

# PRAYER AND LITURGY POLICY

*St. Joseph's  
Catholic  
Primary School,  
a Voluntary  
Academy*

St. Joseph's Catholic primary School

**Prayer and Liturgy Policy.**

*“Trusting in God, Creating tomorrow, helping today.”*

**Intent**

As a Catholic Academy, religious education and faith development are at the heart of our school curriculum developing the Catholicism and spirituality of our pupils.

Prayer and Liturgy an integral part of our lives at St. Joseph's School. We are members of the Body of Christ and members of a Christian Community and recognise that we are all at different stages of our faith journey. Therefore, through our prayer and liturgy and the way we use Christ's teaching within every aspect of our school and lives, we can develop a deep understanding of our faith which will help us to love and serve God in our daily lives, both now and in the future.

Our aims for prayer and liturgy will be to enrich the lives of the children in the:

- Love of God for everyone and everything He has created.
- Understanding of the Good News of the Lord, to enable them to respond to His love.
- Teaching of the Catholic faith and how their lives should be shaped by their beliefs and values.
- Growth of faith by relating the Gospels to their lives and levels of understanding.
- Development of worship and prayer, allowing children to take a leading role and develop a diet of prayer which enhances their own personal journey through life.

We feel that the best way to achieve these aims is a three way process involving the Home, School and Parish. We endeavour to make these links wherever possible, acknowledging that the foundation of all prayer and liturgy are presented to children from a very wide range of backgrounds and commitment to the faith.

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Based upon the varied backgrounds and experience of Church and worship we tailor our programme to meet the needs of all pupils. At St Joseph's, everyone is welcome to join the rich tapestry of prayer and liturgy within school and we are mindful to encourage, support and affirm everyone to participate fully.

### **Implementation**

As a school, we implement the key principles of prayer and liturgy as detailed in the Prayer and Liturgy Directory. In line with the guidance from the Nottingham Diocese, prayer and liturgy in school allows profound moments of encounter which is designed to help the members of the community to grow as Disciples and create Missionary Disciples.

All opportunities for liturgy and prayer are opportunities to embed the influence of Mass. Through this, the children can see how everything is drawn from and leads back to our rich liturgical tradition, whilst still providing enjoyable and inclusive opportunities for our community.

The firm foundation on which all opportunities for prayer and liturgy are rooted is scripture. The liturgical seasons of the church drives the themes for liturgy and prayer. As a school, we follow the "Word of the Week" as outlines in the Diocesan Ordo. This provides an accessible and clear connection to the liturgical season and helps connect the experience of prayer and liturgy at St Joseph's with that of the parish and beyond. These themes can be planned out in the school's Annual Plan of Provision (APOP).

Each week, the children across the school produce a video which reflects the word of the week. This is then used to support prayer and liturgy of the children the following week. The videos are uploaded each week onto our school YouTube channel, allowing the children to be true Missionary Disciples, sharing the Good News beyond our school. A Word of the Week board is displayed in the church with a QR code link to the video as well as a link being in our school newsletter, on our website and Facebook page. This video details the mission the children have and this weaves through other forms of prayer and liturgy throughout the week.

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Prayer and Liturgy, in all forms mirrors the Catholic traditions of the Mass. Children's theological literacy is well developed due to the clear links made with Mass and the liturgical year of the church. All liturgy and prayer follows the structure: gather, word, response and mission.

To ensure that all children experience an act of worship daily, we follow a timetable for worship for the whole school. All worship is based on the word of the week and liturgical season of the Church.

Across each week, there should be:

- One teacher led **class based** worship using the 'Word of the Week' video as a stimulus;
- One child led **class based** Celebration of the Word linked to the word of the week;
- One child/ class led **whole school** Celebration of the Word;
- One adult led **whole school** Celebration of the Word;
- A weekly class Mass or Liturgy of the Word on a rota basis;
- One whole school celebration of faith through signing or prayer

Whole school worship is given the highest priority. It is clearly timetabled within the school day. As a school we look for every opportunity to include those who wish to be involved. Therefore, all staff, parents and the wider parish family are invited to celebrate prayer and liturgy on a regular basis.

