

## Being Forgiven

When assessing worship in Catholic schools, 'the inspector needs to judge ... that Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation are celebrated regularly and pupils know how to respond' (92). Reconciliation is particularly appropriate during Advent and Lent. Find out the date of First Reconciliation in the parishes so that children are not offered the Sacrament earlier in school. Inviting several priests to assist reduces the length of the service and allows participants to choose a priest they don't know or one they already trust. Children may leave class individually for confession, but a communal liturgy prepares each to receive the sacrament and allows non-Catholic students to participate too. The liturgical book, the *Rite of Penance* provides a service outline (2nd Form) [www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Penance/Penance-Intro.pdf](http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Penance/Penance-Intro.pdf)

The Lectionary (volume III) includes suggested readings, and the priest preaches compassionately, enabling everyone to recognise their need for forgiveness through an Examination of Conscience. This is followed by prayers of confession and the *Our Father*, before students, staff, and parents are invited to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation individually and feel relieved of the burden of their sin. It makes the experience seem less daunting if everyone present is invited to take part by speaking individually to a priest. He can give a blessing to a non-Catholic participant or to one not ready to receive the Sacrament. Songs which speak of God's mercy and forgiveness are suitable, along with the *Lord have mercy* (or *Kyrie Eleison*) and *Lamb of God* (or *Agnus Dei*) which you might already sing at school Masses.

A non-sacramental Penance service can be celebrated without individual confessions (see *Rite of Penance*, section V), including a symbolic act of repentance, such as writing down sins and throwing them away; taking a brick away from a wall to reveal a beautiful picture; or untying a knot. Such liturgies should encourage participants to receive the Sacrament individually later (1st Form), and so may be celebrated with little children, or when priests are not available. A liturgy outline can be found at [www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Penance/AdventRec.shtml](http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Penance/AdventRec.shtml)

As an image of the effect of sin, young children broke paper chains, before repairing them to symbolise reconciliation (*right*). Older children realised we can use our hands to hurt, but sought forgiveness. Writing on paper hands, they made a promise to help in future. Their paper hands were left around the cross at the end of the Reconciliation service, then displayed together throughout Lent.

## Finding the Texts for Mass – 3

### The Prayers

The prayers for the Mass are found in the Roman Missal. On a particular day the following prayers might be 'proper' (specifically assigned) to the celebration. The greatest number of proper texts occur on days of high solemnity such as Pentecost Sunday when the Collect (Opening Prayer), Prayer over the Offerings, Preface, Prayer after Communion and Solemn Blessing are all proper – there is also a special text which is inserted in Eucharistic Prayer I. In contrast, for some Saints there is only a proper or given Collect.

There are also larger group of texts for Solemnities. For Sundays there will be a specific or proper Collect, Prayer over the Offerings and Prayer after Communion.

Where specific texts are not provided, they are chosen from a selection such as Prefaces of Sundays in Ordinary Time. Any of the eight Prefaces may be used on a Sunday in Ordinary Time. In a similar way there is a selection of Solemn Blessings.

For the celebration of the Saints a full proper will be provided for Solemnities and Feasts. For many Memorials only a Collect is given. Where this is the case, the appropriate Common is indicated. A Common is a name for a selection of texts. The Commons are grouped in the following categories:

- Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- Common of Martyrs
- Common of Pastors (Priests)
- Common of Virgins
- Common of Holy Men and Women

(continued overleaf)



This resource can be freely photocopied. In fact we hope you will copy it and distribute it widely. Please think of doing so as a form of ministry to the liturgy.

Other editions of Spirit of the Season – this is the third edition – are available on the Society of Saint Gregory website, [www.ssg.org.uk](http://www.ssg.org.uk)

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## Finding the Texts for Mass – 3

(concluded)

There are further distinctions within each Common. A Saint may be referred to in more than one Common, so, for example, texts for St Angela Merici may be chosen from the Common of Virgins or the Common of Holy Men and Women: For educators. Only one set of prayers is used.

The Lectionary also includes a comparable section of Commons. On Memorials, apart from when there is a proper text (cf last edition), the readings given are taken from the Common (eg of Martyrs), and other readings may be selected instead.

