

Diocese of Leeds

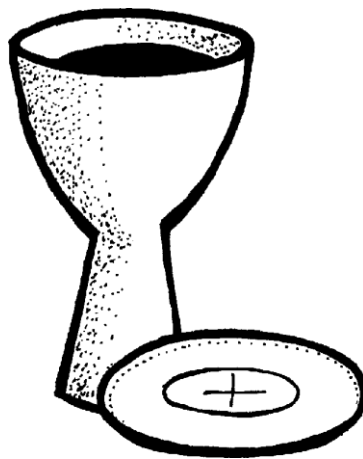


Vicariate for Education

GUIDELINES FOR CELEBRATING SCHOOL MASSES

September 2025

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. (1 Cor. 11:23-25)



Every commitment to holiness, every activity aimed at carrying out the Church's mission, every work of pastoral planning, must draw the strength it needs from the Eucharistic mystery and in turn be directed to that mystery as its culmination. In the Eucharist we have Jesus, we have his redemptive sacrifice, we have his resurrection, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit, we have adoration, obedience and love of the Father. Were we to disregard the Eucharist, how could we overcome our own deficiency? (EDE 60)

I would like to help us to rekindle our wonder for the beauty of the truth of the Christian celebration, to remind us of the necessity of an authentic liturgical formation, and to recognize the importance of an art of celebrating that is at the service of the truth of the Paschal Mystery and of the participation of all of the baptized in it, each one according to his or her vocation. (DD 62)

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Aim of the Guidelines

The celebration of the Mass is at the heart of Catholic life and mission. It is important that assistance is given to those in our schools who are responsible for planning and preparing Eucharistic celebrations. These guidelines do not provide a complete handbook on celebrating the Eucharist, nor do they supersede any of the authoritative documents of the Church or provide the depth of guidance provided in the Prayer and Liturgy Directory (PLD). They are designed to offer practical advice for both primary and secondary schools in relation to in-school Masses and those held in church and aim to ensure that those involved in the preparation of school Masses are attentive to the teachings and requirements of the Church.

These guidelines focus on the norms and key aspects of the liturgy which are outlined fully in two main sources - the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)* and the *Directory for Masses with Children (DMC)* – and assists in applying these norms and aspects to a school context. The school's Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator will also find *Celebrating the Mass (CTM)* from the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales a very informative and useful document.

The purpose of every school Mass is to unite those present more closely to Christ, to deepen their love for him and for others. It is hoped these guidelines will provide an impetus for further liturgical formation and help staff and pupils gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Mass, making it even more meaningful for everyone involved in the school community.

These guidelines relate to the celebration of school Masses and do not cover celebrations of Communion in the absence of a priest. These should be conducted according to the established liturgical directives.¹

The guidelines sometimes refers to 'priest' and sometimes to 'celebrant'. The use of celebrant can refer to your priest chaplain, another priest who is not your designated priest chaplain, or the bishop.

Key to Sources Used²

CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> (London: Geoffrey Chapman, rev ed, 1999) https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/INDEX.HTM
CTM	<i>Celebrating the Mass: A Pastoral Introduction</i> , Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2005) https://liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/GIRM/Documents/CTM.pdf
DD	<i>Desiderio Desideravi</i> , (On the liturgical formation of the people of God), Apostolic Letter of Pope Francis, 2022 (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2022) https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/20220629-lettera-ap-desiderio-desideravi.html
DMC	<i>Directory for Masses with Children</i> , Congregation for Divine Worship (1973) https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/SOS/DCM.pdf
DV	<i>Dei Verbum</i> , (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation) Vatican II, (1965) https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html
EDE	<i>Ecclesia de Eucharistia</i> (On the Eucharist and the Church), Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2003) https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-

¹ Congregation for Divine Worship, *Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (1988); Bishops' Conference of England & Wales, *Celebrations of the Word & Communion for Sunday & Weekday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (1996, revised 2013). These are both available on the Bishops' Conference Liturgy Office website: www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/CWC/index.shtml

² The PLD lists useful documents of the Church that focus on the Eucharist (see PLD 'Notes 9.1').

GIRM	<i>General Instruction of the Roman Missal</i> Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2005) https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/GIRM/Documents/GIRM.pdf
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i> (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) Vatican II (1965) https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i> , (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) Vatican II (1964) https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html
LGI	<i>Lectionary, General Introduction</i> (Liturgy Office) https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Rites/Lectionary.pdf
MS	<i>Musicam Sacram</i> (Instruction on Music in the Liturgy), Sacred Congregation of Rites (1967) https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_instr_19670305_musicam-sacram_en.html
PLD	<i>To love you more dearly: Prayer and Liturgy Directory</i> , Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (2023) https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/resources/the-prayer-liturgy-directory
RS	<i>Redemptionis Sacramentum</i> (On certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist), Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2004) https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20040423_redemptionis-sacramentum_en.html

Please note, in these documents, reference numbers relate to paragraphs not page numbers

General Introduction

Catholic Christianity is a celebration of Christ's life, death and resurrection and his continued presence in the world made visible in the Church, the people of God (LG 1, 2); and the sacraments are ways in which Christ's presence is made visible and effective. In the celebration of the Eucharist, Christ is present in the different elements of the sacrament: in the person of the presiding priest, ordained for this ministry, in the assembled people (Matthew 18:20), in the word of God, and in Christ's body and blood. Reflecting on Christ's presence we become aware that the Mass is no mere human work, something we do, but is an encounter with Christ, who invites us to join with him in worship of God the Father in the Spirit. Going forth from the Eucharist the people of God are nourished from the one table of the Word of God and the Body of Christ to live Christ-like lives.³

The Eucharist as 'Source' and 'Summit' of the Church and sign of 'Unity'

*The Mass is the source and summit of the life of the Church. The Mass ... is the most important action of the Church and from its celebration, the life of the Church flows. It is important therefore that the Mass is celebrated worthily and well.*⁴ (PLD 7.4)

At the heart of the life of the Catholic Church has always been the celebration of the Eucharist, or the Mass, as Catholics often call it. Taking part in the Mass is the hallmark of the Catholic, central and crucial to our Catholic identity. (CTM 1)

These quotations affirm the importance of the celebration of the Mass in the life of

³ 'in so far as she [the Church] never ceases, particularly in the sacred liturgy, to partake of the *bread of life* and to offer it to the faithful from the *one table of the Word of God and the Body of Christ*.' (DV 21)

⁴ Reference to 'source and summit' originates from *Lumen Gentium* 11.

every Catholic school. Within changing patterns of religious belief and practice, the Eucharist remains at the heart of Catholic identity. The Eucharist is a source of inexhaustible richness by which Jesus gives himself to us and from which the Church draws her very life.⁵ The Eucharist is also the summit of the life of the Church because participating in the Eucharist is a prefiguring of the heavenly banquet, a foretaste of the life to come (CCC 1326).⁶



The Eucharist is an essential foundation upon which Catholic ethos is built. Every school Mass is a sign of unity, a sign that those gathered put the world on notice that they take their unity in Christ seriously. The Eucharistic celebration is the privileged place where communion with God - Father, Son and Spirit - is proclaimed and nurtured and those present are united more closely with the Church in its following of Christ. By this sacramental act, the Church fulfils the command of the Lord Jesus to celebrate the Eucharist in memory of him. The mystery of his saving death and resurrection is made present as the living Lord speaks through the scriptures and gives himself in the bread that becomes his Body and the wine that becomes his Blood.

While Mass is the most Catholic of occasions, at the same time, it is a sign of welcome and hospitality gathering all those present into unity.⁷ Those present from other religious traditions and none are invited to strengthen the school's ethos and be agents of change in society, transforming society from within (Parable of the Leaven, Luke 13:20-21) through considering how the Scriptures, and the self-giving of Jesus, speak to them and flow into the living of a good life.

This description of the Eucharist as 'source,' 'summit' and 'sign of unity' while fundamental and positive, may yet remain only an outward sign and not in and of itself afford a positive personal experience of the Mass.⁸ If the Eucharist is to become what it is, it is crucial that formation is offered through the principles of invitation and accompaniment so that, as far as possible, in partnership with parents and parish(es) schools gradually enrich the understanding and lived experience of pupils, students and staff through a positive and progressive catechesis and formation.

General Guiding Principles

Invitation

Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and you will see" (John 1: 37-39).

Jesus' disciples came from diverse backgrounds and responded to his call in various ways. This diversity mirrors our school communities and highlights the need to be welcoming while respecting each person's identity and dignity. Consequently, the principle of invitation is used in two senses: in the first place, taking our cue from Jesus' reply *"Come and you will see"* it is a gesture of welcome and hospitality. Secondly, *"Come and you will see"* is an offer, to engage in an encounter with Christ. It is important to maintain a welcoming and inclusive approach to the Mass because Catholic schools are not parishes, where those attending do so through a conscious decision to participate. In a Catholic school there are Catholic pupils and staff present who, outside of the school, do not attend Mass and there are those who are not baptised and who do not share the fundamental beliefs of the Catholic Church. Ensuring the

⁵ CCC 1328. EDE 1.

⁶ The Eucharist is the summit of salvation history – the history of the actions of God in his covenant relationship with humanity and all creation. The Eucharist is related to the Passover meal of Judaism, but the Eucharist is the most transformative of God's actions in the world. God instituted the Passover meal, and this event involved the delivery of a single nation from slavery, the creation of a national covenant, and a journey to an earthly promised land. In the Eucharist, we have the deliverance of people of all nations from sin, the institution of a universal covenant, and the journey to the ultimate promise land - heaven.

⁷ *Lumen Gentium* 1, says the Church is 'a sign ... of communion with God and of the unity of mankind' meaning that beyond all political creeds and ideologies, beyond all social structures and societies, it is the Church that is the goal of human flourishing.

⁸ 'for an increasing number of Roman Catholics today there appears to be a certain discontinuity between everyday experience and the Sunday Mass. For many a discernible gulf has opened up between the spiritual journey of the individual and the communal, liturgical acts of worship.' (CTM 1)

Mass is open to all pupils, students, staff and when appropriate their families, regardless of faith commitment or background is what the principle of invitation seeks to support. More about responding to the invitation to participate in the celebration of Mass can be found here,

<https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/GIRM/Ministry/AssemblyC.pdf>

Questions to consider:

- *Is the school's celebration of Mass invitational? What does this mean in your context?*
- *How are pupils and students invited to engage or participate in the celebration of Mass?*
- *How does your invitation to Mass convey to the school community that this is the source and summit of the Catholic faith?*
- *How do you ensure the integrity of pupils in your school who are of other religious traditions and none during the celebration of Mass?*

Accompaniment

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them (Luke 24: 13-15).

