Planning

the

Mass

A **third** guide to accompany

 ‘**To love you more dearly’**,

 the Prayer and Liturgy Directory

for Catholic Schools, Academies and Colleges in England and Wales

March 2025



**CONTENTS**

**Section Page**

Foreword, Aims and Acknowledgement 3

Introduction 4

Looking at the Mass through 4 Lenses

* Seasonality in the Mass
* Music 7
* Gathering and Introduction 10
* The Penitential Act 12
* Scripture in the Mass
* The Liturgy of the Word 13
* Scripture Interpretation 16
* The Universal Prayer 18
* The Senses in the Mass
* Preparation of the Gifts 20
* The Eucharistic Prayer 21
* Holy Communion 22
* Structure in the Mass
* Blessing and Dismissal 23

Frequently Asked Questions 24

Further Resources 28

# Foreword

Prayer and Worship are at the heart of the Christian life. It is through our personal prayer and public worship that we grow in understanding, knowledge and love of our God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Parents are the first nourishers of a life of prayer for their children, but as teachers in a Catholic School, you are charged in a particular way with this holy task.

I hope that these guidelines will help support you in this.

Also, I would like to take the opportunity to thank other Dioceses and individuals whose generosity in sharing resources have made this document possible. A particularly warm expression of thanks to Alan Dewhurst in pulling the material together making it accessible to all.

**Rt Rev Ralph Heskett CSsR, Bishop of Hallam**

# Aims of this document

The purpose of this guide is to support schools in their planning and preparation of the opportunities for prayer in their communities, following the publication of the Prayer and Liturgy Directory for Schools – **To love you more dearly** – with full implementation from September 2025.

This section focuses particularly on the celebration of the Mass in a school setting.

# Acknowledgements

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**Introduction**

***The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows.***

*- Sacrosanctum Concilium #10*

*The Mass is the central and most important aspect of the Catholic faith, described as the ‘source and summit of the Christian life’ which means that it is the foundation from which all other aspects of the faith flow, and the highest point to which the Christian life aspires. The Mass is where the Catholic faithful connect most deeply with Jesus as they encounter his real, living presence through the consecration of bread and wine into his Body and Blood. It is through the Eucharist that Catholics feel united with Jesus and his sacrifice and also with each other, as the people of God gathered in worship.*

**The Mass: The Principle of Invitation**

*Jesus begins his ministry by inviting the disciples to come and follow him. These were people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives and who responded in different ways. This diversity is ever present in our school and parish communities and any such journey toward participation starts with an invitation that respects the dignity and identity of those involved.*

*When considering our preparation for celebrating Mass, it is important to maintain an inclusive approach, but to also be mindful of the significance of what is taking place for the Catholic faithful. Catholic schools are not parishes, where those choosing to attend are doing so through a conscious decision to engage in prayer and liturgy. In a Catholic school there will often be pupils and staff present who are not baptised and who do not share the fundamental beliefs of the Catholic Church. An invitational approach ensures that Masses are open to all pupils, staff and when appropriate their families, regardless of their faith background. If pupils and staff who are not Catholic accept the invitation to participate in the Mass, discussions should take place beforehand about how they can respectfully enter, be present and participate in a way that does not compromise the integrity of their own beliefs.*

*To foster an environment of respect and inclusivity, especially for those of different faiths
or no faith, consider inviting rather than directing people to participate in religious practices like the Sign of the Cross or prayers. This simple change can help ensure that participation is a conscious, sincere, and authentic choice for each individual.*

**The Mass: The Principle of Accompaniment**

*Jesus invited the disciples to follow him.
He then walked with them and accompanied them as they grew in faith and knowledge. Prayer and liturgy is an opportunity to accompany our young people on their journey of faith, whatever their starting point, and we must work hard to ensure that our preparation, and the experience of prayer and liturgy in our communities, reflects this.*

*At all times we must be sensitive to the needs of those we serve. It may not be appropriate,
for example, for young people of another faith to take part in certain liturgical actions, which are contrary to their beliefs, but again, this can be another opportunity for accompaniment. Through sensitive dialogue and respect for each person’s dignity, we must be open to what is suitable and where, if possible, we can create opportunities to celebrate what we have in common.*

*With this in mind, it is important to understand the norms of the Church and the destination to which we all journey as pilgrims of hope. The norms, as affirmed in The Prayer & Liturgy Directory, indicate that as we use more traditional structures, such as Mass, specific liturgical ministries such as proclaiming the scripture readings are to be performed by those who normally receive Holy Communion at Mass [PLD Section 5]. However, in a spirit of inclusion and accompaniment, where this is not possible for pastoral or practical reasons, anyone who has begun their journey of faith through baptism may take these roles.*

