I got caught unawares recently and found myself agreeing to attend a Tupperware party. I really didn’t think they still existed! Afterwards it occurred to me that the ritual pattern at such gatherings is the one followed on most occasions when people gather, including liturgy. This common ritual pattern is GATHER — LISTEN— DO— GO.

At the Tupperware party, silly games are played as “ice-breakers” to help a group of who often don’t know one another feel more relaxed and attentive. This is the GATHER phase.

After this, the presenter demonstrates the latest gadgets that are essential for survival in the kitchen, explaining their multiplicity of applications and extolling their virtues, while those present LISTEN attentively.

Then people get involved with catalogues and price lists, deciding what to buy from items on offer and placing orders, Discussion also takes place about who might be host another party in the future. This is the business part of the proceedings, when all are doing something.

Everyone knows that the bringing out of the cakes and coffee means that the end is near. The games, demonstration and business transactions are over and we share food and jokes before we GO home.

This ritual pattern of Tupperware parties has not changed in more than 20 years. Why? Because it works, and it works because it is based on the common rhythm of human interaction, ranging from 21 birthday parties to sporting events.

We GATHER through rituals such as introductions, finding a seat, getting a drink, talking to others, We LISTEN as speeches are made, stories told, jokes shared, rules explained, information and messages read out. The DOing part might involve singing an anthem, a cake, dancing the bridal waltz, exchanging and opening presents, playing a game, drinking. Then we take our leave and GO — with farewells, hugs, handshakes, prom call, etc.

Ritual is essential because familiar patterns enable us to enter into an event — we know what will happen next, what is expected of us and how to respond.

Liturgies follows this same ritual pattern. The Introductory Rites (song, greeting, opening, collect) GATHER this group of individuals into a community of worshippers who together will do the liturgy, that is, offer praise and thanksgiving to God.

In all liturgical celebrations, the Introductory Rites are followed by readings from Si We LISTEN as the divine covenant is announced, as the history of our salvation is as the mystery of Christ is recalled and God’s love for us expressed.
Following the readings we DO the ritual — baptise in water; anoint with oil; lay on F

- The Liturgical Commission Page 2 of 2
take, bless, break and share bread and wine; ask for pardon and receive absolution; vows and rings. The Concluding Rite is better called tile “Blessing and Dismissal” because it is not all. We GO to live out our lives as Christians, to be the Body of Christ which feeds hungry, to bring Christ to the world of our daily lives.