



PRAYER & LITURGY POLICY

St. George & St. Martin's Catholic Academy

Mission Statement

GROWING, LEARNING AND LOVING; UNITED IN
PLAY, PRAYER AND PEACE.

Mission

Growing, Learning, Loving; United in Play, Prayer and Peace.

We aim to provide a rich, educational and social environment, which nurtures and challenges each child, enabling individuals to flourish and to achieve his or her highest possible potential. A child's time at the school will be an important part of their lifelong learning journey and with this in mind; we aim to make their educational experience at St George and St Martin a stimulating and enjoyable one. We offer our children an environment where they can achieve academically, creatively, spiritually and socially. At the heart of our school are the teachings of Jesus Christ, and how these help us be the best

At St George and St Martin, we recognise that the partnership between home and school is one of the most important elements in ensuring that a child's education is a successful, rewarding and happy experience. For this reason, we value the support and commitment which parents offer both to the school as a whole and to their own child's education. We encourage families to come into our school through family learning, family days and lesson workshops.

We are very proud of our links with the parish of St George and St Martin and other churches within the local area. We work in partnership with them and the Archdiocese of Birmingham to bring Christ's message and our faith into all aspects of school life. We are very fortunate to have our parish church next door to our school, with a very welcoming and accommodating Parish Priest, Fr Adrian MacNamara. All children attend Mass every fortnight and visit our church regularly to enhance our curriculum.

Legal Requirements

Collective worship is a legal daily requirement which is distinct from curriculum time. For Catholic schools, this requirement is made explicit within the Trust Deed of the Archdiocese of Birmingham which states: "Religious worship is to be in accordance with the rites, practices, discipline and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church. At all times the school is to serve as a witness to the Catholic Faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ."

Parents have a legal right to withdraw their child from all or any part of collective worship.

At St. George & St. Martin, the responsibility for arranging collective worship rests with the Governing Body; however, in the life of the school, it is predominantly led and managed by the our Prayer and Liturgy Lead and the wider RE Team (including the Principal, Vice Principal/RE Leader), with each staff member and child taking some ownership and responsibility for Prayer and Liturgy.

Rationale

Collective worship will be an educational and spiritual experience to which all can contribute and from which all can gain. At St. George & St. Martin we will continue to foster and deepen our children's personal relationship with God our Father daily in prayer. We do this by helping them to become aware of God's presence in their lives and of His love for them, by leading them to respond to Him in a manner suited to their age. This may be in one of the following ways:

- Prayer of silence
- Spontaneous prayer
- Praying through gesture or action
- Formal prayer
- Guided Meditations

Prayer will not be confined to an act of worship. Children are encouraged to pray in the morning and in the evening. Worship in St. George & St. Martin is an integral part of school life and central to the Catholic tradition and faith system.

The Aims of Prayer and Liturgy Through Collective Worship

We believe that collective worship in our school aims to provide opportunity for all pupils and staff:

- To give glory, honour, thanks and praise to God
- To contemplate the mystery and transcendence of God
- To reflect on spiritual, moral and ethical issues
- To explore, reflect upon and act on their own beliefs
- To respond to and celebrate life
- To experience a sense of belonging and develop community spirit
- To develop a common ethos and shared Christian values
- To enrich religious experience
- To develop a liturgical understanding of the Catholic Church's context and structure
- To teach the meaning and purpose of prayers that are part of the Catholic tradition
- To take a full and active role in collective worship
- To value the wonder and awe of God's creation

All acts of worship in this school will:

- Be a spiritual experience, fundamental to the life of the school and its Catholic character
- Give children positive liturgical experiences appropriate to their age, aptitude and family backgrounds in order to prepare them for the liturgical life of the Church.
- Be appropriately paced and offer a range of spiritual and reflective experiences offered in a variety of groupings and settings.

Linking Home, School and Parish

Parents are acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their child, and are regularly welcomed into school to secure a strong partnership. They are invited to attend Mass, class assemblies and other liturgical celebrations, along with opportunities for reflection in the form of a Class Saint assembly. Emphasis is placed on helping them to understand the vital role they can play in teaching their children the importance of worship and developing the prayer life of their children.

