

Family Prayer

This simple time of prayer might be used once a week in preparation for Mass. It might also be used on the anniversary of baptism of various members of the family.

Before hand prepare a bowl of Holy Water, which can be collected from the parish church, and have a candle ready to light (on anniversaries of baptism use the persons's baptismal candle).

Leader: We gather together as members of God's family,
to remember the new life that he gave us in our baptism,
and to give thanks for all his gifts.

A favourite hymn or song of thanksgiving might be sung

Leader: Father we thank you for the gift of Jesus, the light of life.
As we light this candle may his light again warm our hearts
and help us to share his love with others.

The candle is then lit by a member of the family

Leader: Lord Jesus, your light shines bright for us,
and we want to live like you.
As we offer prayer for those in need,
join our prayers with yours
and present them to our Father in heaven.

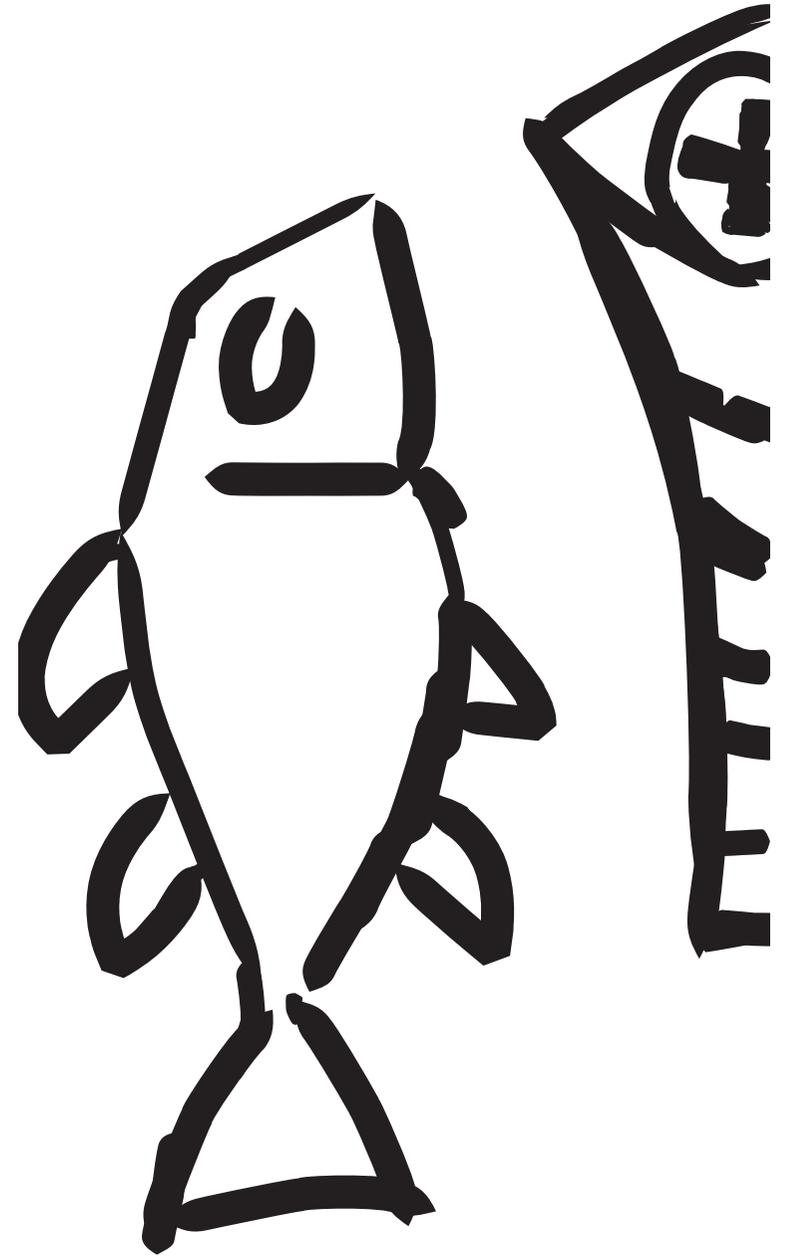
Invite those present to offer a prayer for someone in need. Conclude each prayer with the phrase Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer.

Leader: Holy Spirit, your love makes all things new.
Be with all those in need,
and help us and all people be generous and kind.

Invite members of the family to dip their hands into the Holy Water and make the Sign of the Cross over themselves.

Leader: May almighty God bless us all,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

In Communion with Christ 2. Gathering



Looking at the Mass

Introductory Rites

Entrance Procession

Greeting

Penitential Act

[or Blessing and Sprinkling
of Water]

Gloria

Collect (Opening Prayer)

Liturgy of the Word

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Concluding Rite

We come together to listen to God's word and be nourished by Christ's body and blood so that we can be his body in the world.

The **Introductory Rites** help to bring us together, once more, as the Body of Christ.

The assembly's worship begins with the opening song and **procession**, which help to create a sense of identity, a willingness to celebrate, and an awareness of the mystery being unfolded.

After making the Sign of the Cross together, the priest and people exchange formal **greetings** as a mutual acknowledgement and evocation of the presence of Christ in their midst and as a prayer for his sustaining power.

In Communion with Christ

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

We begin every Mass with the Sign of the Cross. We say the words and make the sign on our bodies, marking ourselves down from our foreheads and across from shoulder to shoulder. It is a reminder that our liturgy is about more than words but involves our whole bodies — all our senses. Even the youngest children, before they know the words, can enjoy making this sign. It can help if they can see us making the gesture.

The Sign of the Cross is itself a prayer. We use it, as at Mass, to mark the beginning and ending of our prayer. It also reminds us that whatever we do God is with us.

The full Sign of the Cross is a large and generous gesture. It can also be expressed in a small and intimate sign. For example when we bless our children with the Sign of the Cross with our thumbs on their foreheads perhaps before going to sleep, Children can feel the shape.

Water

Think of all the ways we use water in the home. For drinking and washing; for cleaning and cooking. For watering plants, for cooling us on warm day.

Water is all around us. It flows from our taps, it flows in rivers and lakes. We can be drenched in a shower of rain; enjoy splashing in a pool; feel the power of the sea.

Water can be used in lots of ways: to wash and to drink. It can give life but also drown us. We use water in church because of the richness and diversity of meaning that the symbol of water contains. Thus in baptism the waters speak to us of both cleansing and of new life. Water is found throughout the Bible from the waters of creation at the beginning, the crossing of the Red Sea by Moses to the number of stories about Jesus and the Sea of Galilee and the fishermen disciples.

Each time you enter church encourage your children to dip their hands in the Holy Water and make the Sign of the Cross as a reminder of their baptism.

In the **Penitential Act** the assembly, gathered in God's presence, recognises its sinfulness and confesses the mystery of Christ's love.

The **blessing and sprinkling of water** serves as a memorial of Easter and Baptism. When it is used it replaces the Penitential Act. God is thanked for intervening to save us through the medium of water and is asked to continue to give forgiveness and life.

The **Gloria** is one of the Church's most ancient hymns. In the West its use was originally restricted to the opening of only the most solemn eucharistic celebrations. The **Gloria** is by nature a festive hymn.

The **collect** completes the introductory rites. Through petition to God, it expresses the character of the celebration and prepares the assembly to hear the word of God.

[*Celebrating the Mass* 140–150]