*To further increase our capacity to bring all those we meet to Christ, we must then look for every opportunity in other forms of worship, such as celebrations of the word, to include all those who wish to be involved. Everyone is welcome to join the rich tapestry of prayer and liturgy within school and we must be mindful to encourage, support and affirm everyone to participate fully.*

***Nevertheless, in our dealings with people, we must not lose pastoral charity, which should permeate all our decisions and attitudes. The defence of objective truth is not the only expression of this charity; it also includes kindness,***

***patience, understanding, tenderness, and encouragement. Therefore, we cannot become judges who only deny, reject, and exclude.***

*– Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, September 2023*

***The Mass: The Principle of Formation***

Jesus called and walked beside his disciples, but it was not a directionless journey. He recognised where they were in their journey and taught them through parables, miracles, and personal interactions. He challenged them to deepen their understanding of God's kingdom and live out their faith in practical ways. Ultimately, he led them towards a destination, salvation. Our Catholic schools also seek to call, accompany and form our pupils so they are ‘directed toward an ideal goal which goes beyond the limitations of anything human’[[1]](#footnote-1).

The Catholic Church emphasises the importance of providing formation about the Mass as it rests at the heart of the Catholic faith. This formation may involve religious education about the main rites and prayers in the Mass, but for those who are Catholic it will also involve catechesis to support pupils preparing to actively, consciously and authentically participate in the Mass.

The Church encourages a way of teaching called mystagogical catechesis, where instead of just learning facts, people experience the mysteries of the Mass. The Mass itself teaches us about these mysteries and shows how they connect to our daily lives. This experience becomes transformative, shaping how we think and act as we live out our faith. Formation is helped by being in the context of a supportive faith community and is a life-long process, which is why it is always important as Catholic schools that we are directing people back towards their parish. They will leave our schools but we need to help them to find a spiritual home that will always be there for them.

Those who are involved in liturgical ministries in the Mass, such as servers, lectors (readers), extraordinary ministers of the eucharist, ‘hold a special place in these celebrations’ as they assist the celebrant in the sacred liturgy[[2]](#footnote-2). Formation should help the ministers to understand the deeper meaning and symbolism of the Mass so they understand the spiritual and theological significance of their role. For this reason, it is essential that pupils are not asked to ‘help’ at Mass, at the last minute and without any opportunity for formation. Formation necessarily goes beyond the mere mechanics of the roles, although it is important that ministers do know how to carry out their ministries well and with reverence and devotion.

It is important for Catholic schools to provide formation opportunities for members of the Catholic faithful maintaining a distinct Catholic identity and mission[[3]](#footnote-3). Catholic schools are also called, however, to be welcoming to those who do not share the Catholic faith, fully respecting their religious freedom and conscience.[[4]](#footnote-4) This welcome involves respecting diversity and adopting a ‘listening attitude to engage in a constructive dialogue’[[5]](#footnote-5). The Mass remains central to the life of the Catholic school but is open to participation by all members of the school community irrespective of their religious belief, in a spirit of inclusion and mutual enrichment.

*Looking at The Mass through the four lenses of:*

***Season Scripture Senses Structure***

**Seasonality in the Mass**

 **Music, Gathering, Entrance Processions, Penitential Act**

***The liturgical year is to be revised so that the traditional customs and discipline ofthe sacred seasons shall be preserved or restored to suit the conditions of modern times; their specific character is to be retained, so that they duly nourish the piety of the faithful who celebrate the mysteries of Christian redemption, and above all the paschal mystery.***

*Sacrosanctum Concilium #107*

*Seasonality is something that connects us all on a very human level. When considering our approach to planning and celebrating prayer and liturgy we need to think first of when in the life of the community it’s taking place. Just as the changing seasons outside help us get a feel for the time of year, so we must give special consideration to making the different seasons in the Church feel different too.*

*When preparing Mass, seasonality is particularly important. There are specific changes and adaptations made to reflect the season in each celebration, and the season of celebration shapes nearly every aspect of preparing for Mass. The Ordo, or the information provided by* [*www.liturgyoffice.org.uk*](http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk) *provides specific information for those preparing and should be the first point of reference when getting ready to celebrate.*

*The specific areas of guidance for the Mass found in this section explicitly reflect seasonality. Ensuring that the liturgical season is faithfully expressed not only helps us prepare Mass in a more faithful and engaging way, but also helps inform our choices across all expressions of prayer and liturgy in the community.*

***MUSIC***

**As an art placed at the service of communal prayer, music is
part of the liturgical action, drawing people together and transforming them into an assembly of worshippers.**

**For this reason, music is considered integral to worship and serves a ministerial function. 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.**