A Worshipping Community

St. George & St. Martin Catholic Academy is a worshipping community: we place prayer, worship and liturgical celebration at the very heart of our expression of Catholic tradition. We actively strive to provide a varied experience of worship and to promote engagement through the creative contributions of both pupils and staff.

We understand that, through prayer and collective acts of worship, we can develop our relationship with God and we can talk to Him in many ways. Therefore, it is our duty to provide every child with the opportunity to meet God through engagement in the spoken word, music, dance, drama, art and through silent reflection. We particularly value opportunities to nurture pupils in leading collective worship and developing prayer experiences of their own making.

We realise that, as one “instrument” of the Church, we cannot achieve this in isolation and therefore need to encourage a collaborative partnership between the home, the parish and the school. We recognise that each of these groups has a responsibility to fulfil its role and seek to support parents in this mission.

We believe that collective worship should take into account the religious and educational needs of all who share in it:

- Those that form part of the worshipping community in church
- Those for whom school may be their first and only experience of church
- Those from other Christian traditions, or none
- Those from other faith backgrounds

Prayer and Liturgy at St. George & St. Martin

In addition to the four formal prayer times throughout the school day (morning, grace before and after meals and home-time), prayer and worship is an integral part of the day at our school and is not separated from the rest of school life. Pupils all share in this important aspect of our daily experience. Children have a natural aptitude for prayer and are open to God. They respond in many ways to the world around them and their experiences at school should be full of opportunities for exploration and discovery. Teachers create an environment where these responses are developed, in recognition that they can form the beginnings of prayer. To this end, each classroom has a special prayer area that reflects the liturgical season. These spaces are intended to support pupils to initiate their own prayers.

Each week pupils participate in:

- A Gospel-based assembly to enable all children to access and reflect upon the weekend readings, planned and led by the Principal or Vice Principal (Mondays)
- A whole school or Key Stage assembly based on the current virtues (twice per half term (EYFS/KS1 Wednesday/KS2 Thursday))
- Key Stage Hymn practice, led by Music leader or class teachers and supported by Key Stage staff (hymns practised are linked to forthcoming Mass and the liturgical calendar) (Every other Monday for EFS/KS1 & Tuesday KS2)
- A whole school Mass (Every other Thursday plus Holy Days)
- A celebration Assembly, recognising each child's God-given gifts and talents (Fridays)
- Daily opportunities for Prayer through daily classroom prayer resources and/or class Prayer and Liturgy

Liturgical Assemblies

During Advent and Lent, additional liturgies, led by classes, are held to enable children to experience a fuller understanding of these seasonal times of preparation for Christmas and Easter.

Planning

Prayer and Liturgy at St. George & St. Martin is planned following a structure with reference to the Church's seasons, significant liturgical dates and the curriculum.

Each act of collective worship follows a 4-part structure:

- 1) Gather
- 2) Listen
- 3) Respond
- 4) Go Forth

Staff and Key Stage 2 children are expected to follow this format for every assembly/ liturgy and are encouraged to record this on a Liturgy planning sheet (appendix one)

- Scripture will be the focus for most acts of worship
- Collective worship will relate to the school community in the light of the school's aims and mission, the virtues, curriculum, class saints and the liturgical calendar.
- There will be flexibility to respond to changing situations within the school and the wider community.
- The school will aim to teach children the skills to enable them to prepare, organise, lead and evaluate worship.

Resources

Resources are monitored by the RE and Prayer and Liturgy leaders and new resources are ordered, within the budget, where required. There are a wide range of resources available to aid planning for Prayer and Liturgy, such as assembly books, access to Ten:Ten resources (staff have their own log ins), artwork etc. These can be found in the cupboards in the school hall or in the Principal's office. Music resources/ CDs for collective worship are kept in the staffroom and a copy of backing tracks have also been downloaded onto the staff's shared area of the school network. There are also resources from the Birmingham Diocese Education Service and several Internet sites that are also a useful resource for planning; these links have been distributed to all teaching staff, with recommendations to support planning and delivery of collective worship.

Each class has several artefacts for their prayer areas such as candles, crucifixes, crosses, praying hands, rosary beads, statues, bibles etc. These may be shared amongst staff as they wish.

