

Spirit of the Season

Autumn 2007

Liturgical Year C www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/SOS

Made in God's Image

In the beginning... At the end of the first chapter of the Bible on the Sixth day of creation God creates man and woman:

God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27

When we turn to the New Testament the relationship between God and humanity has developed – God send his son Jesus into the world. In St Paul's words though his state was divine he 'became as men are'.

Our faith depends on our relationship with a person – God in human form – who is proclaimed to the whole world. And all the world is called to worship and to serve God together.

Cry out with joy to the Lord,
all the earth.
Serve the Lord with gladness.

Ps 99

In the Nativity season, scripture informs us that both rich and poor, locals from the hills outside Bethlehem, and

visitors from far away, gathered to adore the infant Christ. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus' disciples to preach in many languages, enabling them to fulfil Jesus' final command from the Gospel of Matthew:

Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Matthew 28:19

All Christ's disciples across the world have received this command, and so we learn from each other of the One person who fully lived as human and divine.

In the Church's most ancient tradition, the process of Christian formation always had an experiential character. While not neglecting a systematic understanding of the content of the faith, it centred on a vital and convincing encounter with Christ, as proclaimed by authentic witnesses. Sacramentum Caritatis, 64.

Faith is about knowing the person of Christ ever more deeply, and different cultures



In 2007-8 the front page of Spirit of the Season will explore what it means to be a Church 'diverse in culture, nation, race' and how this might deepen our understanding and practice of liturgy.

*God beyond all names,
you have made us
in your image
We are like you,
we reflect you;
we are woman,
we are man.*

Bernadette Farrell

have different ways of knowing Christ. Yet they are all authentic witnesses to Christ, who is present and working in their lives.

In as much as our worship engages us in liturgical experiences which derive from a variety of cultures, so we come to know more of God, in his various forms, and through his diverse witnesses.

Alive & Active



The word of God is something alive and active.

So we are told in the Letter to the Hebrews (4:12). During this year perhaps we can take the opportunity to look at the role of scripture – of the word of God – in our liturgies and in the life of the school.

- Is the word of God alive for you?
- Is the word of God active?

Maybe we can consider what that actually means. If the scripture that we listen to in our liturgy does not lead to a response in our lives, does not lead us to growth and change, can we describe it as either alive or active?

To provide some starting points for the year it maybe useful to reflect on some scripture passages to discover how the bible itself talks about the word of God.

Yes, as the rain and the snow come down from the heavens and do not return without watering the earth, making it yield and giving growth to provide seed for the sower and bread for the eating, so the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do. Isaiah 55:10-11

- God's word is effective.
- It feeds and nourishes us.
- It sows seeds for our later reflection.
- It is a tool for discovering God's will for us.

For this Law that I enjoin on you today is not beyond your strength or beyond your reach. It is not in the heaven, so that you need to wonder, 'Who will go up to heaven for us and bring it down to us, so that we may hear and keep?' Nor is it beyond the seas, so that you need to wonder, 'Who will cross the seas for us and bring it back to us, so that we may hear it and keep it?' No the Word is very near to you, it is in your heart for your observance. Deuteronomy 30:11-14

- God's word is close to us, it is within our grasp.
- We should not be put off by the text but approach it simply and straightforwardly.

Jesus came to Nazara, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written:

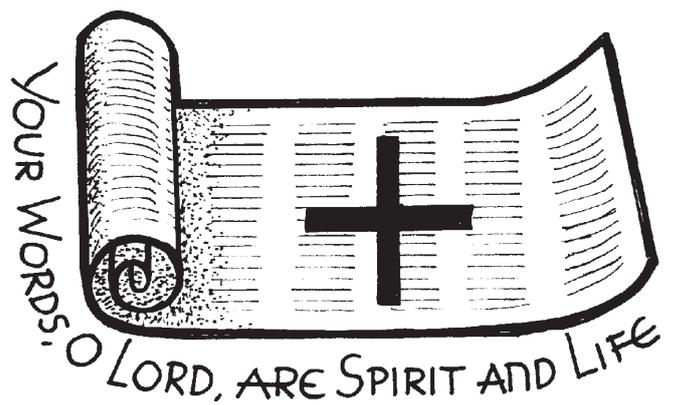
'The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.'

He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, 'This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen.' Luke 4:15-21

- For Catholics the scriptures become alive and active when they are proclaimed within the liturgy.
- When the scriptures are proclaimed in the liturgy the Church teaches that Christ is present.
- A fundamental message of the scriptures is God's love for us and for our freedom.

