

Spirit of the Season

Summer 2007

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

Cycle of Prayer ~ Planning

As this School Year starts to draw to a close, it is good to review what you've learnt during the year and especially from any use you've made of the Cycle of Prayer. Use the review to begin to think how the Cycle of Prayer might be used, perhaps still more effectively, next year.

The Cycle has the potential to give a sense of rhythm and pattern to our praying of the year, building on the deeper rhythms of the liturgical seasons of Advent/Christmas, Lent and Easter. Making full use of these patterns can give a shape to the year, so that when we gather for prayer we already have a sense of 'where we are' in the year - be that 'preparing for Easter', or 'celebrating the Incarnation' (God becoming one of us) or spending a week or so, united with the rest of the Church in England and Wales, focused on 'Life' issues.

Letting these focuses or themes inform our worship together can make the whole work of preparing for class-room prayer, assembly and liturgy easier. Choosing one or two songs that might be used in different ways during all the worship of Advent means that we establish the focus, establish the sense of season, and don't have to find and learn lots of songs. Repetition need not mean 'boring'; repetition can lead to deeper learning, and deeper prayer. It can also greatly simplify the work of preparing liturgy and prayer.

What themes have you highlighted through this year? Which do you plan to focus on during the next year? RE Coordinators should ensure that what is planned is made known to the whole teaching staff as soon as possible. Review those plans at the beginning of next year, and let everyone know what common resources they find it helpful to use in their classroom prayer times. This will be of assistance to everyone - not least by helping avoid duplication of effort.



Ordinary Time: Summer

28 May - 31 August 2007

A Deeper Understanding between Christians and Jews

Those Who Suffer Persecution, Oppression and Denial of Human Rights

St John Fisher & St Thomas More
22/6/07

Europe

Europe day 9/5/07
also Patron of Europe:
St Benedict 11/7/07
St Brigid 23/7/07
St Benedicta of the Cross 9/8/07
also Sts Cyril & Methodius 14/2/07
and St Catherine of Siena 29/4/07

Human Life

Day for Life
1st Sunday in July 1/7/07

Seafarers

Sea Sunday
2nd Sunday in July 8/7/07

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





Liturgy is part of our lives. There is always the danger whether in school or on a Sunday of seeing liturgy and prayer as something extra, an add-on rather than part of what makes us not only Catholic but also what makes us human.

The idea that liturgy and our lives are connected is familiar. Sometimes, though, familiar ideas need exploring to show the different dimensions of the idea.

Times of liturgy and prayer offer us precious moments to reflect on our lives and make sense of them. The idea that for Sunday Mass, for example, we prepare ourselves by reflecting on our lives in the previous week and that from the liturgy we are nourished by Word and Eucharist for the next week.

When we prepare the liturgy or reflect on scripture we cannot but bring our current life experience to the discussion. What speaks to us in the scriptures are aspects that illuminate our lives.

Particular parts of the liturgy speak to the lives of those present: the homily or any reflection, intercessions or prayers that express our concerns for the world and our neighbour. Also the Eucharistic Prayer where we are caught up in Christ's offering to the Father. Music where the words express our experience are often those which people sing well because they can understand why they are singing.

We come to the liturgy to mark stages and events in our lives. These can be the 'big ones' birth, marriage and death or they can be other significant events. At the end of the Summer Term schools will be having Mass or another form of prayer for those leaving. We could just have a party but we need to do more than that. On the back page are ideas of prayer at moments of crisis: the unexpected and tragic death, the natural disaster, the international act of violence. At these moments we turn to prayer not because we expect to find answers but because it is the natural thing to do.

There is a danger that we see the connections between liturgy and life as strictly one-way traffic: life is celebrated in liturgy. This is

a humanistic approach which puts us at the centre of liturgy and potentially leaves no room for God. In the preceding paragraphs there are hints at how this can be avoided. At a time of crisis we can only console ourselves by listening to God's word, his promise of hope, and by placing our fears and intercessions with him trusting in his compassion and mercy. At a leavers' Mass it is not a celebration of what they have achieved but of thanksgiving for the gifts that God has poured out and the desire for God's blessing in the future. A funeral is not a celebration of the life of the departed rather, the Church teaches, it is a proclamation of the resurrection, consolation for those who mourn and prayer for God's mercy on the soul of the deceased.

Liturgy can both reflect and, through God's grace, change our lives. Furthermore how we celebrate liturgy should provide a model for how we should live. In truth liturgy not only provides a model but also a mirror. Where liturgy and our lives cross over is in the importance of relationships with God and with one another. It is why reconciliation is important before full participation in the Eucharist: reconciliation of relationships with God and our neighbour.

Points for Reflection

- Remember and reflect on a liturgy that affected you in the last year. What difference did it make?
- Collect, for yourself, a number of passages or phrases from Scripture that speak to you.
- What would a stranger perceive about your school from the way that liturgy is celebrated?

Points for Action

- How do concerns for prayer (events in pupil's lives) become known and prayed for?
- Is there a balance between local and wider concerns in prayer?
- How will God's action through those who are leaving be acknowledged and given thanks for?

