

Spirit of the Season

Lent 2005

Liturgical Year A www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/SOS

Catholic?

Our liturgical celebrations are ritual celebrations. On this first page during this year we have seen that ritual helps create identity, share values and enables us to celebrate together. All these aspects of ritual are present when we celebrate liturgy.

It is the liturgy that makes us as Catholic. It is through the liturgy of baptism that we become members of the Church. The celebration of baptism is more than the pouring of water, it is an expression of the faith of the community which is handed on from one generation to the next. In many parishes this Lent people will be preparing to celebrate Baptism at Easter.

Liturgy does not just create us as Catholics it forms us, week by week, too. In the liturgy we are nurtured in faith; fed by Christ himself in Word and Sacrament. For many Catholics, coming together on Sunday, is their primary opportunity to respond to and grow in the distinctive nature of our baptismal calling.

The Church teaches that the liturgy is the source and summit of Christian living, it is therefore a key part of our Catholic identity, how well we celebrate will help establish the distinctiveness of that identity.

- How will your school celebrate this Lent?
- How will this reflect the distinctive nature of your Catholic School?



Father,
we have set
out on the
road that leads to
the glory of Easter.

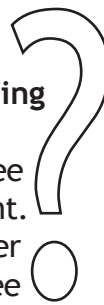


May Christ be our way,
our truth, and our life.
We make this prayer
through Christ our Lord.
Amen

FAQ

Why do we give something up for Lent?

Fasting is one of three spiritual exercises of Lent. The other two are Prayer and Almsgiving. The three are connected – our fasting should lead to contemplation and prayer, what we fast from should enable us to give alms.



Opportunity for Art

Using the above image as template. Enlarge it; make each of waves a different shades of blue – perhaps light to dark; make the child life-size and on each wave write something about Baptism, Church, what it is to be Catholic. You could also use the image with themes of Penance and Lent using a purple scheme



Ash Wednesday

Glossary

Not a Holy Day of Obligation (when Catholics are obliged to go to Mass) but a day popular in our religious culture. Made from last year's burnt palm branches (a smoky affair) the ashes are mixed with holy water. The distribution of ashes is not restricted to a priest as they are not a sacrament but a sacramental.

Using the thumb, which has been pressed into the ashes, mark the forehead with the sign of the cross while saying such things as: 'Turn away from sin and believe the Good News'. Other sentences are given in the Missal.

A simple and profound liturgy could be put together around the ritual that need not be too long. The 'ashing' could be done with each year/class group by one or more ministers (delegated persons). The ministers are 'ashed' first and then they 'ash' one group.

The shape of the liturgy could be as simple as: Gathering hymn; Scripture; Distribution of ashes; Prayers. Link the celebration in some way to what the school is planning to do for the rest of Lent.

The Classroom in Lent

Lent is a good time to spring clean the prayer corner. Why not tidy away any images or statues until after Easter so that the space is simple and bare.

Place in simple containers sand, stone (of different sizes and textures) and other dried material (but not flowers).

Make a genuine wooden cross using branches tied together with twine. This together with a candle could be used in all your Collective Acts of Worship.

Lent: 'Lent' in Old German means 'Spring'. It is a six-week season of preparation for Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday, when ashes from burning last year's Palm Sunday greenery are put on the heads of the assembly as a sign of repentance and embracing the teaching of the gospel. During Lent, the acclamation 'Alleluia' is not sung.

The Sundays of Lent are identified above all by the Scripture readings chosen for them in the Lectionary. In the Catholic Church, those who are being baptised at Easter are at the centre of the liturgy. On the First Sunday they are enrolled as 'the elect', those chosen for Easter baptisms. All the congregation are invited to keep Lent along with the 'elect' as a time of spiritual purification, of living the values of the gospel and of prayer.

Sacramental: (Latin *sacramentale*—like a sacrament) A sacred act or object involved on liturgy, such as the Ash Wednesday ashes, palms on Palm Sunday and the washing of feet on Holy Thursday.

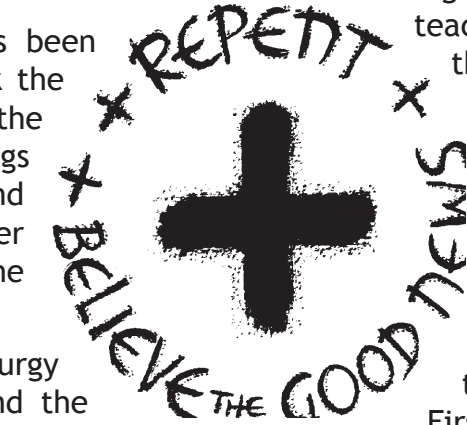
Abstinence (Latin *abstinentia*—depriving oneself) The act of going without something, e.g. certain foods, for religious reasons.

Catholics abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and perform acts of abstinence on Fridays.

from *A Basic Catholic Dictionary* © Alan Griffiths published by Canterbury Press, Norwich. www.scm-canterburypress.co.uk

Resources for Penance

On the Liturgy Office website you will find materials for celebrating penance including prayer cards for children. [www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources].



Seeing, Touching, Tasting

In this series we look at the way that we might more fully use our senses in worship, letting these lead us to fuller participation in what we do.

Sometimes in liturgy, there are many words used, but the symbols of the liturgy are underplayed. Often at baptism, rather than a true bathing or washing, there is a little tiny trickle of water. At an anointing, the merest smudge of oil, rather than a lavish anointing, worthy of the name. Likewise at Mass when it comes to the key symbols of the bread and the wine. Often we use bread that looks like cardboard, and especially at Masses with children, commonly communion is not given under the form of wine. But symbols are there to communicate. The extraordinary is made present to us through the ordinary things we see and touch and taste—water, bread, wine. Christ who is the living water, who turns bread and wine into his Body and Blood, our food for a life united with him.