- Celebrating The Mass #80

*Music enriches all prayer and liturgy and enables all people to participate in an active way. The Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales provides clear guidance on Music in the Liturgy (Singing the Mass 1997), and this document helps us to understand where to focus our attention and resources when supporting our communities.*

*When approaching the music for the Mass it’s worth noting that the hymns aren’t actually the first priority when it comes to the music for the celebration.*

*The order of priority is as follows:*

***Most Important***

* *Gospel Acclamation (always Alleluia, except in Lent when alternatives are always used)*
* *Sanctus (Holy Holy)*
* *Memorial Acclamation* ***•***
* *Great Amen*

***To Be Included Next:***

* *Opening Hymn*
* *Gloria (if applicable – check the Ordo or Liturgy Office)*
* *Psalm*
* *Communion Processional Hymn (during but not after communion)*

***To Be Included only if all of the above are already present:***

* *Penitential Act*
* *Hymn for the Preparation of the Gifts (previously known as ‘Offertory’)*
* *Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)*
* *Recessional/Exit/Final Hymn*

***What should not be sung:***

* *The Lord’s Prayer (Our Father) This prayer was given by Jesus to everyone and should be inclusive to all so avoid singing this unless everyone present knows the music and can join in with this prayer.*

*After Communion has taken place it is important that any Communion processional song concludes to allow for silence after everyone has received Holy Communion.* ***•***

*Instrumental music can also be a great way of helping everyone to focus and to reflect at
appropriate times – as long as it doesn’t distract from words and actions that might be taking place at the same time.*

*Secular (non-religious) music, whilst potentially suitable for celebrations of the word, or Prayer, is not usually used during Mass. Whenever it is used, it must be in conformity with the Bible and**the Church’s theological teaching, and should be used in a way that enhances the celebration.*

*As the document ‘Celebrating the Mass’ reminds us we need to make sure to allow time for
all those leading to become confident with the Mass music so that it does not become a* ***•*** *distraction or a worry. Remember to also rehearse with the accompaniment that will be played during the Mass – changing instruments or using a different backing track can cause confusion.*

***Before using music in a liturgical celebration always consider the following points:***

* *Check sufficient and appropriate musicians are available and that they know which pieces of music they need to prepare*
* *Time for musicians / congregation to practise the Mass music*
* *Space for the musicians (including chairs, music stands, microphones etc.)*
* *Check that the sheet music is suitable for the instruments being played eg chords for guitars, sheet music for woodwind / brass / stringed instruments in the correct key*
* *Check that the words and verses that the musicians have match those printed in the order of service / showing on screen to avoid any confusion*
* *Be prepared with some music that can be played whilst people gather or when the musicians receive Holy Communion*

*Something further to consider is how to support our communities in learning new music and how we can foster confidence in the use of music in prayer and liturgy more broadly. The Prayer & Liturgy Directory encourages the creation of a programme of music that reflects the season, and to consciously give time to allow this to become part of the culture of worship. It is good advice to then use the Mass music at other times too, such as in celebrations of the word, to enhance its familiarity.*

*Most importantly, don’t forget to enjoy the music during prayer and liturgy. As Saint Augustine says: ‘Whoever sings well prays twice over’. Fostering a sense of joy, and a culture of participation, can create an accessible and moving experience for everyone.*

***Gathering and Introduction***

***The Atmosphere***

*Try to ensure that the space is set, candles are lit, and everything is ready before anyone comes into the space for Mass. Encourage people to come in quietly perhaps by playing music so that they understand the change in atmosphere for the celebration of Mass. It is worth reflecting that Mass may not always be celebrated in a church. It is vital that any space used feels different and important and reflects the liturgical season. Art, decoration, lighting and colour can all be used to enhance a space for Prayer and Liturgy.*

***Who should be involved?***

***The principles of active and conscious participation are in a sense even more significant for Masses celebrated with children. Every effort should therefore be made to increase this participation and to make it more intense. For this reason, as many children as possible should have special parts in the celebration: for example, preparing the place and the altar, acting as cantor, singing in a choir, playing musical instruments, proclaiming the readings, responding during the homily, reciting the intentions of the general intercessions, bringing the gifts to the altar, and performing similar activities in accord with the usage of various peoples.***

*– Directory for Masses with Children #22*

***Introduction***

*An introduction to Mass may be led by young people, or by a member of staff, before the celebration begins. The purpose of the introduction is to welcome those who have gathered, and to set the tone and theme of the Mass.*

*The beginning of Mass is also a good time for any commentary that has been prepared, particularly if it is a particular feast . The Introduction can come before the opening hymn or after the priest has begun the celebration with the Sign of the Cross. It is important to check with the priest what is appropriate for the particular celebration and include him in the preparation of any texts.*

