

Spirit of the Season

Advent 2007

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

In union with the Whole Church

We hear a lot about the globalisation of society. As Catholics, we worship in a global Church. On any given Sunday, across the world, the same readings are proclaimed, the same set prayers are recited, and the same format is followed for Mass. In our efforts to build strong local worshipping communities, in our schools, and parishes, we must not neglect this universal dimension.

For example, as we seek to take our place within the worldwide communion of the Church, our Prayers of the Faithful ought to include both local and global concerns, along with intercessions for the whole Church (*Celebrating the Mass* 172). The Eucharistic Prayer places our communion in the context of worldwide worship, as we pray 'in union with the whole Church'.

In the Eucharistic Prayer the Holy Spirit is invoked to sanctify the gifts and transform those who partake of them into the body of Christ, uniting the

assembly and the whole Church and family of God, living and dead, into one communion of love, service and praise to the glory of the Father (*Celebrating the Mass* 187).

Fellow-worshippers who have died are not gone forever, but have 'left this world' in Christ's friendship to be welcomed into God's kingdom. The universal Church unites us across the barriers of time and space.

Universal liturgy further unites us with countless worshippers throughout the ages. This connection with people across time and space is one of the reasons for Pope Benedict XVI's love of plainchant and his encouragement of its use: 'in order to express more clearly the unity and universality of the Church' (*Sacramentum Caritatis* 62). It is one of the ways that we can ensure that our celebration of the Mass is not narrowly focused on the local. Through the use of Taizé chants and, for example, Russian Kyries phrases in Latin (and Greek) are not as foreign



*Bring the hopes of every nation,
bring the art of every race.
Weave a song of peace and justice,
let it sound through time and space.*

*Summoned by the God who made us,
Delores Dufner*

as they might have been in the recent past. It is possible to do a simple plainchant refrain, such as *Ubi Caritas* or *O come, O come Emmanuel* in English or Latin. Children can often surprise us by the breadth of what they enjoy. Explaining the wider global and historical dimension can add to the interest.



Choosing the right words



For every day of the year the Church provides a choice of readings for Mass and other liturgical celebrations. These are found in the Lectionary. On some days there is a choice of what can be read; on other days only what is laid down can be used.

Even where Mass is not being celebrated there can be advantages in using the readings for the day. Not only does it offer some 'ready-made' texts and perhaps opens us to ideas that we may not have considered it is also a way in which we can connect with the wider Church. Another possibility where a weekly liturgy or time of prayer is done would be to use the readings of the Sunday.

The Church uses two Calendar systems which run alongside each other and how they interact is based on a number of factors.

The *Temporal* (of time) cycle is the Sundays and Weekdays of the liturgical seasons: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Ordinary Time. This provides the foundation for the year and where there is a choice will usually be preferred.

The *Sanctoral* (of saints) cycle is the Calendar of Saints. The Church chooses to celebrate a number of saints through the year and gives them different ranks according to their importance.

There are a number of ranks of celebration: Solemnity, Feast, Memorial (obligatory or optional). **Solemnities** are the highest rank and include the significant events in the life of Christ and Mary and important Saints. They include the Immaculate Conception, the Annunciation and Ss Peter & Paul. **Feasts** come next and include the apostles and evangelists. The majority of Saints in the Calendar are **Memorials**.

To find out what is possible you will need to know or find out the following information:

- What day is it?
- What choices are there?
- Where do I find them?

What day is it?

The liturgical day will affect what the reading is or can be. The best way to find out is to consult a liturgical calendar or ordo which most dioceses include in their yearbook, some dioceses publish a separate liturgical calendar which can be full of useful information. Another place to check is the Liturgy Office website [www.liturgyoffice.org].

uk/Calendar/2007]. It is sensible to look at a Calendar for the particular year also check it is a liturgical calendar – if there is a Saint marked on everyday it is not.

You should note the following: Weekday or Saint's day, rank of Saint's celebration. If no rank is indicated it will usually be an optional Memorial. Some Calendars use the term *feria* to note a day with no given Saint.

What choices are there?

- On Solemnities, Feasts and Sundays: the readings of the day are always used.
- On Memorials: there is a choice between the readings of the memorial and the readings of the 'ordinary' weekday. The readings of the weekday are usually to be preferred.
- On Weekdays: ideally the readings of the weekday should be used. In Ordinary Time, however, other texts such as one of the Masses for Various Needs and Occasions could be used.

In choosing the readings there is an emphasis by the Church that, where change is permitted, the readings should be suited to the needs and pastoral circumstances of the group celebrating. Though this allows for alternative texts to be used best practice would suggest only after the readings for the day have been considered.

Where do I find them?

Readings for Mass and other liturgies are found in the Lectionary. In England and Wales this comes in three volumes:

1. Proper of Seasons (e.g. Sundays and Weekdays of Advent), Sundays in Ordinary Time
2. Weekdays of Ordinary Time, Proper of Saints
3. Ritual Masses (i.e. Weddings etc.), Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, Votive Masses, Masses for the Dead.

