

**World Communications Day 2009  
LITURGICAL MATERIALS**

**24 May 2009, The Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord**

*These materials have been prepared to help parishes celebrate the Liturgy on World Communications Day. They can be adapted in whatever way suits the parish. They include:*

- Introduction to the Mass
- Themes for two possible homilies
- Key quotations from the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI's Communications Day letter that can be used in the homily or newsletter
- Prayers of the Faithful

**INTRODUCTION TO THE MASS**

Today we celebrate the solemnity of the Ascension. Forty days after his Resurrection from the dead, Jesus is taken up to heaven, giving us hope that we may one day join him, and giving us even now a share in his divine life. This year, the Holy Father has dedicated this day as World Communications Day. He invites us to reflect on the place of the media and new digital technologies in our lives and in the life of the Church. Let us pray during this Mass that we may use all the different communications media wisely: For the common good of all society, and for the glory of God.

**SCRIPTURE READINGS**

First reading: Acts 1:1-11

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 46: 2-3, 6-9

Second Reading: Ephesians 4:1-13 [or the reading from Year A, Ephesians 1:17-23]

Gospel: Mark 16:15-20

**THEMES FOR TWO POSSIBLE HOMILIES**

**1. UNITY**

St Paul writes: "Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. There is one Body, one Spirit, just as you were all called into one and the same hope when you were called."

- Jesus, now ascended into heaven, is the Head, and we are all united in his Body the Church.
- Unity is a gift from the Holy Spirit, bringing people together in Christ from very different backgrounds. The diversity of peoples and personalities in our parish, in our diocese. This is something to be grateful for.
- Unity also needs working at. Not to take it for granted. Look into our hearts at the prejudices and barriers. How can we use our gifts to build others up, to build the parish up, to deepen community.
- New digital technology like the Internet, mobile phones, video sharing, social networking sites. All this can help us connect with others. Young people appreciate this. New ways of connecting, creating communion and friendship.

- As Catholics we are called to use digital technology for purposes that are truly good. To deepen friendships. To share good news, especially our faith. Not in a pushy way, but naturally. We need the confidence to believe that our faith matters, and that our example and words can help others.
- Let us be honest about the risks and dangers of the media. Sometimes the content itself can be harmful. Or even if the content is good or at best neutral, the habit of using digital technology can become like an addiction that takes us away from family, friends, and ordinary human relationships. But the challenge is to use the media wisely and for our true good.
- The Catholic Communications Network is the main official body within the Catholic Church in England and Wales working with the media. It seeks to make the Church present through the media and to help Catholics use the media effectively. There will be a second collection at the end of Mass for the CCN. Please give generously to support this important work.

## **2. EVANGELISATION**

In the Gospel reading Jesus says: "Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation."

- Someone's parting words are very significant -- when they leave on a long journey, or emigrate; or when they are dying.
- Jesus's parting words to the Apostles, and to us, are a plea for us to share the Good News with the whole of creation, to share the message of salvation and the gift of baptism.
- He commands us to go out to the whole world. Not just to sit back, with the door closed -- but to take a risk and step outside.
- For most of us this is done in small, quiet ways: Witnessing to our faith by our way of life, and by our commitment to being at Mass each Sunday; talking about our Catholic faith quite naturally when it comes up in conversation; standing up for our moral convictions when it is important; encouraging someone in their faith; perhaps offering to pray for someone or to pray with them; perhaps inviting someone to a parish event.
- For us as a Church, Pope Benedict XVI says in his Communications letter that we should use new digital technologies to spread the Good News of the Gospel -- the Internet, mobile phones, texting, social networking sites, video sharing, etc. The wonderful possibilities offered by these new media, their speed, how far they reach. They can foster connections and communication.
- The Church can share the faith not just in words, but also images, testimonies, videos, etc. The digital media can be a way of creating community.
- This is especially true for young people.
- There are also risks and dangers: Content can be harmful or degrading. Or the habit of using the media can create a dependency, or a disconnection from ordinary relations.
- There are two challenges for us. First, as a parish, how can we use the digital media better? To help us to know each other, to help others to know what we are doing, to evangelise. Let us share our ideas and see how we can respond to the Holy Father's challenge. Second, as individuals, how do we use the Internet, the mobile phone, e-mail,

etc? Am I using it well in my own life -- for the good of others and for the glory of God? Or am I becoming a slave to these new media? How can I use them well?