To foster an environment of respect and inclusivity, in all forms of worship, we invite rather than direct people to participate in religious practices like the Sign of the Cross or prayers. This ensures that participation is conscious, sincere and authentic choice for each individual.

Central to liturgy and prayer across the school is the use of scripture and creativity. We ensure that children have the opportunity pray and respond to prayer in different ways. These include:

- Mass and Liturgy of the Word;
- Celebration of the Word;
- Word of the Week videos;
- Traditional forms of prayer;
- Meditation and reflection;

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- Contemporary styles of prayer;
- Signing and praise.

### Mass

At St Joseph's we celebrate year group, key stage and whole school Masses on a regular basis. When preparing Mass, staff should seek advice from either the Lay Chaplain, Liturgy and Prayer Lead or the Headteacher. Masses should be sent to the clergy at least 4 days before the celebration.

Before the Mass, readings should be given to the children to practice and should be printed into the Mass file. In addition, staff should check that the church is set, including the screen with slides, with quiet music playing before anyone enters the space for Mass (this is usually the church).

**Introduction**- an introduction to Mass may be led by young people, or by a member of staff, before the celebration begins. The purpose of the introduction is to welcome those who have gathered and to set the tone and theme of the Mass. The introduction can come before the opening hymn or after the priest has begun the celebration with the Sign of the Cross.

#### The introduction should:

- Welcome the congregation and any special guests
- Introduce those who have prepared the Mass
- Introduce the theme of the Mass e.g the liturgical season, the feast day, the intentions of the Mass etc
- Prepare the congregation to take part in the Mass

#### The introduction could also include commentary to:

- Explain why specific readings have been chosen/ why they relate to the theme of the Mass
- Ask the congregation to reflect upon and focus on a particular intention during the Mass

The introduction and gathering is also a good opportunity to bring up any objects of symbols that may help the congregation to reflect upon the theme or

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season of the Mass. Care should be taken that this display does not distract from the altar and therefore a separate site or use of a small table is always preferable.

**The Penitential Act**- This comes in the first part of the Mass just after the welcome/ introduction and the Sign of the Cross. It is there to help us prepare our hearts and minds for what we are about to participate in, and to receive. The Penitential Act always begins and ends with words from the priest.

At St Joseph's, the young people lead this part of the Mass. They write and lead the Penitential Act in the form of three statements about Jesus' love and mercy followed by the responses: 'Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy' rather than focussing on personal mistakes or failings. This important focus reminds us that forgiveness is rooted in love and, by focussing on Jesus love and mercy for us, we can confidently and sincerely then ask Him for mercy.

A great place to start when writing these statements is to look first to the Gospel reading to help create a connection between the different sections of the liturgy.

The priest will conclude the Penitential Act with a prayer seeking forgiveness.

Readers should return to their places after the priest has concluded the Penitential Act but not before.

On solemnities, feast days and other days of celebration, the Gloria will follow. The Gloria should be sung.

**Scripture**- It cannot be underestimated how important the role of scripture is in prayer and liturgy. It should be the firm foundation on which our practice and approach is rooted.

To ensure consistency, the Good News Translation should be used in all Masses where the majority of the children are younger than year 6. In year 6, we begin to use the English Standard Version (Catholic Edition).

The Ordo gives the specific readings for each day and is an essential resource when planning for Mass.

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Scripture should always be read from the full translation. However, in addition to this, it can be helpful to use other resources alongside the text to scaffold understanding. This could be in the forms of videos, music, visual aids etc. These should not be a replacement for, but an addition to the scripture. Drama can be used but this should not replace the scripture. After all scripture interpretations, the focus should remain on the scripture and therefore there should not be a round of applause.

All readings should be proclaimed from the lectern or ambo. If the text needs to be enlarged and cannot be read directly from the lectionary then the Mass folder should be used to keep all reading. Loose papers (however beautifully backed) should not be used.

