

Spirit of the Season

Winter 2007

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

Remembering the needs of others



Intercessory prayer is an important dimension of Christian prayer. Many teachers will have experienced the way in which children will offer such prayer with particular intensity when, for example a friend or a family member is ill, or at a time of bereavement.

The prayer associated with the Cycle of Prayer will very often take the form of intercessory prayer. Children will be best prepared for this activity when there has been the opportunity to help them to learn about the particular situations and people concerned. Class projects, poster boards, searches for relevant websites will all provide opportunities for this learning.

Frequently particular organisations will provide resources for days that they relate to. For example the Catholic Education Service produces materials for Education Day. The materials they provide can of course be used to resource prayer throughout the season, although it would be important to ensure that the concerns of any outside organisation do not obscure the more general theme established in the Cycle of Prayer.

Think about how the intercessions might be offered. Might you be able to set up a prayer board or prayer book for pupils (and staff) to write in their prayers? Maybe sometimes during prayer time the offering of verbal prayers could be accompanied by the lighting of a candle – so that, for example, there might be a pause for silent prayer after each 'bidding' or invitation to pray; a candle might be lit during the silence; and then the response be sung or said by the whole assembly. Invite classes to prepare visual displays of the concerns that will be prayed for – and ensure these remain around for a day or so afterwards, so that the community is encouraged to continue to remember the needs of others in their private prayer.

Ordinary Time: Winter

9 January - 21 February 2007

Peace on Earth

Day of Prayer for Peace
2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time 14/1/07

Christian Unity

Octave of Prayer for Christian
Unity
18-25 January

The Sick and Those Who Care for Them

World Day for the Sick
11 February

Students and Teachers

Education Day
3 Sundays before 1st Sunday of Lent
4/2/07

The Unemployed

Day for the Unemployed
Sunday before the 1st Sunday of Lent
18/2/07

[www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/
Calendar/Cycle](http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Calendar/Cycle)



Making Connections

Sacred & Secular



In the cycle of the year how do we respond to the seasons, to significant moments or times? What are the seasons, moments and times to which we want to, or need to respond?

We have the Christian seasons and feasts but we also have the secular seasons and occasions. Sometimes the two overlap, and sometimes there is a real tension between the two, the most obvious, perhaps, being the Advent and Christmas seasons.

There are also those major moments in the Church's year that we are not in school to celebrate, most notably Christmas and Easter, but also Pentecost. Of these, Easter seems the more difficult problem. Nobody appears to have much of a problem celebrating the birth of Jesus before the 25 December but we have real difficulty in celebrating the Resurrection, even though the Easter season goes on for seven weeks.

We need also to consider those moments of secular life that we celebrate. Beginnings and endings of the year, charity events both local and national, the World Cup, the Olympics etc.; all provide moments of gathering to celebrate.

How do we give each its due, leading pupils to an awareness that all is gift, that our lives as Christians do not separate us from the world but allow us to celebrate it fully? How do we plan ahead so that when the moments of secular celebration occur within our Christian seasons we incorporate them in a meaningful way?

The Advent season offers perhaps the most difficult challenge. The secular world begins its build up of expectation, its time of waiting, long before the Church's time of waiting begins, and creates a waiting that is very different to our waiting as Christians. The waiting of the secular world is over on 25 December, wrappings torn, food eaten – and all that goes with it. Our waiting as Christians is for a beginning not an ending, for a new world, not the end of an old year. We need each year to give consideration to how we create a feeling of expectation that has nothing to do with lights and Christmas trees. Do we perhaps during Advent have a Jesse tree

in school, through which we can reflect on the shoot which springs from the stock of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1), and those characters in scripture that bring us to Christ? Do we use the liturgical colour of the season, not just in the display at the school entrance, but more widely around the school – so that pupils are noticing it enough to ask 'Why?' (This might be a good move for all the seasons.) Perhaps instead of having a 'Carol Service' in the last week of the Autumn Term you have an Advent Service, where the focus of scripture, music, action is on anticipation, perhaps only ending with reference to the Nativity.

Somehow the Lenten season is the most successfully celebrated in school. The clear exhortation of the Church to prayer, fasting and almsgiving seems to provide clear and obvious lines of action. This is also the time when some in the parish, and perhaps in school, will be preparing for Baptism. The journey of growth and change for all of us can be strengthened by recognising those with whom we share the journey.

The Easter season seems to be the one that passes many schools by. We lead into the Easter holidays with liturgies around the passion and death of Jesus and allow the celebration of the Risen Christ to disappear into the flurries of the beginning of the Summer Term. The season lasts seven weeks so sounds of 'Alleluias' and 'Christ is Risen' can resound around the school!

Points for Reflection

- Looking back how well did we celebrate Advent last year? When did we celebrate Christmas – Christ's coming among us?
- What might we do to celebrate the Easter season? Days overflowing with paschal joy.

Points for action

- Do you have a calendar either in your classroom or the staff which shows both the liturgical seasons and major feastdays, when the school might be celebrating Mass together as well school, local or national events that could be marked in prayer.



Preparing Music for Liturgy

The first point of reference for choosing music will always be the scripture, whether this is solely the Gospel, or other readings as well. Some liturgies may have a particular theme, which will evoke other musical ideas too, although this should not dominate the liturgy.

