

Our bodies are a sign – 2

Liturgy of the Word

Processing: We are a pilgrim people, our life is a journey of faith, following Jesus whom John describes as ‘The Way’. Religious processions are a great symbol of this, both inside and outside of the Mass. At Baptism the procession from the door to the ambo signifies the welcome of the Church to Her new member; at funerals we process behind the body as it leaves the church to go to its final resting place. Our entrance procession at Mass enables all to move from their daily exterior life to an interior life of prayer. We leave behind our worldly status and are united with our sisters and brothers with the Mass bringing about ‘true unity amidst diversity’ (Fr Robert Barron, *Catholicism*).

Blessing with holy water: As we gather for liturgy on our way into church, we bless ourselves with holy water as a sign of our Baptism. We may also do this as we enter and leave our homes and when embarking on a journey.

Reverencing the Blessed Sacrament: On entering a holy place where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the tabernacle, we turn to face it and genuflect as a sign of love and respect for the Eucharist.

Bowing: Before taking our seat, we bow towards the altar, the sign of Christ our Saviour, whose name we also reverence with a slight bow of the head whenever mentioned in the liturgy. The Missal indicates we should bow between the words ‘and by the Holy Spirit’ and ‘became man’. When the priest concludes Mass with a solemn blessing he invites everyone to bow down.

The Sign of the Cross: As we begin a liturgy, we make the Sign of the Cross to signify that our celebration together takes place in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Again, we make the Sign of the Cross before the Gospel, marking our forehead, lips and heart, offering our thoughts, words and hearts to God as we listen to the stories of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. The Sign of the Cross at the end of Mass is made as the priest blesses us and sends us out to spread Christ’s kingdom in the world.

Sign of Peace: In the Mass we exchange a Sign of Peace after the Lord’s Prayer, echoing the theme of forgiveness of each other and acknowledging Christ’s presence in our neighbour. In England and Wales we use a handshake, not as a greeting but expressing peace, communion and charity. (*Celebrating the Mass* n 67) The 2014 Vatican statement makes the connection between the Sign of Peace and building a more just and peaceful world.

Striking the breast is a sign of humility and self-abasement and is used by the faithful in the *I confess*. (*Celebrating the Mass* n 66)

Finding the texts for Mass – 4

Having identified what prayers and readings are used on any day, we will now look at what possibilities there are for replacing the texts. As a general rule, the more important the celebration (ie a Solemnity), the less flexibility there is for changing texts.

Calendar

In addition to the world-wide celebrations marked by the Church, there will also be those in the national and diocesan calendars. If a school has connections with a religious order this too may draw in other observances. There will be at least one celebration proper to the school or parish: its Patronal Solemnity – the celebration of the saint to whom the school or parish is dedicated. Being a solemnity, the *Gloria* is sung and there are two readings etc. As previously noted, where there are no set texts they are taken from the appropriate Common.

Readings

The Missal and the Lectionary provide two sections – Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, and Votive Masses – which offer a variety of additional readings and prayers. These can replace the texts on any weekday in Ordinary Time and, where there is good reason, Weekdays of Advent, Christmas and Easter. Votive Masses have titles such as ‘The Mercy of God’ or ‘The Holy Eucharist’. The Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit is often used for times such as the beginning of term. The Masses for Various Needs and Occasions reflect a range of pastoral situations such as ‘For the Pope’, ‘For the Family’ or ‘For the Sanctification of Human Labour’.

The *Directory for Masses with Children* reiterates the approach of the *Introduction to the Lectionary* that when choosing readings the needs and capability of the listeners should be borne in mind. In Masses with children, if the readings of the days seem unsuitable they may be replaced by others – keeping in mind the liturgical season. It is also possible in some circumstances to omit difficult verses. The principle is quality over quantity, whilst recognising that a well-proclaimed long reading can be as engaging as a short one and the criterion is the spiritual advantage of the children. (DMC 41-44)

Prayers

As already suggested, the prayers from Masses for Various Needs and Occasions and the Votive Masses may replace those of a Weekday outside Lent. Texts should be chosen from the Missal which are more suited to children with due regard to the liturgical season. Where this is not possible the *Directory* suggests that the prayers may be adapted while retaining the purpose, form and substance of the original prayer. (DMC 50, 51)

This resource can be freely photocopied. In fact we hope you will copy it and distribute it widely. Please think of doing so as a form of ministry to the liturgy.

