

Spirit of the Season

Advent 2008

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

Prayer Positions

About 10 years ago, it was noticeable that in a school Mass on a weekday morning in a primary school hall, nobody knelt down for the Eucharistic Prayer, as they had always done.

When this observation was made by a regular visitor to the school, the reply was 'its health and safety'. Be that as it may, it raises various questions regarding our posture in prayer, and what it means.

Standing, kneeling, sitting - all have their place in the celebration of the Mass, and it is important for children and adults to know why we do things, and what the alternatives are in different circumstances.

- **We stand** for the beginning of Mass through to the end of the Introductory rites.
- for the proclamation of the Gospel.
- for the Intercessions or Prayer of the Faithful.
- at the beginning at the Preface of the Eucharistic Prayer.
- for the Lord's Prayer.
- for the Concluding Rites of the Mass.
- **We sit** for the readings from the word of God.
- during the Preparation of the

Gifts.

- **We kneel** during the Eucharistic Prayer (after the Holy, holy)
- after the Lamb of God.
- after Holy Communion.

So what happens if - for good reason, in a particular space - we do not kneel. First, there is the acknowledgement of why we kneel at all. Kneeling down together is something that most people only ever experience in the context of the worship of God. So, it should not be dispensed with lightly, because that unique experience clearly has a purpose and a place.

If an assembly cannot kneel, then the suggested alternative would be to stand, because these are moments of the greatest honour, respect, and reverence - does it make sense to sit down?

In practical terms, however, in a school hall, does standing make sense, or does it make an otherwise visual experience somewhat compromised?

For a community to sit throughout the celebration of Mass - even with standing for the Gospel and the Lord's Prayer and following prayers through to

Holy Communion, has the unfortunate consequence of making the Mass a spectator event with some involved and others 'sitting and watching'. To kneel, to stand, and to sit at appropriate times, and to use posture to reflect prayer and participation is not something to discount without good reason.

There is a common understanding of the significance of the postures of standing, sitting, and kneeling within our culture.

We rise to greet people, to honour someone important, to express readiness for action, or when seized with excitement. In Christian liturgical tradition, standing is the basic posture of an Easter people lifted up to greet its risen Lord. The assembly stands at Mass, for example, during the proclamation of the Gospel reading.

We kneel as a human gesture of submission. In Christian tradition, kneeling is an acknowledgement of one's creatureliness before God. It can signify penitence for sin, humility, reverence, and adoration.

We sit to listen, to rest, to watch. At Mass it is appropriate, for example, to sit during the homily and at the Preparation of the Gifts. Except in case of infirmity it is not usually an appropriate posture for other moments of the liturgy where a more engaged posture, such as standing or kneeling is to be preferred. Celebrating the Mass, 57-60.

Classroom Prayer and Assemblies

In this edition, we explore how we might gather for a time of worship, whether it be an assembly or classroom prayer.

Gather

We are reminded why we gather, and in whose name we gather; the theme is introduced.

It will help if the gathering, whether for assembly or classroom prayer, has a familiar format in order to attune students to the act of worship which is about to take place.

Some thought should be given to the following:-

Posture - will students stand or sit?

Gathering - does prayer always take place at the same time in the morning routine?

Leadership - who will lead prayer: staff, students? Is there a rota?

Focal point - is there a focal point in the classroom or assembly space, e.g. a prayer table, a candle that is always lit to signify the start of the prayer time, a slide projected on the wall for the students to look at as they take their places?

Sign of the Cross

Leader: We come together to pray...

All: in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening response:

Leader: O God, open our lips

All: and we shall praise your name.

Introduction

- Introduce theme...
- In Sunday's Gospel, we heard ...
- Today's assembly is about ...
- Today we are going to think about ...

Liturgical Colours and Environment

The period of Advent is marked by the use of Violet vestments on the 1st, 2nd and 4th Sundays, with rose for the 3rd Sunday, known as 'Gaudete Sunday'. The season of Christmas uses the colours white, gold and silver and begins on Christmas Eve and ends on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, on the Sunday after the Epiphany.

- Advent wreath
- Travelling nativity set
- Stars
- Pictures of characters from the Advent readings
- Christingles

10 Ideas for Ritual Actions

Advent

- Decorate and bless the Advent wreath
- Place strips of cloth in a crib
- Write promises on stars attached to a piece of string hung across the ceiling
- Place the different titles of Jesus into the crib or on an altar cloth built up gradually over the season
- Add paper 'flames' to an outline of a candle
- Place figures along a journey, e.g. nativity figures, kings etc...

