



PRAYER & LITURGY GUIDE

St. George & St. Martin Catholic Academy

Mission Statement

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

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 a 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

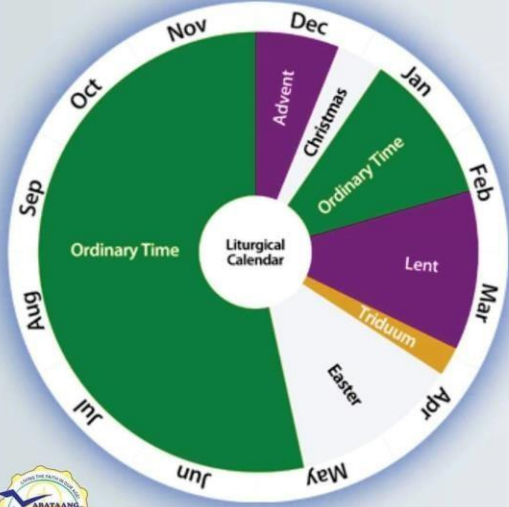
This part of the liturgy is in response to the scripture the children have listen to. For all children to participate fully it is important they have the opportunity to act in some way on what they have heard. This could be in the form writing a prayer, writing how they feel about a particular issue, 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 prayer garden or parish church 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.