



St Mary Magdalene's Primary School

Guidance on Prayer

Agreed by Governing Board on 20.09.2023

Policy will be reviewed by Sep 2025

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1 Our School Prayer

Dear Lord,
You are the friend of all children,
Look after our school St Mary Magdalene's.
Look after the children and the adults who work in it.
Help us always to do our best,
Help us to be kind to one another,
To work hard to become the best people we can possibly be.
Let your light shine for all to see,
Help us to celebrate your love in our lives.
Amen.

2 The Romero Prayer

It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view.
The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts; it is even beyond our vision.
We accomplish in our lifetime only a fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.
Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything.
This is what we are about.
We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water the seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.
We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something and to do it well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.

3 WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is the raising of the mind and heart to God.

The Faith of the Catholic Church. Ed Rt Rev D. Konstant.



At the heart of the Christian faith is the belief in a God who communicates with people. God calls every human person into a loving relationship in which all can find the help, support, encouragement and healing which will enable them to fulfil the purpose of their lives as individuals and as part of the community, “the Body of Christ” to which, through Baptism, they have been called.

As with every relationship, our relationship with God can only grow through communication. Prayer is the way in which we engage in communication with God. Prayer consists of:

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

Speaking - expressing the deepest longings and desires of our hearts to the one who knows and understands us better than we know our selves.

Reflecting - thinking about our relationship with God. Pondering on the actions of God in history and in our own lives.

Resting - simply being consciously in the presence of God, knowing that we are loved.

Christians believe that prayer is essential to human fulfilment for it is only on God that we can discover ourselves, our meaning and our purpose.

You have made us for yourself,

O Lord,

And our hearts are restless

Until they rest in you.

St. Augustine

4 PRAYER IN OUR SCHOOL

As teachers in a Catholic school, every member of staff is expected to either:

Actively engage with pupils in prayer

Or

Ensure that there are opportunities for pupils to pray

Traditionally there are points in each day when prayer should take place:

Morning

Evening

Night

In addition, it is also customary to pray:

Before and after meals

Before the beginning of any significant action

A rhythm of prayer should be established in the life of the school, so that it becomes the 'heartbeat' of the community.

In our Catholic school it is expected that teachers will:

Provide opportunities for pupils to pray

Provide pupils with meaningful prayer experiences

Assist pupils to develop the language of prayer

Teach pupils the traditional prayers of the Church

Help pupils to develop habits of prayer

In order that pupils will be able to:

Contemplate something of the mystery of God

Reflect on moral and spiritual issues

Explore their own beliefs

Respond to and celebrate life

Experience a sense of belonging and develop community spirit

Develop a common sense of ethos and shared values

Enrich religious experience

Learn prayers which are part of the Catholic tradition

Reinforce positive attitudes

Take time out 'to wonder at', 'come to terms with' and 'give worth to' God.

Enabling the statutory daily Collective Act of Worship and other prayer time to take place and to be meaningful and significant is one of the most important responsibilities of the Class Teacher. While these times may be comparatively brief, they require:

Careful Planning

Confident Presentation

Appropriate setting

Good resourcing

Imagination and creativity

The Class Teacher should keep records of planning and evaluation and there should be a whole school policy relating to prayer in the life of the school community which identifies:

Provision for collective acts of worship

Monitoring and evaluation responsibilities and processes

Educational outcomes

Resources

Development Plan

Leading pupils into prayer is a vital and essential part of Catholic education. This handbook has been provided to help teachers to fulfil expectations which the Catholic community has of them in helping develop our schools as powerful and exciting schools of prayer.

Our aim...

is to put people

not only in touch

but in communion

in intimacy with Jesus Christ:

only he can lead us to the love of the Father

in the spirit

and make us share

in the life of the Holy Trinity.

Pope John Paul II

5 PREPARING FOR PRAYER

If the prayer experience which are provided for pupils are to be enriching and rewarding, the following elements are essential:

Adequate preparation

Effective time management

Calm gathering into the prayer

The prayer can be greatly assisted by:

The provision of a focal point- a display which provides visual stimulus for prayer. The display can be quite simple consisting of perhaps a Bible, a candle, a crucifix, a cross, statue or icon and a drape in an appropriate liturgical colour.

