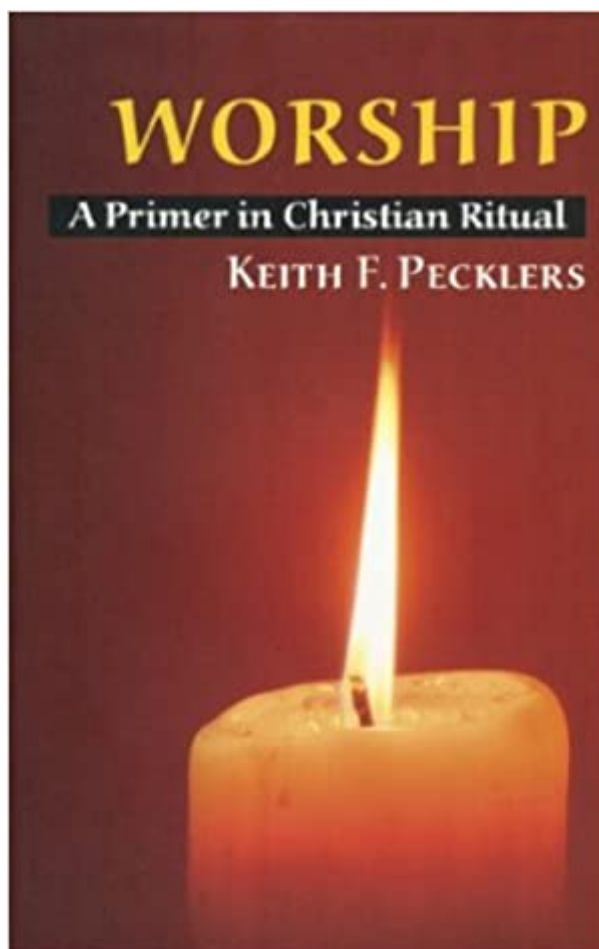


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# Worship: A Primer In Christian Ritual



## Synopsis

What is worship? Keith F. Pecklers, SJ, answers this important theological question by focusing on the basics of Christian worship. Beginning with the definitions of such terms as "ritual" and "liturgy" - he writes in a very readable style about the historical/theological foundations of worship, tracing the evolution of Christian liturgy from the earliest centuries of the Christian era up to the reforms of Vatican II. Pecklers focuses on such liturgical issues of importance in our post-Vatican II Church as: inculturation, popular religion, and the social responsibility that authentic worship requires. He also considers some key social issues of the twenty-first century and their impact on our worship: the break-up of the stale parish community and decline in church attendance; the clergy shortage and priestless parishes; ecumenical liturgical cooperation and interreligious dialogue; the credibility of preaching; and how worship welcomes or excludes the marginalized. Chapters are "Worship and Ritual," "Worship in Development and Decline," "Worship in Crisis and Challenge," "Worship in Transition," "Worship and Culture," "Worship and Popular Religion," "Worship and Society," and "Worship and the Future of Christianity." -Keith F. Pecklers, SJ, SLD, is professor of liturgy at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and professor of liturgical history at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute of Saint'Anselmo. Liturgical Press recently published his book *Dynamic Equivalence*. He received Catholic Press Association awards for two other Liturgical Press publications, *The Unread Vision* and *Liturgy for the New Millennium*."

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## Customer Reviews

Valuable to anyone interested in the history and possible future of ongoing liturgical reform. The Jurist This text is a "must have" resource and Peckler is to be commended for his contribution to the field. Catholic Books Review This is a good book. Peckler's . . . remains a steady and knowledgeable guide. Review for Religions Those whose task is to promote a deeper understanding of the church's liturgy at the basic level are very much in Peckler's debt. Theological Studies Fr. Peckler is known for several excellent works on the history of liturgical development in the twentieth century and the nature of liturgical translation, and he here brings together a great deal of scholarly research in readily digestible form. The Tablet Keith Peckler is to be congratulated in particular for his resolute focus on the forest, even as he surveys its many trees. His ecumenical perspective and commitment is evident throughout - in the historical section, in the delineation of issues and in the breadth of scholarship on which he draws. . . . Read it all! America Keith Peckler writes with a rare combination of energy, learning (which he wears lightly) and an awareness of the complex questions that face Christians all over the world today. He communicates a strong sense of the dynamic of tradition, pushing us on into the future - provided, that is, that we are prepared to sacrifice some of the things that we hold dear, which at times are more a hindrance than a help. We can only believe and do certain things not because they are Anglican, or Roman Catholic or Lutheran or anything else, but because they are true. Kenneth Stevenson, Bishop of Portsmouth Being a trained liturgist, I have been strongly connected to the Liturgical Press and its publications for over 30 years. As a matter of fact, I have every copy of Worship dating back to 1970! It is a treasure to be able to go back and look at the growth of the liturgical movement through this absolutely wonderful publication. . . . I have purchased many publications of the Liturgical Press over the years and will continue to do so. The quality of the scholarship in all your publications is superb. Jeanne Trinque

