

## Family Prayer

*One of the challenges for all of us is how to join ourselves with the Church's prayer — so that we are not observers of prayer, but are truly taking part in what is done.*

*In his death Jesus offered the whole of his life to his Father, for love of God and for love of the whole world. In the Eucharistic Prayer, the Church's great prayer of Thanksgiving, we are invited to offer to God all that we have and all that we are, and to join together in praying for the Church and for the world.*

*How to start helping young Catholics to take their part in this?*

*One way might be to spend time together, perhaps on Friday or Saturday, preparing for Sunday Mass by each thinking of:*

- *one good thing to offer thanks to God for — perhaps for friends or some pleasing thing which has happened in the week, or for a particular talent that there has been an opportunity to use or develop during the week.*
- *one thing that one wants to ask God for. It might be something for oneself — perhaps to be more loving or more considerate, more patient or more forgiving. It might be to pray for the needs of others — perhaps for a member of the family or a friend; perhaps for those such as the elderly or sick in the parish; perhaps for those much further away that may have been seen on the television news, for example people caught up in the effects of war or of natural disasters.*

*If the family has a prayer table or prayer corner, the children (and other family members might be invited to write or draw their prayers for the week and place them there. This will help the family share its joys and its concerns, and also provide a convenient reminder for all of what it is they want to particularly remember, give thanks for and pray for at Sunday's Mass.*

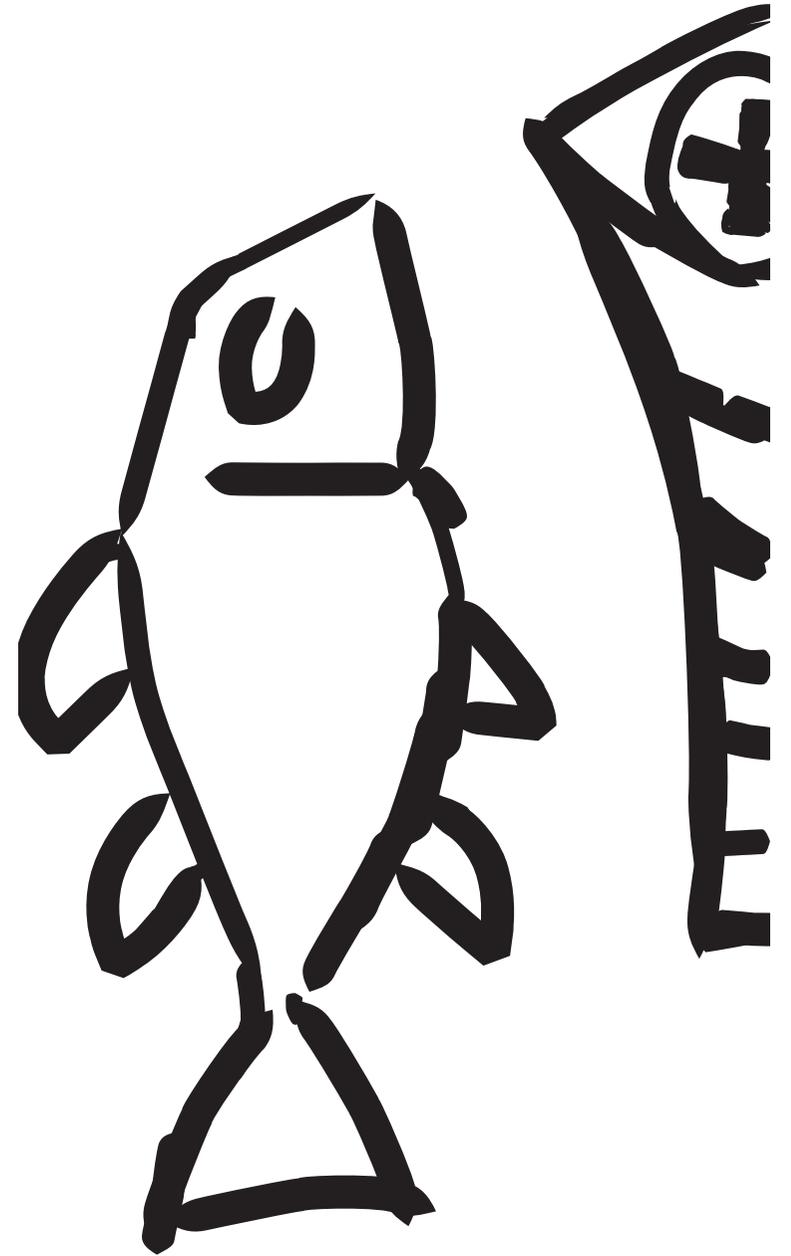
Remember everyone who is suffering from pain or sorrow.