Scripture readings should be read clearly and confidently. Young people should have the chance to practise the readings and be given an explanation of their meaning and context. A microphone should be used.

### First Reading

This reading is present for all celebrations of Mass

This is usually from the Old Testament or sometimes from one of the letters in the New Testament

The book of the Bible is given at the beginning of the reading and ends with 'The Word of the Lord' to which the congregation responds, 'Thanks be to God'.

### Psalm

This reading is present for all celebrations of Mass

This is usually one, or part of one, of the Psalms in the Books of Psalms

For a responsorial Psalm the reader of the Psalm introduces the response which the congregation repeats. Then the reader of the Psalm sings or reads each verse, interspersed by the response each time.

Psalms are songs and wherever possible should be sung, even if to a very simple tune. If it is not possible to sing any parts of the psalm then instrumental background music can be used to help meditation on the words.

### Second Reading

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This reading is usually only given on Sundays and solemnities

The second reading is always taken from the letters in the New Testament

To ensure clarity and ease of understanding, scripture should be proclaimed by a single voice.

### The Gospel Acclamation

The acclamation is always sung, and the congregation stands to greet the Gospel.

The reader of the previous piece of scripture may remain at the lectern to sing the acclamation before the Gospel is proclaimed. Care should be taken to ensure the reader leaves the lectern before the priest arrives.

### The Gospel

The Gospel always comes from one of the four canonical Gospels in the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. This is the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. Accordingly special marks of honour are used to distinguish it:

- The priest proclaims the Gospel after a prayer or blessing
- Whilst the Gospel passage is introduced, those present make a sign of the cross with the thumb on forehead, lips and chest, whilst responding: 'Glory to you, O Lord'
- The Gospel ends with the words, 'The Gospel of the Lord' and the response 'Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ'

After the scripture readings, the priest preaches on the Word of God and the theme of the Mass, this is called the homily.

**The Universal Prayer-** sometimes known as the prayer of the faithful or Bidding Prayers, concludes the Liturgy of the Word, encouraging us to turn to God and to ask for help with those things he scripture has taught us.

The Universal Prayer begins with an introduction from the priest and ends with the priest's prayer on behalf of the whole congregation.

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The intentions of these intercessions are usually in the following order:

1. For the needs of the Church
2. For the pupil authorities and salvation of the whole world
3. For those burdened by any kind of difficulty
4. For the local community
5. Any other specific intentions of the community, including prayers for those who have died.

The intercessions should reflect:

- The scripture
- The theme of the Mass
- The liturgical season
- The needs of the local community
- The needs of the world

At the end of the intercessions and prayers the congregation should be invited to pray for their own intentions in silence, followed by a longer pause. When we collectively pray, 'Lord hear us' or 'Lord in your mercy' to offer up our silent prayers. These prayers will then conclude with asking for the intercession of Mary. For example: We ask Mary our Mother to pray for us as we say, Hail Mary...

The reader should only return to their seats after the priest has concluded the final prayer of the Universal Prayer and all have said, 'Amen'.

**The Preparation of the Gifts-** this used to be called the offertory and is an important part of the celebration of Mass and should only involve the procession of bread, wine and if necessary a collection of money or goods for the parish or the poor.

**Blessing and dismissal-** the end of the celebration is an important moment, particularly in its missionary focus. The congregation should leave after the final blessing. Therefore, all announcements should be made before the final blessing. If a final hymn is to be included, this should be short and purposeful to inspire people in mission. Children may leave during the final hymn.

## Liturgy of the Word

Where there is no priest, children will celebrate the Liturgy of the Word in church on a rota basis. When preparing Liturgy of the Word with children, staff should seek advice from either the Lay Chaplain, Liturgy and Prayer Lead or the Headteacher. The Liturgy of the Word follows the same structure as detailed in the Mass section above.