Keith F. Peckler, SJ, is professor of liturgy at the Pontifical Gregorian University and professor of liturgical history at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in Rome. He is the author of the following titles published by Liturgical Press: *Dynamic Equivalence: The Living Language of Christian Worship*; *The Unread Vision: The Liturgical Movement in the United States of America 1926-1955*; *Worship: A Primer in Christian Ritual*; and editor of *Liturgy for the New Millennium: A Commentary on the Revised Sacramentary*. He is also the author of "Liturgy from Trent to Vatican II" included in the *Handbook of Liturgical Studies* published by Liturgical Press.

"For the Christian community, praying in common is a non-negotiable and those who do not pray in

common with the rest of the body of Christ cannot rightly call themselves 'Christian'." Fr. Pecklers goes on to say that people might be honest generous, righteous, and inspired by the life of Jesus but if they never pray in common with other Christians they cannot rightfully claim the Christian identity. That is not a harsh exclusion. It is a simple fact because communal worship formed the cornerstone of the early Church (e.g. the last supper), was as a key factor during its history, and remains an integral part of Christian life today. The Greek word leitourgia, giving rise to the English "liturgy", once had a secular meaning - literally "work belonging to the people". It is used many times in the Greek version of Hebrew scripture (the Septuagint) and became associated with worship in the second century. The term came to signify service to both God and community giving clue to the relationship between Christ and his Church through the Christian community's charitable and ministerial roles within the context of worship. The formal study of liturgy - the symbols, rituals, forms and practices of worship as they fit into particular theological and cultural settings - is a relatively recent (20th century) phenomenon. Fr. Pecklers is a Rome based American Jesuit who has written extensively about the subject. He is widely traveled and his commentary is not limited to the Roman Catholic liturgy. For example he says when illustrating the necessary corporate nature of Christian worship, "When the Christian community gathers together each Sunday it brings with it all that has transpired the previous week, both good and bad, 'what we have done and what we have left undone', as Anglicans pray in Confession of Sins found within the Book of Common Prayer." The first four chapters present sound theological and historical foundations proceeding from the Apostolic period to fourth century events, like the Edict of Milan (313), and through the Medieval period that included the innovation of elevating the host and chalice high overhead during the Eucharistic prayer (ca. 1200) that we see frequently even today. The effects of Reformation period events, like the Council of Trent (1545 - 63) and Thomas Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer (1549), on liturgical practice are discussed in detail. The history of this "worship in transition" is then traced into the twentieth century illustrated by such events as the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). The remaining four chapters introduce thematic, sociological, and cultural material ultimately raising questions about the future of worship in response to our changing world. The interaction of Christian worship with diverse cultures is examined - now called "liturgical enculturation". We read a clear plea for flexibility within the context of theology. The relationship between corporate Christian worship and the popular religious practices of local peoples is discussed in some detail. We have learned much from our Latin neighbors in this regard and the lessons apply well to the needs of immigrants and others in foreign lands. The reasoning extends to arguments favoring a form of worship that is deeply connected to the plight of human society. We

are now starting to understand that worship is an integral part of human life rather than being simply a matter of religious rubrics on the periphery of human society. The book concludes with a chapter raising questions about the future of Christian worship in a postmodern, multicultural world saying that, "churches will have important decisions to make about how we worship, who leads us, who is 'worthy' to participate, and how corporate prayer connects to the rest of life."The book is informative, stimulating, well written and easy to read. It should appeal to anyone interested in or curious about the history of Christian worship and how it relates to human society.

Kieth Pecklers achieves a very thorough compilation of the long history, adaptation and reform of Christian Worship from a Roman Catholic viewpoint yet with sensitive attention to many forms of this worship from the first century onward. In eight well crafted chapters he captures the intensity of the early church, the insight of the Patristic era, the accretions of the Medieval period and the conflicts of the great Reforms of the 16th Century. He also offers clear insight into the many attempts at reform and revival of involvement of all the faithful that occurred in the 18th, 19th and eventually emerged at Vatican Council II in the 20th Century. He maintains a brisk pace for the person interested in getting a quick foundation while including frequent references for the more scholarly reader. The bibliography at the end is quite thorough.

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