Liturgical colours

white/gold for the feasts of the Lord and the saints - except martyrs and the Easter Season

red for Pentecost and feasts of the martyrs

purple for Lent

violet for Advent

green for the ordinary times of the Church's year.

blue, though not an official liturgical colour, is associated with the feasts and times of devotion to Mary - who in the Catholic Church is commonly referred to as Our Lady

Body Position- God is always present with us and in prayer we make ourselves conscious of that. This requires an alertness and openness to God's presence. This is assisted by the bodily position we take for prayer. While standing is the traditional posture, this can be a difficult position for people to hold without a distracting movement. Pupils can be helped by being encouraged to sit in a upright position, feet placed on the floor and with hands gently relaxed, palms upwards, resting on the upper leg. Closing the eyes can also be helpful. This position allows for relaxation at the same time as alertness. If time allows, relaxation and breathing exercises are very helpful.

6 WHY DO WE PRAY?

We pray in order to offer God our:

ADORATION

CONTRITION

THANKSGIVING

SUPPLICATION

We Pray in

ADORATION

Adoration and Praise are the ways in which we acknowledge our place before God.

We offer God adoration and praise simply because God is God.

Children can develop this kind of prayer through the use of litany formula, using responses such as:

Blessed be God forever

To God (you) be highest glory and praise forever more

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you

Gory to God in the highest

e.g.

L Loving God you created all things

All To you be highest glory and praise for ever more.

L For the beauty of your creation

All We praise you, we bless you, we adore you.

We pray in

CONTRITION

Through praying in contrition (sorrow) we recognise the reality of sin and we ask God's forgiveness for:

Our personal sin:

It is important for everyone to acknowledge their failings. If this is not done it is all too easy to forget the damage that can be done to one's self and others. By acknowledging our sins we open ourselves up to:

God's Mercy-which will reassure us that, even though we have failed, God still loves us and values our worth.

God's Forgiveness- which will free us from the burden of guilt.

God's Healing- which will repair the damage our sin has done to ourselves and to others.

God's Help- which will lead us to change.

The prayers which we use to express contrition for personal sin are said in the first person. In them we express our personal responsibility. Before praying these prayers, time should be given to *an examination of conscience* in which we reflect on our need for forgiveness for the sins we have committed (sins of commission) and for the things we have failed to do which we ought to have done (sins of omission).

A short act of Contrition:

O My God, because you are so good, I am very sorry that I have sinned against you and, with the help of your grace I will not sin again. Amen.

A Scriptural Act of Contrition:

Have mercy on me God, in your kindness.

In your compassion blot out my offence.

O wash me more and more from my guilt

And cleanse me from my sin (Psalm 50)



The sin of others:

Following the example of Jesus who prayed "Father, forgive them", we can pray for God's mercy for others who have sinned and we can ask for the grace of God to lead others to conversion and repentance.

The sins of the World:

There is sin in the world over which we have little or no personal control over, but which, in some ways, we share, because we are part of the community which sins. (E.g. sins as violence expressed through warfare and terrorism; discrimination through racism, sexism and other forms of oppression and inequality; consumerism; injustice in the distribution of the world's resources etc.) By acknowledging the sin we ask for:

God's mercy and forgiveness for that sin

We ask to be purified personally for the ways in which that sin has affected us

We strengthen our own resistance to the false values and wrong attitudes which lead us to such sin

*We witness, in the face of false values and wrong attitudes, the truth and values of God.

Prayers used to express sorrow for the sins of the world are usually expressed in a communitarian way.

There are many ways to structure prayers which ask for forgiveness for the sins of the world. One useful way is through the litany style of prayer.

e.g.

L For the ways in which we have taken more than our fair share of the world's resources. Lord, have mercy.

All Lord, have mercy.

L For the time we have ignored the needs of the hungry we pray:

All God, forgive us.

We pray in

THANKSGIVING

All things come from God and by thanking God we:

Recognise our dependence on God

We acknowledge God's goodness to us

We make ourselves more aware of God's blessing

We develop an appreciation of and a respect for the gifts of God in our lives.

The highest expression of thanksgiving is the Mass (the word 'Eucharist' comes from a Greek word meaning thanksgiving).

Graces before and after meals are helpful in developing an attitude of thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving should be part of prayer at the end of the day.

e.g.

