

Family Prayer

It is common these days for family meals to be eaten ‘on the run’. The demands on time, the different timetables for children’s and parents’ lives can make it seem almost inevitable. But when we miss out on eating together we miss out on many things – the opportunity it provides for hearing about the various events of each others’ day or week; the opportunity to share family stories and memories; the opportunity to relax together and enjoy one another’s company.

There is good reason for trying to ensure the family does share mealtimes. If it cannot happen every day, maybe it can happen once a week. Sunday lunch was a staple event in the lives of virtually every family not so long ago. If it can be recovered in your family it provides a domestic complement to the family’s taking part in the parish celebration of Sunday Mass.

The following are prayers that might be said by individuals or families before or after meals.

Before beginning the meal

Bless us, O Lord, and these your gifts
which we are about to receive from your bounty.

Help us to show care
for all those who go hungry this day.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

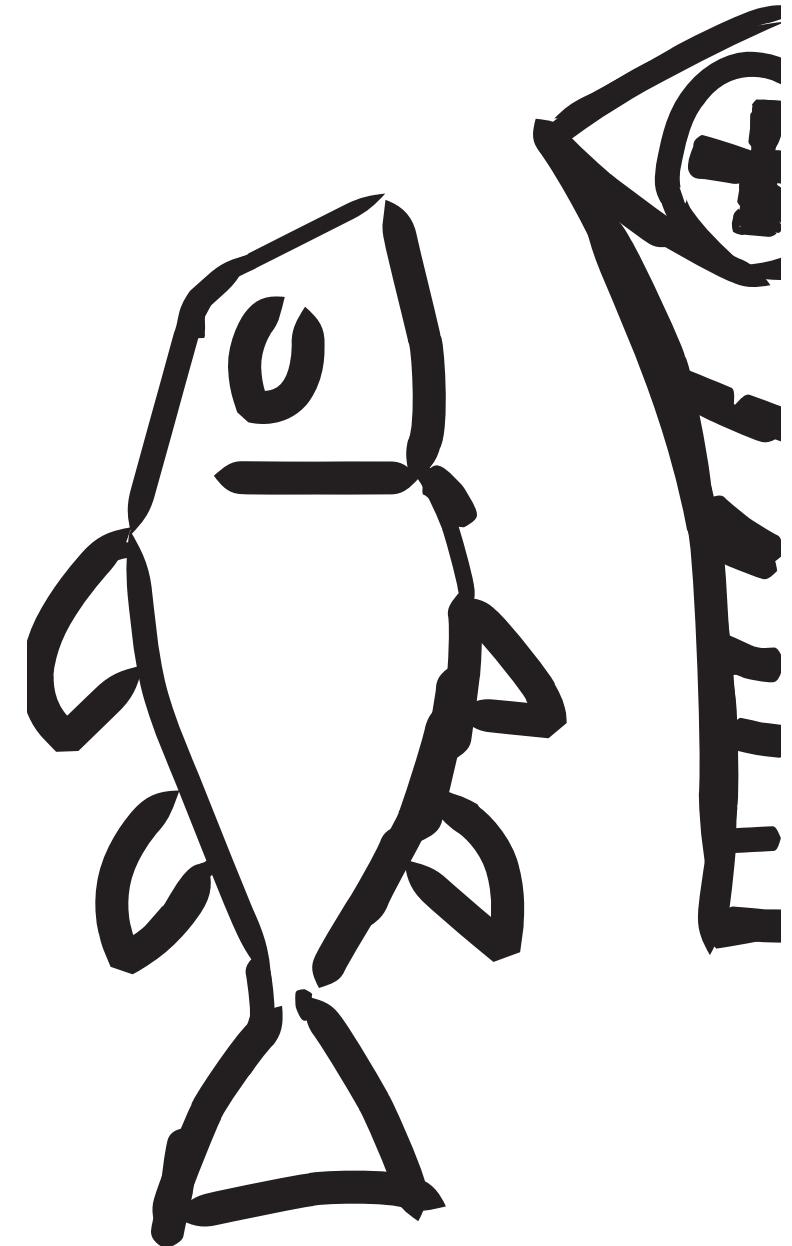
After the meal

God our Father,
we thank you for the food we have shared.