General

- Bring forward pictures that have been drawn or examples of work to place at the front or on the prayer table
- Contribute to a symbolic picture such as adding petals to a flower, leaves to a tree
- From a set of postcards or pictures, choose an image representing God, self, character from scripture...
- Add grains of incense to charcoal to symbolise prayers ascending to God



THE YEAR OF ST PAUL

From 28th June 2008 to 29th June 2009 we celebrate the Year of St Paul. As we enter on our Advent journey maybe we could consider Paul's missionary journeys. Paul's imagery, too, of the race to be run in the Christian journey of life.

On Paul's first journey he joined Barnabas in travelling to Cyprus and onward to Anatolia, Paul and Barnabas preached to the Jews in the synagogues about the Good News of the Resurrection and salvation in Jesus Christ, founding new communities and healing the sick.

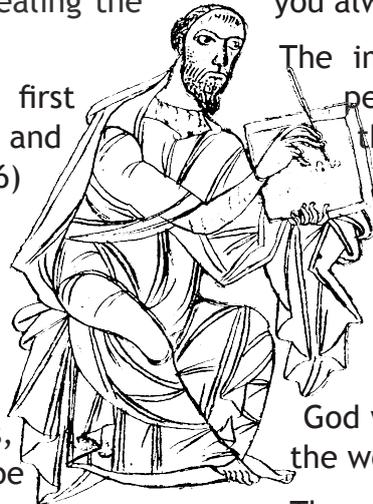
You might want to map Paul's first journey, highlighting both modern and ancient placenames. (Acts 13:1-16) Maps of Paul's missionary journeys can be found on the Westminster Diocesan website www.rcdow.org.uk/paul

Paul describes the journey of his life in the Letter to the Philippians, using the imagery of a race to be run.

'Not that I have become perfect yet: I have not yet won, but I am still running, trying to capture

the prize for which Christ Jesus captured me.' (Phil 3:12)

Maybe this could provide food for an Advent assembly, highlighting our sense of expectation of the coming of Christ, not only at Christmas but in the sense of the second coming of Christ that the Advent scriptures focus on. There is, of course, always the third perspective, our consciousness of the presence of the Lord today, in our world, where he is always incarnate. As Jesus said to the disciples; 'know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'



The image of the race to be run could perhaps be developed in considering the idea of striving for something worthwhile, highlighting the children's experience of the efforts they put in to the achievements of which they are proud. During Advent we strive to be ready for the coming of Jesus, trying to be closer to what God wants us to be - followers of Jesus in the world.

The prayer given SOS Autumn 08 might be prayed:

Music for Processions in Advent and Christmastide:

Appropriate songs lead us through the weeks and days of Advent; the most ancient being the 'O' Antiphons with their various names for Christ sung from 17th - 23rd December, settings of which include *O come, o come Emmanuel* and Marty Haugen's *For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits*. See if your Nativity play contains any songs you could adapt for liturgical use, especially lyrics about the journeys of Mary, Joseph, the shepherds or the kings.

Advent:	Composer:	Source:	Notes:
<i>We will walk</i>	Martin Foster	Cantate	
<i>Wait for the Lord</i>	Jacques Berthier	Laudate / CFE	Taizé
<i>Stay awake!</i>	Christopher Walker	Laudate / CFE	
<i>Magnificat</i>	Various	Various	Mary's song of joy on receiving the news of her pregnancy
Prepare the way	Christopher Walker		Round / canon
Christmas:			
<i>Little Donkey</i>			
<i>Calypso Carol</i>			
<i>He came down that we might have love</i>	arr. Geoff Weaver	World Praise	From the Cameroon

Saints of the Season

November

11 St Martin of Tours

As a catechumen, Martin was in conscience unable to continue with military service. Martin was baptised at the age of eighteen, for a time became a hermit, and then worked to establish monasticism in the West. He was bishop of Tours for twenty-five years. One of the first non-martyrs to be venerated as a saint, he is widely remembered for his legendary generosity to the poor, for arguing against the persecution of heretics, and especially for his active evangelisation and pastoral care of rural areas.