In Catholic schools, we have the unique opportunity and privilege to walk alongside pupils, accompanying them on their faith journeys. Like the disciples, each pupil, student and member of staff have different starting points, and it is essential to be sensitive to these. The celebration of the Mass should be accessible to all, and the educational and catechetical perspectives and approaches we take to support those within our community with SEND will be beneficial to everyone. From these diverse starting points, we need to accompany all members of the school, so they come to appreciate that their engagement and participation in the celebration of Mass is a means of growing and furthering their own faith journey and the ethos of the school.

Schools must authentically accompany pupils, students and staff by discerning how the celebration of the Mass can best address their spiritual and educational needs. Those present at Mass should not be passive observers, rather they need to engage in what is taking place according to their age, capacity and faith commitment. Additionally, schools should support all baptised Christians who wish to play a more ministerial role at Mass with integrity and sincerity, regardless of their starting point.

Through the celebration of Mass, the school walks alongside all members of its community because such celebrations shape the life of the school marking beginnings and endings, times of celebration and joy, and times of sorrow and sadness. The school is a living embodiment of the key insight of the Second Vatican Council that:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs, and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, ... are the joys and the hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.' (GS 1)

Questions to consider:

- *How do you accompany pupils and students so they can engage or participate in the celebration of Mass?*
- *Is your accompaniment different for those of other religious traditions and none? If so, what does it look like?*
- *How do you accompany those who minister during Mass: those who proclaim the word, those who read the prayer of the faithful, those who serve, those who lead the music/singing?*
- *How do you accompany those who are indifferent?*
- *How do leaders accompany the teaching, non-teaching staff and parents to aid their engagement in the celebration of Mass?*

Formation

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." (1 Cor. 11:23-25)

Formation is an on-going process that aims to foster growth in engagement and participation in the celebration of the Mass. Good formation is on-going, enabling people to understand and participate in what is taking place. Whilst formation is a life-long process – a process whereby the Christian grows through their understanding and action to become more like Christ Jesus – the school has an important part to play in forming pupils, students and staff in the celebration of Mass through modelling, providing explanations to aid greater understanding and accompanying pupils and staff in their developing appreciation of the Mass.

The final purpose of all ... Eucharistic formation must be a greater conformity to the Gospel in the daily life of children. (DMC 15)

The *Directory for Masses with Children* affirms that catechesis in the Mass is the responsibility of parents, catechists and teachers. However, it recognises that parents do not always fulfil the religious obligations they undertook at their child's baptism (DMC 2). In this context, the liturgy has an important formative role in assisting the spiritual and catechetical progress of children and young people, not least for those who do not regularly attend Sunday Mass. It is through liturgy that the Church's faith is expressed and embodied. By means of the Eucharistic celebration, the Church reaches out to young people to instruct and to bless them (DMC 3).

Whilst formation takes place during the celebration of Mass, it is important that schools plan regular formation for pupils, students and staff to help develop their engagement and participation. Formation should be based on the needs of pupils, students and staff and be deliberately planned to achieve a particular aim. What is planned will be part of what the PLD calls the 'annual plan of provision' (PLD 8.2).

Questions to consider:

- *When and where is formation in the celebration of Mass taking place in school?*
- *Is formation based on the needs of pupils, students and staff? How do you know?*
- *Is formation regular and effective? How do you know?*
- *What guidance exists for teachers?*
- *What guidance exists for those who support the formation of the pupils and students?*
- *What formation do senior leaders receive?*

Four of the five key points of formation promoted by the diocese are relevant to the celebration of Mass:

- Every effort will be made to give pupils and students positive experiences, based on sound educational, pastoral and liturgical principles.
- Eucharistic celebrations experienced in school will prepare Catholic pupils and students for the liturgical life of the Church.
- Eucharistic celebrations as far as possible, take the pupils and students age, aptitudes and backgrounds, into account.
- Eucharistic celebrations will highlight a special occasion and will normally be celebrated with those pupils whose faith development has reached an appropriate stage.

A Note on the Formation of Children in Primary Schools

'All who have a part in the formation of children should work together and consult toward one objective: that children have some experience of those human values that are present in the eucharistic celebration: e.g. acting together as a community, exchange of greetings, the capacity to listen, to forgive and to ask for forgiveness, the expression of gratitude, the experience of symbolic actions, a meal of friendship, and festive celebration.' (DMC 9)

The Catholic life and mission of primary schools embodies these human values present in the eucharistic celebration, and alongside these approaches, schools can use pre-eucharistic celebrations outside of the Mass to support the formation of children in their understanding of the Eucharist.

'Celebrations of various kinds which help the children to understand some of the elements of liturgy (such as greeting, silence, community praise especially in song) have a great part to play in their liturgical formation and in preparing them for the liturgical life of the Church.' (DMC 13)

Progressive Participation and Progressive Engagement

A central aim of the PLD is an explanation and exploration of ‘progressive participation’ in the liturgy (here understood as the celebration of Mass) for baptised pupils and young people (PLD 1.1, 3.2, 3.3). However, it is also acutely aware that Catholic schools are inclusive of Catholics and those of other denominations, religious traditions and none. Consequently, the PLD most helpfully draws all members of the school community – Catholics, Christians, members of other religious traditions and people of good will – together in what is most appropriately called ‘progressive engagement’.

Engagement and participation are progressive; they are developmental, they take time, they take planning, and both co-exist at the same time in any school because they reflect the diversity of school cohorts and the stage of spiritual and faith development of pupils, students, and staff.

Progressive Participation

Progressive participation refers to a gradual deepening, not just a routine ‘going through the motions’, but a growing in experience, understanding and involvement in the celebration of the Mass. To participate is both interior and exterior. Fundamental to the interior aspect of participation is a formation in that openness which recognises that God is speaking to you and me in and through the Word, fostering our attentiveness, enabling us to rest in and reflect on the Word. This can be aided by short pauses for silence between readings and responses to aid reflection.⁹ The PLD gives the example of how bidding prayers, used as a prayerful response to the Word, can show the close interplay between the interior and exterior. *‘The reader invites us to pray for those who are sick and then we keep a silent pause. In that silence we bring to mind members of our family and friends who are ill and so we respond: ‘Hear our prayer.’* (PLD 3.3) The Mass requires of those who participate in it an openness to the reality that the bread and the wine offered are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ – it is Christ who is received in holy communion. Through an openness to this mystery, participants are nourished by Christ and can live like Christ: fortified by word and holy communion, participants go out from the celebration to live Christ-like lives.

Pupils and students who are baptised are called to progressively participate in the celebration of the Mass, so that their participation can become full, conscious and active.

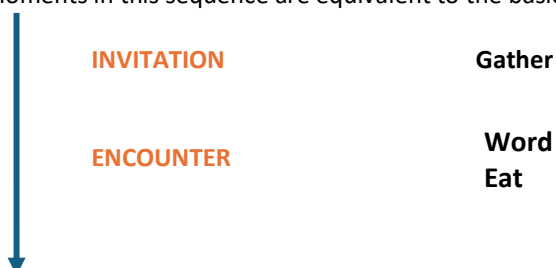
- ‘Full’ means having an awareness that celebrations of the Mass take place when groups gather, and the proclamation of scripture and the eating of the Body and Blood of Christ is the central action. The participant is fully present during the celebration, in body, mind and spirit: the participant is engaged and open to the celebration.
- Participating ‘consciously’ is underpinned by formation appropriate to the participant’s age and development, through which pupils come to understand what is happening.
- Finally, participating ‘actively’ means entering into the celebration of the Mass with an openness to the encounter with Christ in word and holy communion, acknowledging the impact it can have on their lives. (PLD 3.3)

Consequently, schools should carefully consider when pupils and students are ready to both attend and minister during the celebration of the Mass and should assist pupils when they do.

Progressive participation in the Mass is a movement in THREE related steps:

INVITATION → ENCOUNTER → MISSION

through which pupils and students are accompanied and formed in an ever-deeper participation in the life of Christ Jesus. The three moments in this sequence are equivalent to the basic structure of the celebration of the Eucharist:



⁹ *The Place of Silence*, <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Preparation/Silence.shtml>
See also (CTM 91, 92).

During Mass participants encounter the Lord Jesus, especially in Word and in his Body and Blood during the Eucharistic Prayer and Holy Communion.

Progressive Engagement

Section 5 of the PLD entitled 'The school community at prayer and liturgy' outlines an inclusive structure through which all members of the school community are invited to engage in four related actions. Taken together, these actions map out the way in which the celebration of Mass can mark a stopping point on a spiritual journey:

1. **To be present:** pupils bring themselves to the celebration, with all that is going on in their lives and in the world. Being alert to this is the first step in engaging with any form of worship.
2. **To experience:** to engage in what is happening through the senses – at the most basic, to see and to hear.
3. **To reflect:** to ask what has been experienced, and what it means to their lives.
4. **To respond:** to ask how to take forward what has been experienced into living a good life.

Progressive engagement is a movement in FOUR related steps through which pupils and students are accompanied and formed into an ever-deeper engagement. All members of the school community are invited to be present at the celebration of Mass, to be both respectful and to engage in the celebration so that what is experienced can be taken forward into living a good life.

The steps of progressive engagement and progressive participation provide an inclusive structure that ensures all members of the school community can find a place at the one table of the word and of the eucharist during the celebration of the Mass.

Progressive Engagement

Invitation

Experience

Reflect

Respond

Progressive Participation

Gather

Word

Eat

Send

Invitation

Encounter

Mission

Depending on their religious faith, Catholics, other Christians, members of other religions and faith communities, as well as people of good will, will engage or participate in these actions in different ways, and the explicit religious content of the event will assume different meaning and weight.

The Eucharist as a Sacrifice – the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

'The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice.' (CCC 1367)

When we say that the celebration of the Eucharist (the Mass) is a 'sacrifice' we are describing its intimate connection with the passion, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus.

In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke (the Synoptic Gospels), we are told that Jesus journeyed with his friends to Jerusalem in the last week of his life for the Passover festival. In Hebrew Passover is *pesach* which in Greek (the language of the early church) is '*pascha*'. So, the frequent use of 'paschal' by the Church (as in 'Paschal mystery', 'Paschal lamb', 'Paschal candle') refer to the sacrifice Jesus made for the forgiveness of sins: '*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son*' (John 3:16).

The reason for calling the Eucharist a sacrifice is the fact that Jesus is the (Passover) lamb that was slain – the Lamb of God ('*The next day he [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming towards him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* John 1:29). The sacrifice of Jesus is perfect in the sense that it is a once-for-all event that restores our relationship with God by taking away the sins of the world.

The immediate background is the Last Supper where Jesus celebrates the Passover meal with his friends, but at this

meal Jesus does something new and immeasurably significant; he gives us the gift of the Eucharist. Taking bread and wine Jesus said, *'This is my body, This is my blood'*. The bread and wine Christ offers as his Body and Blood at his Last Supper not only anticipates the actual historical event - Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice - which is about to take place in his suffering, crucifixion and death, but is renewed at every celebration of the Mass. This once-for-all sacrifice *lives on* in the eucharistic celebration. When the priest, who by his ordination represents Christ, takes the elements of bread and wine and repeats Jesus' own words, they are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit and become Christ's body and blood.