The musical priorities (see right) will always be the first place to begin planning. Once the Gospel Acclamation and Eucharistic Acclamations have been chosen, other priorities will be the Responsorial Psalm, a Gloria (if appropriate), Gathering song and Communion chant.

There is a fine balance between using music which students already know and introducing new music - the art of this will be seen in using certain pieces sparingly and updating your repertoire so as to give them new choices, so they can still participate in planning.

It is important that students are not expected to learn too much music at a time. There should be a balance of what they know well and only one or two pieces they might learn, depending upon the time and resources available.

Consider carefully the words of the music you choose. People's beliefs are often shaped by what they sing, because music can be so memorable. It is important that texts express our faith well and are also appropriate to the moment when they are used.

Once the liturgy is planned, it is often wise to check the amount of music used, or in one part of it in relation to the others.

There is a danger of restricting music to one particular type or style in a liturgy, which can lose the breadth of tradition of the worldwide Church. A Mass with a lot of music by a single composer or in one particular style may not express the dimensions of the God in whom we believe.

Music can be an important link between school and parish. With effective communication, the repertoire can be built up very successfully, so as to help people to participate in either setting.

It is important to consider which pieces are appropriate to different parts of the Mass. During Communion, there might be a simple response which people can sing whilst in procession, which reflects the moment. This would not be a time for a song about Our Lady.

When you have chosen the music, who needs to know what you have chosen and why?

Points for Reflection

- Review the texts you sing to ensure that they reflect worship as a communal event. How often are the texts about 'I' rather than 'we'?

Looking ahead — Lent

Look for songs that speak about baptism and forgiveness, water and reconciliation, journey and new life.

The twin themes of the season are baptism and repentance. Both of these themes are looking towards Easter for their fulfilment. Lent is the journey of the Church towards the annual celebration of the Lord's dying and rising.

In Lent we fast from the Alleluia. The Gospel Acclamation is replaced by a short phrase praising Christ's presence in the Word.

By tradition the Church has avoided instrumental music in Lent and has sought a more austere sound to the liturgy. Try music unaccompanied or with a starker accompaniment. This is one way of providing an effective contrast with the Easter Season.

What shall we sing?

The Gospel Acclamation

The Alleluia or in Lent a phrase such as 'Glory and praise to you, O Christ!' precedes the proclamation of the Gospel at the heart of the Liturgy of the Word. The acclamation prepares people to listen to the Gospel. It may accompany a Gospel procession where the Book of the Gospels is taken to the Ambo with candles and other signs of honour.

Because of the importance we place on hearing Christ speaking to us in the Gospel the Acclamation should always be sung as a sign of reverence.

Form

An acclamation is a short song of praise. The form is Acclamation (Alleluia) — scripture verse — Acclamation. Though the verse can help us prepare to hear the Gospel it may be omitted. Different settings of the Alleluia have different strengths. Some may best accompany a procession; others will still people into quiet reflection, ready to hear the Word.

Putting it Together - Preparing Mass

Mass needs to be part of a culture of prayer in school rather than just being the thing that helps to make a school Catholic because it is something that is easily identifiable as 'Catholic'. It needs to be fed by other prayer in school and, in turn, feed and nourish the school community. It is a time to gather round the table of the Lord, to listen to God's word, to be challenged, comforted, enriched and encouraged in our faith.

Although celebrating Mass in school can appear to be an easy option because it may be a more familiar form of prayer, it still needs careful preparation. There are lots of decisions that need to be made as part of this process. For example:

- Should it be whole school, class/form groups, voluntary or compulsory?
- Where do you celebrate: school hall, classroom, local parish church?
- What are you celebrating: Feast days, special occasions, liturgical season, each week/month?
- Will you use the readings of the day from the Lectionary or choose other pieces of scripture? How will you decide this? (The preference should usually be for the readings of the day.)
- What music will you use? Will you observe the priorities for singing: Gospel and Eucharistic Acclamations?

- How will the presider be involved in the planning and preparation?
- What other ministers are needed? How will they be prepared?

The Mass is a meal as opposed to a buffet! It is possible to utilise the structure of the Mass to assist in ensuring that the celebration has a sense of direction and connection, rather than being a collection of separate 'prayers' prepared by different pupils/class groups etc.

Some structures can be rigid and, whilst there are 'rules and regulations' of what is appropriate for a celebration of Eucharist, there is room for flexibility and creativity.

If you're not sure what is possible then seek advice from the parish priest, diocesan liturgy commission, or get a copy of '*Celebrating the Mass*' (Catholic Truth Society, 2005).

The liturgical structure of Gather-Listen-Respond-Go can be used as way of understanding the structure of the Mass. The following ideas are not intended to all be used in a single liturgy, or to be used every time you celebrate Mass, but they are intended as a starting point to inspire you to create your own ideas.

Gather

- Spend time preparing the place you are going to celebrate in: make banners etc.
- Sing a song/chant with a

gathering theme. See the website for ideas.

- If possible arrange the seating so the community can physically gather round the table of the Lord.

Listen

- Use slides/images to illustrate the scriptures.
- Create a focal point to represent/symbolise the reading as it is read,

Respond

- Print the responses to the readings/prayers etc so that everyone can join in.
- Give reasons for thanksgiving at the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer.
- Allow time at Communion for both quiet reflection and communal song.

Go

- Don't have a final hymn but dismiss people straight away.
- Have a special blessing or act of commissioning linked to the feast/focus/theme of the Mass.

Getting in touch

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