19 St Hilda of Whitby

Hilda became a nun at the age of thirty three, eventually becoming abbess of Hartlepool before moving to the double monastery of Whitby, which under her leadership became a great centre of learning, of literature, and of the arts. Renowned for her wisdom, she was consulted by kings and bishops alike. She hosted at her monastery the decisive synod of 664. Though herself sympathetic to the Celtic tradition she loyally accepted the synod's decision, which decided that the Church in England would follow Roman customs. She is remembered for her patronage of learning, and for her leadership of the English Church in a formative period.

24 St Andrew Dung-Lac & Companions

Andrew is listed among 117 canonised martyrs who died in Vietnam between 1820 and 1862. The group comprises ninety-six Vietnamese, eleven Spanish Dominicans, and ten presbyters from the Paris Foreign Mission Society. They are remembered as representatives of the thousands of Christians tortured and martyred in Vietnam between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries: bishops, presbyters, religious, and lay people, both children and adults.

30 St Andrew

Born at Bethsaida (Galilee), Andrew was a fisherman. He introduced his brother, Simon Peter, to Jesus and became one of the first to follow Christ. He is mentioned a number of times in the gospels, for example, in introducing some Gentiles to Jesus. Widely venerated since ancient times, he is remembered as one of the twelve who bore witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. He became recognised as patron saint of Scotland because, according to legend, some of his bones were brought there and buried in the place which now bears his name.

December

3 St Francis Xavier

Francis died on this day in 1552 off the coast of China. While studying in Paris, he met Saint Ignatius of Loyola, became one of the first Jesuits, and went to Goa (India) as a missionary. From there he travelled extensively through southeast Asia to Japan, winning many converts and leaving behind organised Christian communities. He is remembered for the witness of his poverty and for his tireless efforts as a missionary.

6 St Nicholas

Bishop of Myra (Turkey), Nicholas died in the fourth century. Nothing more is known about his life. Since the tenth century, he has been widely venerated. Nicholas's reputation for generosity led to the custom of giving children gifts on his feast day, and thus to the Christmas figure of Santa Claus.

8 Immaculate Conception of Our Lady

The Church teaches that Mary was free from sin from the moment she was conceived. This special grace prepared her to be the mother of God. Mary did not earn this freedom in any way. It was simply a gift bestowed by God.

13 St Lucy

Lucy died at Syracuse in Sicily, probably in the persecution of the emperor Diocletian in 304. Her name means light and coming half way through Advent her feast day guides our hope toward the coming of Christ our light.

Winter Journeys

The seasons of **Advent** and **Christmastide** provide occasion to shine the promised light of Christ in the depth of the darkness of winter out on the streets in procession. We join the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, then follow the star with the shepherds and the kings. Some parishes and schools enjoy the *posada* during which Nativity statues are moved from house to house, family to family, or classroom to classroom, before settling in their stable scene in a central location in church, school chapel or hall at Christmas. During the journey of the figurines, the stable scene is left bare, creating anticipation of their arrival. Informally, we engage in processions when we go out carol-singing. Carol-singing from classroom to classroom could be combined with other school Christmas customs such as exchanging Christmas cards or sharing in Secret Santa. It is important that the sense of Christmas is not lost when the New Year begins, but sustained through visual displays and the words and music of worship. **Christian Unity Week** from 18th - 25th January presents a valuable opportunity to process between schools or churches of different Christian denominations, witnessing to our common faith in the local community.

The season concludes with the Feast of the **Presentation of the Lord** on 2nd February, also known as Candlemas, with a strong tradition of processions by candlelight, acknowledging Christ as the light to enlighten the Gentiles (Luke 2:32). While candlelight can be dangerous, and ineffective during the day, sunlight can be amplified with the clever use of mirrors, prisms and the use of reflective materials such as foil in any visual aids.

Peter Mazar in *School Year, Church Year* on processions in Candlemas (194, 196): 'Forty days ago, on Christmas Day, a light was kindled. On Epiphany this light rose to twinkle from the stars. And today this starlight is placed in our arms. There's something splendid about a wintertime procession as an act of defiance against the elements, as a hastening of spring ... signs that the sun is gaining power. For us they can be sacred signs that the love of God is stronger than death'.

Getting in touch

Martin Foster, Liturgy Office,
39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PL.
020 7901 4851 (tel) 020 7901 4821 (fax)
Martin.Foster@cbcew.org.uk
www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/SOS

The views expressed in *Spirit of the Season* are not necessarily those of the Bishops' Conference.

Spirit of the Season may be copied and distributed freely in whole or in part. Permission for any other use contact the Liturgy Office.

To get an email when the next issue is available see the website.

© 2008 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales ISSN 1748-5088