Other editions of Spirit of the Season – this is the fourth edition – are available on the Society of Saint Gregory website, www.ssg.org.uk

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Use Scripture with confidence – 4

Using the Lectionary outside Mass

‘All must listen with reverence to the readings of God’s word: meditating on the word, taking it to heart, and beginning to respond to it in prayer’ (CTM 70, ref LM28 GIRM 55, 56)

‘Christian communities discover, express, and deepen their identity by sharing the stories of our salvation that we read in the Scriptures.’ The way we do this with children will influence the way in which children both receive and transmit what is communicated.

The Lectionary readings for Sundays are proclaimed within the liturgy on the Lord’s Day. However they do not remain there, caught in a moment of time. They flow into the rest of the week, and we can find ways of deepening our experience of this encounter with God through the Word, in our homes, parishes and classrooms using various tried and tested practices of prayer gleaned from the treasury of our tradition.

One of these is a form of sharing scripture together called *lectio divina*. This is a slow, prayerful reading of the Word, like a quiet walk through a garden, stopping and noticing the different plants, shrubs, trees, birds, smells; you notice a word or phrase that catches the imagination, and simply ‘resting’ with this, gazing, repeating it quietly in your heart. Following a silence, have a second reading of the text, repeating this process of quiet repetition, and then gently asking what word or phrase or image caught your attention? I wonder what God is saying to you through this word? After a short time for individual reflection, invite members of the family or class to share their words and thoughts. (It is OK to remain silent, but do gently encourage, for the sharing will help others.) It is very simple. In the process we are moving from ‘head knowledge’ to heart, from ‘history’ to ‘my story’ in the present. We are open to hearing what we have not heard before, open to being changed. The ‘I wonder’ questions come from all involved. If there is time, it is then good to invite a creative response – go and draw a picture or paint, write out the word or phrase very carefully and decorate it. In this creative, meditative response the word penetrates more deeply.

‘How to’ tips:

- Create the quiet space, sitting together in a circle. Invite the Holy Spirit: ‘O that today may I listen to your Voice.’
- Leader or invited person to proclaim the Gospel, all listen.
- Allow silence. ‘What word or phrase or image caught your attention?’ Stick with it, repeat it.
- Listen for a second time, and repeat invitation ‘What word or phrase or image struck you?’
- After silence, gently invite ‘Would anyone like to share their word or phrase or image, and any thoughts?’
- Invite a creative response: draw, paint, write, play.
- Perhaps finish with ideas of how we might ‘act’ to do something differently this week.

Resources: Wednesday Word
<http://www.wednesdayword.org.uk/>

Further information on the Liturgy in the Lenten Season: <http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Calendar/Seasons/Lent.shtml>

Our bodies are a sign - 3

Communion

After we have exchanged the Sign of Peace, a sign of our hope for peace and unity for the Church and the whole human family, the Priest breaks the bread, as we sing or say the *Lamb of God*. Commissioned ministers who are to assist at communion should be in place on the sanctuary by the end of the Sign of Peace. After the *Lamb of God* we kneel. The Priest genuflects, raises the host and says: ‘Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.’ We reply: ‘Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.’ These are the words of the Centurion who asked the Lord to heal his sick servant (Matthew 8:5-13). ‘These words remind us that the Body and Blood of Christ is a food and drink that offers us salvation.’ (*Praying the Mass*)