## Celebration of the Word

All opportunities for children to participate in celebration of the word should closely mirror the Mass. These can take place in the church, school hall, classroom, outdoors or any appropriate space. Care must be taken to ensure that the space is suitable for the celebration and is prepared before the start so that children can enter calmly and reverently. Music may be playing as children enter the prayer space.

Seasonality and theme should be paramount when planning a celebration of the word and all celebrations should centre around scripture.

All celebrations of the word should follow the structure:

**Gather-** this is an opportunity for the children to gather in prayer. Children should use this as time to prepare themselves to hear scripture and be close to God. During the gather, children may use music, silence or action to gather together. All celebrations of the word should also begin with all participants being invited to make the sign of the cross. During the gather, children should prepare the focal point using symbols which allows participants to understand the theme and seasonality of the celebration.

As in the Mass, the gather may also be used as an opportunity to reflect on God's mercy and may include sorry prayers.

**Word-** this is the focus of the celebration. The scripture should be read from a lectern and read clearly and confidently. Where possible, this should be read by a single reader using a microphone. Scripture interpretations may be used in the form of song, videos, drama, art, dance etc but these must be used after the full translation of the scripture has been shared. Where the majority of the

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group is younger than year 6, the Good News Translation should be used. With year 6 children this should be the English Standard Version (Catholic Edition).

**Response-** this section should invite all present to respond to the scripture. This may be in the form of a joint action, moment of silence or song. The response should be informed by the message of the scripture, age and size of the group and the liturgical season. There may also be an opportunity for Bidding or Thanksgiving prayers.

**Mission-** at the end of the celebration, just as at the end of Mass, the children should be sent out as missionaries to act on the message from the scripture. This mission should link closely to the scripture and theme of the celebration and be a clear, achievable action for all participants to complete. This may be an action such as prayer journaling directly after the celebration and a mission that they can live out beyond the celebration.

When planning a celebration of the word, care should be given to the seasonality, atmosphere and space. The involvement of children in the planning and delivery of the celebration should be guided by the Skill Strategy progression document. All planning should be completed on the Diocese Planning Forms.

### **Retreat Days of Prayer.**

Twice an academic year the chaplaincy team prepare and present retreat days of prayer. These are based on a theme away from the word of the week. In the past these have been linked to the liturgical calendar or the Bishop's incentives.

The children work closely with the Lay Chaplain and Liturgy & Prayer leader to prepare small prayer stations based on the theme. Each station follows the structure of collective worship using scripture to inspire their creative response to prayer. Each class, across the school, are invited to visit the prayer stations and reflect on the theme and scripture. Parents, the wider parish community and schools from across the CMAT are also invited to these retreat days and have the opportunity to reflect in prayer.

## Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a deep conversation with God and is vital to facilitate time in prayer and reflection based on scripture.

To prepare for your Lectio Divina prayer time, create a focal point with a Bible (open at your reading) an icon, a candle and a cloth (liturgical colour).

Lectio Divina can vary in length and should be guided by the age and capacity of the children involved. Lectio Divina always follows the same format:

- Give each person a copy of the chosen scripture, or have the Bible so all can view the chosen piece.
- Begin with the sign of the cross and perhaps play some quiet music to begin your reflection.
- Tell the group - 'You are going to be listening to some scripture and thinking about what it is saying to you. Try to listen carefully to the words and think about what God is trying to tell you.'
- Read the scripture (not too quickly).
- Say - 'Reflect for a moment upon the scripture you have just heard. Think which words and phrases are most important for you. Think about what God is trying to tell you through this scripture.'
- Pause for a while to allow everyone to think and reflect.
- Now ask someone to read the scripture for a second time.
- Then invite people to share aloud the words or phrases that were important to them. Encourage each other to say why the words were chosen and why they have importance for a particular person.
- Read the scripture for a third time. Pause at or use expression with the words and phrases people found important. You could even ring a little bell when the important words are spoken.
- Play some quiet music for a while.

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- Say the closing prayer: Thank you God for allowing us to hear your Word and to become closer to you; may we take your Word and use it in our lives.
- Finish with: 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
- Leave the scripture available for reading later if you would like to.

