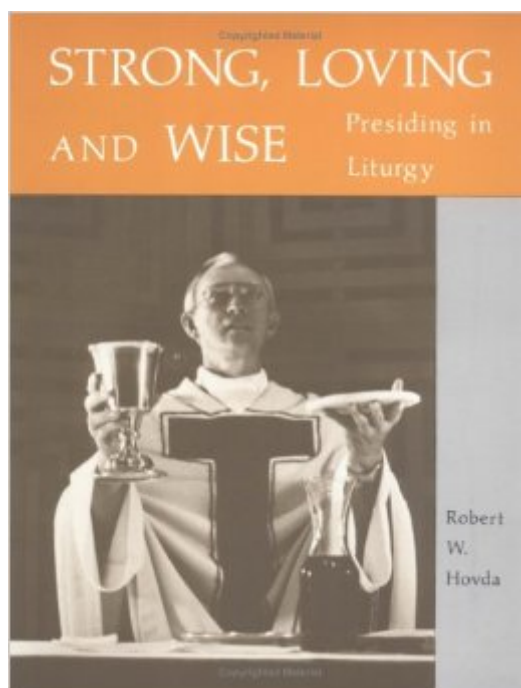


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# Strong, Loving And Wise: Presiding In Liturgy



## Synopsis

A manual of ideas and experiences emphasizing the fact that a good presider must be aware of what will happen at every planned moment of a liturgical celebration.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Robert Hovda's *Strong, Loving and Wise* has been and remains the quintessential presentation of what it means theologically, spiritually and practically to plan and lead worship in Christian assemblies. While it was written by a Roman Catholic priest and addresses itself especially to the role of the priest in leading the Mass after Vatican II, his insights about the character and presence of the presider apply equally well to any who plan or lead worship in any way in any Christian assembly. I make it a required text in the worship courses I teach for my denomination (The United Methodist Church), and many of my colleagues do as well. But it is just as valuable as a training tool for worship planners, praise bands, choirs, worship teams, lectors, leaders of prayer, or anyone else involved in leading worship in any way in local congregations or non-congregational worshipping communities. So if you lead worship, read this book. And if you are responsible for training or leading others who lead worship, study it with them. This book is that important, that rich, and that good.

This book provides a great foundation for those who plan and preside over the Liturgy. Although the liturgical denominations all differ somewhat in the particulars of the Liturgy, there are certain fundamentals that are common to all celebrations of the Holy Eucharist. This book provides a great

exposure to those fundamentals.

I'm happy to say this slim but over-sized pages of booklet offers a lot of support for personal passion while presiding with the sacraments. There are a few places where it feels dated to decades ago but overall this is relevant for ongoing study and reference. There is encouragement for energy and expectancy in the service verses going through the motions. Good for many denominations.

Hovda provides an excellent overview of the priest's responsibilities at the altar during the Eucharist. I (a lowly seminarian) highly recommend this work for all interested in priestcraft, whether postulant or bishop or anyone in between.

I first read this book about thirty years ago and it challenged my view of 'the correct way' to do liturgy. The preface damns what I held to be true, that of the ideal of the anonymous celebrant. Unless they go to an anglo-catholic seminary, most ordinands get taught little or nothing about celebrating the Eucharist. For this reason, this book is a useful ordination present. And it's good that the author looks forward to the day when his church will ordain women so I can give it to women priests because of its use of gender inclusive language. It's also a book for those who act in other roles during the liturgical assembly. He uses the somewhat ugly term 'presider' because: All initiated believers are celebrants in liturgy. A man after my own heart, he doesn't like concelebration because the extras priests are 'superfluties which a firm, strong, clean ritual action abhors. While 'bigging up' the role of presider, he doesn't undermine the ministry of the laity. The visiting priest during a vacancy is problematic and the author believes: As "a service of leadership," it normally assumes an already existing relationship with the community assembled. For those who don't like costly vestments, especially those who want to get rid of chasubles because that deprives the liturgical assembly of focus and colour. For those clergy who like to compere and explain, he reminds them, basically, that 'it's not all about you. He doesn't like page numbers announced?: Nor endless notices. The bloke who posts wafers needs to ponder that a sick person needs the presence and touch of the church through its sacramental. He follows the conservative line that the presider should be the preacher (unlike the orthodox, where the priest might be a farmer in his day job so the sermon can be preached by a lay theologian. PCCs take note that 'the church's business is to cultivate a consensus sensitivity rather than a majority vote psychology. He prefers real bread to 'individually pre-punched, small, thin, tasteless, textureless, assembly-line wafers.... Such "bread" lacks not only the baker's hand but also the taste, the texture, the smell, the shape and size of

anything accepted as bread in our culture. I strongly disagree that the presider should be the last to receive. First, there are those who say that until the presider receives communion 'the holy sacrifice is not complete.' Secondly, the presider is not somehow being hospitable by letting the guests eat first. It is Christ who is the host, not the priest. As someone put it, 'This is not a play and you are not Jesus.' Regarding administering: The presider looks at the communicant and the communicant looks at the presider. One does not expect a grin or a grimace. One does expect, and one has a right to expect, a look of respect and reverence, of care and communion. As for: with words like "Sister (Maria), the body of Christ" - what if the priest gets your name wrong or simply doesn't know your name? Are we a club for insiders only? What about those who feel embarrassed? After a storm of protests about Leonard Bernstein's "Mass: a Theatre Piece for Singers, Players and Dancers" I wrote a letter in support. Protestors claimed that the composer had "failed" because he "didn't understand Catholic liturgy." Yet the way that Bernstein handled the reading, when the celebrant opened the great book with marked deliberateness, a moment of anticipatory silence, and then read in a loud, slow, clear, appropriately inflected voice, not perfunctorily but savoring the words and letting them ring out, you can't help comparing it with a muttered "Thanks be to God" after a reading and the reader continuing rapidly: "Please join-in-the-Alleluia-on-page-ten-Alleluia~ Alleluia-Alleluia." There are some priests whom I'd force to read about chatter, endless and infuriating pedagogy or commentary. Also, their fear of silence. The author lived April 10, 1920 - February 5, 1992. He'd been involved with the Catholic Worker, Saint John's Abbey and University held an important place in Father Hovda's heart. He became a Roman Catholic in 1943 while waiting trial for his stance as a conscientious objector. Shortly thereafter he decided to pursue study for ordination to the priesthood. He received the North American Academy of Liturgy's Berakah Award in 1982. He'd met much rejection but was finally accepted at Saint John's "without money or diocesan affiliation." He said he could not have imagined another place where he could have survived, with his opinions and brashness, much less where he "could have been initiated into the savingly ancient Benedictine tradition, an orthodoxy untainted by Counter-Reformation hysteria, the writers and speakers and visitors who gravitated to such an oasis,...and a prayerful and serious liturgy." Bob in turn made a significant contribution to Saint John's by writing "The Amen Corner" for Worship from 1983 until his death. Father Hovda gave countless lectures at liturgical conferences across the country and wrote numerous articles, but his most important contribution to liturgical theology and ministry was this book.

Bob Hovda was neighbor of mine in DC many years. Lost my original copy of this somewhere along

the way and wanted to replace it.

Good

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