If you wish to celebrate a Saint who is not in the Roman Missal you would choose prayers and readings from the appropriate Common.

There are no proper texts for the Weekdays in Ordinary Time. They may be chosen from any of the 34 Sunday texts. The Missal notes that, when choosing, the pastoral needs of the congregation should be taken into consideration. It is common practice to repeat the texts of the preceding Sunday.

## Our bodies are a sign

The liturgy is not the work of the priest alone but requires the wholehearted engagement of the people present (the assembly). *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches us that the Eucharist is the 'source and summit of the Christian life' and that by participating in the Liturgy we are made holy. However, more is required of us than simply 'attending mass'; the faithful people of God are asked to 'actively participate'.

We respond in Mass and other liturgies by joining in with the people's responses, singing, reflecting on what we hear and changing our body posture and gestures at particular times to reflect our internal participation. An outsider, looking in, may think that the changes from sitting to standing and then to kneeling are random, but these changes in posture are integral to how we pray and intrinsically linked to the action that is taking place. As we move together, we signify that we are members of one body, worshipping together 'with one heart and soul' (Acts 4.32). As we worship with every aspect of our being, moving together we create the liturgy and allow its symbolism to work to greater effect.

**Standing:** Standing is always seen as a mark of respect and in our liturgies, too, it signifies our attentiveness and respect. We are the Easter people, lifted up to greet our risen Lord, (*Celebrating the Mass* 58).

**Sitting:** During the Mass we sit to listen, to rest and to watch. For example, we sit during the first and second readings and the psalm, changing our posture to standing to greet the Gospel.

**Kneeling:** Kneeling is a human gesture of submission. During our liturgies we kneel at times of utmost reverence, to signify our humility before God, sorrow for our sins and adoration of the Eucharist.

## Use Scripture with confidence – 3

The Word of God in Lent  
vertical and horizontal relationships



Lent is a time of quiet but intense spiritual reflection, and traditionally a time of fasting in order to share with people who have less than we do. You could describe it as 'breathing' or 'slowing down and thinking time', creating space in our hearts and minds to de-clutter and re-form some priorities for our Christian life. The liturgical environment in the Lenten season is simple, signalling to those present 'this is different'.

In the Sundays in Lent, Years A, B and C, the first and second Sundays have the accounts of the Lord's temptations and his transfiguration. In the Year of Luke, C, Sundays three to five continue with the theme of reconciliation in stories of repentance and bearing fruit, the prodigal son, and the woman caught committing adultery. There is a 'vertical' relationship with the other readings: the first reading and its responsorial psalm finds their echo in the Gospel and, as it's Lent, the second reading from the letters of St Paul also shares in the integral theme. For children and adults in the Catechumenate, preparing for Baptism at Easter, the Gospels of Year A are used.

**Exercise:** To explore the relationships between the readings on the Sundays in Lent Year C. Read the Gospel, and then use the Psalm response to pose a question. eg 5th Sunday of Lent Gospel: Jesus asks the woman found in adultery, 'Has no-one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you, go away and don't sin any more'. Take the response in the Psalm, 'What marvels the Lord worked for us, indeed we were glad,' and ask 'What are the 'marvels' in the Gospel? What are the 'marvels' worked by God in our own lives?'

**Exercise:** Take time to reflect on the missal prayers, and identify the many allusions to Scripture in the texts themselves. The antiphons at the entrance, and at communion, are obviously scriptural, and the references are given. Others are more 'hidden'. Do you recognise the stories and where you might find them? For example, in 'the Communion Rite, 'Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed'?

**Question:** How do we invite the children to prepare to take part attentively in a Liturgy of the Word, either within Mass, or in a liturgy outside Mass? What about 'prayer time' in the classroom or at home during this Season?