As we walk solemnly in procession to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, we express ‘the humble patience of the poor moving forward to be fed, the alert expectancy of God’s people sharing the Paschal meal in readiness for their journey, the joyful confidence of God’s people on the march toward the promised land.’ (*Celebrating the Mass* n 210) If possible, we should be singing a simple, repetitive chant, refrain or well-known communion song as we approach the Table of the Lord. We hold our hands up, to receive, so that they are clearly visible to the Priest. St Cyril of Jerusalem in the 4th century instructed: ‘When you approach, do not go stretching out your open hands or having your fingers spread out, but make the left hand into a throne for the right which shall receive the King.’ As we approach the minister, we make a slight bow of the head, acknowledging the presence of Christ. The minister says, ‘The Body of Christ’, and we reply ‘Amen’. We then go on to receive the Blood of Christ, after which we assent, ‘Amen’, before returning to our place in the assembly, where we kneel to give thanks in prayer or in song.



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Criteria for evaluating collective worship in schools – 4

Range, quality and frequency of collective worship in schools

Prayer infuses the Catholic school at every level. Staff, governors, families and children pray individually and together. Faith is shared and informs all school activities. Spaces within the school day and in the school buildings enable regular, ongoing and natural encounters with God. The liturgical year guides us through times of penitence, sorrow, celebration, anticipation and relief, so that all of human experience might be expressed in worship. Ensure, therefore, that your liturgical provision is not narrowly joyful, nor manipulatively emotional. Plan liturgy across the year, highlighting significant moments to punctuate regular day-to-day, week-to-week and term-to-term opportunities, pausing for reflection and sharing celebration. Where possible, link the curriculum with liturgy, so that liturgy is integrated with the rest of the children's experience. Further, link school liturgy to the wider worshipping life of the parish, collaborating with your parish priest and parish lay ministers, such as the music co-ordinator.

Learners' response to worship in schools

Progress in faith is not linear and doesn't yield reliably measurable outcomes. However, establishing and strengthening a relationship with God promotes emotional articulation and maturation, a secure forum for the expression of troubling issues, and growth of self-esteem and self-confidence. If our school liturgies offer such a relationship, then the children will participate eagerly, and feel settled in the loving embrace of God. Children will desire to pray, to talk about their faith, to look after resources for worship, to explore various means of prayer (innovative and traditional), and to respond in liturgy. Good collective worship provides space to enjoy intimacy with God, and to give public expression to faith collectively through song and communal responses, and individually in composed and spontaneous prayers and symbolic action. Deepening faith promotes a more profound awareness of the liturgy and a care for the development of the faith of other people. Good collective worship encourages an enthusiasm for good liturgical planning, participation and pastoral care. Pupils understand through experience that liturgy is to be anticipated with joy, as an opportunity for learning, developing and sharing their faith.

Liturgy and morality

The moral code of a Catholic school is based on our faith, so while it is nourished by good collective worship it may be undermined by poor liturgy. What we aim for in guiding our students towards good citizenship and personal responsibility may be similar to the aims of non-Catholic schools, but why we do it is rooted firmly in our faith. As we give examples to the children of moral choices and consequences, let these be from the Gospels or the lives of the saints, so we encourage the understanding that morality for Catholics is essentially intertwined with discipleship. Morality, like spirituality, is an evolving concept, tested and proved by real-life experience. Collective worship in school, which allows for an holistic expression of human experience in relation to the divine, is an effective tool in moral development, since it holds a mirror up to our experience, alongside the security of forgiveness, mercy

and justice. Scriptural morality has been made clear by the Church over centuries by its canon of moral teaching. This has relevance to the children in relation to their friends, families and school experience. Gospel values are not merely about being nice to each other. Remember, for example, that Jesus was irritating to many of the people he met, and he overruled and undermined many of the laws and customs of the day. The development of an informed conscience is essential for confident, independent living and a vital relationship with God such as that enjoyed by the prophets and disciples, which includes questioning and challenging in order to deepen faith. The quality of our learners' moral development cannot be assessed independently of their understanding and appreciation of Catholicism.

Find out what your own diocese has planned, especially ideas for pilgrimage.