Mass & The Eucharist

Eucharistic celebrations are a crucial element of our collective worship at St. George & St. Martin's. Opportunities for children to participate in the Mass are given every two weeks, parents and other members of the school and Parish communities are encouraged to attend.

Eucharistic celebrations will take the following forms:

- Whole school Masses every two weeks and for Holy Days of Obligation and special feasts
- Children are encouraged to attend Saturday evening/ Sunday Masses throughout the year as well as our Family Masses which take place each half term.
- Masses for children preparing to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion and Confirmation e.g. Commitment and enrolment.
- Our school also take representatives from Key Stage 2 to the annual North Staffordshire Combined Schools' Mass and Good Shepherd's Mass and will take up opportunities to have an active involvement in these Masses.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Termly and annual monitoring schedules are completed and reviewed by the RE Team, with input from SLT where required. Monitoring and evaluation of Prayer and Liturgy takes place in a variety of ways: looking at class prayer, God and Me books, scrutinising RE books and planning, formally and informally monitoring acts of worship, pupil interviews and evidence of reflections on worship.

Termly meetings with the link governor, (Mrs Hollins), are scheduled and minutes from these meetings are reported and shared with the RE Team, Principal, local governing body and Board of Directors. Actions from the previous minutes are discussed at the following meeting to ensure progress and impact.

The school's provision for Prayer and Liturgy is evaluated annually to consider how it meets the needs of pupils and whether it truly reflects the aims and mission of the school.

The RE Team may evaluate the quality of Prayer and Liturgy in the school by conducting informal evaluations, with the permission and consultation with staff members throughout the school year. Staff are always invited to observe Senior Leader's assemblies, prayer times and acts of collective worship as good practice.

Inclusion & Equal Opportunities

All children at St. George & St. Martin Catholic Academy have a right to be included in accessible Prayer and Liturgy unless withdrawn at parental request. Inclusion of all is a cornerstone of Catholic belief and of our own school mission statement. Worship should play an active role in developing an inclusive attitude in the children themselves.

Healthy & Safety

It is the responsibility of class teachers to follow school Health and Safety procedures

Lighted candles should only be used under adult supervision during Masses and acts of worship and a safety lighter should be safely stored away from children.

Class teachers will use battery operated candles in class, but real candles should be used at Mass.

Policy Reviewed by: J. Bridgewater, D Farmer

Date: 11/1/24

Signed: *D. Farmer*

Headteacher

Date: 11/1/24

Signed: *J. Bridgewater*

RE Lead

Policy to be reviewed: September 2026

Appendices listed below

Appendix One – Planning Document

<p>Date: Time: Place:</p>		
<p>Liturgical Season/Feast: Focus:</p>		
<p>Key Stage/Year: Adults present:</p>		
		Think about...
<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>We gather</p> </div>	<p>Bring everyone into the Holy place We come together as part of God's family. Make everyone welcome!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Liturgical colours (Green, purple, white/gold, red) ▪ Prayer focus table ▪ Bible ▪ Cross ▪ Symbols/ objects/ pictures/ photos ▪ Candle ▪ Music ▪ Sign of the cross
<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>We listen</p> </div>	<p>How will God's Word be proclaimed? God speaks to us and we listen</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bible Reading
<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>We respond</p> </div>	<p>How we will respond to God's Word? What sort of prayer/action/song will we use? We respond to the Word of God.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prayer ▪ Singing ▪ Reflection ▪ Sacred Silence ▪ Dance ▪ Gesture/ action ▪ CAFOD story ▪ Drama ▪ Picture / photo ▪ Create
<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Going Forth</p> </div>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gospel phrase ▪ Song ▪ Learn about CAFOD ▪ Tell others about CAFOD ▪ Action ▪ Campaign ▪ Prayer card ▪ Artefact ▪ Picture ▪ Big question

Appendix Two – Prayer & Liturgy Progression Document

Expectations to develop pupils' skills in planning and leading Prayer and Liturgy in each key stage.