May our sharing in this meal
help us to grow in love of you and of each other.

With the help of your Spirit
may we grow in the likeness of Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord.
Amen

In Communion with Christ 5. Communion



Looking at the Mass

Introductory Rites

Liturgy of the Word

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of Gifts

Eucharistic Prayer

Communion Rite

Lord's Prayer

Rite of Peace

Breaking of Bread

Communion

Prayer after Communion

Concluding Rite

The Lord's Prayer, Sign of Peace and Breaking of the Bread both lead us to and prepare us for Holy Communion. They are together a transition from one high point, the Eucharistic Prayer, to another, the sharing in Communion.

The Communion of priest and people is helpfully accompanied by prayerful congregational song. This singing is meant to express the communicants' union in spirit by means of the unity of their voices, to give evidence of joy of heart, and to highlight more the "communitarian" nature of the Communion procession.

The Communion procession expresses the humble patience of the poor moving forward to be fed, the alert expectancy of God's people sharing the Paschal meal in readiness for their journey, the joyful confidence of God's people on the march toward the promised land. In England and Wales it is through this action of walking solemnly in procession that the faithful make their sign of reverence in preparation for receiving Communion.

In Communion with Christ

Being Reverent

The care and affection that parents show their children is a sign of their love for them. The way husbands and wives relate to one another shows to others, and to themselves, their love and respect for one another.

How we relate to other people is a sign of the value we give to them. But the opposite is also true — by treating someone with respect, even a respect we do not yet have — we can learn to respect them.

When we receive Holy Communion we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus. How we receive Holy Communion is both an expression of our beliefs but can also help to shape our beliefs too.

What does it mean to receive communion reverently? Our reverence is to Christ and we first of all encounter Christ in those around us — so how we go up to Communion is a sign of reverence. Do we join a procession where respect is shown for all? Is there an opportunity to focus on what we are about receive either by ourselves or through song? Is our reception of Holy Communion a moment of prayer? Is our return to our place marked by respect for what we have just received?

Difficult to do this with perhaps a child on each arm but actions can speak louder than words. How we show reverence offers a firm foundation for our children's understanding of the gift of Jesus in Holy Communion.

This leaflet for parents of young families is one a series of resources produced by the Liturgy Office of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales to assist parishes reflect on their celebration of the Eucharist in the light of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. *Celebrating the Mass* and Leaflet © 2005 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Other resources are available from www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources

Silence

There are many different forms of silence. The silence that allows us to relax; to think and reflect. The silence which is unexpected and unnerves us. The silence which is the awkward pause where it is uncertain what happens next.

These different forms can be experienced in both a large group or at the level of one to one.

In our personal relationships we can move through the stage of the awkward pause to knowing someone well enough that we can be comfortable in each other's silence. This silence is not a passive vacuum — it is full of thoughts, feelings and communication.

At Mass there are various moments for silence. In particular in the Liturgy of the Word to help us ponder on what we have heard and after we have received Holy Communion.

This can be a real challenge to parents. To engage in silent prayer which is more than a passive being still but a space for communication with God and introduce these same values to children. This may be the moment to recall at Mass the family prayer given on the previous sheet: what do we give thanks for and what do we ask God for.

ness for their journey, the joyful confidence of God's people on the march toward the promised land. In England and Wales it is through this action of walking solemnly in procession that the faithful make their sign of reverence in preparation for receiving Communion.

When Communion is completed, the whole assembly may observe a period of total silence. In the absence of all words, actions, music, or movement, a moment of deep corporate stillness and contemplation may be experienced. Such silence is important to the rhythm of the whole celebration and is welcome in a busy and restless world.

In a final presidential prayer that brings to a close the Communion Rite, the community of faith asks that the spiritual effects of the Eucharist be experienced in its members' lives.

Celebrating the Mass 200–216