*The aim of the introduction is:*

***‘...that the faithful coming together take on the form of a community and prepare themselves to listen properly to God’s word and to celebrate the Eucharist worthily.’***

*– Directory for Masses with Children #40*

***The Introduction should:***

* *Welcome the congregation and any special guests*
* *Introduce those (students) who have prepared the Mass*
* *Introduce the theme of the Mass, e.g., the liturgical season, the feast day of a saint, the intentions of the Mass, etc.*
* *Prepare the congregation to take part in the Mass as a community*

***The Introduction could include commentary to:***

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

*The Introduction / Gathering is also a good opportunity to bring up any objects or symbols that may help the congregation to reflect upon the theme or season of the Mass.*

*These might include young people’s work, symbols to represent the theme, or religious icons. This could be done by creating a prayer focus at the front of the celebration during the introduction or by pointing out and explaining the objects / symbols that have already been prepared before the Mass began. Care must be taken that this doesn’t distract from the altar, or that the altar becomes simply a backdrop for the display. A separate site is always preferable.*

*Using the beginning of Mass to bring up objects or symbols such as these allows them to inform and be present for the entire celebration. It also allows the priest to refer to them and use them as a foundation for dialogue with the congregation.*

*The presentation of the gifts, where items like this have previously been brought up before,* ***should not*** *be used for this purpose and should focus on simply the ‘fruit of the earth and work of human hands’: the gifts of bread and wine brought to the altar.*

***...it is appropriate to introduce other related elements that will permit children to perceive visually the wonderful works that God performed in creation and redemption and thus support their prayer. The liturgy should never appear as something dry and merely intellectual.***

***For the same reason, 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.***

*– Directory for Masses with Children #35*

***The Penitential Act***

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

*The Penitential Act is part of each Mass however it is sometimes replaced with an alternative Rite, such as on The Presentation of the Lord (2 February) or Ash Wednesday.*

*The Penitential Act always begins and ends with words from the priest. Some of the statements within can be written and led by those taking part in the Mass.*

***There are three different forms that the Penitential Rite can take.***

1. *The ‘I confess to Almighty God...’ prayer*
2. *The ‘Have mercy on us O Lord...’ dialogue*
3. *Three statements about Jesus’ love and mercy followed by the responses: ‘Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy’ (also familiar in the Greek ‘Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison, Kyrie Eleison’).*

*It is possible for young people to write and lead a Penitential Act in the third form (statements followed by: Lord have mercy... ). This will take the form of three statements written about Jesus and his love and mercy rather than focusing on personal mistakes or failings. This important focus reminds us that forgiveness is rooted in love and, by focusing on Jesus’ love and mercy for us, we can confidently and sincerely then ask him for mercy.*

*A great place to start when writing these statements is to look first to the Gospel reading to help create a connection between the different sections of the liturgy, and to root this element of the Mass with the particular feast or season.*

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

*The readers should return to their places after the priest has concluded the Penitential Act (but not before).*

*On Sundays, solemnities, feast days, and other days of celebration, the Gloria (the song of the angels on Christmas night) will follow. The Gloria is not required for a weekday Mass but can still be included if appropriate. See the Ordo for times when the Gloria is required. The Gloria should be sung.*

**Scripture in Mass**

**Readings, Scripture Interpretation and the Universal Prayer**

***The Liturgy of the Word***

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

*Scripture is a fundamental part in the celebration of Mass. During the Liturgy of the Word we hear scripture passages which help us gain something of the theme of the celebration. These scripture passages help us to encounter Christ in a profound and meaningful way.*

***Cycle of readings***

*The Church gives us a rich calendar of readings throughout the whole year. These tell the story of Jesus and the story of the people of God as a journey which accompanies us through the seasons.*

*We get to experience different Gospel perspectives across different liturgical years and this universal approach is a great starting point when looking to find scripture for prayer and liturgy.*

*The Ordo gives the specific readings for each day of the year and is an essential resource when planning for Mass. Over the course of the year the cycle of readings helps us go into scripture in depth, drawing upon scripture from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. This rich tradition of scripture permits not only an encounter with Christ, but also a connection with the wider liturgical life of the Church. We should always seek to use the cycle of readings to inform and influence the scripture we choose.*

***During this part of the Mass we hear readings from the Bible, the Word of God.***

*A brief explanation of the background of the reading can be provided as another point of commentary before the scripture.*

*All readings should be proclaimed from the lectern or ambo. If the text needs to be
enlarged and cannot be read directly from the lectionary then the document that the scripture is read from should be presented in a respectful way that acknowledges its importance as the Word of God. Loose pieces of paper (however beautifully backed) should not be used, but rather an appropriately-decorated folder, already on the lectern, helps to indicate that the readings are taken from a common source of scripture, the Bible, and not simply something one person has prepared.*