L For all we have learned today:

All We give you thanks



As pupils grow, they should be invited to reflect on the need for thanksgiving for things which are not immediately obvious:

e.g.

L For the things we struggled with today:

All We give you thanks

L Because we got on with people we don't always find it easy to like:

All We give you thanks.

We pray in

SUPPLICATION

In the prayer of supplication we ask God for:

Our own needs

The needs of others

The needs of the Church

The needs of the World

By praying this way we:

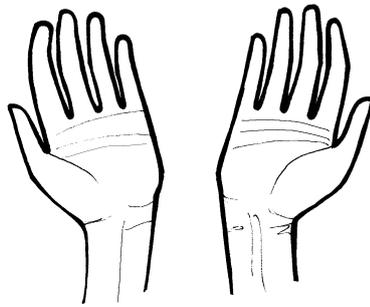
Recognise that all good things come from God

Make ourselves more aware of the needs of others

Remind ourselves of the ways in which we must co-operate in order that God may act

Open ourselves to accept the will of God

We need to be careful in the way in which we explain the prayer of supplication. While we believe that God always hears our prayers, they are not always answered in the way we might, at first, desire. It is, therefore, important to lead pupils to understand that, while our prayers are heard, God may not grant them if they are not ultimately for our good, or the good of those for whom they pray.



There are two main forms of prayer of supplication:

Prayers of Intercession – these are addressed to God.

Bidding Prayers – these are first addressed to the people and are followed by an intercession addressed to God.

Bidding Prayers:

invite the people to pray for an intention

followed by a brief silence in which personal prayers can be made

ask for God's action and, often our cooperation with God

conclude with an intercession formula

e.g.

L Lord Hear us

All Lord Graciously hear us

Or

L Lord, in your Mercy

All Hear our prayer



7 TYPES OF PRAYER

LITURGICAL PRAYER

ORAL PRAYER

MEDITATION

CONTEMPLATION

LITURGICAL PRAYER

Liturgy is the public worship of the community in which we celebrate in word and with symbol the presence of Christ at work in the Church and the world. Liturgy is not the same as a time of prayer or worship. What makes liturgy is the use of symbol.

There are two forms of liturgical prayer:

The Liturgy of the Church

These are the official rites of the Church:

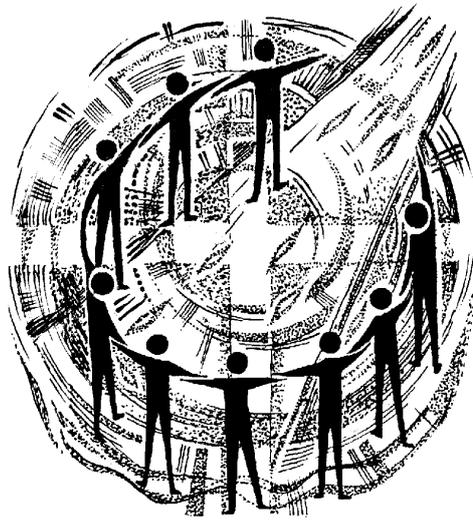
The Mass

The Sacramental Rites

Other rites and officially approved devotions

Other Liturgies

There are other ways of celebrating liturgy though, if they are not the official rites of the church, they are sometimes called para-liturgies.



ORAL PRAYER

Prayer using words which may be said aloud or in silence. In oral prayer we can use:

Scriptural prayer:

e.g. Our Father, the Psalms and Canticles (songs) of the Old Testament and New Testament.

Traditional prayer of the community:

e.g. Hail Mary, Glory Be, Eternal Rest

Written prayers:

e.g. Prayers of the Saints, spiritual writers and prayers written by teachers and pupils.

Spontaneous prayers:

e.g. prayers which arise from our own hearts and minds.



MEDITATION

Meditation is a prayerful quest engaging thought, imagination, emotion and will. Its aim is to make our own, in faith, the subject considered, by deepening and comparing it with the reality of our own life.

The Faith of the Catholic Church. Ed Rt Rev D. Konstant

In meditation we reflect on such things as:

Scripture stories

Passages from Scripture

Music

Prayers

Poetry

Pictures

Events which have taken place in the World

Events in our own lives

And ask ourselves what God:

Wants us to understand

Wants us to do

in response.