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## **KEY QUOTATIONS FROM THE HOLY FATHER, POPE BENEDICT XVI'S WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY LETTER 2009**

For use in homilies or in the parish newsletter

[Quotations have been adapted slightly]

### **THE CAPACITY FOR CONNECTION**

"Young people, in particular, have grasped the enormous capacity of the new digital media to foster connectedness, communication and understanding between individuals and communities, and they are turning to them as means of communicating with existing friends, of meeting new friends, of forming communities and networks, of seeking information and news, and of sharing their ideas and opinions."

### **THE DESIRE FOR FRIENDSHIP AND COMMUNICATION**

"The new digital technologies respond to a fundamental desire of people to communicate and to relate to each other. This desire for communication and friendship is rooted in our very nature as human beings... When we find ourselves drawn towards other people, when we want to know more about them and make ourselves known to them, we are responding to God's call – a call that is imprinted in our nature as beings created in the image and likeness of God, the God of communication and communion."

### **THE NEED TO RESPECT THE HUMAN PERSON**

"We should strive to respect the dignity and worth of the human person. If the new digital technologies are to serve the good of individuals and of society, all users will avoid the sharing of words and images that are degrading of human beings, that promote hatred and intolerance, that debase the goodness and intimacy of human sexuality or that exploit the weak and vulnerable... If the desire for virtual connectedness becomes obsessive, it may in fact function to isolate individuals from real social interaction while also disrupting the patterns of rest, silence and reflection that are necessary for healthy human development."

### **THE POSSIBILITY OF DIALOGUE**

"The new technologies have also opened the way for *dialogue* between people from different countries, cultures and religions. The new digital arena, the so-called *cyberspace*, allows them to encounter and to know each other's traditions and values. Such encounters, if they are to be fruitful, require honest and appropriate forms of expression together with attentive and respectful listening. The dialogue must be rooted in a genuine and mutual searching for truth if it is to realize its potential to promote growth in understanding and tolerance."

### **THE PROMOTION OF JUSTICE AND THE COMMON GOOD**

"It is gratifying to note the emergence of new digital networks that seek to promote human solidarity, peace and justice, human rights and respect for human life and the good of creation. These networks can facilitate forms of co-operation between people from different geographical and cultural contexts that enable them to deepen their common humanity and their sense of shared responsibility for the good of all."

## THE SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE

“It falls, in particular, to young people, who have an almost spontaneous affinity for the new means of communication, to take on the responsibility for the evangelization of this “digital continent”. Be sure to announce the Gospel to your contemporaries with enthusiasm. You know their fears and their hopes, their aspirations and their disappointments: the greatest gift you can give to them is to share with them the “Good News” of a God who became man, who suffered, died and rose again to save all people. Human hearts are yearning for a world where love endures, where gifts are shared, where unity is built, where freedom finds meaning in truth, and where identity is found in respectful communion. Our faith can respond to these expectations: may you become its heralds! The Pope accompanies you with his prayers and his blessing.”

## PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

PRIEST:

My brothers and sisters,  
filled with joy at Christ’s Ascension into heaven,  
let us turn to God our Father in prayer.

READER:

1. For our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI and all the Bishops of the Church:  
That they may faithfully follow the example of the Apostles  
and proclaim the Good News to all creation.  
Lord, in your mercy... **Hear our prayer.**

2. For those in public office:  
That they may use their authority for the common good.  
Lord, in your mercy... **Hear our prayer.**

3. For God’s holy Church:  
That Christians may use the media wisely and creatively  
to spread the Gospel  
and to build God’s Kingdom of truth and justice.  
Lord, in your mercy... **Hear our prayer.**

4. For those in particular difficulties at this time:  
That the Lord may sustain them through their faith  
and through the love of their fellow Christians.  
Lord, in your mercy... **Hear our prayer.**

Let us ask Our Blessed Mother to pray with us and for us  
as we say: HAIL MARY...

PRIEST:

Heavenly Father,  
You raised Christ from the dead  
and brought him to sit at your right hand in heaven.  
Hear and answer the prayers that we make now with confidence,  
through the same Jesus Christ,  
who is Lord forever and ever. AMEN.