Remember Christians everywhere  
and all other people in the world.

We are filled with wonder and praise  
when we see what you do for us  
through Jesus your Son...

*(from Eucharistic Prayer for Children I)*

## In Communion with Christ 4. Thanksgiving



## Looking at the Mass

### Introductory Rites

### Liturgy of the Word

### Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of Gifts

Eucharistic Prayer

Communion Rite

### Concluding Rite

From the days of the Apostles the Church has celebrated the saving life, death and resurrection of Jesus by carrying out what the Lord did and handed over to his disciples to do in his memory. Like him, the Church has taken bread and wine, given thanks to God over them, broken the bread, and shared the bread and cup of blessing as the Body and Blood of Christ. The Church's Eucharist, in all its rich variety of forms and traditions, has always retained this basic shape: the taking of the elements of bread and wine in the preparation of the gifts, the act of thanksgiving in the Eucharistic Prayer, the Breaking of the Bread, the giving and sharing of the Body and Blood of Christ in Communion.

The Procession with the Gifts is a powerful expression of the assembly's participation in the Eucharist and in the social mission of the Church. It is an expression of the humble and contrite heart, the dispossession of self that is a necessary prerequisite for making the true offering which the Lord Jesus gave his people to make with him.

# In Communion with Christ

## The work of our hands

What we eat can either nourish or harm us. More and more we take care to avoid artificial additives and preservatives in much food. There is encouragement to turn from processed and pre-prepared food and get used again to using fresh ingredients. The best food is the food we make for ourselves.

One aspect of the Mass is that it is a meal at which we are fed. One way of appreciating this mystery is to appreciate the ingredients, in this case bread and wine. At the Preparation of Gifts we offer to God bread and wine the work of our hands. We take simple gifts of God's creation, water and wheat, and grapes and from them bread and wine are made.

Meals are made for sharing! What a difference there is when we sit together and share a meal, enjoying the food and drink and each other's company. So at Mass we share not only the food and drink, but also gather with the family of the Church. And God makes both the community that gathers and the food and drink into Christ himself present for us.

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](http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources)

## Giving and receiving

From the earliest times the Church has taken a collection at Mass. St Justin writing in the 2nd Century wrote:

*Those who are well of, and who are also willing, give as each chooses. What is gathered is given to him who presides to assist orphans and widows, those whom illness or any other cause has deprived of resources, prisoners, immigrants and, in a word, all who are in need.*

The Sunday collection is one of the gifts we offer to God, along with the bread and wine. It is an aspect of our understanding of the Mass as a sacrifice. Christ gave himself to death on the cross so that we might share in his resurrection. One of the ways we unite ourselves with Christ's sacrifice is through what we offer of ourselves.

Does the whole family join in the offering—perhaps using one planned giving envelope? With children taking it in turns to put in the basket? Explaining the reason for CAFOD collections can help children understand that when we have money we have the responsibility for using it wisely.

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The Eucharistic Prayer, the centre and summit of the entire celebration, sums up what it means for the Church to celebrate the Eucharist. It is a memorial proclamation of praise and thanksgiving for God's work of salvation, a proclamation in which the Body and Blood of Christ are made present by the power of the Holy Spirit and the people are joined to Christ in offering his Sacrifice to the Father.

At the heart of the Eucharistic Prayer, the account of the Last Supper is recited. The words of Jesus, in which he gave himself to his disciples as their food and drink, are now repeated in the context of this prayer of praise. In the power of the Spirit, these words achieve what they promise and express: the presence of Christ and his Sacrifice among his people assembled. Everything for which God has been thanked and praised, all that was accomplished in the history of salvation, is summed up and made present in the person of the crucified and risen Lord.

The Eucharistic Prayer is proclaimed by the priest celebrant in the name of Christ and on behalf of the whole assembly, which professes its faith and gives its assent through dialogue, acclamations, and the Amen.

*Celebrating the Mass* 174–194