Year Group	Expectations	Known prayers for the year group
Nursery	<p>Children take part in liturgy each day, in small groups, led by their teacher or key worker. Children will begin to learn about the expectations for how we sit reverently and respectfully in a circle during liturgies.</p> <p>Children will begin to have an understanding of the colours of the liturgical year and what they represent.</p> <p>Children will take part actively in liturgies by making the sign of the cross.</p> <p>Children will take it in turns to take their prayer bag home weekly and conduct a liturgy at home with their families, providing evidence in their prayer bag journal.</p>	<p>At the end of Nursery the children will know the following prayers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning prayer • Lunch time prayer • Grace after meals • End of the day prayer
Reception	<p>Class liturgy is timetabled weekly.</p> <p>At the start of Reception, the teacher will use the teaching planning proforma to plan and deliver appropriate liturgies.</p> <p>Teachers will model, along with support staff to demonstrate how to act respectfully and reverently during liturgies.</p> <p>Children will build on their knowledge from Reception about the liturgical year and the corresponding colours.</p> <p>As the year progresses, children will begin to take ownership of setting up the prayer area at the beginning of the liturgy and packing it away respectfully at the end of liturgies.</p> <p>Children will also begin to take some ownership of what is placed on the prayer area and begin to explain why they have chosen certain items/religious symbols.</p> <p>Children will take it in turns to take their prayer bag home weekly and conduct a liturgy at home with their families, providing evidence in their prayer bag journal.</p>	<p>At the end of Reception, the children will know the following prayers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning prayer • Lunch time prayer • Grace after meals • End of the day prayer • St. George & St. Martin's school prayer • Hail Mary • Our Father • Glory Be
One	<p>Class liturgy is timetabled weekly.</p> <p>From the beginning of year one, children will work in small groups using the</p>	<p>At the end of Year 1 the children will know the following prayers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning prayer

	<p>diocesan A3 planner, facilitated by an adult. An adult will scribe the plan for them on the children's planner.</p> <p>Children will lead different parts of the worship, with help from their teacher. Teacher to model a liturgy at least once per half term, including whole school liturgies sent by the Prayer and Liturgy lead.</p> <p>The children will choose different religious symbols to signify the theme of their worship and will begin to explain the significance of what they have chosen. The children will have a good understanding of the liturgical year and the colours used in each season.</p> <p>With assistance from an adult, each half term at least one of each evaluation will be competed (self, peer and teacher).</p> <p>Children will take it in turns to take their prayer bag home weekly and conduct a liturgy at home with their families, providing evidence in their prayer bag journal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunch time prayer • Grace after meals • End of the day prayer • St. George & St. Martin's school prayer • Hail Mary • Our Father • Glory Be • Act of faith, hope and love • Prayer to the Guardian Angel
<p>Two</p>	<p>Class liturgy is timetabled weekly.</p> <p>Children will work in small groups, facilitated by an adult, to plan and deliver weekly liturgies, using the A3 diocesan planner.</p> <p>Adults will scribe the children's ideas on the children's planning proforma.</p> <p>Children will begin to independently choose the theme for their worship and think about appropriate scripture to link with their theme.</p> <p>The children's knowledge of the liturgical year will be secure by the end of year 2. They will be able to explain the significance of each season and explain the colours that correspond to this.</p> <p>Teacher to model a liturgy at least once per half term, including whole school liturgies sent by the Prayer and Liturgy lead.</p> <p>With assistance from an adult, each half term at least one of each evaluation will be competed (self, peer and teacher). Children will take it in turns to take their prayer bag home weekly and conduct a liturgy at home with their families, providing evidence in their prayer bag journal.</p>	<p>At the end of Year 2, the children will know the following prayers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning prayer • Lunch time prayer • Grace after meals • End of the day prayer • St. George & St. Martin's school prayer • Hail Mary • Our Father • Glory Be • Act of faith • Act of hope • Eternal rest • Prayer of St Francis of Assisi • The joyful mysteries of the rosary
<p>Three</p>	<p>Class liturgy is timetabled weekly.</p> <p>Children will plan liturgies in small groups, facilitated by an adult, using the A3 diocesan planner and will record their ideas on the children's planning proforma.</p> <p>Children will independently choose their theme and think about appropriate scripture that links to the theme.</p>	<p>At the end of Year 3, the children will know the following prayers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning prayer • Lunch time prayer • Grace after meals • End of the day prayer • St. George & St. Martin's school prayer

