

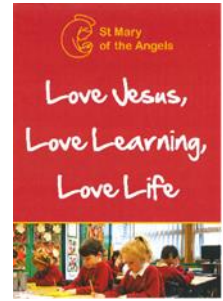
St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School

Prayer and Liturgy Policy

Person responsible: Mrs. H. Thorpe

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To be reviewed: July 2025



We use the language 'Prayer and Liturgy' in place of the term 'Collective Worship' in our daily life, practices and policies. This policy is written to reflect and support our school mission statement: Love Jesus, Love Learning, Love Life.

Vision

We believe that Christian worship in a Catholic school, names and celebrates God's presence in our lives. It is concerned with giving glory, honour, praise and thanks to God. It is our loving response, in word and action, to God's invitation to enter into relationship, made possible through the work of Jesus Christ and the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer, Liturgy and Worship

Prayer: We believe that Prayer consists of:

listening - being attentive to the voice of God in every moment of life.

speaking - expressing our heart's deepest longings and desires to the One who knows and understands us better than we know and understand ourselves.

reflecting - thinking about our relationship with God. Pondering on the actions of God in history and in the unfolding mystery of our lives.

resting – simply being consciously in the presence of God, knowing that we are loved.

One of the Early Fathers of the Church described prayer as ***"... the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God."*** These words of St John Damascene have become a classical definition of prayer and they point to the reason why, in a Catholic school, we begin and end each session of the day in prayer. Prayer can have a variety of forms and styles and express different things.

Liturgy: "Liturgy" literally means, "work of the people", and points to the fact that something else is going on beyond prayer. It is the formalising of worship at the heart of which is symbol and action.

Liturgy makes explicit the celebration deriving from and highlighting every instance of worship, which occurs in our daily lives. To liturgical celebration therefore should be brought all human symbols of expression - art, dance, poetry, music, gesture, stillness [see '*Children's Directory for Masses*']

The '*Liturgy of the Word with Children. Guidelines*' [1996 The Bishop's Conference of England and Wales] lists the **General Principles of Liturgy**:

- Liturgy is the praise and worship of God.
- Liturgy is the source and summit of the Church's life and our lives.
- It is the right and duty of all baptised, both children and adults.
- The function of the liturgy is to build up members of Christ's body, to strengthen us in preaching Christ.
- Liturgy is action and symbol; it speaks to the whole person, it involves all the senses: sight, touch, sound, taste and smell.
- Participating in liturgy forms our habits because we are ritual people and learn through repetition and copying.
- In liturgy we discover the riches of prayer, through word and gesture, silence and stillness.
- The purpose of adapting liturgy for children is to lead them into full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy of the parish.
- Liturgy with children, as with adults, demands dignity, clarity and simplicity.

Collective Worship: God is present and active in all authentic human experience. We already have a graced life and **worship** is naming and celebrating this reality in the Christian tradition. God is reached through the world and adored within it. Creating a sacred space for worship is to create a space where the unity of God and creation is reverently symbolised and celebrated. Worship and the words and rituals we use should not sever us from the ordinary circumstances of our lives but rather unite us more closely to them.

- Worship remembers and celebrates the marvellous things God works in our lives. It celebrates God's presence in our lives. Worship should not feel like an interruption from a different world. It is a spontaneous response to life.
- Collective Worship is concerned with giving glory, honour, praise and thanks to God. It is our loving response, in word and action, to God's invitation to enter into relationship made possible through the work of Jesus Christ and the witness of the Holy Spirit.
- Worship will be at the very heart of every Catholic school and must reflect something special or separate from ordinary school activities.

Prayer may be an individual experience, or if it is an activity with others may form part of an act of worship.

All liturgies involve the praise, thanksgiving and adoration of God and are, therefore, acts of worship. However, not all worship will be liturgy as it may or may not include symbol and action.

An assembly is any experience of gathering/assembling in school. It may include an act of worship but the difference between worship and assembly must always be clear

The Aims of Prayer and Liturgy

We believe that Prayer and Liturgy in our school aims to provide opportunity for all pupils and staff:

- To contemplate something of the mystery of God
- To reflect on spiritual and moral issues
- To explore their own beliefs
- To respond to and celebrate life
- To experience a sense of belonging and develop community spirit
- To develop a common ethos and shared values
- To enrich religious experience
- To grow in liturgical understanding and development
- To reinforce prayers which are part of the Catholic tradition
- To reinforce positive attitudes
- To participate with others in prayer and worship.
- To take time out 'to wonder at', 'to come to terms with' and 'to give worth to.'

Legal Requirements

The law requires all maintained schools:

- Provide daily collective worship for all pupils including in the sixth form (section 70, 1988 Education Act)
- Acts of collective worship are not to be designated curriculum time. In the context of the Catholic school this means that time of collective worship are not considered to be part of the allocation of curriculum for Religious Education
- Recognise and respect that parents have the legal right to withdraw their children from Collective Worship.

In addition:

- Foundation Governors in voluntary aided Catholic schools have a statutory responsibility to preserve and develop the religious character of their schools

The governors and the head teacher are responsible for ensuring that there are daily timetabled opportunities for whole school.