***The Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales has approved the following translations of the Bible for use in the Liturgy:***

* *English Standard Version Catholic Edition (the translation used in the lectionary)*
* *Jerusalem Bible (the translation used in the lectionary before Advent 2024)*
* *Revised Standard Version*
* *New Jerusalem Bible*
* *New Revised Standard Version*
* *Good News (for Masses with young children)*

*It’s important for the ‘active and conscious participation’ of those gathered that the readings from scripture be appropriate.*

***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...***

***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.***

*- Celebrating The Mass #43*

*If it is considered that such a change to the readings would be prudent, make sure to discuss this with the priest in good time beforehand.*

*The readings in Mass follow this format:*

***First Reading:***

* *This reading is present for all celebrations of Mass*
* *This is usually from the Old Testament, or sometimes from one of the letters in the New Testament; Acts of the Apostles is used during the Easter season*
* *The book of the Bible is given at the beginning of the reading (see the* ***Scripture Introductions Guidance****) and ends with ‘*The Word of the Lord’*, to which the congregation replies,* ‘Thanks be to God’.

***Psalm:***

* *This reading is present for all celebrations of Mass*
* *This is usually a part of one of the psalms in the Book of Psalms; sometimes a canticle from another part of the Bible takes its place.*
* *For a responsorial psalm, the psalmist (reading or singing the psalm) introduces the psalm which the congregation repeats. Then the psalmist reads or sings each verse, interspersed by the response each time.*

***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.***

*- Celebrating The Mass #162*

*Psalms are songs, and were sung by God’s chosen people long before they were written down. Wherever possible the psalm at Mass should be sung, even if to a very simple tune. This can be done using the responsorial format described, or sung altogether. It is permitted to sing the response and recite the verses. If it is not possible to sing any parts of the psalm then instrumental background music can be used to help meditation on the words.*

***Second Reading***

* *This reading is only given on Sundays and solemnities*
* *The second reading is always taken from one of the letters of the New Testament*

*To ensure clarity and ease of understanding, scripture should be proclaimed by a single
voice. If the scripture given for the first or second reading is of particular length, and has a number of voices or characters in, then this can be an opportunity to involve several young people in its reading, each taking a different character or voice or reading the part of narrator.*

***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 in Holy Week.***

*- Directory for Masses with Children #48*

***The Gospel Acclamation***

* *The acclamation is always sung and the congregation stands to greet the Gospel.*
* *There may be a procession with candles during the acclamation.*
* *The reader of the previous piece of scripture may remain at the ambo or lectern to sing the acclamation before the Gospel is proclaimed. Care should be taken to ensure the reader leaves the ambo or lectern before the deacon or priest or any altar servers arrive.*

***The Gospel***

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

* *The deacon or priest proclaims the Gospel after a prayer or blessing.*
* *A procession to the lectern or ambo, with candles, is made.*
* *Whilst the Gospel passage is introduced (‘*A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to N*.’) those present make the sign of the cross with the thumb on the forehead, lips and chest, whilst responding ‘*Glory to you, O Lord’*.*
* *The Gospel ends with the words,* ‘The Gospel of the Lord’*, and the response* ‘Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ’.
* *Optionally the acclamation may be sung again, especially where there is a procession of candles.*
* *The Gospel always comes from one of the four canonical Gospels in the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke or John.*

***Scripture Interpretation***

***General advice***

*Scripture readings should be read clearly and confidently. Young people reading should have the chance to practise the readings, and be given an explanation of their meaning and context, so that they are comfortable and familiar with what they will be saying. If a microphone is needed it should be in place and easily adjustable by the reader, so that the readings can be heard easily by everyone.*

*If young people wish to prepare scripture reflections, then these must be done in a way that enhances understanding rather than to detract from the Word of God.*

**Drama can be used to enhance the pupils’ response to the liturgy of the word but should not replace a scripture reading. Care should be taken that it is appropriate and proportionate.**

– Prayer & Liturgy Directory FAQ

*After the scripture readings the priest preaches on the Word of God and the theme of the Mass in general, this is called the homily. When celebrating with young people participation of those gathered is encouraged. This homily should be suitable and relevant to the young people with whom it is shared.*

**If it is to fulfil its purpose, the Homily must be the fruit of meditation, carefully prepared, and in length, style, and content sensitively adapted to the needs and capacities of all present. This may well be more easily achieved if the priest prepares the Homily in shared reflection and prayer with members or representatives of the congregation.**

- Celebrating the Mass #169

*Interpreting Scripture creatively can be an engaging and enjoyable way to help young people connect with the liturgy. It can help contextualise complex concepts in a meaningful and relevant way.*