When we celebrate the Eucharist, as the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection, this central event of salvation becomes present. It's power to effect change in the world comes not from its memory alone, but from what it is: Jesus gives up his life for us, and this sacrifice is so decisive for the salvation of the world that Jesus offered it and returned to the Father *only after he had left us a means of sharing in it as if we had been present there* (EDE 11).

The real value in stressing the sacrificial dimension is that it reminds us that the Eucharist is above all an action of Christ Jesus. Christ enacts, in the eucharistic celebration, our redemption – he gives himself *here and now* not simply in the past - in the offering of his Body and his Blood. Secondly, by leaving us a means of sharing in his sacrifice, Christ reminds us that the Eucharist he offers is indistinguishable from the Cross – it always leads to the Cross. Therefore, caught up, as we are in the offering of ourselves at the Eucharist, we too are called to sacrifice (*'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.'* John 12:24): to the service of God and others above and beyond ourselves.

At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet 'in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.' (CCC 1323)

A Note on some Key Terms

The words **Eucharist** and **Mass** are often used to refer to one and the same event, the sacred meal of Christians which is an offering of divine nourishment in word and bread and wine after the example and command of Jesus at the Last Supper by which he is made present in the **Sacrament**.

The word **Eucharist** comes from the Greek word *eucharistein*, which means thanksgiving or to give thanks. Two words come together to make the word Eucharist: *eu* which means good and *charis* meaning gift. To celebrate the Eucharist is to give thanks for the good gift of Christ himself.

The word **Mass** is a form of the Latin word *missio*, derived from the verb *mittere* meaning 'to send.' At the end of the celebration of Mass we hear one of the following: 'Go forth, the Mass is ended.' 'Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.' 'Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.' 'Go in peace.' Each of these commands or dismissals translate the original Latin *Ite missa est* – 'Go! It is sent forth.' After being fortified by word of God and by the Body and Blood of Christ, we are called to mission, sent to live out the good news.

The word **Sacrament** comes from the Latin word *sacramentum* meaning 'a pledge,' and is related to the Latin word *sacrare* meaning 'to make holy.' By the action of the Holy Spirit through particular signs what a sacrament pledges or promises comes to pass – bread and wine become the sacred body and blood of Christ - and through eating and drinking of the same, we are united with Christ and inheritors of the kingdom he promised.

Before Mass

The Priest

The celebration of school Masses is best enabled when there is a good working relationship between the priest and school leaders. This will involve co-operation and communication, with a willingness from both parties to fulfil what the Church requires in the context of the concrete reality of a school community. The *Directory for Masses with Children* (DMC 1973) supports the formation of children and the planning of school Masses



and alongside *Celebrating the Mass* (CTM 2005) will be a shared text between school leaders and priests. Both the DMC and CTM contribute to our understanding of the celebration of the Eucharist with children in the primary phase and with pupils at secondary school, particularly for those who do not regularly attend Sunday Mass.

As in all relationships, a balanced appreciation of what each party offers, patience, humility, each granting the other permission to express uncertainty and make mistakes and a readiness to compromise are pivotal. Paramount in this relationship is pastoral sensitivity on both sides, seeing different expectations, misconceptions and difficulties as opportunities for formation rather than criticism: what is required is an openness in the spirit of Christ.

The celebrant's role at Mass is to lead the people in prayer, in listening and responding to God's word and in offering Christ's sacrifice to God the Father and to offer Christ's Body and Blood to all. With respect to what children and young people can comprehend through the liturgy, the DMC states:

'Even in daily life children do not always understand all their experiences with adults but rather may find them boring. It cannot therefore be expected of the liturgy that everything must always be intelligible to them. Nonetheless, we may fear spiritual harm if over the years children repeatedly experience things that are barely comprehensible in the Church.' (DMC 2)

The celebrant has an important responsibility in Masses with children and young people *'to make the celebration festive, familial and meditative.'* He should

'be concerned above all about the dignity, clarity, and simplicity of his actions and gestures. In speaking to the children, he should express himself so that he will be easily understood, while avoiding any childish style of speech. The free use of introductory comments will lead children to a genuine liturgical participation, but these should not be merely didactic explanations.' (DMC 23).

Therefore, not only must formation happen before and after school Masses, formation is also a feature during the Mass itself. The central role played by the celebrant in the celebration of the Mass requires the school's Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator to:

- consult with the celebrant in advance about the date, time, year group(s) and theme of the forthcoming Mass.
- Discuss with the celebrant what he expects others to prepare – e.g. music, choice of readings, Prayer of the Faithful, power point of the order of the Mass etc. – and what he will prepare.
- each celebration of Mass with children should be *'carefully prepared beforehand, especially with regard to the prayers, songs, readings, and bidding prayer. This preparation should be done in consultation with the adults and the children who are to exercise a special ministry in these Masses.'* (DMC 29)
- discuss whether the celebrant or whether the coordinator or other senior leader will provide or facilitate a simple introduction or commentary on the theme of the Mass and/or at different moments in the Mass, e.g. at the gathering before the Mass, before the Liturgy of the Word, before Communion.
- let the celebrant know of any pastoral issues within the group celebrating so that he can be pastorally sensitive during the Mass.
- present the Mass planning sheet to the celebrant in advance of the Mass, with names of children, young people, and staff who are ministers during the Mass, e.g. servers, readers, singers, gift bearers, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist. The celebrant, if applicable, can use this list to aid the smooth running of the Mass by inviting forward ministers by name at the appropriate time.
- provide opportunities during the school year for your priest to support the formation of pupils and staff in their understanding of the Mass.

Environment

The church is the main setting for children's eucharistic celebrations, but often logistical constraints make this impractical. In such cases, it is important to create a suitable worship space in school. An assembly hall, classroom or sports hall can be transformed into a sacred space and be made to feel very different, with careful attention to style, colours, artwork, and lighting, all of which contribute to setting the right tone and distinguishing this time as sacred. When it is clean, tidy, appropriately decorated, the place of celebration shows us the importance and holiness of the Mass. The key is to always align with the liturgical season, scripture, and any liturgical feasts being observed – consult

the Ordo (Diocesan Liturgical Calendar) for guidance. More information about preparing the liturgical environment for Mass can be found at <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/GIRM/Ministry/Environment.pdf>

What furniture is needed? There should be a recognisable

- **altar**,
- **lectern** (or ambo),
- **presidential** (or priest's) **chair**.

Ideally, the three above should be used only for the celebration of Mass.

- **credence** (small side) **table**
- **offertory table**
- **altar server bell**

What things are needed for the furniture?

- **altar**: **white altar cloth**, at least two **white altar candles**, **Crucifix** – standing or flat facing the priest, **Roman missal** and **Stand**.
- **lectern**: the appropriate **Lectionary** or **Bible**, text for **Prayer of the Faithful**, (microphone).
- **credence table**: dressed in a white cloth, and have enough room for: **Corporal**, **Chalice**, **Purificator**, **Lavabo bowl**, **jug of water**, **Lavabo towel**.
- **offertory table**: a **Paten** with **altar breads** and/or an open **Ciborium** with altar breads, **one large altar bread** for the priest, appropriate **jug of wine** or **cruet** of wine (no water on the Offertory table, just the bread and wine).

From the lectern the proclamation of God's Word nourishes the congregation. The sacredness and dignity of the word of God means that the lectern is reserved for the proclamation of the Word i.e. scripture readings, responsorial psalm, homily and Prayer of the Faithful. Ideally, another place should be used for other announcements or commentary before, during and after the Mass.

The vessels, cloths, vestments, liturgical books, and all other liturgical items should be clean and of a good standard. Vessels that can break easily should not be used.

If Mass is celebrated within the school, please ensure:

- there is space for the celebrant to put on their vestments.
- the use of real wax candles (at least two on the altar) rather than electric ones for the celebration of Mass so have a supply of matches or a candle lighter to hand (CTM 114).
- use fresh flowers or dried flowers as a sign of the beauty and dignity of the celebration - never use artificial flowers - ensure they assist in the recognition (and do not obscure) the appropriate liturgical fixture (altar, lectern) and season – e.g. no flowers in Lent, abundant display of flowers during Eastertide (CTM 118-121).
- there are sufficient chairs for everyone
- the altar servers have chairs

Music¹⁰

As an art placed at the service of communal prayer, music is integral to worship and serves a ministerial function of drawing people together and transforming them into an assembly of worshippers.

One who sings well prays twice (GIRM 39).

In choosing music for liturgy, consideration should be given to the music itself, the text, and the ritual function. Musical factors include the quality of composition, its ability to express the tone, content, and form of a text (for example, an acclamation or a hymn), and the ease with which it can be remembered and sung (CTM 83).

¹⁰PLD 6.2 has a summary about the use of music in the Mass.

The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales provides clear guidance on music in the Mass in the leaflet 'Singing the Mass' <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Music/Singing.pdf>

When including music, it is important to note that singing certain parts of the Mass rather than hymns is the priority when organising music for school Masses. This fact has an important bearing on the formation of the school community.

"Schools should give priority to singing the liturgical texts at Mass and other liturgies above the use of hymns and songs. These texts include the Acclamation before the Gospel, the Acclamations in the Eucharistic Prayer (Holy, Holy; Memorial Acclamation; Amen), the Responsorial Psalm, and the Gloria" (PLD 6.2).

The order of priority is:

- Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia, but not in Lent)
- Sanctus (Holy, Holy)
- Memorial Acclamation (after the Institution narrative)
- Great Amen (at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer)
- Opening hymn
- Responsorial Psalm
- Gloria (if applicable)
- Communion hymn (during Communion procession)
- Thanksgiving hymn after Communion
- Hymn during Preparation of the Gifts (Offertory procession)
- Penitential act
- Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)
- Final Hymn

Most important to sing



Least important to sing

Whilst some schools and parishes include a hymn after the Communion procession – a thanksgiving hymn for all to sing - it is often better to have instrumental music *"to create an atmosphere conducive to recollection, stillness, or silent prayer"* (CTM 84). However, take care that the music does not have an original context that would be inappropriate for prayer. Any reflections presented after Holy Communion: whether musical, oral, written, visual or a combination of such should enhance prayerful reflection and encounter and not detract from, or overshadow, the liturgy.

Secular (non-religious) music that is not written for the liturgy is not used during Mass. Whilst the CTM states *"The music of our own day, from every culture and region, should also serve the assembly and its worship with due reverence and honour"* (CTM 82), the context is the use of liturgical music which is contemporary and/or from other cultures, i.e. contemporary music in those styles written for the liturgy. So, a liturgical musical repertoire that draws upon different world cultures represented in the school would be an important feature to include. However, it may be possible to use a secular song, i.e. not written for the liturgy, always in consultation with your celebrant, if it is in conformity with the Bible and the Church's teachings and used in a way that enhances the celebration. As the PLD states: *"it is essential that any text that is sung reflects Catholic teaching and understanding of the faith. This does not mean that a song has to offer a complete presentation of a particular doctrine, but it needs to be in accord with the Catholic faith and not contain anything which is directly contrary to it"* (PLD 6.2).