	<p>Children will begin to think of differing ways that they can respond appropriately to prayer. Children will be able to plan an appropriate go forth mission task linking to their theme.</p> <p>Teacher to model a liturgy at least once per half term, including whole school liturgies sent by the Prayer and Liturgy lead.</p> <p>Children will have secure knowledge of the liturgical year and will be able to begin to plan liturgies around the liturgical year.</p> <p>Each half term at least one of each evaluation will be completed by the children (self, peer and teacher).</p> <p>Children should be given the opportunity to plan and deliver worships based around their sacramental preparation of the Eucharist.</p> <p>Children will take it in turns to take their prayer bag home weekly and conduct a liturgy at home with their families, providing evidence in their prayer bag journal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hail Mary • Our Father • Glory Be • Act of love • Act of sorrow (contrition) • The Angelus • The luminous mysteries of the rosary
<p>Four</p>	<p>Class liturgy is timetabled weekly.</p> <p>Children will plan liturgies in small groups, facilitated by an adult, using the A3 diocesan planner and will record their ideas on the children's planning proforma.</p> <p>Children will independently choose their theme and think about appropriate scripture that links to the theme.</p> <p>Children will think of differing ways that they can respond appropriately to prayer. Children will be able to plan an appropriate go forth mission task linking to their theme.</p> <p>Children will have secure knowledge of the liturgical year and will be able to begin to plan liturgies around the liturgical year.</p> <p>Teacher to model a liturgy at least once per half term, including whole school liturgies sent by the Prayer and Liturgy lead.</p> <p>Each half term at least one of each evaluation will be completed by the children (self, peer and teacher). Children will take it in turns to take their prayer bag home weekly and conduct a liturgy at home with their families, providing evidence in their prayer bag journal.</p>	<p>At the end of Year 4, the children will know the following prayers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning prayer • Lunch time prayer • Grace after meals • End of the day prayer • St. George & St. Martin's school prayer • Hail Mary • Our Father • Glory Be • Prayer of the guardian angel • Prayer of St. Richard of Chichester • The Memorare • The sorrowful mysteries of the rosary
<p>Five</p>	<p>Class liturgy is timetabled weekly.</p> <p>Children will independently plan and deliver liturgies using the A3 diocesan</p>	<p>At the end of Year 5, the children will know the following prayers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning prayer

	<p>proforma and record their ideas coherently on the children's planning proforma.</p> <p>Children will independently choose a theme and appropriate scripture to correspond and link with their theme.</p> <p>Children will be able to think of appropriate and prayerful ways of responding to the Word of God, including opportunities for spontaneous prayer.</p> <p>Children will be able to independently choose appropriate music and hymns to link in with their liturgy theme.</p> <p>Teacher to model a liturgy at least once per half term, including whole school liturgies sent by the Prayer and Liturgy lead.</p> <p>Each half term at least one of each evaluation will be completed by the children (self, peer and teacher). The children will use these evaluations to plan subsequent liturgies.</p> <p>Children will be able to plan an appropriate go forth mission task linking to their theme.</p> <p>Children will take it in turns to take their prayer bag home weekly and conduct a liturgy at home with their families, providing evidence in their prayer bag journal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunch time prayer • Grace after meals • End of the day prayer • St. George & St. Martin's school prayer • Hail Mary • Our Father • Glory Be • Regina Caeli • The Magnificat • The glorious mysteries of the rosary
<p>Six</p>	<p>Class liturgy is timetabled weekly.</p> <p>Children will independently plan and deliver liturgies using the A3 diocesan proforma and record their ideas coherently on the children's planning proforma.</p> <p>Children will independently choose a theme and appropriate scripture to correspond and link with their theme.</p> <p>Children will be able to think of appropriate and prayerful ways of responding to the Word of God, including opportunities for spontaneous prayer.</p> <p>Children will be able to independently choose appropriate music and hymns to link in with their liturgy theme.</p> <p>Teacher to model a liturgy at least once per half term, including whole school liturgies sent by the Prayer and Liturgy lead.</p> <p>Each half term at least one of each evaluation will be completed by the children (self, peer and teacher). The children will use these evaluations to plan subsequent liturgies.</p> <p>Children will be able to plan an appropriate go forth mission task linking to their theme.</p>	<p>At the end of year six, the children will know the following prayers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning prayer • Lunch time prayer • Grace after meals • End of the day prayer • St. George & St. Martin's school prayer • Hail Mary • Our Father • Glory Be • Hail Holy Queen • Prayer to the Holy Spirit • The Holy Rosary • The Stations of the Cross