***Some key questions to consider and discuss with young people when preparing an interpretation of scripture are:***

1. *What is the meaning of the piece of scripture?*
2. *What is a message or phrase
that sums up the passage (there is often a precis of the reading in the lectionary which can help with this)*
3. *What does the piece of scripture mean in today’s time and place?*
4. *How do the words personally speak to our community?*

*When preparing to interpret scripture, consider the best ways to bring that scripture to life. It is important to remember that all scripture must be read (or in the case of the psalm, sung) before any interpretation is given, so that the reflection enhances understanding. The scripture interpretation must never replace hearing the Word of God as it has been handed down to us.*

***Scripture interpretation could take one of several forms:***

1. *A re-enactment of the scripture, either as the passage is read, or shown directly after reading.*
2. *A dramatised interpretation of the scripture, set in a modern-day situation.*
3. *A metaphorical interpretation where the core theme is reflected in a different setting or scenario.*
4. *A musical interpretation prepared to explain the message and theme of the scripture.*
5. *An artistic interpretation of the scripture (eg posters, pictures, sculpture), where the scripture is read followed by a showing and explaining of the artwork. This works well when young people are not very vocal or confident in front of others.*

*It is important to remember that this is not a performance. It is not there to highlight the people taking part, but rather to help explain the scripture itself. With that in mind it is important to keep the focus on the scripture, not to give rounds of applause, and to encourage the young people to be respectful and appropriate.*

*Ensure any interpretation isn’t too long or too complicated. Pick one aspect or theme to interpret and keep it simple. The experience of leading the interpretation should be enjoyable for the young people. Young people shouldn’t have to memorise extra words for example, nor rehearse over and over again.*

*It is also important to remember that any interpretations do not replace the homily; rather they form part of a dialogue with the priest to which he can respond. To enable any interpretation to be in harmony with the homily it is vital to ensure that the preparation of any interpretation is done in collaboration with the priest.*

***The Universal Prayer***

***Enlightened and moved by God’s word, the assembly exercises its priestly function by interceding for all humanity. Because “the joy and hope, the struggle and anguish of the people of this age and especially of the poor and those suffering in any way are the joy and hope, the struggle and anguish of Christ’s disciples,” the Church prays not just for its own needs but for the salvation of the world, for civil authorities, for those oppressed by any burden, and for the local community, particularly those who are sick or who have died.***

*- Celebrating the Mass #171*

*The Universal Prayer, or Prayer of the Faithful, (sometimes called Intercessions, Bidding Prayers or Asking Prayers), concludes the Liturgy of the Word, encouraging us to turn to God and to ask for help with those things that the scripture has taught us. These prayers are offered on behalf of all people across the wider Church and the whole world.*

*The Universal Prayer begins with an introduction from the priest, and ends with the priest’s
prayer on behalf of the whole congregation. The intercessions are led by those taking part in the Mass, with all invited to make the response at the end of each.*

*The intercessions are purposely phrased so that those leading the prayer first invite the community to pray for particular intentions:*

*For example, ‘We pray for [Theme]... that...’*

*Then, after a period of silence, when all present can make their own quiet prayers for the intention suggested, it is collectively brought together with the words ‘*Lord hear us’ *or ‘*Lord in your mercy*’ And the response: ‘*Lord, graciously hear us’*; or ‘*hear our prayer’*.*

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

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*
5. *Any other specific intentions of the community, including prayers for those who have died.*

***The intercessions should reflect:***

* *The Scripture*
* *The theme of the Mass*
* *The liturgical season*
* *The needs of the local community*
* *The needs of the world*

*At the end of the intercessions and prayers the congregation should be invited to pray for their own personal intentions in silence. followed by a longer pause. We then collectively pray ‘Lord, hear us’ or ‘Lord in your mercy’ to offer up our silent prayers.*

*In England and Wales, the prayers usually conclude with asking for the intercession of Mary, Mother of God. For example:*

***We ask Mary, our Mother, to pray / intercede for us as we say, Hail Mary full of grace....***

*Other Marian prayers (such as the Hail, Holy Queen, or the Memorare) can also be used here. The readers should only return to their seats after the priest has concluded the final prayer of the Universal Prayer, and all have said ‘Amen’.*

**The Senses in Mass**

**The preparation of the gifts and the liturgy of the Eucharist**

*The Mass is a particularly sensory experience and it speaks to the reality of our incarnation. Mass truly engages the senses and by reflecting on elements from the Mass, such as gesture, procession, offerings, and posture we can find new and creative ways to engage others in all aspects of prayer and liturgy and beyond.*

*Reflecting on what we* ***see, hear, think*** *and* ***do*** *during prayer and liturgy can be a useful approach to ensure what we plan is both engaging, and most importantly, accessible, as the language of the senses speaks to everyone.*