Music Planning

- The priority to sing Mass texts over singing hymns and songs, means it is important for schools to consider the repertoire they need based on when they pray together (e.g. prioritise learning an *Alleluia* over an offertory hymn).
- Whether considering the sung parts of the liturgy or the use of hymns and songs, it is important to look ahead to when they might be introduced into the musical repertoire of the school.
- Using common settings of the parts of the Mass enables pupils and staff to participate more widely within the local diocese by making useful links to the parish(es) the school serves. This especially enables students to participate in national and international events such as the Walsingham Pilgrimage, the Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage and World Youth Days.
- Aim to avoid an over-dependence on a single style of music, hymn or text. Schools should draw on chants and hymns which have stood the test of time as well as contemporary compositions.
- Those with responsibility for choosing music should ensure that the text and the music fit the context of the liturgy.

So, for example, avoid singing hymns about receiving Communion during the Entrance Procession or even Offertory hymns during Communion. It is sometimes possible to connect the lyrics of hymns to the readings, particularly the Gospel.

- Is this music right for this moment in the Mass? Are the words appropriate? Does the form of the music fit the form of the Mass? Please note that when composed in the first-person singular, some worship songs can express only an individual relationship with Jesus, whereas Catholic worship emphasises the community as one or the needs of the wider Church.
 - Is this a good piece of music? Does it set the text appropriately? Can it be sung by the pupils?
 - Is the music right for this community? Is it suitable for this age group – does it reflect the capacity of the pupils? Is it appropriate for this celebration? What can be done to draw on the diverse nature of the community? What links can be made with the local parish(es) to share repertoire and good practice? (PLD 6.2)
 - Make time for all those involved to become confident with the music so that it does not become a distraction or a worry.
- Before the celebration of Mass make sure you have considered the following:

- Check that you have the correct recorded music or backing tracks to encourage and support singing if you have no musician(s). Ensure you practise with the accompaniment you will use during the Mass.
- Ensure your musicians are available for the Mass and they know the pieces they need to prepare and the order in which they will be performed.
- Ensure you have set aside time for music rehearsals and singing practise for the community who will be celebrating the Mass.
- Have you set aside space for musicians and/or choir to sit/stand including any chairs, music stands, instruments, amps, microphones, laptop?
- Ensure the sheet music (particularly for different instruments), lyrics and verses are correct and consistent and match what is printed (if applicable) for or sang by the congregation.
- Do you need to have some recorded music ready to play when musicians go up to Communion or when the community gathers before Mass begins?

Atmosphere

Before Mass begins, it is important to ensure that the space is prepared, with candles lit and everything in order. This sets the scene for the solemnity of the occasion. To maintain a reverent atmosphere, consider playing gentle, instrumental music as the congregation enter helping them appreciate the change in atmosphere, reinforcing that this area is now a sacred space for the celebration of Mass. By entering in silence and, if applicable and practical, reverently genuflecting or bowing, people can better appreciate the sacredness of the Mass they are about to participate in. If there is no tabernacle present, pupils should be reminded that when going to their allotted seat they should bow to the altar. As part of the formation for ministers, altar servers, readers (ministers of the Word), or gift-bearers (Offertory), should be reminded of the significance of bowing before the altar as they perform their role during Mass.

Introduction

Prior to the start of Mass, an introduction may be led by young people or a member of staff. This serves to welcome those gathered and establish the overarching tone and theme of the Mass. The aim of this introduction is to show that those present

‘Take on the form of a community and prepare themselves to listen properly to God’s word and to celebrate the Eucharist worthily’ (DMC 40).

During the introduction, a warm welcome should be extended to the congregation and any special guests. The theme of the Mass should be introduced, whether it pertains to the liturgical season, a specific saint's feast day, or the intentions of the Mass. This sets the stage for active participation by preparing the congregation to engage as a community. Furthermore, the introduction may include commentary to explain the significance of selected readings and how they relate to the theme of the Mass. It is also an opportunity to encourage reflection on a particular intention throughout the Mass.

Incorporating Symbols of the School Community

The introduction can provide an opportunity to incorporate objects or symbols that enhance reflection on the Mass theme or season. If a class or form has a particular symbol (candle, cross, banner etc.) these can be processed to the front and brought together to symbolise gathering as one. Objects could include artwork by young people and symbols representing the theme. Care should be taken to integrate these elements thoughtfully by building a separate prayer focus and explaining these symbols *before* Mass begins. These additions should not overshadow the significance of the altar or detract from its central role in the celebration. Ensure these objects are brought up prior to the beginning of Mass or in the Entrance procession and *not* during the Offertory procession, which should be reserved for the bread and wine alone. The procession of objects that celebrate some work of the school like pupil work and sporting equipment are not appropriate objects for inclusion within an Offertory, because such objects will not be transformed, nor are they real gifts for those in need; they are tokens that will be retrieved and returned to ordinary use after the celebration. (CTM 180)

Dance and Drama

Great care should be taken over considerations of drama and dance in relation to the celebration of school Masses. Drama and dance do not have an automatic place in the Eucharistic celebration and are better placed within celebrations of the word and assemblies. A dramatic presentation of a scripture reading could take place before the Mass begins as a means of preparation. Similarly, by way of preparation, dance might also precede the beginning of Mass or follow the end of the Mass, after the final blessing and dismissal, by way of thanksgiving.

Postures and Liturgical Colours

The Eucharistic celebration invites a variety of postures (standing, sitting, kneeling and bowing) which reflect the different significances of what is taking place and is a form of prayer. (CTM 57) School Masses should ordinarily follow the pattern of posture used in parish churches, although there may need to be some adaptation according to the circumstances of the celebration and the nature of the school environment. The usual posture for the different parts of the Mass is highlighted in these guidelines.

The celebration of the Mass involves the use of all the senses thereby connecting the liturgy with daily living. For example, we hear the word of God; we see the cross, the candles, the vestments; we smell the flowers and the incense; we touch the Sacred Bread.

There are FOUR principal liturgical colours.

- **Green** is used in Ordinary Time.
- **White** is used in the seasons of Easter and of Christmas; also on celebrations of the Lord (other than of his Passion), of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of the Holy Angels, and of Saints who were not Martyrs; on the solemnities of Trinity Sunday, All Saints (1 November) and of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist (24 June); and on the feasts of Saint John the Evangelist (27 December), of the Chair of Saint Peter (22 February), and of the Conversion of Saint Paul (25 January). It may, in England & Wales, be used for Funerals.
- **Red** is used on Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion and Good Friday, on Pentecost Sunday, on celebrations of the Lord's Passion, on feasts of the Apostles and Evangelists, and on celebrations of martyred Saints.
- **Violet/Purple** is used in the seasons of Advent and of Lent and for reconciliation. It may also be worn for Funerals.
- **Rose** may be used, where it is the practice, on Gaudete Sunday (Third Sunday of Advent) and on Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent).
- **Black** may be used, where it is the practice, for Funerals.
- On more solemn festive days more precious, sacred vestments may be used, even if not the colour of the day. (CTM 112)
- **Blue**, the colour we associate with Mary, is not a liturgical colour. White is always the liturgical colour for Feast days which honour Mary. Blue can be used outside of the Mass on prayer spaces and focal points within the school.

Questions to consider:

- *If the school is celebrating Mass in a church are staff familiar with the building, where pupils sit, where they should sit, where members of the public may be sitting?*
- *If Mass is celebrated in school what is happening in the space immediately beforehand?*

- How do you consider practical features of the room such as space and temperature to ensure comfort and avoid potential behaviour issues?
- How much time do you have to set up, does this include a walkthrough in the space for those involved in ministries?
- What conversations have taken place with pupils and staff before entering the space where Mass is to be celebrated to ensure everyone is clear about expectations?
- How do you provide an authentic welcome to everyone present that acknowledges their starting points and helps to ensure Mass is meaningful for them?
- Have appropriate staff been prepared in advance for how to model gestures and responses in the Mass?

The Structure of the Mass

The structure of the Mass - the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist - should always be maintained, as should the opening and closing rites. (DMC 38) The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist form one single act of worship and should not be separated or celebrated at different times or places, even within the same day. (RS 60)

It is always necessary that Masses with a large proportion of children and young people must orientate them toward the regular celebration of Mass with adults, especially Mass on Sunday. Apart from adaptations because of age, the result should not be entirely special rites, markedly different from the Order of Mass celebrated with a congregation. (DMC 21)

The Liturgical Year

The liturgical year should be the basis for the celebration of school Masses, with the liturgy following the liturgical calendar and the cycle of readings in the Lectionary as closely as possible. Where Masses are celebrated according to a particular theme, these should be integrated within the seasons and feasts of the Church's year. For example, a Mass which takes light as its theme would rightly be celebrated in Advent, the theme of forgiveness in Lent, and the theme of joy in Eastertide.

The Lectionary and the use of Bibles

Schools bought new lectionaries for Advent 2024 following the *Bishops' Conference of England & Wales* requirement that a new translation (English Standard Version) is used. However, the *Good News Bible (Catholic Edition)* is still an approved text for use in Masses with children. This enables the exact readings from the Lectionary to be used during Masses with children, taken from this simpler translation. It is also permissible to use properly approved lectionaries for Masses with children.

Sometimes the readings of the day are unsuited to the children, in this case, in close consultation with your celebrant:

"If all the readings assigned to the day seem to be unsuited to the capacity of the children, it is permissible to choose readings or a reading either from the Lectionary for Mass or directly from the Bible, but taking into account the liturgical seasons." (DMC 43)

Feasts and Solemnities

There should be a clear sense of the different levels of solemnity present in the liturgy. Feast days should be celebrated more solemnly than weekday Masses. The following are some ways in which solemnities are marked out:

- 'Although it is not always necessary to **sing** all the [Mass] texts that ... are meant to be sung, every care should be taken that singing by the ministers and the people is not absent... In the choosing of the parts to be sung ... preference should be given to those that are of greater importance and especially those sung by the priest ... with the people responding, or by the priest and people together.' (CTM 76)
- The Introductory Rites can include the use of a **processional cross**, **candles** and **thurible** carried by servers during the entrance procession. This will also mean that **more servers** are required.
- The (optional) use of **incense** expresses the solemnity of a particular celebration or to enhance a particular moment within a celebration. It is a sign of honour and a symbol of our prayer rising before God. It emphasises the transcendent otherness of God and reminds us of God's awesome presence in the cloud that accompanied the Israelites on their journey through the wilderness. In the Introductory Rites it can be used

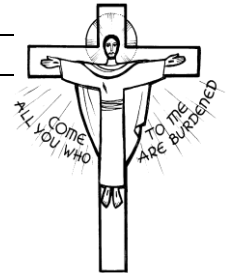
for the veneration of the altar. In the Liturgy of the Word, it can be used to venerate the Book of the Gospels. In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, it may be used to venerate the gifts of bread and wine and the altar. (CTM 117)

- D. On more solemn occasions, alongside their usual duties, **servers** may accompany the gift bearers during the offertory procession. (CTM 47)
- E. The **Gloria** is recited.
- F. There are **two readings** from scripture (in addition to the Responsorial Psalm) before the Gospel.
- G. The **Creed** is recited.