## Criteria for evaluating collective worship in schools – 3

### What makes prayer Catholic?

Inspectors evaluating Collective Worship look for evidence that the worshipping life of a school reinforces and reflects its Catholic character. That doesn't necessarily mean we always have to pray for the dead, or say a Hail Mary, although these have long been considered distinctively Catholic forms of prayer. First and foremost, Catholic prayer is Trinitarian, that is, directed to God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Sign of the Cross is the simplest symbolic representation of the Trinity. The Eucharist is central to Catholic worship, although not every act of worship in a Catholic school need be a Mass. The Mass is famously described as the source and summit, thus all our prayers point towards it, or flow out from it. Vaguely spiritual songs and poems are not distinctively Catholic so blur the appropriate focus of Catholic worship. Catholic prayer follows the cycle of the liturgical year, whose ebb and flow differs from the school calendar. Catholicism is a universal faith, so the context of our prayer is world-wide. This may be expressed in words, displays, fabrics, foods and songs from other countries or in a variety of languages. Catholic faith in the communion of saints unites us with worshippers across the centuries, thus our worship is rooted in Catholic heritage and tradition, which may include the prayers of the canonised saints, Latin plainchant, elements of the Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours, alongside Biblical prayers, songs and stories.

## Lead Prayer with Confidence – 3

### Be Confident

- Being the leader is a distinct liturgical role. Try to avoid also being teacher or even disciplinarian.
- Your body language and actions will speak volumes and will be more effective than too many instructions. If you appear confident; people will be confident in you. If you are calm; you will encourage an atmosphere of calmness. You may however be like the proverbial swan paddling fast beneath the surface.
- It can be helpful to have a moment's prayerful silence before the liturgy or prayer begins.
- A stand to hold your text can be useful. For some it will be a comfortable 'safety barrier' but it can also either serve as something to hold onto for the nervous or to allow the hands to be free.
- Be definite and graceful in your movements, for example when making the Sign of the Cross. Be still. Try to avoid fidgeting with your hands. For prayers consider using the '*orans*' (praying) posture with hands outstretched. When giving instructions or information rest your hands on the stand or hold them by your side. When listening to the readings, for example, it may be comfortable to hold your hands together.

## The Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy

Pope Francis has announced a Holy Year of Mercy. We have had a number of 'years' recently including Paul, Eucharist and Faith. They provide an opportunity to deepen our appreciation of an aspect of our faith. One could argue that they also encapsulated ideas at the heart of the person of the Pope (St John Paul II and the Eucharist, Pope Benedict and Faith). From the beginning of his pontificate, mercy has been a central theme of Pope Francis not only as an aspect of God's love for us and the Church that we should understand but as something we also should practice.

The Year will begin on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception 2015 (8 December) and will end on Christ the King in 2016 (20 November). In Rome there will be series of Jubilees through the year for people involved in different parts of the life of the Church. Many of these may be replicated at a local level and it is worth finding out what your diocese is planning.

Pope Francis' ideas of for the Year are in the document *Misericordiae Vultus* (The Face of Mercy) as expressed in the first sentence: 'Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy'. It is a short, readable document which explores both the scriptural background and the practical consequences.

These consequences are expressed in the Corporal & Spiritual Works of Mercy:

### The seven corporal works of mercy:

- Feed the hungry.
- Give drink to the thirsty.
- Clothe the naked.
- Shelter the homeless.
- Visit the sick.
- Visit the imprisoned.
- Bury the dead.

### The seven spiritual works of mercy:

- Counsel the doubtful.
- Instruct the ignorant.
- Admonish sinners.
- Comfort the afflicted.
- Forgive offenses.
- Bear wrongs patiently.
- Pray for the living and the dead.

The corporal works of mercy are drawn from the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46) and this might a starting point for exploring the ideas with children. It is a text that can easily be dramatized with appropriate tableau. There might be a project over the year to find out what local initiatives and charities there are to respond to these needs. To look what they do and how the school might support them.

The spiritual works of mercy might provide the structure for a reflection with staff looking at how in being a professional teacher they embody mercy for the children.

The Vatican has a website which include documents and calendar. There is also the official Jubilee hymn written by Paul Inwood which can be downloaded freely. <http://www.iubilaeummisericordiae.va>

Find out what your own dioceses has planned especially ideas for pilgrimage.