It does not make much sense to use in liturgy things that the people present have never laid their hands on, do not know what they are. For it is through the familiar that the less familiar is communicated.

In the right hand columns are ideas about those unfamiliar yet familiar elements of bread and wine. Once we know what bread and wine are we can

learn what it is that God does with them, the works of human hands, so that they become not just ordinary, but our spiritual food and drink.

We take these things into our hands again at the time of Holy Communion. But now, though we still see the familiar, they are transformed. Now our seeing, touching, tasting are 'deceived'—for it is truly Christ himself we receive. When we allow the wonder and the love of this to move us to prayer, then we know we are indeed participating in the liturgy of the Church.



Work of our hands

Our sense of taste is primarily fed through bread and wine at the Eucharist. Let children have some experience of bread making so that they can make the connection between the bread they handle at home, the bread they have baked at school and the bread used at Mass. Simple recipes can be found on the Liturgy Office Website [www.liturgyoffice.org/Documents].

Experiences of wine making are more complex to arrange but children should at least know how it is made and the importance it has on various occasions.

Our sense of touch is stimulated not only through holding the bread and raising the cup to our lips but also in the many physical gestures of liturgy. Encourage children to be aware of their participation though:

- using their bodies
- joining their hands in prayer
- making the sign of the cross
- marking the forehead, lips and hearts with a cross prior to the Gospel
- sharing the Peace with others
- giving or receiving a blessing on the head
- moving in a procession
- dancing or clapping with songs
- grounding the feet when we stand

What are we asking of ourselves, of others?

In the first of these reflections on diversity we asked, 'Why does it matter?'

Now, perhaps, the question is, 'What are we asking of ourselves, of others? What expectations do we have of liturgy in the school community?'

In liturgy the question asked of the Christian is 'are you willing to be a disciple?'

In preparing liturgy for this diverse community do we just go through the motions, or are we truly expecting change, development, growth? And, do we, as those who prepare and plan liturgy, experience that growth ourselves? If our expectations are to lead people to discipleship, then our liturgy needs to connect and provoke – and do this across cultures, Rites, levels of practice, age. If liturgy is 'the source and summit of the Christian life' it must renew and transform us. We cannot be spectators, but must participate – at whatever level. Our liturgy must touch people where they are - offering each person the possibility of transformation.

Sometimes we have opportunities to broaden the community in which we celebrate, to draw parents into our liturgies, so that they

share with their children not only their Sunday worship, or their prayer life at home, but also in that of the school community. In using such opportunities our parents cannot be merely observers of what seems essentially a school 'performance' but need to be truly participants. If we do invite parents perhaps we need to ask ourselves why we do so – or, if not, why not? For, if we are truly committed to the transforming nature of liturgy then perhaps families, on those occasions where it is possible, might be drawn into the celebrations.

Maybe the greatest danger for teachers as preparers of liturgy is that they can find themselves standing outside of it, concerned so much with who does what and when, that the liturgy becomes an empty – and stressful – experience for them. This also raises the issue as to what degree that experience is transmitted to others taking part.

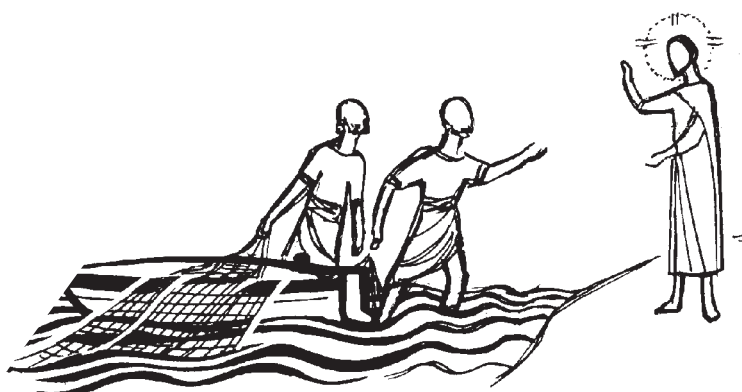
There is, perhaps, another issue – that of those who do not enter into the understanding of liturgy articulated here. Are they excluded if our expectations are linked with belief and Christian commitment? Can we deliver what we want to in

other, simpler ways. Again it is a matter of meeting people in the place where they are and respecting that place.

These are, perhaps, tough questions - but questions which need to be addressed if what we do in school is to connect and to provoke, for what we are doing is not merely passing on culture, rituals, traditions. We are calling on God.

Forthcoming documents

Two important documents on the Mass and how it is celebrated will be published in April 2005. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) 3rd edition and *Celebrating the Mass*. GIRM is the user's manual that is found at the front of the Missal. The Directory for Masses with Children draws on GIRM as the basis for its provisions. *Celebrating the Mass* is a teaching document of the Bishops' Conference. It is a comprehensive guide to the Mass and will be a great help for both understanding and preparation. A Study Guide for small groups will also be available called *With Hearts and Minds*. The books will be published by CTS [www.cts-online.org.uk]. Information and further downloadable resources will be available from the Liturgy Office website [www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources].



Getting in touch

Martin Foster, **Liturgy Office**,
39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PL.
020 7901 4850 (tel) 020 7901 4821 (fax)
lifeworsh@cbcaw.org.uk
www.liturgyoffice.org.uk

Anne Dixon
National Project Co-ordinator,
Catholic Education Service,
39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1BX
0207901 4880 (tel) 020 7901 4893 (fax)
general@cesew.org.uk
www.cesew.org.uk

Spirit of the Season is put together by
Paul Varey, Trinity & All Saints College,
Leeds, LS18 5HD.
0113 283 7201 (tel) 0113 283 7200 (fax)
p_varey@tasc.ac.uk

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