Where possible, it is appropriate for schools to anticipate the celebration of feasts and solemnities which fall on Sunday.

The Order of the Mass

The celebration of the Mass has four parts, a beginning and an end and two central pillars: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.



1. Introductory Rites

- A. Sign of the Cross and Greeting
- B. Penitential Act
- C. [Gloria]
- D. The Collect

2. Liturgy of the Word

- A. First Reading
- B. Responsorial Psalm
- C. [Second Reading]
- D. Gospel Acclamation
- E. Gospel Reading
- F. Homily
- G. [Creed]
- H. Prayer of the Faithful

3. Liturgy of the Eucharist

- A. Preparation of the gifts
- B. Eucharistic Prayer
- C. Communion Rite
- D. Lord's Prayer
- E. Rite (Sign) of Peace
- F. Breaking of the Bread (The Fraction)
- G. Communion

4. Concluding Rites

- A. Blessing
- B. Dismissal

1. Introductory Rites

It is usual for all to **stand** from the beginning of Mass until after the Collect (Opening Prayer) and everything that takes place within this time forms part of the Introductory Rites.

Entrance Procession

The Mass begins with the entrance procession and opening song. Participation in the song symbolises the unity of the assembly, gathering from different places and cultures and of different ages but singing with one voice as the People of God and Body of Christ.

The procession of the priest may also include altar servers carrying candles and cross, and of readers (carrying the

Book of the Gospels).

If it has not already taken place before Mass (discuss the most appropriate time with your celebrant in advance), it is a suitable moment to introduce objects or symbols representing the occasion (if this is applicable), placing them near the altar (their significance should be explained before the Mass begins – in the introduction). Incense, if appropriate, may also be part of the procession, adding to the solemnity of the occasion.

The standing of the assembly and the procession signifies unity as all prepare to meet Christ in word and holy communion.

Music accompanies the entrance procession.

A. Sign of the Cross and Greeting

Led by the priest, the assembly makes the Sign of the Cross. The Sign of the Cross is not just an introduction but a Christian prayer. When we make the Sign of the Cross, we express our praise of God as Trinity. For we pray '*In the name of*' not in the 'names of': we believe in one God known in three ways, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is also a statement of our Christian belief that God loves us so much that he gave His only Son who died on the Cross for the forgiveness of our sins. (John 3:16)

The priest greets the assembly with the words, '*The Lord be with you*'. The assembly responds: '*And with your spirit*'. This pattern of priest-then-assembly establishes the interdependence of the priest and the people as they take up their respective roles to praise God. This greeting and response, like much in the revised text of the Mass (introduced in 2011) is inspired by its origin in the Bible, and in this instance, brings us much closer to the language of St. Paul. In Galatians 6:18 Paul greets the community with the words '*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.*' Here Paul addresses the whole Christian community, not only one person. Therefore, the priest's greeting and the assembly's response expresses a desire that the Lord be present in spirit of the entire community – so the Priest's greeting '*The Lord be with you*' implies '*The Lord be with your spirit*' and the assembly responds, '*and with your spirit*'.

B. Penitential Act

The Penitential Act is an important part of the Introductory Rites because it provides an opportunity for each person to prepare themselves to participate in and receive Christ in Word and Holy Communion by humble acknowledgement of their sins and by seeking God's mercy and forgiveness. It forms a key part of all Masses except when, on Ash Wednesday and the Presentation of the Lord, it is replaced with an alternative rite. The Act should follow one of the forms set out in the *Roman Missal*:

1. The Confiteor, or 'I confess to Almighty God...' prayer
2. The 'Have mercy on us, O Lord ...' format or the
3. Three-fold format 'Lord, have mercy, Christ, have mercy, Lord, have mercy'. In Greek, the 'Kyrie eleison'. (see <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Missal/Text/MCFL.pdf>)

It is possible to write a Penitential Act in the third form (statements followed by 'Lord, have mercy...'). Please note that each of the sentences that precede the 'Lord/Christ, have mercy' is a prayer of praise for God's love and mercy and should not have the form of an examination of conscience. It should not begin: 'Lord, for the times we have ...' or 'Lord, when we are ...' Rather, it should be focused on Christ and should follow the pattern of the *Missal*: 'You were sent to heal the contrite of heart: Lord, have mercy'; 'You came to call sinners: Christ, have mercy'; 'You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us, Lord, have mercy'.

The Rite for the Blessing and Sprinkling of Water can also take the place of the Penitential Act (see Appendix II of the *Roman Missal*).

After the Penitential Act, the priest says a prayer of absolution (forgiveness of sins).

C. Gloria

The Gloria is a song of praise and thanksgiving to God and its opening verse echoes the song of the angels announcing peace to the shepherds at the birth of Jesus (Luke 2). The multiple ways to describe God in the second verse expresses

our awe and wonder at the overwhelming experience of meeting God in prayer.

The Gloria will not be a regular feature of school Masses because it is usually sung or said on feast days, solemnities, Holy Days of Obligation and Sundays (except in Advent and Lent). Check the **Ordo** for times when the Gloria is required.

D. The Collect (Opening Prayer)

The opening prayer marks the moment when the priest invites us to pray. The prayer connects us with the universal Church reminding us that wherever Mass is celebrated around the world, fellow believers are engaging in the same act. Beginning with the words "Let us pray," the priest extends his hands as a sign of invitation. This is a moment of silence when together we ask the Lord for his help. At the end of the prayer, we respond "Amen." This prayer is called the 'collect' as the priest collects all the prayers we have prayed quietly in our hearts and sums them up in the Church's prayer to God our Father.

It is also permissible for the priest to adapt the presidential prayers to the needs of children, but this must preserve the purpose and substance of the prayers and avoid language foreign to the genre of presidential prayers, moral exhortation, or a childish form of expression. (DMC 51)

Questions to consider:

- *How does your school ensure the pupils and staff know when to stand, sit or kneel, is this included within your Mass plan or Order of Service?*
- *Will pupils be seated on chairs or on the floor and will this change your expectations of whether they should stand or sit during the Mass?*
- *How does your school ensure that pupils and staff know and can participate in the Mass responses?*
- *Have you checked which Penitential Rite your celebrant intends to use, so that your Order of Service reflects this and confusion is avoided?*

2. The Liturgy of the Word

After gathering as one and seeking God's mercy, we **sit** and ready ourselves to encounter God speaking to us through the proclamation of scripture. We are called to be attentive, and through expectant listening, to discern '*How is God speaking to me through his Word today?*' Keeping a silent pause between the readings is an aid to reflection on God's message. To listen to the Word of God is an act of hope that God will nourish and increase our faith to prepare us for the Eucharist to come and for the life we live once we go in peace, to love and serve the Lord.



All scripture readings should take place at the **lectern** and should be read from the **Lectionary**. However, in the school context, sometimes another translation may be used (in consultation with your celebrant) e.g.

- Good News Bible (Catholic edition) – for Masses with children
- Lectionary for Masses with Children
- New Jerusalem Bible
- Revised Standard Version
- New Revised Standard Version

The source used should be in keeping with the dignity of the Word of God – from an approved Bible in excellent condition or if there is need to enlarge the text and so it cannot be read directly from the Lectionary or the Bible, it should be presented respectfully acknowledging its importance as the Word of God.

The scripture readings may not be substituted with any other readings, whatever their source, and paraphrasing is never acceptable. (CTM 157) However, to support the engagement and participation of those gathered it is important to bear in mind:

'If all the readings assigned to the day seem to be unsuited to the capacity of the children, it is permissible to choose readings or a reading either from the Lectionary for Mass or directly from the Bible, but taking into account the liturgical seasons... but the gospel reading should never be omitted.' (DMC 43, 42)

And

'If, because of the limited capacity of the children, it seems necessary to omit one or other verse of a biblical reading, this should be done cautiously and in such a way "that the meaning of the text or the intent and, as it were, style of the Scriptures are not distorted." (DMC 43)

If you do think changes are needed, given the importance of the word of God, ensure you consult with your priest beforehand. DMC 43 and CTM 157 appear to contradict each other, but it is the context of a Mass with primary aged children that DMC 43 has in mind.

The readings of the **Liturgy of the Word** should follow this pattern:



'All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living.' (2 Timothy 3:16)

'Everything written in the Scriptures was written to teach us, in order that we might have hope through the patience and encouragement which the Scriptures give us.' (Romans 15:4)

'For in the readings God speaks to his people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation, and nourishing their spirit; Christ himself is present in the midst of the faithful through his word.' (CTM 153)

The order of readings emphasises the unity of God's Word. We hear scripture from the Old Testament not only because the New Testament lies hidden in the Old Testament – the first reading always has a connection to the Gospel - but because these readings prepare us to encounter Jesus. Through the readings at Mass, we appreciate that the word of God forms a unity in proclaiming the one and same mystery of Christ. As St Jerome remarked: *'Not to know the Scriptures is not to know Christ'*.

'All must listen with reverence to the readings of God's word: meditating on the word, taking it to heart, and beginning to respond to it in prayer' (CTM 70)

A. First Reading

- This reading is present in all celebrations of Mass.
- This can be from the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) or (on weekdays) from an Apostle in the New Testament (this includes all books of the New Testament apart from the Gospels or the Acts of the Apostles or the revelation to John – Acts must however be used during the Easter Season).

- The book of the Bible is introduced at the beginning of the reading with the words written in the Lectionary: **‘A reading from ...’** **Never say**, *‘The first reading is a reading from ...’* and ends with **‘The Word of the Lord’** to which the assembly responds: **‘Thanks be to God’**.

B. Responsorial Psalm

- This reading is present in all celebrations of Mass.
- This must be either a canticle or taken from the book of Psalms found in the Old Testament.
- For a responsorial psalm the Psalmist (reading or singing the psalm) introduces the response which the congregation repeats and then the psalmist reads/ sings verses which are followed by the response each time. The Psalmist should **never** introduce the psalm by saying, *‘The response to the psalm is ...’*
- Psalms were written as songs of praise – it’s the Bible’s song book - so, where possible, we should sing the psalm altogether or it can be helpful to sing the response but recite/listen to the verses to encourage participation. If it is not possible to sing any parts of the psalm, then using instrumental music can be used to help meditate on the words.

‘Even when it is impossible to sing the psalm, it may be possible to support and enrich its recitation with instrumental music. Psalms should always be recited in a manner conducive to meditation.’ (CTM 162)

C. Second Reading

- This reading is only used during Sunday Masses and solemnities.
- The second reading should be from an Apostle in the New Testament.
- If a New Testament reading is used as the second reading the first reading must be from the Old Testament.

