

Spirit of the Season

Winter 2008

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

Sharing our humanity

As members of the body of Christ, we are united with Christians all over the world, so universal liturgy is relevant to everyone – not only those in multicultural parishes.

Look outside the cultures of your own school to find songs from the whole world church. By doing this, you are connecting with people in many other situations and places, calling them brothers and sisters, and experiencing some part of their life. *Spiritual Garments*, 48

It is important to avoid the promotion of a particular region to the exclusion of others. One community 'visited' each continent or region of the world on every Sunday in Eastertide, enjoying music, dance, decoration, prayers and readings in local languages, leading up to an international celebration of Pentecost, with Mass followed by a shared meal including food from around the world.

We can take advantage of the riches offered by our international brothers and sisters, yet we must not neglect those who are in need. Within the body of Christ:

If one part is hurt, all the parts share its pain. And if one part is honoured, all the parts share its joy.

1 Corinthians 12:26

We can stand in solidarity with those around the world who are struggling. We can raise our awareness of world news, in order to support members of our parish communities whose relatives and friends overseas may be experiencing hardship. We can engage in campaigns for world-wide justice, such as fair trade, One World Week, Racial Justice Sunday, as these are consistent with Catholic social teaching.

Big business is forcing us all to become international consumers and we are brought into closer contact with foreign nationals than we may realise through the food we eat, the clothes we wear and the products we use. We ought also then to take on responsibility of being active and fair international citizens, concerned for the progress and security of the whole world, and all of our brothers and sisters in Christ.



The personal relationship which the individual believer establishes with Jesus present in the Eucharist constantly points beyond itself to the whole communion of the Church and nourishes a fuller sense of membership in the Body of Christ.

Pope Benedict XVI
Sacramentum Caritatis 68



Fulfilled in your hearing



In the first part of this series, Autumn 2007, there was an opportunity to reflect on the passage from Luke's Gospel where Jesus reads from the scriptures in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:15-21). In response to the reading a couple of points were noted:

- 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.

The natural place for the Word in the Catholic tradition is in the liturgy. As noted above when the scriptures are proclaimed it is Christ that is speaking and Christ does not speak to a vacuum but to his body, those present. Though we may each hear a passage in individual, unique ways, it also speaks to 'us'. Whenever we ask the question 'What is Christ saying to me?' we should also ask 'What is Christ saying to us?'

If we are to hear Christ speaking it is important that we can hear what is said. This has implications for how readings in the liturgy is proclaimed and prepared.

- Always choose good readers – the use of many readers of differing ability is a form of 'false participation'. Many people taking part should not be at the expense of the need of all to participate through hearing the word clearly.
- The ability to speak clearly is essential but it is also important to have some understanding of the text you are reading and a desire to communicate something.
- Permission to dramatise readings can be found in the *Directory for Masses with Children*. As with all adaptations in the Directory the aim is to enable the participation of the children – both those who are part of the drama and those who are members of the assembly.
- When preparing readers either as a group or individuals make sure you allow to time to reflect on the text together.

- If you will be outside your usual setting and/or using microphones it is sensible to have a practice in place with equipment.
- Make sure the readers know when they will be reading, what comes before and afterwards. In the next *Spirit of the Season* (Lent 2008) there will be more on posture and gesture.

However well the reading is prepared by the reader this may not be enough. For any message to be communicated it must be received. In the Mass part of the purpose of the Introductory Rites is to prepare the assembly to hear the word. Each element within the Introductory Rites forms us into the Body of Christ. Any liturgy or time of prayer needs something, often a song or the greeting/sign of the cross, to begin and gather people together.

There is also opportunity to introduce the Readings before they are heard. There is a basic skill, which any good teacher will have, how to introduce a text so that it is an invitation to listen rather than a précis of the story. This skill is also key when generally preparing liturgy with groups. Be careful not to pre-empt emotional responses by telling people what they feel or how they will respond to a reading or in a liturgy.

This introduction can take place either prior to the liturgy or before the Liturgy of Word. The Directory for Masses with Children places an importance on introducing the readings (47).



Dating Easter

This year Easter Sunday falls on 23 March, almost the earliest date on which it can fall.

The date of Easter is worked out according to the following formula: The first Sunday after the full moon after the Spring Equinox.

In 2008 this means:

- Spring Equinox = 21 March 2008
- Full Moon = 21 March 2008
- Easter Sunday = 23 March 2008

This is a reminder that the liturgical year is embedded in the cosmos; shaped by both the solar and lunar calendars.