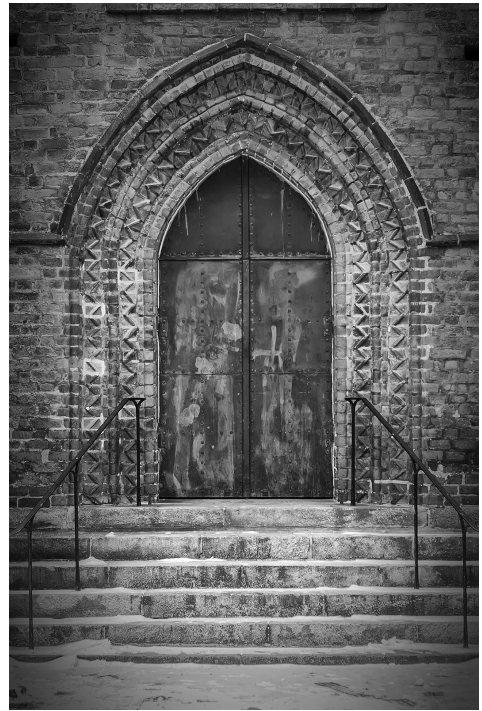


# Doors and the Year of Mercy

Holy Years have been part of our Catholic history since Boniface VIII declared the first such Jubilee in 1300. Since then they have usually been proclaimed every twenty-five years. There have been a few exceptions such as 1983 which celebrated the 1,950th anniversary of the death and resurrection of our Lord. Pope Francis, in calling a Holy Year of Mercy, is declaring this year a Jubilee, rather than just a year dedicated to a particular theme. A major aspect of the Holy Year has been to make a pilgrimage to Rome seeking God's mercy and renewing our commitment to our baptismal life. The Holy Year begins when the Pope formally opens the Holy Door in St Peter's Basilica which is only open during such a year. Pilgrims enter the basilica through that door as a sign of faith, of our entering into the presence of God.

This time Pope Francis has also called for a Holy Door, 'a Door of Mercy', to be opened in all cathedrals for the Jubilee Year. He also suggests that 'a similar door may be opened at any shrine frequented by large groups of pilgrims, since visits to these holy sites are so often grace-filled moments, as people discover a path to conversion.' In this way, the Pope invites the local church and Rome to be in communion in this celebration. Parishes and communities should plan ways of making a pilgrimage to the cathedral or other holy site where a Holy door has been opened.

The Holy Doors in Rome are closed up at the end of year to await the next Jubilee. Can we find ways of sharing in this image for the Year of Mercy? Our schools, homes and churches probably do not have the luxury of a door we do not use. Yet we all have doors which are more important than others. We have time to think as to whether there is a door which we could call our Holy Year Of Mercy Door. It could be the main door, the assembly hall door, a chapel door, which for the year we would decorate in a very special way. One suggestion was to set up a simple, small door frame with some decoration, which would be a sign or symbol of the Holy Doors elsewhere.



One other important point that Pope Francis makes is that he has chosen to open the Holy Door in St Peter's on 8 December because of its rich meaning in the recent history of the Church, because it is the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. He explains that the bishops of the Council 'strongly perceived, as a true breath of the Holy Spirit, a need to talk about God to men and women of their time in a more accessible way.' The image of the door expresses that hope and invites us draw more people closer to God.

The year will focus on the idea of God's mercy in the scriptures, and so for our liturgy and music there are many images of the door or the gate as ways of encountering God. We need to look out for opportunities to use those images in a particular way as we celebrate during this year. Some of them are given here just to prompt your thinking, for you to develop and share them with others.

Jacob has his dream of an encounter with God:

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, 'Truly, the Lord is in this place and I did not know!' He was afraid and said, 'How awe-inspiring this place is! This is nothing less than the abode of God, and this is the gate of heaven!' (Genesis 28:16,17)

What will you make of this verse from the psalms?

O gates, lift high your heads;  
grow higher, ancient doors.  
Let him enter, the king of glory! (Psalm 24:7)

How can you reflect on these words of Jesus?

So Jesus spoke to them again: In all truth I tell you, I am the gate of the sheepfold. All who have come before me are thieves and bandits, but the sheep took no notice of them. I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe: such a one will go in and out and will find pasture. (John 10:7-9)

How will you respond to this invitation?

Look, I am standing at the door, knocking. If one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share a meal at that person's side. (Revelation 3:20)

Then as we come to Advent and Christmas there are many occasions in the liturgy where people come and go – they enter and leave the story. Perhaps there you might also find moments to reflect on the door, the door that opens us into the heart of God's gracious mercy.