If the scripture chosen for the first or second reading has many parts or has many voices within it then this can be an opportunity to involve several young people in its reading.

Depending on the text of the reading, it may be helpful for the children to read it in parts distributed among them, as is provided for the reading of the Lord’s passion during Holy Week. (DMC 47)

D. The Gospel Acclamation

- The assembly **stands** to greet the Gospel – this is a sign of respect, but is even more a sign of our preparation for the high point of encountering Christ in the Gospel. The assembly should always sing the acclamation. If the acclamation is said, the reader of the previous reading may remain at the **Lectern** to read the acclamation before the Gospel is proclaimed by the priest (or deacon). The reader should **never say**, *‘Please stand for the Gospel.’* Excepting Lent, the Gospel Acclamation is **‘Alleluia’**, Hebrew for ‘Praise God’. We acclaim and praise God for the gift of Jesus who is the Word of God. (John 1:1)
- There may be a procession with candles (and incense if used) with the Book of the Gospels during the acclamation.

E. The Gospel

This is the high point of the **Liturgy of the Word** so some special marks of honour are used to distinguish it:

- The priest (or deacon) reads the Gospel after a special prayer of blessing
- A procession to the **Lectern** with candles
- Whilst the Gospel passage is announced (e.g. **‘A reading from the Holy Gospel according to ...’**) we make the sign of the cross with our thumb on our forehead, lips and chest. We then respond by saying **‘Glory to you, O Lord’**
- The Gospel reading ends when the priest (or deacon) says, **‘The Gospel of the Lord’** and we respond by saying **‘Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ’**. The Gospel acclamation may then be sung again.

The Gospel always comes from one of the four Gospels in the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke or John.

A Note on Understanding the Scripture Readings

‘All the elements that will help explain the readings should be given great consideration so that the children may make the biblical readings their own and may come more and more to appreciate better the value of God’s word.’ (DMC 47)

As part of formation, teachers may wish to share the scripture and 'teach' it before Mass so children can engage more deeply during Mass. This echoes the process of how readers prepare for Mass by reading scripture ahead of time.

'Introductory comments may precede the readings and help the children to listen better and more fruitfully, either by explaining the context or by introducing the text itself. In interpreting and illustrating the readings from the Scriptures in the Mass on a saint's day, an account of the saint's life may be given, not only in the homily but even before the readings in the form of a commentary.' (DMC 47)

F. Homily

In all children's Masses a homily explaining the word of God is very important. It can take the form of a dialogue with the children, unless it is preferred that they listen in silence. (DMC 48)

The assembly **sit** to listen to the homily. The term "homily" originates from a Greek word meaning "dialogue" and it is an important time in the Mass when the priest breaks open the Word to reveal the true meaning to those present. The Word of God is dynamic and alive and hopefully, through the homily, the assembly can be guided in ways to apply it to their own lives. Whilst the homily is entrusted to ordained ministers, including deacons, priests and bishops, it is hoped that it will be suitable to the age and capacity of children and young people.

To enhance the visual element of the celebration, and to aid participation, *the use of pictures prepared by the children themselves may be useful, for example as illustrations of a homily, as visual expressions of the intentions of the general intercessions, or as inspirations to reflection.* (DMC 36)

Following the Homily, a moment of silence is encouraged so that there can be prayerful reflection on the message.

G. Profession of Faith (The Creed)

When the Profession of Faith (also called the Creed) occurs in the liturgy, the Apostles' Creed may be used in Masses with children in place of the longer Nicene Creed. (DMC 48)

The Creed is usually recited by the whole assembly on Sundays and not in ordinary weekday Masses. The only time the Creed will be a feature of school Masses is on Holy Days of Obligation and solemnities. The assembly **stands** to recite the Creed.

H. Prayer of the Faithful (Bidding Prayers)

The Prayer of the Faithful is introduced by the priest and then the intercessions are led by a member of the assembly. The entire assembly, which remains **standing**, is invited to make a response at the end of each intercession. A silent pause for personal prayer after each intercession is read is required.

There are four intentions included in the *Roman Missal* as general guidance:

1. For the needs of the Church
2. For public authorities and the salvation of the whole world
3. For those burdened by any kind of difficulty
4. For the local community.

These intentions may be shaped to reflect more closely:

- the scripture readings
- the theme of the Mass
- the liturgical season
- the needs of the community
- the needs of the world

The intercessions are not mini prayers, addressed to God, the intentions are biddings, invitations by which the

assembly is asked to pray for certain people and things. So, they should **NOT** begin, *'Dear God, we pray for ...'* or *'Lord Jesus, thank you for ...'* but rather *'For ...'* or *'Let us pray for'*. The assembly listens and is then given a period of silence to pray to God for that intention. The time of silence following each intercession unites the outward intercession and our inward (interior) prayer for it. The importance of the silent pause after the reading of the intercession and BEFORE the reader says, 'Lord hear us' or 'Lord in your mercy' needs to be explained to the reader and to the assembly. At the end of the period of silence there is a plea to God to hear the prayers through words such as *'Lord in your mercy,'* or *'Lord Hear Us'*, followed by the assembly emphasising the plea by saying *'Hear our Prayer'* or *'Lord Graciously hear Us'*.

At the end of the intentions, it is customary in England and Wales to pray for the personal intentions of the assembly and to ask for the intercession of Mary, for example: *'We ask Mary our Mother to pray for us as we say, Hail Mary ...'* The priest concludes the Prayer of the Faithful with a simple prayer and only once this has happened should the reader of the intercessions return to their seat.

For excellent resources for preparing the Prayer of the Faithful see the Liturgy Office website <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Documents/Intercessions.shtml>

The Prayer of the Faithful concludes the Liturgy of the Word, and the focus moves from the lectern and is now centred on the altar and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Questions to consider:

- Do you help prepare pupils for the gestures in Mass by including them in other times of prayer, such as celebrations of the word, e.g. greeting the Gospel and the 'little cross' on head, lips and heart?
- What preparation / unpacking of the scripture to be read at Mass can take place in advance to help prepare pupils and staff and ensure pupils are expectantly listening?
- How as a school do you refer back to the message of the Gospel / homily to reinforce its meaning following the Mass?
- If the (Apostles') Creed is being professed at this Mass, have you included the words within your Order of Service for those who may require help remembering the words?
- How do you ensure the pupils reading The Prayer of the Faithful understand what they are reading and understand why it is important to allow time for the assembly to pray?
- How do you ensure those who are proclaiming the word of God, and the Prayer of the Faithful, are well prepared?

Proclaiming the Word

'In proclaiming the word of God from Sacred Scripture, readers exercise their responsibility in mediating the presence of Christ. God speaks to the assembly through them, and the impact of God's message will depend significantly on their conviction, their preparation, and their delivery' (CTM 41).

a. Technical formation

'The technical preparation should make the readers more skilled in the art of reading publicly, either with the power of their own voice or with the help of sound equipment' (LGI 55)

The reader reads so that everyone else might listen to the word. So, it is important for the reader to read clearly so that people might hear every word. If someone reads too quickly we do not have a chance to hear what is being said, so it is important to read slowly. It might seem slow to the reader – but just right for the assembly. When the assembly has heard the reading they need to listen to it a little longer, so that they can listen to it with their heart, not just with their ears. So it is important that we have a little pause after each reading, before the psalm starts, or the Gospel acclamation – for people to listen to what God is saying to them. As readers grow in confidence and experience they not only read, but become better at helping people to listen.

Children, young people and staff should practise reading the word so that they develop an appropriate fluency and tone. Practise should take place in advance of the Mass and it is best if readers practise at the lectern from where the word is to be read so that they are used to the place, the lectionary and any microphone or sound equipment that is required.

b. Liturgical formation

'The liturgical formation ought to equip the readers to have some grasp of the meaning and structure of the liturgy of

the word and of the significance of its connection with the liturgy of the eucharist. (LGI 55)

The Liturgy of the Word is structured on God's plan of salvation: at Mass we hear how God spoke to the people of Israel in the first reading, we sing a psalm of David and then we reach the high point, hearing and listening to the words of Jesus in the Gospel. This structure is reflected in the introductions and responses to the different readings, culminating in the greater significance given to the Gospel.

The Liturgy of the Word is an essential part of every Mass because we enter into the covenant relationship between God and the people of God; a covenant sealed in the sharing of the Body and Blood of Christ. *'The meaning of Communion is proclaimed in the word; the message of scripture is made actual once again in the Communion banquet.'* (CTM 152) As one single act of worship, we are nourished by the word of God and by Christ's body and blood.

c. Biblical formation

The purpose of their biblical formation is to give readers the ability to understand the readings in context and to perceive by the light of faith the central point of the revealed message. (LGI 55)

Time must be set aside for readers to ponder the message of the reading they will proclaim. This can take the form of a question like *'How is God speaking to me in this reading?'* *How is God speaking to us in this reading? 'What message can I hear?'* Older students can be given a brief contextual background to the reading or readers can meet together for a bible study session in advance of the celebration.

The whole point of each type of formation is to aid the proclamation rather than simple reading of the word of God.

Within the Diocese, Christians, as well as Catholics, are permitted to proclaim the respective passages from the Holy Scriptures given in the Lectionary for a Mass celebrated with a Catholic school community. They would be equally able to read the intercessions during the Prayer of the Faithful when used during Mass.

3. Liturgy of the Eucharist

'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.' (CTM 174)

A. The Preparation of the Gifts

'The purpose of this rite is to prepare the altar, the gifts which are placed on it, and the assembly ready for the Eucharistic offering which is to follow.' (CTM 177)

During the preparation of the altar and the gifts, we **sit** as everything needed for the eucharistic offering is arranged.

Preparation of the Altar

'First, the altar, the Lord's table, is prepared as the centre of the Eucharistic liturgy. Until this point in the celebration, with the exception of its veneration at the beginning, the altar has not been the focus of attention. It remains almost bare and unused during the Liturgy of the Word, which is centred at the ambo. Now the setting is prepared for the sacred meal.' (CTM 178).

To begin with, there should be nothing on the altar except for the white altar cloth, candles (and a crucifix). Where possible, altar servers assist the priest in preparing the altar. They bring the corporal, purificators, chalice(s) and Missal. All these elements should be kept on a credence (side) table before they are used, along with a jug of water sufficient for the preparation of the chalice, the washing of the priest's hands (with a bowl and small towel) and for the purification of the vessels after Holy Communion.

Procession of Gifts



'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.' (CTM 180).

Sufficient altar breads and wine (where appropriate) for the communion of the faithful are prepared before the beginning of Mass. These should be placed on an **offertory table** by themselves at the place from where they are to be brought in procession. *Water is not brought forward in procession as it is not made by human hands and cannot therefore be offered as a sacrifice.* Instead, the water should already be on the credence (side) table. The point of the Procession of Gifts is to bring forward what is offered to God in the celebration of the Eucharist or gifts to be given to help the poor or the Church. The bread and wine which we offer symbolises the offer of ourselves to God which, we pray, will, like the bread and wine, be transformed so that we can live Christ-like lives. (see CTM 180) It is desirable that some of the assembly bring these gifts to the priest.