Our school must ensure that:

- There is a named person who is responsible for organising Collective Worship across the school. At St Mary's this is Helen Thorpe, supported by Sarah Kane.
- Collective worship, in the form of prayer or liturgy, happens for all pupils daily
- All pupils are able to access the prayer and liturgy offered within the school day
- Collective Worship is well resourced, both in regard to content and the continued professional development of those planning and leading, this includes enabling pupils to plan and lead
- There is regular and comprehensive monitoring of Collective Worship which clearly demonstrates the living of our school's Catholic mission

Assemblies

Assemblies provide an opportunity for the school community to join together in listening to, and reflecting upon, the Word of God and praising Him in prayer and song. Children are encouraged to be quiet and reverent during times of reflection, to actively participate in spoken prayers and to be keenly involved in celebration, sung prayers and action songs in a joyful and appropriate manner. Our assemblies are as follows:

- A whole school Celebration Assembly is led by the Headteacher or Senior Teacher every Friday afternoon. This includes time for prayer and a celebration of children's achievements.
- Gospel Assembly is led by the Headteacher every Monday morning. This includes time for prayer, worship through hymns and a focus the Sunday Gospel.
- There are additional Assemblies throughout the year that may be in response to relevant events, e.g. the Death of Queen Elizabeth II.
- There are additional Teaching Assemblies, led by the Headteacher, where our older children buddy up with our younger children to work together. For example The Good Artist Assembly and Harvest Assembly
- We have special assemblies or services, led by the Headteacher and Chaplaincy Team to mark our journey through the Liturgical Year, for example our Advent Service, Ash Wednesday Service, Feast Days such as Feast of All Saints, Feast of Sts Peter and Paul.
- Each individual class leads an assembly on at least one occasion during the year, including EYFS in the summer term, usually held on a Thursday. This will include prayers and reflections and often refer to the current WTL topic as studied by that class.
- Every week, the Music Lead and RE Subject Leader lead a singing practice in each Key Stage.

Prayer and Liturgy in our classroom

Each class has a prayer focus area. A crucifix, statue, picture, Bible, cross, candle or other such articles are often the focus for reverence. These are added to and changed according to the liturgical colours and feasts and may include elements of the current WTL topic.

Each class has a 'Prayer and Liturgy' resource box, which contains a wide range of coloured cloths, artefacts, books etc to support teachers in adapting their prayer focus area for different times of the Liturgical Year. The Prayer and Liturgy boxes also include children's planning cards for the preparing and leading of Prayer and Liturgy. They are different for each Key Stage.

Every class have a Prayer Leader system. Prayer Leaders contribute to and lead daily prayer time in the classroom in different ways.

Prayers are said daily in each classroom at the beginning and end of the morning and afternoon sessions – or as a whole school or Key Stage if we have gathered for an assembly. These are usually occasions for communal prayer and children are also encouraged to engage in their own silent prayer or add to the prayers which are being said.

As part of WTL, children are often asked to contribute to class prayers or to compose their own prayers based on a theme. These may be shared and celebrated and incorporated into the daily prayers as appropriate.

All children participate in planning for and leading acts of Prayer, which may be integrated into RE lesson time. Prayer leaders and children's Prayer and Liturgy planning sheets are used in all classes and will also be on display. Classroom prayer may, but not must, be organised around the Gather-Word-Reflect-Mission structure. The structure is often used to support children when planning and leading their own times of structures prayer.

Liturgy in school and classroom

Celebrating the sacrament of the Eucharist through the Holy Mass is an important part of our Catholic Life and Identity. We endeavour to celebrate Mass in school at the start and end of the school year and also at Easter. When there are further opportunities to celebrate Mass at school, we welcome this. We liaise with our Parish Priest, Fr Edmund to plan a timetable of Masses for the Liturgical Year alongside the other parish schools and churches. The children participate and contribute to these Masses with direction from the headteacher and RE Lead.

Non-sacramental liturgies are also held throughout the Liturgical Year, for example during Lent, children's Stations of the Cross services are led, and during Advent, services of reflection are led by the Headteacher. We also regularly welcome visitors into school to help lead Prayer and Liturgy, e.g. including Fr Edmund, Fr Humphry, Deacon Tony, leaders from CAFOD and others.

During Lent, we offer children the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation through services held in the hall led by Fr Edmund.

We recognise that for many children their primary experience of the Mass is through school Masses and celebrations. As such, we acknowledge the importance of our role as imparters of the Catholic faith and traditions and aim to lead by example in respect to behaviour, reverence and participation in the Mass. Non-Catholic members of staff are encouraged to liaise with the headteacher, Deputy teacher or RE leader on any areas they require any guidance or support in relation to the Eucharist or the Mass as a whole.

Monitoring and Evaluation

At least once a year the school's provision of worship will be evaluated to consider whether it meets the needs of all pupils and whether pupils are making progress in acquiring skills and abilities in organising and leading worship. All teachers are responsible for the monitoring and development of the prayer life of the children.