Lead prayer with confidence – 4

Leading others in prayer

One of the tasks of the leader is to enable the prayer and participation of others. A way of achieving this will be by being attentive to the flow and pace of the prayer. Try to avoid a liturgy which overruns its expected time (though this implies that in the preparation a realistic time has been given). Though not every aspect will be in the hands of the leader, a lot will be, including the transitional moments.

Give time for silence. Vary the amounts: a short pause as part of a collect or intercession will be different from a time of reflection after a reading. If groups are unfamiliar with using silence, give them ideas as to how it might be used and build the time up gradually.

Be attentive to other ministers. Provide eye contact if they need to be ready or offer the 'liturgical nod'. During the readings or songs be a model member of the congregation – through your attitude and response encourage the participation of others. Try to avoid doing everything.

Take time if needed. It is better to stay seated, pause briefly and sort your papers out and then, when ready, stand and continue, than to provide a distraction by rummaging around while something else is happening.

Through your preparation and proclamation make the prayers authentic to you and by your attitude and posture invite others to share that prayer so that together you may offer prayer and praise to the Father through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Tips for singing the Mass with children

1. *Everyone is involved in singing at Mass – not just the children*
Singing is a normal aspect of Mass. **Everyone is involved in singing at Mass** as a form of prayer, alongside spoken, silent, and body prayer (movement, posture, procession and gesture). So at Mass, children and adults sing together. Don't just leave the singing to the children! It's not about the quality of your voice or ability to hold a tune – we join in all together and leave the Holy Spirit to make it into something beautiful (Romans 8:26).
2. *Repeating pieces at every Mass helps people join in confidently*
To help children and staff join in singing, **repeat pieces at every Mass** so that participants become familiar with them and comfortable singing them. For example, learn one *Alleluia* (Gospel Acclamation), one version of the Holy-Memorial Acclamation-Great Amen (Eucharistic Acclamations) and use these at every Mass. You may already know an *Alleluia* (for example, the chorus of *Seek ye first*). The *Freedom Liturgy* is a catchy, easy-to-learn Mass setting available from www.wheatsheafmusic.co.uk, and the Mass of John Paul II by Edwin Fawcett works well with teenagers (edwinfawcett.bandcamp.com/album/mass-of-blessed-john-paul-ii), although it needs a good accompanist.
3. *Don't add music to the Mass unnecessarily – prioritise singing prayers integral to the Mass*
School Masses can't be lengthy as they have to fit into a tight teaching timetable when the worship space is available. Children may lose their concentration on the Mass after 45 minutes or so. So music doesn't need to be added to the Mass to make it longer. **Sing the prayers which are already part of the Mass** before trying to add more to it: Lord, have mercy (Penitential Act); Psalm; the Gospel Acclamation (*Alleluia*); Eucharistic Acclamations (Holy-Memorial Acclamation-Amen); Lamb of God. It is rare for a *Gloria* to be part of a weekday Mass – check your Ordo (a Church calendar which you can find at the back of your Diocesan yearbook or online) to see if it's necessary.
4. *Choose individual children who can sing the Psalm verses as a solo*
Give talented young singers the chance to sing the Psalm. Easy singable versions can be found online at www.mikeanderson.net, or learn one or two Common Psalms which can replace the Psalm set for a particular day. Consider *The Lord's my shepherd* (Psalm 22) or *Taste and see* (Psalm 24) – there are many musical versions of these Psalms to choose from.
5. *Learn new music online*
Use websites with backing tracks and demonstration tracks to help you learn new music. Check out new and traditional songs and hymns from worshipworkshop.co.uk or contemporary worship songs at www.resoundworship.com
6. *Help everyone participate together – priest and people*
Talk through the Mass with your priest and use your own Missal or Mass card so you recognise the spoken or visual cues for each piece of music. For example, the priest always says, '...we acclaim', before you sing 'Holy, Holy'. **Provide a congregational participation aid** (projecting the words onto a screen or printing the Mass words onto a card) so that all present can join in with the prayers which are spoken or sung by everyone together.



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