***...the Liturgy is the priesthood of Christ, revealed to us and given in his Paschal Mystery, rendered present and active by means of signs addressed to the senses (water, oil, bread, wine, gestures, words), so that the Spirit, plunging us into the paschal mystery, might transform every dimension of our life, conforming us more and more to Christ.***

*- Pope Francis - Desiderio Desideravi #21*

*The Mass speaks to everyone using the language of the senses. Although during the preparation of the gifts, which begins the Liturgy of the Eucharist, there are not many opportunities for young people to take specific roles, there is a rich tapestry of gesture, prayer, song and movement with which we can engage everyone present.*

***The Preparation of Gifts (Offertory)***

*The Preparation of the Gifts, which we used to call the ‘offertory’ is an important part of the celebration of Mass and should only involve the procession of bread, wine and if necessary, a collection of money or goods for the parish and the poor.*

*Where possible the bread and the wine should each be brought up in a single container that makes them clearly visible to those celebrating Mass, for example a glass jug or open ciborium. The water should be already on the credence table since, unlike the bread and the wine, it is not the work of human hands.*

*The procession should not be used to bring up other objects or work from the young people. These should be brought up during the Entrance Procession and placed in a prominent position (but not on the altar) so they are present for the entire celebration. It may seem confusing that young people’s work cannot be “offered” to God, but a distinction is made here between elements which are offered (symbols at the start of Mass, our prayers after the scripture readings, etc) and the elements which are given here, as an offering from the community, offered in sacrifice to God, and then transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit through the priest’s words, given back to the congregation as the Body and Blood of Christ.*

***The Eucharistic Prayer***

***At the Last Supper, Christ instituted the Sacrifice and Paschal meal that make the Sacrifice of the cross present in the Church. From the days of the Apostles the Church has celebrated that Sacrifice by carrying out what the Lord did and handed over to his disciples to do in his memory. Like him, the Church has taken bread and wine, given thanks to God over them, broken the bread, and shared the bread and cup of blessing as the Body and Blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16).***

***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.***

*- Celebrating the Mass #174*

*After the procession of gifts, the priest prepares the gifts of bread and wine (mixed with a little water) often with the help of a deacon and altar servers.*

*The priest prays over the gifts, and then he begins the Eucharistic Prayer by saying the Preface, to which the congregation are invited to respond by singing ‘Holy, Holy, Holy...’. (Sanctus). During this time everyone is invited to kneel if they can and if the setting allows it.*

*There are several different Eucharistic Prayers, each of which has its own particular focus and themes with the same basic structure. Young people are to be encouraged to think about the words used as they are being prayed out loud. In Hallam Diocese, in primary schools, the Children’s Eucharistic Prayers may be used, with those Eucharistic Prayers found in the Missal being normative for young people in secondary education.*

*After the elevation of the consecrated bread and wine, which have been transformed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Our Lord, the cantor will start one of the three memorial acclamations.*

*The Eucharistic Prayer concludes with the Doxology, as the priest sings: ‘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’ Everyone then responds together with the Great Amen.*

*As the congregation stands the priest invites them to pray the prayer common to all Christians, the ‘Our Father’, and then, after a prayer for peace, all together share a sign of peace, which usually takes the form of a handshake (or similar) with those close around. The Lamb of God (Agnus Dei) is then recited or sung, sometimes led by a cantor rather than the priest.*

***Holy Communion***

*During the distribution of Holy Communion great care and sensitivity should be used when explaining who is able to receive Communion. It can also be helpful to explain to everyone how and when to move, and what to do when receiving Communion in the particular setting. This might more helpfully be undertaken before the Mass begins, so that this sacred time doesn’t become distracted with announcements. Likewise, it can be helpful to have some young people or staff acting as stewards here, to help the congregation come forward to the priest in a dignified and calm manner.*

*It is key that everyone receives an invitation to participate, be that in receiving Holy Communion or coming forward for a blessing, should each individual wish to do so. This is a special moment and everyone should be invited sensitively to participate in a way that is authentic to what they believe.*

*After Communion a purposeful and deliberate silence should be observed to allow for prayer and reflection.*

**Structure in the Mass**

**Blessing and Dismissal**

*The structure of Mass is geared toward sending us out to proclaim the Good News. The Rites of Dismissal, as with the ‘Mission’ in our Celebrations of the word, should inspire, empower, and enable direct action that proclaims the Gospel by our lives.*

*The end of a celebration is an important moment, particularly in its missionary focus. We are being sent out to live and share what we have heard and received. With this in mind, it can be suitable to have a final piece of commentary which gives those attending a mission or focus for when they leave. This could be accompanied by a prayer card / gift prepared by a group.*