'Besides money, gifts in kind and other real gifts for the poor are appropriate, but not token items that will be retrieved and returned to ordinary use after the celebration. If it is intended to make use of things that symbolise the particular work or identity of the assembly or occasion for celebration, these are best brought to the sanctuary as part of the Entrance procession and displayed near the altar or other suitable place. They should not be brought in the procession with the gifts of bread and wine.' (CTM 180)

During the Preparation of the Gifts instrumental music may be played, the choir may sing, or silence may be kept as an alternative to singing a hymn: *'Sung texts need not speak of bread and wine, nor of offering. Texts expressing joy, praise, community, as well as the spirit of the season, are appropriate. Since the presentation of gifts is preparatory, instrumental music or silence may often be more effective.'* (CTM 180)

Presentation of the Gifts

'The [prayers] accompanying the placing of the gifts on the altar are based upon Jewish table-prayers. They are an expression of praise of God for the gift of creation and for human collaboration in the production of bread and wine that will become Christ, living Bread and saving Cup, food and drink for the assembly.' (CTM 181)

The priest, having received the gifts of bread and wine, offers them to God the Father and then places them on the corporal. This may be done in silence.

Prayer over the Offerings:

The assembly ordinarily **stands** for the prayer: *'The Prayer over the Offerings concludes the preparation of the gifts and points forward to the Eucharistic Prayer.'* (CTM 185) The priest may choose from the Missal the texts of the Presidential prayers more suited to children. (DMC 50-51)

B. The Eucharistic Prayer

The Eucharistic Prayer constitutes one of two high points in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the other being sharing in Communion. (CTM 200) It is the central prayer of the Mass, during which the bread and wine are consecrated and transformed. The Eucharistic Prayer *'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 ... 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.'* (CTM 186)

The priest may choose one of the Eucharistic Prayers found in the Missal or one of those for Masses with Children: *'The three prayers [of Eucharistic Prayer for Masses with Children I-III] use different levels of language. Prayer I may be more suitable for those only recently introduced to the Eucharist. Prayers II and III may be more appropriate as children grow in sacramental awareness and in familiarity with the Eucharistic liturgy.'* (CTM 188) In Masses with older children one of those for Masses of Reconciliation or those of Masses for Various Needs and Occasions may also be chosen.



Preface

The Eucharistic Prayer begins with the Preface, meaning 'before the act' when Christ is made present on the altar. It is introduced by the Dialogue, ideally sung by the priest with the assembly responding. The assembly ordinarily **stands** for this:

'All are invited, in the biblical term, to lift up their hearts, that is, to raise up and place in God's presence their entire being, thoughts, memories, emotions, and expectations, in grateful attention and anticipation.' (CTM 190)

Sanctus

The Preface ends with the Sanctus (*Holy, Holy, Holy*): *'In this acclamation the assembly joins its voice to that of all creation in giving glory to God, with words inspired by the vision of Isaiah (6:3).'* (CTM 192)

The threefold repetition of 'Holy' symbolises the three persons of the Trinity. The second part echoes the jubilant acclamation of the crowd as Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, exclaiming, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.' Just as the crowd joyfully welcomed Jesus as their long-awaited king, in the Mass we too greet Christ, who is about to be present among us in the gifts transformed. The Sanctus serves as a song of praise sung by human beings and angels, uniting us in glorifying God, and it is therefore appropriate that the Sanctus, which is a song, should be sung.

'To facilitate the children's participation in singing the Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and the Agnus Dei, it is permitted to use with the melodies appropriate vernacular texts, accepted by competent authority, even if these do not correspond exactly to the liturgical texts.' (DMC 31) *'The Eucharistic Prayers for Children, with their variety of acclamations, will be most effective in engaging the children when sung.'* (CTM 188)

Epiclesis

Where possible, the assembly should **kneel** after the Sanctus and during the remainder of the Eucharist Prayer, or at least until after the Memorial Acclamation. If kneeling is not practical, the assembly should preferably stand. Remaining seated during this part of the Eucharistic Prayer should be a last resort where kneeling or standing would be impractical or disruptive.

Consecration is the act of making something holy or sacred. During the Mass the bread and wine are consecrated and transformed. This begins at the epiclesis, meaning the 'calling down of the Holy Spirit', when the priest extends his hands over the bread and wine. In Eucharistic Prayer III, for example, the Priest prays:

'Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore you: by the same Spirit graciously make holy these gifts we have brought to you for consecration, that they may become the Body and Blood of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ at whose command we celebrate these mysteries.'

The priest, by virtue of his ordination, represents Christ the High Priest, and is invested with authority to consecrate the bread and wine which becomes for us Christ's Body and Blood. The consecration and transformation are accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the words of Christ which he spoke at the Last Supper i.e. 'This is my body ...'

Institution Narrative

Following the epiclesis, the priest narrates Christ's institution of the Eucharist that took place at the Last Supper. The priest repeats the words Christ spoke:

At the time he was betrayed and entered willingly into his Passion, he took bread and, giving thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: 'Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you.' In a similar way, when supper was ended, he took the chalice and, once more giving thanks, he gave it to his disciples, saying: 'Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me.'

Together with the calling down of the Holy Spirit, Christ's words effect a change in the bread and wine and they become the Body and Blood of Christ. This is a 'speech-act', what is said comes to pass. Just as God speaks creation into existence – 'Let there be light, and there was light' – the words of Institution have the power to effect a change in reality and Jesus' sacrifice is made present. Such is the solemnity and gravity of what takes place, it is good practice to

teach children and young people to bow as the priest genuflects after the two elevations as a mark of respect and adoration. After the words of Institution - where the priest, taking separately the elements of bread and wine, repeats the words of Jesus from the Last Supper - there follows the Memorial Acclamation.

Memorial Acclamation

'The Memorial Acclamation of the people in the Eucharistic Prayer confesses the Church's belief in the central mystery of our faith, the Paschal Mystery of Christ's death, resurrection, and presence among his people.' (CTM 195)

These acclamations proclaim the death and resurrection of Christ as the primary focus of the prayer.

The text for the Memorial Acclamation should be one of the three available in the Missal, except where in those for Masses with Children there is a given text. It is always preferable to sing the Memorial Acclamation.

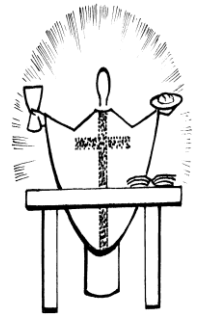
Doxology

To end the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest elevates the Body and Blood of Christ and says or sings the Doxology which concludes with the assembly saying or singing the Great Amen.

Through him, and with him, and in him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, for ever and ever.

This is a song of praise for the saving work accomplished by Christ – 'through him, and with him, and in him' – in union with the Father and Holy Spirit.

'The Doxology is part of the Eucharistic Prayer rather than an acclamation. As such it is proper to the prayer that it is spoken or sung by the priest alone. The lay faithful participate in this prayer in faith and silence, and then through their acclamation, the Great Amen.' (CTM 198)



The Great Amen is the final Acclamation by which everyone makes the prayer their own. When the Doxology is sung by the priest then the Amen should be sung. If the Doxology is not sung it is fitting for all to say the 'Amen' with confidence.

C. The Communion Rite

'When the Eucharistic Prayer has ended, the Lord's Prayer, the breaking of bread, and the invitation to communion, should always follow, because these elements have the principal significance in the structure of this part of the Mass.' (DMC 53)

Although the Lord's Prayer, the sign of peace and the breaking of bread - are important elements of the Communion Rite, in the context of the whole celebration they constitute together a transition from one high point, the Eucharistic Prayer, to another, the sharing in Communion. The transformation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ during the Eucharistic Prayer and its eating and drinking in the Communion Rite are equally important. Christ is present to be encountered, consumed and shared. Love for one another and unity are the themes which underpin this part of the Eucharistic celebration which follows the Eucharistic Prayer and which leads to the reception of Holy Communion.

D. The Lord's Prayer

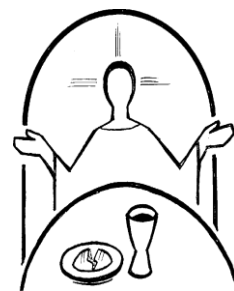
When we pray this prayer, we are not merely using our own words but instead the words that Jesus himself taught us. *'What prayer would the Father hear more gladly than that in which he hears the voice of his only Son, Jesus Christ?'*¹¹ The prayer begins 'Our Father,' uniting us as children of God. It is important this prayer belongs to the whole assembly and so everyone should be able to join in. Consideration therefore needs to be given if the prayer is to be sung, that the setting should enable everyone present to participate and should also include the acclamation 'for the kingdom, the power...'

¹¹ Saint Cyprian, *De Oratione Dominica*.

Ordinarily, the assembly **stands** for the Lord's Prayer.

E. The Rite of Peace

This has been described as *"a seal placed on prayer."* (CTM 202) *"The exchange of peace prior to the reception of Holy Communion is an acknowledgement that Christ whom we receive in the Sacrament is already present in our neighbour."* (CTM 204) It is not an expression of merely human solidarity or goodwill; rather, it is an opening of each person, individually and communally, to a challenge and a gift that is beyond us. This peace – the flourishing of life in harmony with God, ourselves, with our neighbours and the whole of creation – is not something we can acquire for ourselves, but is the pure gift of God, won for us by the risen Christ (*'As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!"'* Luke 24:36). It is the peace of Christ which is exchanged with those immediately around them. (CTM 204) Care should be taken that the exchange of the sign of peace does not become disruptive. *'The sign of peace - in England & Wales customarily a handshake – is sufficiently strong and expressive not to need explanatory song and commentary.'* (CTM 204)



F. Breaking of the Bread (the Fraction)

In the time of the Apostles, the entire Mass was known as *The Breaking of the Bread* because this important action was so central to the Eucharist. (Acts 2:42) It is also called the Fraction because it involves breaking the consecrated bread while the Lamb of God (*Agnus Dei*) is sung or recited. The *Agnus Dei* is deeply rooted in God's word. In the Passover narrated in Exodus 12, the lamb is the sacrifice by which the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt. In the New Testament, John the Baptist calls Jesus the Lamb of God (John 1:29) indicating that it is through Jesus that the assembly are freed from their sins so they enter into friendship with God. The breaking of the bread reflects Christ's sacrifice and prepares the consecrated bread for distribution to those who are ready to receive.

Where possible, the assembly **kneels** at the end of the *Agnus Dei*.

G. Communion

Christ becomes food for us because he wants to nourish us so we might have life and have it in abundance. Communion is the time in the Mass when the priest shares the Eucharistic food. It is appropriate that it is called Communion because upon receiving the Body of Christ, we enter into an intimate communion with him. When we receive the Body of Christ, not only does the Eucharist become part of us, but we become what we eat, we become Christ-like.