The readings can also be found in people's Sunday and Weekday Missals.

It is also possible to check the text in a Bible – the Lectionary uses the Jerusalem Bible. Other versions are permitted: check the website for information. Be aware when using a text directly from a Bible that the Lectionary often edits how it begins and ends so that the passage makes sense by itself.

The Letter & the Spirit

The Season of Advent focuses on the coming of Christ.

At the beginning of the season the emphasis is on the Second Coming – we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ – at the end of time.

After the 17 December the focus shifts to reflection on and preparation for Christ's first coming in Bethlehem.

Throughout the season we are reminded to seek Christ's coming among us today.

- How will you find time to wait this Advent?
- How are you providing space for others to wait?
- Do you expect a renewed sense of Christ's presence?



Liturgical music must always be like John the Baptist:
Always pointing to Christ,
never drawing attention to itself.

Brother Roger of Taizé

2 Directory for Masses with Children ~ A guide

The Introduction of Children to the Eucharistic Celebration (8–15)

Liturgical formation (8), appropriate to their age (12); Liturgies especially for children (13), and not always Mass (see 27):

- prayer;
- services of the word (see also 14).

Masses with Adults in which Children also participate (16–19)

One liturgy for the whole community is most important (16). Infants may be cared for outside of the act of worship (16). Within the liturgy, account should be taken of children:

- occasional words addressed to them: e.g. beginning and end of Mass (17); in the homily (17, 19),
- involvement of children in the action: e.g. procession with the gifts (18); singing (18),
- special liturgy of the word on occasion (17).

Sometimes, where there is a larger proportion of children:

- the homily may be addressed more directly to them,
- one of the adaptations given in chapter 3, below, may be used.

Questions for Reflection

- How are families supported in the task of the liturgical formation of children? (10)
- How well are the human values of liturgical celebrations balanced with the development of children's spiritual capacity? (9, 14)
- In what ways do children appreciate that the liturgy forms them for daily life? (15)
- At Sunday Mass how are children recognised as an integral part of the assembly? (16)

Keeping focused

The Central Mystery

At the heart of Christian experience is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. While located in a particular time and place, these universal, foundational events overflow into every aspect of human life—changing and transforming.

The spiritual journey of the individual Catholic, therefore, is both focussed and informed by the great Christian story with the joys and challenges of life being intentionally brought into dialogue with the Gospel. Clearly this is more than an intellectual exercise for, through the hidden life of prayer, a loving, personal relationship between the believer and their Lord is fostered and developed.

The Liturgy focuses in particular on the Paschal Mystery of Christ's passion, death and resurrection, whereby "dying he destroyed our death and, rising, he restored our life". However, we do not neglect the other events of Christ's life. Jesus' self-offering to the Father was expressed in every word and action of his earlier life. During our celebration of the Eucharist the primary focus of attention is, quite rightly, on the few final momentous days of Jesus' life on earth. But we must always be aware that the offering of his life to the Father had already been expressed in every word and action of his earlier life. The Last Supper, Calvary and the Resurrection experiences are the culmination of all that went before.

In every aspect of daily life, the baptised, Catholic, Christian is called to model him or herself on Christ whose life of joyful service was clothed in humility and rooted in prayer.

Celebrating the Mass: Introduction 4-7

Celebrations often happen for a reason and the same can be true of our liturgies. Whilst the main reason we celebrate the Eucharist is to take our part in Christ's paschal mystery (see left), there are times and occasions in our lives when it is particularly appropriate for us to gather in prayer and worship. This sense of purpose to our gatherings, the understanding of why we join together in prayer, can often provide a focus to our liturgical celebrations.

The liturgical calendar of the Church (the various seasons and feast days which make up the Church's year) already provides a wealth of ideas. The starting point for any celebration of Mass should be the readings of the day, given in the Lectionary, from which particular themes or focus emerge or, more technically, we are identifying which aspects of the paschal mystery are being emphasised.

Similarly there are occasions worthy of liturgical celebration which arise out of our ordinary, day-to-day life or the cycle of the academic year (e.g. 'Welcome' at the start of the school year). What is given by the Church in the readings and what we are celebrating should not be in conflict. It can be helpful to ask how the readings help us understand a particular event or to identify what aspects of Christ's life help us to shape the celebration.

Once a focus has been decided there are a number of areas for consideration:

- not everything needs to be connected to this - this can lead to overkill
- ensure that the readings, music, prayer of the faithful etc. are all appropriate
- consider how the structure of the liturgy may lend itself to enhancing the focus - e.g. focus on Blessing and Dismissal at a Leavers' Mass
- make sure the focus is clear so as not to confuse. This is particularly important when celebrating with young children
- the focus should not overwhelm the liturgy or draw attention away from the reason we have gathered
- choose appropriate themes which are relevant and do not jar with liturgy
- consider the use of symbolism and gesture appropriate to the theme.

Getting in touch

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