	<p>Children will take it in turns to take their prayer bag home weekly and conduct a liturgy at home with their families, providing evidence in their prayer bag journal.</p> <p>Children should be given the opportunity to plan and deliver Prayer and Liturgy based around their sacramental preparation for Confirmation.</p>	
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1. Introduction

We should never underestimate the ability of young people to be open to contemplative prayer. We need only find the right ways and means to help them embark on this precious experience.



Pope Francis

Spirituality is the recognition of a feeling or belief that there is something greater than oneself, something more to being human than a sensory experience, and that the greater whole of which we are a part is divine in nature. We are all spiritual beings in one way or another, as members of a Catholic school we have a duty to nurture pupils' inner spirituality and allow it to grow and blossom.

As Pope Francis highlights, in a time when many young people are searching for ways to express their spirituality in a way that is relevant to them, the way in which we facilitate prayer are of vital importance. In order for our pupils to have a positive experience of prayer it must be appealing to them and delivered in a way that is age appropriate and that they can relate meaningfully to.

At St. George & St. Martin's we have weekly planned Prayer and Liturgy sessions to facilitate this need. These can be teacher or pupil led. There is an expectation that all children participate fully at an age-appropriate level in planning and delivering Prayer and Liturgy.

The aim of this guide is to offer ways in which a sacred space can be created and the different ways we can facilitate praying and worshiping with young people.

2. The basic parts of a Liturgy

All liturgies should be structured around four main parts: Gather, Listen, Respond and Go Forth.

1. Gather

The purpose of this initial part of the worship is to gather together as a community. This is your opportunity to set the spiritual atmosphere that should be maintained throughout the liturgy. It should always begin with the sign of the cross and the lighting of a candle to welcome God's presence. It should also be considered how the children will be sat so that they can engage fully in the liturgy. A theme should also be introduced at this part of the worship and religious artefacts relating to the theme should be displayed. It is a requirement that there is a focal point for prayer so this should be at the front of the classroom or in the middle of the circle if that is how the children are sat.

2. Listen

This part of the liturgy is where we listen to scripture from the bible, a reflection or a responsorial psalm. It is a good idea to have a different voice from whoever is leading the liturgy so that the children have a new focus. If it is a particularly long reading it can also be useful to have an image displayed for the children to reflect on to maintain their focus. If the reading is taken from the bible, then the reading/gospel should be greeted appropriately as we do in mass.

It is also a requirement that 'the word' is in a prominent place on the prayer area and preferably on a stand so it can be seen. It is also a good idea to end the gospel with a short gospel reflection to make the meaning of the gospel relevant to the children's lives.

3. Respond

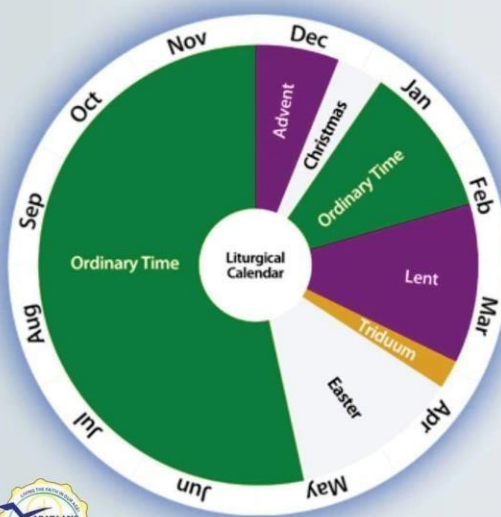
This part of the liturgy is in response to the scripture the children have listen to. For all children to participate fully it is important they have the opportunity to act in some way on what they have heard. This could be in the form writing a prayer, writing how they feel about a particular issue, passing a religious artefact and sharing their thoughts. It may be that you invite children to respond verbally or offer their idea up to the prayer space. This should be done reverently and maintaining a spiritual atmosphere. See section 5 for practical ideas for prayer in the classroom.