Songs without Words

Because musicians enjoy doing music there can be a danger that within a liturgy there can be too much music. This can imbalance the liturgical action. Always make space for times of reflection using silence or maybe instrumental music. At Mass instrumental music can be effective before the liturgy begins, to accompany the Preparation of Gifts, after Communion and to conclude the liturgy – to play people out. These times give an indication of how instrumental music can be used in other liturgies: to create an atmosphere of prayer, to accompany a liturgical action, particularly when the action is primarily visual, and mark a moment of transition. Pieces of music need to be chosen carefully so that they enhance the liturgy and prayer and do not become an event, or performance, in themselves.

Using new liturgical pieces as the basis for instrumental pieces can be a subtle and effective way of introducing new music.

Using Instruments to accompany singing

The use of instruments to accompany singing, either the whole assembly or a group, can greatly enhance the liturgy.

As a general rule, instrumentalists or singers should not add harmonies until people know the song well enough, e.g. verse 3 or 4.

Instrumentalists do not have to play every verse of every song; vary it by bringing an instrument in on the chorus, for example, to indicate where everybody is to sing.

Avoid having all instruments playing the melody line so that the sound is top heavy. Many published pieces come with instrumental parts. These can often be found in either original collections or with the sheet music/octavos. Parts can be created from the vocal parts such as a descant or an alto part.

Playing an instrument can be a great way for beginners to have an experience of playing with others. Be aware of what beginners are capable of: what keys are best, where their best range is or other limitations such as using only open strings and 1st finger on a violin. Andrew Wright of Brentwood diocese published with McCrimmons some basic arrangements of liturgical music. These can serve as good models of what can be done.

If possible work with instrumental teachers and/or the local parish.

If you have good, confident instrumentalists try using solo instruments without accompaniment as a way of accompanying a reflection.

Percussion can add both rhythmic energy as well as subtle effects. The suggestions above all apply to the use of percussion. If it is used all the way through every song it can be monotonous. Identify beforehand which pieces percussion would enhance.

Building Repertoire

The end of the year is a good time to look back and evaluate what has been done in the last school year.

It is an opportunity to see what music might need to be identified and learnt next year. Learning new music is not necessarily a good thing in itself. The first priority is to build up a repertoire that serves the school's liturgy and prayer. If you have lots of upbeat final songs but never sing the Gospel Acclamation – something needs to be done to restore the balance. Similarly if you have a range of quiet chants but not a single psalm setting.

Sometimes new music can be something old that we have not used before – a repertoire that only consists of pieces written in the last 5-10 years suggests that something is lacking and that our tradition is not being engaged with. The reverse is also problematic – a repertoire that contains nothing recent. New music is a sign of the Holy Spirit active in the Church. New music and settings can give us an insight into what it means to follow Christ today.

- What new music has been learnt over the last year?
- What worked?
- Can you categorise the music into different types: songs, liturgical settings, psalms; into different styles. Is there a balance?
- What do you need to find for next year?

For ideas on finding music see the website

Putting it together ~ Prayer in a Time of Crisis

Some people cope well in a crisis whilst others do not. Panic, shock, grief can all hinder our capacity and ability to think straight, make good decisions etc. Often a crisis doesn't allow us the luxury of time to be fully prepared or to have gone through a long process of adapting and editing ideas for a time of prayer.

You may have a school policy to deal with these situations in a practical way but what about in a liturgical way? One obvious answer is to be prepared in advance! Although this might sound morbid and no-one can predict when disasters will occur, it is good to collect resources for these situations just in case. Why not keep a file of prayers, reflections, songs etc. for when someone dies, a natural disaster occurs or someone falls ill.

Whilst it is important to acknowledge how we feel at these times there is also a need to be sensitive to people's feelings – don't encourage them to delve too deeply if there isn't going to be sufficient time to deal with the emotions that may emerge. Don't play on people's emotions – something's sadness is not judged on how many

people cry or get upset. Also try to be aware and be open to the different ways people deal with a crisis and to allow for this in the liturgy. It may be more appropriate to have a series of prayer times, some with the whole school, some with class groups, depending on the nature of the crisis. Usually proximity to an event affects the appropriate level of response: a local disaster often has more impact than something more distant, unless there is a local connection. There may be a need for both an immediate response and something more considered at a week's distance.

Don't forget the needs of the staff as well.

Liaise with the local parish(es).

Above all it is worth remembering that, in a time of crisis when people might feel helpless, prayer is the one thing we can do!

Below are some ideas you might wish to use for a prayer in a time of crisis using the liturgical structure of Gather-Listen-Respond-Go. They are not intended to all be used in a single liturgy but they are intended as a starting point to inspire you to create your own ideas.

Gather

- Bring forward images: of the person's life/pictures etc.
- Begin with some reflective instrumental music
- Use an opening prayer that acknowledges how people might be feeling: hurt, angry, confused, upset etc and offering it to God

Listen

- Choose a piece of scripture where people deal with loss/crisis: E.g. Jesus weeping at the death of Lazarus, the calming of the storm
- Have a eulogy or ask someone to lead a

reflection on what has happened

- Use newspaper articles that describe the events of the natural disaster

Respond

- A minute of silence
- Lighting a candle
- Writing in a book of remembrance/condolence

Go

- Allow people to leave when they are ready
- Outline what support is available to help people deal with the crisis
- Encourage people to find out more about the event (if a natural disaster) and how we can help those affected by it



Getting in touch

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