The Church describes the relationship between the Old and New Testament as follows:

The New Testament lies hidden in the Old; the Old Testament come fully to light in the New. Christ himself is the centre and fullness of all of Scripture, as he is of the entire liturgy. Thus the Scriptures are the living waters from which all who seek life and salvation must drink. Lectionary for Mass: Introduction 5



The Letter & the Spirit

Preparing liturgy is not just a question of knowing the letter of the law it is also necessary to know its spirit. Over the coming year parts of *Spirit of the Season* will look at the role of a preparation group and what it is responsible for. This section will offer questions that could be used with a group and are intended to both enable reflection on liturgy and life and to articulate hopes and expectations for the liturgical life of the community.

- Think about a good experience of liturgy
- What made it memorable?
- What do you hope for out of liturgy: for yourself, for your community?

Praying Simply with Scripture

One way of using scripture is as a resource for prayer. This simple way of praying can be both by an individual or by a group.

For an individual it can be a way of preparing to use a passage as the basis for a liturgy or a lesson. Ideas for using with a group are indicated by [brackets].

- Gathering: silence, sign of the cross, [simple chant]
- Scripture passage read first time
- Silence
- Scripture passage read a second time
- Silence then name a word or phrase that speaks to you
- [this can lead to an exploration of why a phrase caught someone's imagination or further reflection on the passage]
- [it can also lead to prayer]
- Conclude with a sign of the cross

This is a simple form of *Lectio Divina* – the prayerful reading of scripture. For more details and ideas see the leaflet on the Liturgy Office website: www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Scripture

1 Directory for Masses with Children ~ A guide

The *Directory for Masses with Children* was issued by the Holy See in 1973. It is intended to supplement the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* which describes best practice for celebrating the Mass. The Directory is a guide to adapting the liturgy when Mass is celebrated with children. The principles it sets out can be helpful in planning any celebration with children.

The complete Directory is not long and can be downloaded from the Liturgy Office website. This series is intended to summarise the document and both highlight the significant parts and serve as a guide to the Directory. This summary is based on the one included in *Liturgy of the Word with Children Guidelines* as an Appendix.

The Directory is in 4 parts:

- Introduction
- 1. The Introduction of Children to the Eucharistic Celebration
- 2. Masses with Adults in which Children also participate
- 3. Masses with Children in which only a few adults participate.

Chapter 3 is the longest section and covers both the elements of a celebration and the individual parts.

Introduction (1–7)

It is spiritually harmful if children 'repeatedly experience in the Church things that are barely comprehensible' (2). The purpose of the Directory is to help children:

- benefit more from the educational value of the liturgy (2);
- play a fuller part in the liturgy (3), and so be able to
- take part with more understanding in the parish Mass (21).

The liturgy must be adapted (3, 20). The Directory gives principles for adapting to those who have not yet reached 'pre-adolescence' (6). Further adaptation in applying these principles is necessary for children with special needs (6).

Preparing Liturgy

The nature of liturgy as 'the work of the people' can be evident, not only in the shape and style of the worship but also in the way it is planned and prepared. Whilst preparing liturgy on your own may appear to be an easier option, allowing for personal preferences and avoiding potentially difficult differences of opinion, ideally preparation should be undertaken by a group so it more truly reflects the communal aspect of worship.

This group need not consist solely of adults but can include anyone - this could also be an opportunity to involve those with a particular connection to the celebration e.g. those leaving school being involved in planning the leavers' Mass. Obviously it would be important that the person who will be presiding should be involved, but if this is not possible then the planning group should communicate all aspects of the liturgy with them. Where a liturgy, such as Mass, consists of several parts, different members of the group may be responsible for each part. However, it is important that the sense of the liturgy as a whole is not lost. Before beginning it is useful to have an idea of the structure of the whole liturgy and where the high points are; in Mass these would be the Gospel and the Eucharistic Prayer.

For planning to be effective it is vital that there is an understanding of what and why we do things. For many liturgy planning groups this may involve a period of initial education and formation, so that the group can explore and become familiar with the structures, styles and fundamentals of good liturgy. Whilst this might appear a daunting task there are numerous resources to assist in this, particularly *Celebrating the Mass* and the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (and a very helpful Liturgy Office website).

A liturgy planning group will provide a wealth of ideas and creativity to encourage active participation in the liturgy. This is one of the two functions of a group, alongside enabling the liturgy to be well celebrated. The task of the group will always be more than 'just choosing the music'.

A good starting point when planning liturgy, especially Mass, is the gospel reading. This allows the Word of God to feed and speak through the various aspects of the liturgy, and often helps to provide a focus and unity. Why not use the simple form of prayer on page 3 as a starter.

From this reflection can develop ideas for texts such as intercessions and reflections as well as how the environment might be planned. Over time as the group deepens its understanding they will begin to look at how the liturgy might be developed over the year, how ministry might be encouraged or how a music repertoire might be built up.



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