4. Go Forth

This final part of the liturgy brings the whole thing together and the idea is that we will now go and live out the message we have been focusing on. It may be that you end with a prayer, a relevant song/hymn or a special task or mission. The liturgy should always end with the sign of the cross.

3. Liturgical colours

WHAT IS A LITURGICAL CALENDAR?



The Liturgical Calendar begins every year during the month of November on the First Sunday of Advent and runs through to the Solemnity of Christ the King.

The "Lectionary," the Mass readings from the Holy Bible, follows a Sunday cycle and a weekday cycle. The Liturgical Calendar follows a three-year cycle, each year being represented by the letters, A, B, and C. During the year A cycle, the Gospel of Matthew is the primary Gospel that is used for the readings. In year B, Mark is the primary Gospel. In year C, Luke is the primary Gospel. The Gospel of John is proclaimed on particular Sundays in each of the years.

During the year, in addition to the Sunday worship, the Church also celebrates Solemnities, Feasts, and Memorials, which may be on any day of the week. These occur during the year to commemorate special events or persons that are highly revered by the Catholic Church.

c: National Shrine of St. Jude, Chicago

The colour of the priest's vestments and other garments around the Church change at different times in the Church's liturgical calendar. The prayer focus in each classroom should also change, in keeping with the liturgical colours of the Church. The Liturgical year cycle should be displayed at all times along with the relevant provided poster highlighting the key dates and themes of this part in the Church's year, along with appropriate prayer and hymn ideas.

Green – symbolising life, growth and hope and to be used during Ordinary Time.

Purple – symbolising penance and preparation and to be used during Advent and Lent.

White – symbolising purity, holiness, joy, innocence and triumph and is to be used during Christmas and Easter.

Red – symbolising fire and blood and it to be used at Pentecost (50th day after Easter Sunday), Palm Sunday and Good Friday (or liturgies relating to these events).

Additionally, it is appropriate to use red for liturgies relating to feast days of Saints who are martyrs.

Blue – To symbolise Marian feasts:

- 25th March – The feast of The Annunciation
- 11th February – The Feast of our Lady of Lourdes
- Blue may also be appropriate for worships dedicated to Mary and in the months of October and May.

4. Creating a prayerful atmosphere

It is important that a prayerful atmosphere is created and maintained throughout the liturgy. It is important to consider that this is special time set aside for time with God and our own personal reflection.

Seating

It is important, mainly based on what you will be doing in your liturgy/respond task, to consider how the children are sat. If at all possible, the classroom should be set up differently than it would in lessons just so there is a differentiation. One way of achieving this is by sitting in a circle. If this is not possible then it may be you need to consider if the children need to move for the respond task that you maintain a level of reverence and spirituality so it may be that the children make their offering a row at a time rather than a 'free for all.' Where possible, it is lovely to use our beautiful chapel and prayer garden as spaces for liturgy.

Lighting

The lighting of a room is a perfect way to create a spiritual and prayerful atmosphere. By turning off the lights and lighting candles, the atmosphere immediately becomes more peaceful, even if it is not very dark in the room. Wherever possible, it has more impact if the children enter the room once it has been prepared with the low level lighting/candles/ music etc.

Music

In Pope Francis's exhortation to young people he states 'Music is particularly important, representing as it does a real environment in which the young are constantly immersed, as well as a culture and a language capable of arousing emotion and shaping identity. The language of music also represents a pastoral resource with a particular bearing on the liturgy and its renewal.'

Soft, instrumental music playing in the background can have a calming influence on young people and can set the prayerful tone and atmosphere. Having this music playing as the children process in signals, without words, that it is time for us to welcome the presence of God into our hearts, silently, respectfully and reverently.

There might also be singing as part of your liturgy and this in itself can be a vital part of creating a prayerful experience. As St. Augustine says 'To sing is to pray twice.' Any hymns/songs selected should

be along the same theme that has been chosen for the liturgy so the meaning and purpose of the liturgy is reinforced.

Tone of voice

The tone, pitch and volume of your voice when introducing parts of the liturgy are very important. It is still important to speak clearly but slowing down your speech and lowering the volume of your voice signals to the children this is different to a lesson or assembly and help to create and maintain a spiritual atmosphere.