### **Evaluation of Liturgy and Prayer**

Each child, regardless of their faith background, is given the opportunity to evaluate liturgy and prayer. There is no expectation for all acts of worship to be formally evaluated. However, evaluations should be completed on a rota basis. These evaluations should be shared with the children who prepared the worship and used to inform all future worship opportunities.

Following each Mass, the children in Key Stage Two are given the opportunity to reflect and respond. This allows them time to think of how the Mass will impact and shape their lives.

Parents, Govenors and staff are given the opportunity to evaluate worship on a regular basis. This is sometimes completed using the evaluation forms or through the use of questionnaires.

### **Other aspects of Worship during the year**

At St. Joseph's School, we do take into account the different seasons celebrated in the Church's Liturgical Year. This partly takes place in lessons, but it also focussed on in our assemblies and other activities during the year.

Areas covered in the academic year:

- Harvest Celebration
- Advent preparation for Christmas
- Lenten preparation for Easter (including a Lenten service which the parents and parishioners are invited to attend)

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- Important feasts of the year celebrated and focusses on - all Holy Days and our Patron Saint Joseph

### Home - School-Parish links.

We warmly welcome opportunities for parents to be involved with collective worship and for us to assist parents in the difficult responsibility they have in encouragement and guidance, through their example, for their children to nurture and grown in their faith journey.

All parents are involved in selecting the word of the week for the year. In addition to this they are also invited to celebrate whole school and class collective worship. We also welcome opportunities where we can join with parishioners and other groups and where we can invite them to join us. We work hard to foster such links and organise a number of opportunities throughout the year:

- A weekly class Mass or Liturgy of the Word;
- Lenten and Advent services;
- Parents and Grandparents opportunities to evaluate collective worship;
- Christmas concerts - with performances for both parents and local Senior Citizens;
- Word of the Week videos;
- Parish Ambassadors;
- Services across the liturgical year (see APOP)

### **Impact**

Our liturgy and prayer has ambition for the spiritual growth of all pupils irrespective of background and starting point. All pupils are visually uplifted by worship. The most recent Diocesan Canonical Inspection Report stated that, 'Pupils take ownership and initiative in leading the community of St Joseph's in deep and meaningful worship.'

At St. Joseph's, we continually measure the impact of our collective worship by speaking to children and all stakeholders. By ensuring that collective worship

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has the highest possible priority, the impact that it has on the lives of all members of our community is palpable.

Worship is an integral part of our lives at St. Joseph's School. We are all members of the Body of Christ and members of a Christian Community and recognise that we are all at different stages of our faith journey. Therefore, we ensure that Collective Worship is differentiated so that all can access it despite age or faith background. Careful consideration is taken to remove any barriers and all collective worship ensures that all learning styles are catered for.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Headteacher has the responsibility for the leadership of collective worship and delegates responsibility to key staff:

The Liturgy and Prayer Lead should:

- Keep informed of religious issues and initiatives and inform and support colleagues
- Maintain resources- update and order when appropriate
- Ensure collective worship is taking place in line with the school policy through observations, monitoring planning, monitoring the Catholic life of the school and discussion with children.
- Attend Diocesan R.E Lead courses, as well as other related courses
- Lead INSET and staff meetings
- Monitor prayer displays and evidence files on Teams.
- Support staff in planning and delivery collective worship.
- Ensure that the progression document for liturgy and prayer is followed so that all children access prayer in an age appropriate way.

Class teachers ensure that the children attend high quality collective worship in line with the school policy.

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The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher ensure that high quality collective worship in line with the school policy.

Governors monitor the success of Liturgy and Prayer at whole Governing Body meetings through the Headteacher's report and reports from subject leaders.

**Reviewed:** July 2024

**Review Date:** July 2025

### Accompaniment

All forms of prayer and liturgy are used as an opportunity to accompany young peoples on their journey of faith, whatever their starting point, and as a school we ensure that all experiences of prayer and liturgy reflects this.