When you stand outside the church for the Blessing of the New Fire at the Easter Vigil raise your eyes to the heavens to look for the Moon.

The dating of Easter was a source of controversy to the Early Church between those who wished to keep it on the 14th day of the Jewish month of Nisan whichever day of the week and those saw that Easter fundamentally connected with Sunday, the first day of the week. In England this was one of the matters of dispute which were resolved at the Synod of Whitby in 664.



The Letter and the Spirit

The Season of Lent is marked by two themes: Baptism and Reconciliation. Preparation for Baptism at Easter and reconciliation so that we can celebrate Easter worthily. To help us prepare we can engage in 3 disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving which are highlighted in the readings for Ash Wednesday. However we choose to mark the Lenten season it is important to remember that that it is not an end in itself but to prepare us for Easter.

- What will you let go of this Lent?
- What might you need to let go in liturgy?
- How will this change you or your community for the better?

3 Directory for Masses with Children ~ A guide

Masses with Children in which only a few Adults also participate (20–54)

- *The third chapter is the longest section of the Directory. It will be covered over the next four issues*

Recommended especially on weekdays (20).

Further adaptation is necessary (20), in keeping with the purpose of the various elements of the liturgy outlined in the Missal (21).

- Every effort should... be made to increase... participation and to make it more intense. (22)
- The liturgy should never appear as something dry and merely intellectual. (35)

Thorough preparation by everyone is essential (29).

Involving the Children

- arranging the room (22),
- visual aids (35), their own artwork (36),
- music and song (22, 30): especially the eucharistic acclamations (30); use of recorded music (32),
- reading scripture and the intercessions (22),
- dialogue with the children, especially in the homily (22, 47),
- opportunity to give reasons for thanksgivings at the start of the eucharistic prayer (22),
- silence (22, 37),
- gesture (33) and movement, especially the four processions (34): entrance, gospel, gifts, communion,
- involvement in preparing the gifts (22).

Making Choices

When planning any liturgy, there are numerous decisions to be made. There may already be certain parameters about the nature of the liturgy: it may be a Feast day, or there may be a special focus such as welcoming new students or praying for those who are leaving.

The first decision to be made will usually be the readings. As explained in the last *Spirit of the Season* (Advent 2008) the Church provides readings for every day of the year. On a holy day or feast day, the readings of the day cannot be changed. Even where the readings do not have to be taken – on the weekdays of Ordinary Time, for example – it is recommended that the texts are at least considered. By sharing the same readings with the rest of the Church throughout the world is one way we connect ourselves with the whole Church.

The Directory for Masses with Children states that some readings may be omitted, however there must always be a reading from one of the four Gospels at Mass.

Once a Gospel has been chosen, a useful step is to go to the back of the Sunday Lectionary, to the list of where each Gospel occurs. This will then direct you to appropriate First and Second Readings and Responsorial Psalms, related to the gospel.

Another possibility would be to look at the suggestions for the Masses for Various Needs and Occasions. This is a large number of readings arranged around a number of themes, such as: Masses for Justice and Peace, Christian Unity etc. These can be found in the third volume of the Lectionary.

Another area of choices is based on texts in the Altar Missal: Prefaces, Eucharistic Prayers, Opening prayers and final blessings. As with the readings there are days such as holydays when the texts are laid and other days when a choice can be made. For example there are set of Opening Prayers to complement the Masses for Various Needs and Occasions – there is also a particular Eucharistic Prayer for such Masses.

The Penitential Rite offers another set of choices. There are 3 forms: 'I confess'; 'Lord,

grant us your salvation...' and 'You were sent to heal the contrite'. Where the 'Lord have mercy' has not been included in the Penitential Rite (i.e. in forms A & B) it follows The Penitential Rite may be replaced by the Blessing and Sprinkling of Water – this would be particularly appropriate in the Easter Season. It is important that, over time, children are familiar with each form. (See *Spirit of the Season* Lent 08 for more information about Penitential Rite C).

For celebrations of Mass the priest celebrant may wish to make choices for Mass texts – though he may welcome ideas and suggestions. In particular it is good to inform him which readings have been chosen well before the celebration. Best practice would, of course, be to prepare together – though time constraints may count against this. Even if there is not time to prepare together regularly it is advisable that an opportunity to establish common understanding of good practice. This may be easiest to do as a whole staff.



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