Both the sacred Body and the precious Blood contain the full presence of Christ, therefore receiving Holy Communion in one form (the sacred Body alone) is sufficient for a complete reception of Christ. The decision to administer Holy Communion under both kinds at school Masses should be made in consultation with the celebrant, considering factors such as the number of attendees and appropriate catechesis. (RS 102)

Individuals may choose to receive the Body of Christ on the tongue or in the hand. Before receiving Holy Communion, a bow of the head or another act of reverence is appropriate. Those receiving the sacred Body should consume it immediately, responding with *"Amen"* before receiving it. Proper preparation and catechesis are needed so that children and young people receive Holy Communion respectfully and know that they should consume it *before* they begin to move away from the minister.

As Holy Communion is to be distributed, it is important to approach the issue of who may receive Communion with great care. An invitation should be extended to all present to participate, whether in receiving Holy Communion or coming forward for a blessing, respecting each individual's beliefs and preferences. This sacred moment should be approached with sensitivity, allowing everyone to participate authentically according to their faith. Those who wish to receive a blessing should join the procession and indicate their wish by placing their hands across their chest. In a primary school, where whole classes of children have not yet made their First Holy Communion, this should be discussed with the celebrant beforehand.

In a school Mass where many may not be familiar with Mass or the way the room has been arranged for this special occasion provide clear guidance on how and when to move, as well as proper conduct during Communion.

Additionally, having designated stewards, such as young people or staff, can assist in ensuring a dignified and calm atmosphere as the assembly approaches the celebrant. If possible, any instructions should be given before Mass begins to preserve the sacredness of the occasion.

Trained and commissioned extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may assist with distribution when there are not enough clergy present. Such ministers will normally have received proper training apart from exceptional circumstances where they might be commissioned for service at a particular occasion. They should not give blessings using the formula of the Trinity or by holding up the host and tracing a blessing. Instead, they should extend a hand towards the person with appropriate words such as *"May the Lord Jesus bless you"*. Sensitivity and understanding should be shown towards children of other religions who may come forward for a blessing.

Music during the distribution of Holy Communion may be sung by the choir alone or by the assembly. *'The text and music should be suited to the mystery being celebrated, the part of the Mass, the liturgical season or the day.'* (CTM 213) This may be led by a cantor or choir, so as to remove the need to carry hymn books or sheets in the procession. If there is a large number of communicants, instrumental music may be used to supplement singing, rather than adding additional songs.

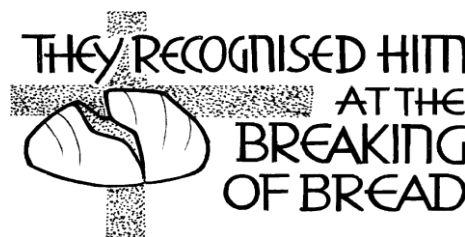
'When Communion is completed, the whole assembly may observe a period of total silence...and/or...a song of praise may be sung.' (CTM 215)

Any form of musical performance after Holy Communion is inappropriate. Following Communion, any remaining consecrated bread is consumed or returned to the tabernacle and the sacred vessels are purified by the celebrant.

The celebrant brings the Communion Rite to a close with the Prayer after Communion.

Questions to consider:

- Do you have sufficient sacred vessels for the size of your community if you require many extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion?
- How do you anticipate and prepare, through formation, for the times of Mass where the reverence is sometimes interrupted e.g. sign of peace, distribution of communion?
- How do you prepare logistically so the distribution of Holy communion is efficient and respectful?
- How can staff or older pupils discretely ensure Holy Communion is consumed by all who receive?
- How do you ensure that the music ministry helps the congregation to engage fully in the Mass and does not become a performance by a choir or band?
- Is a ciborium, with consecrated host, to be collected from the tabernacle before distribution?
- If unconsumed Holy Communion is to be returned to the Tabernacle is this organised in advance of Mass?



4. Concluding Rites

The emphasis is on sending forth, highlighting the call to live out and share the Good News that we have encountered.

The Blessing

The celebrant helps the assembly focus their attention by greeting them *'The Lord be with you'*. The assembly replies *'And with your spirit.'* The celebrant then blesses the assembly using the Trinitarian formula *'May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.'* The assembly respond *'Amen'*.

“At least sometimes, depending on the liturgical seasons and different occasions in the children’s life, the priest should use more expanded forms of blessing, but at the end should always retain the Trinitarian formula with the sign of the cross.” (DMC 54)

Dismissal

Before being sent away children need some very brief reminder and practical application of what they have heard, but this should be done in a very few words. This should express the connection between the liturgy and life. (DMC 54)

The dismissal is mission focused and linked to Jesus command to his disciples to ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’ (Matthew 28:19-20)

The assembly “are given a sense of abiding mission, which calls them to witness to Christ in the world and to bring the Gospel to the poor.” (CTM 217)

The celebrant says one of the following:

Go forth, the Mass is ended.

Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

Go in peace.

The assembly respond, ‘Thanks be to God’.

After the blessing and dismissal, the priest and any other servers leave the sanctuary or altar in procession. It may be customary to conclude the celebration in song, although: *“The practice of a final song or hymn is foreign to the Roman Rite...the use of a final hymn at Mass which keeps ministers and assembly in their place after the dismissal detracts somewhat from the dimension of missionary imperative present in the dismissal texts. The use of instrumental music, particularly an organ voluntary, is more appropriate to this moment.” (CTM 225)*

However, if a final song or hymn is included, it should be fairly short, uplifting, and purposeful, igniting a spirit of mission within the assembly.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is different if the Bishop celebrates a school Mass?

The text of the Mass is as normal apart from the Bishop's greeting at the beginning of Mass, after the Sign of the Cross, is *'Peace be with you – and with your spirit.'* The main other differences will relate to the roles of the altar servers and while the bishop's secretary will take charge, servers do need to be prepared in advance.

The Bishop will usually bring his mitre and crozier and it is helpful to have two additional servers to assist with these. These servers walk behind the Bishop in the procession and may wear special scarfs (vimpae) which the Bishop will bring with him. As the Bishop arrives at the altar he will pass the crozier and mitre to these servers who can take them to the side. The Bishop will usually wear his mitre for the first reading and psalm (and if there is one, the second reading). This can be brought to him by the server. During the Gospel Acclamation, the Bishop may bless the deacon or priest who is to read the Gospel. Then he will remove his mitre – which the server can take away – and receive the crozier which the other server will bring. After the Gospel the server will need to take the crozier to the side. The Bishop may preach the homily using the mitre and the crozier and this can be clarified before Mass. The Bishop may wear the mitre to receive the gifts during the offertory procession. The Bishop needs the mitre and crozier for the final blessing.

What age do pupils need to be to attend Mass?

There is no minimum age but it is a matter of judgement and will often depend on context. This applies particularly to early years children.

In what sense do pupils participate in school Masses?

The principles of active and conscious participation in the liturgy are important for Masses celebrated with pupils. Everyone is invited to participate spiritually and prayerfully. Pupils should also take up different specific roles, as appropriate, during the celebration – for example, serving, singing and music, reading, praying, and bringing up the gifts of bread and wine. Silence also has an important place and a value in enabling participation.

Should all pupils, even those who are not Catholic, be expected to bow or genuflect to altar/tabernacle?

There should be space for discernment between senior leaders and priest chaplain and then dialogue with students who are not Catholic, or their parents, to discuss what is deemed an appropriate mark of respect that does not compromise the integrity of their beliefs. Some pupils may feel comfortable bowing others may not and this should be respected.

How can those members of the community who are not of the Christian faith be involved in Mass?

Members of the school community who are not of the Christian faith can help with the preparation of the liturgical space and they may choose to be part of a group considering Mass intention/themes for Prayer of the Faithful. During Mass they can learn to listen to and engage with the prayers and the Scriptures, reflecting on what the experience

means to their own lives. They can assist with music and song. They can come forward for a blessing during the Communion Rite. They can respond to what they have seen and heard by taking it forward into their own life.

Can those members of the community who are not Catholic be altar servers?

It is common practice to only invite people to prepare to be altar servers after they have made their first Holy Communion. More information about the Ministry of Altar Serving can be found at the following link <https://www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk/education/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Servers-and-their-Ministry-at-Mass.pdf>

What can be done if the priest will not allow female altar servers?

No one has a right to serve – male or female. However, there is no liturgical reason for excluding girls from the ministry in school Masses.

Why don't we sing the Alleluia and the Gloria during Lent?

In a similar way to fasting from certain foods, we fast from the Alleluia and Gloria so that they are more joyful when they return at Easter.

Could another text be used instead of a scripture reading in Mass?

No.

Who can read the Gospel and preach the homily at Mass?

The priest proclaims the Gospel unless a deacon is present. Only clergy can preach the homily, unless they delegate this to another as specified in the *Directory for Masses with Children*.

Can those members of the community who are not Catholic read at Mass?

In school Masses readers of the Word are expected to be of the Christian faith. Christians, as well as Catholics, are permitted to proclaim the respective passages from the Holy Scriptures given in the Lectionary for a Mass celebrated with a Catholic school community. They would be equally able to read the intercessions during the Prayer of the Faithful when used during Mass.

At Mass, can scripture readings be adapted for younger children?

Yes, the *Directory for Masses with Children* makes this provision, but always discuss with the celebrant beforehand.

Is there guidance on writing the Prayer of the Faithful (bidding prayers)?

Yes, see <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Documents/Intercessions.shtml>

What should be brought forward in the offertory procession?

Principally the bread and wine. This gives an indication that anything brought forward is something which will not just be returned but will in some way be transformed. Artefacts and displays are best incorporated in an introduction to the Mass or processed during the Entrance procession.

Who is allowed to distribute Communion?

Where there are insufficient clergy present, a commissioned extraordinary minister of Holy Communion can assist.

What age do pupils have to be to be an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion?

This will depend on the circumstances in consultation with local clergy. Any Extraordinary Minister should have celebrated first Eucharist and Confirmation and received appropriate training and commissioning.

Do all pupils have to come forward for a blessing at Communion?

No. The encouragement is for the 'blessing' to be more a simple prayer for the person concerned rather than a blessing. It may be that for practical reasons, all pupils are required to walk towards the front, although there will be no expectation for them to receive a blessing or Holy Communion. This should be discussed with the celebrant in advance.

Good practice is to ensure all clergy observe the same form of blessing. Extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist should not give blessings using the formula of the Trinity or by holding up the host and tracing a blessing. Instead, they should extend a hand towards the person with appropriate words such as "*May the Lord Jesus bless you*". Sensitivity and understanding should be shown towards children of other religions who may come forward for a blessing.

Is applause appropriate during Mass?

It is helpful for pupils to understand that liturgical celebrations are not performances. However, it can be appropriate to thank all those who have ministered at the end.