*It is important that this is brief and focused, so that the missionary nature of this part of the celebration is not lost. For that reason, it is a good idea to allow people to collect any prayer cards / gifts as they leave rather than to give them out to everyone gathered.*

*Shortly before the final blessing is also the time for any community announcements to take place.*

***The invitation that precedes the final blessing is important in Masses with children. Before they are dismissed, they need some repetition and application of what they have heard, but this should be done in a very few words. In particular, this is the appropriate time to express the connection between the liturgy and life.***

*- Directory for Masses with Children #54*

***The practice of a final song or hymn is foreign to the Roman Rite, which is notably brief in its concluding rites. 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.***

*- Celebrating the Mass #225*

*If a final hymn is to be included then it should
be short, celebrational, and purposeful to
inspire people to mission. It can be a good idea to leave the Mass whilst singing (meaning that all announcements must be done before) so that those gathered can process out during the song.*

The Mass: Frequently Asked Questions

If your question is not asked or answered then please discuss with your parish priest.

## What is required for the celebration of Mass in school?

For a school Mass, various practical items are needed and these include:

Fittings

• Altar

• Ambo (or lectern)

• Processional cross and/or altar cross

• Credence (small side) table

• Presidential Chair (chair for the priest)

Books

• Roman Missal

• All volumes of the Lectionary, or readings within a purposed lectionary cover

Perishables

• Altar breads

• Wine

• Water

• Wax Candles

• Matches

• Cruets: small containers for the water and wine used in the preparation of gifts

Vessels

• Paten: a shallow dish for holding the host(s) for the Eucharist

• Ciborium: a covered dish for storing consecrated hosts (plural ciboria)

• Chalice: a large cup for the wine for the Eucharist

Linen

• Altar Cloths

* Corporal: a square cloth placed on the altar underneath the chalice and paten so that no fragments are discarded

• Purificator: cloth used to wipe the chalice after Communion

• Lavabo cloth: cloth used to dry the priest’s hands at the preparation of gifts

At the beginning of Mass, there should be a white altar cloth, candles, and a crucifix on the altar. It is important that the vessels, cloths, vestments, liturgical books, and other items used in the Mass are clean and of good quality. Glass or earthenware vessels should not be used for the Sacrament itself. If the school does not possess the items listed above then hopefully arrangements can be made with a local parish to borrow them when needed. If the school does have its own items, then consideration should be given to where they can be stored respectfully when not in use.

## What differences are there when it is a Bishop celebrating the Mass instead of a priest?

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, which is ‘Peace be with you – and with your spirit.’

The main other differences will relate to the roles of the altar servers and they do need to be prepared in advance. The Bishop will be the best guide of whether these roles are included.

 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 vimpae, special scarfs 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 a school Mass?

There is no minimum age but it is a matter of judgment 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?

A dialogue should take place with those pupils who are not Catholic, or their parents, prior to the celebration of Mass 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 Catholic be involved in Mass?

In preparation for Mass, those members of the school community who are not Catholic 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 on the Liturgy Office website [here](https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/GIRM/Ministry/ServerC.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 Gospels 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 in this diocese, Ministers of the Word are expected to be of the Christian faith.

## 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.

## What should be brought forward in a procession with gifts (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 better incorporated in the Introductory Rites.

## Who is allowed to distribute Communion?

Where there are insufficient clergy present, a commissioned extraordinary minister of Holy Communion can assist. More information about this ministry can be found on the Liturgy Office website [here](https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/GIRM/Ministry/Communion).

## 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 Minster should have celebrated Confirmation and Eucharist and received the appropriate training and commissioning.

## 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.

The Mass: Further Resources

* Sacrosanctum Concilium – Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy <https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html>
* Hallam Diocese Ordo (2024-25: Not as the link says) <https://hallam-diocese.com/ordo-2023-to-2024/>
* Liturgy Office, England and Wales - <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk>
* Celebrating the Mass (Catholic Bishops’ Conference, April 2005) <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/GIRM/Documents/CTM.pdf>
* Directory for Masses with Children <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/SOS/DCM.pdf>
* Desiderio Desideravi – Apostolic letter of Pope Francis <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/20220629-lettera-ap-desiderio-desideravi.html>
* New Lectionary, New Opportunities – The God who speaks <https://www.godwhospeaks.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Lectionary-Scripture-Resource-FINAL-1.pdf>
* Good News (in Nottingham Diocese may

be used only for Masses with Children in primary schools, or where the majority of those present are aged up to year 5)

1. The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal §98 (108) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Musicam Sacram §13 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. To the International Congress organized by the European Committee for Catholic Education (April 28, 2001) §4 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith §55 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion §II.6 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)