**SPEAK, LORD,
YOUR SERVANT IS
LISTENING.**

An important part of the prayer growth of young people is to introduce and develop their capacity for meditation. The key to doing this is to develop the young people's ability to:

Be physically still

Be silent

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplative prayer is the simplest expression of the mystery of prayer. It is a gaze of faith fixed on Jesus, an attentiveness to the Word of God, a silent love. It achieves real union with the prayer of Christ to the extent that it enables us to share in his mystery.

The faith of the Catholic Church. Ed Rt Rev D. Konstant.

This is the most important prayer of all. It is a prayer of which children and young people are capable. It is a prayer in which one is filled with:

Wonder

Awe

Love

for God.

Contemplation grows out of:

Stillness

Silence

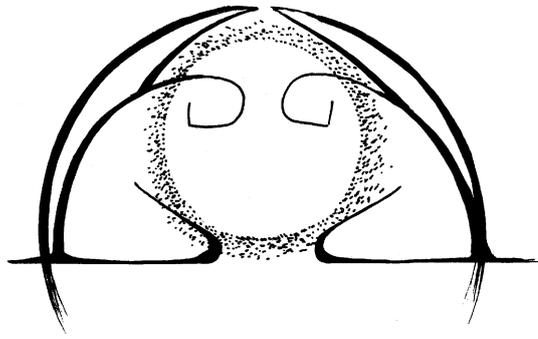
To help pupils to enter into this prayer, they can be taught:

Relaxing techniques

Breathing techniques

Body posture techniques

They can also be assisted by the provision of stimuli which lead to a sense of awe and wonder which, in their turn, lead to love.



Prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours; God thirsts that we may thirst for him.

(CCC 2560)



Prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward Heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.

Therese of Lisieux

STRUCTURING

PRAYER

GATHERING

When praying with children and young people, it is helpful to give a sign that the prayer is about to begin. This can be done in a variety of ways:

The playing of music

Lighting a candle

Inviting pupils to an area of the room

Asking pupils to take up a position (standing or sitting)

With younger pupils, starting with an appropriate song assists in the preparation.

We usually, though not always, begin with the Sign of the Cross. This is an important prayer because:

It reminds us of our Baptism

It reminds us that all we say and do is done in the name of God, the Blessed Trinity.

The sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



Greeting

Just as there are ways of greeting people when we meet, so there are ways of greeting each other as we gather for liturgy and prayer. The formal greetings are normally said by ordained ministers but it is appropriate for teachers or leaders of classroom worship to use them. In this way, pupils can be familiarised with the Church's way of greeting.

Some examples of formal greeting:

L The Lord be with you

All And with your spirit

L Peace be with you

All And with your spirit

L The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you

All And with your spirit

Alternately, other greetings can be used.

L God the Father be with us

All to guide and to guard us

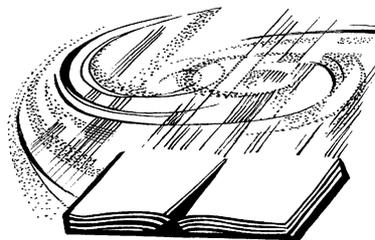
L God the Son be with us

All to guide and to guard us

L God the Holy Spirit be with us

All to guide and to guard us

The Word



Prayer times should regularly include the Word of God.

As the Scriptures are at the heart of the Christian tradition they should, therefore, be a regular and important part of worship.

When Scripture is used, the following points should be borne in mind:

In More formal worship settings a procession of the Word (the Bible) helps to convey the dignity and importance of the Scriptures. The procession should include:

Accompanying the Bible with lighted candles

Placing the Bible on a lectern

Singing an 'Alleluia' (if a text from one of the Gospels is to be read)

The signing of the forehead, lips and heart when the Gospel is announced.

Readings can be announced and concluded using formulae used in the liturgy.

Before reading from the Gospels:

L The Lord be with you

All And with your spirit

L A reading from the Holy Gospel according to N

All Glory to you Lord

At the end:

L The Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Before other scriptural readings:

L A reading from...

At the End:

L The Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Other Readings.



Response to the Word

Reflection

- *This can be in silence
- *Personal reflection led by the person leading the prayer time
- *Shared reflection

Prayer expressing

- *Adoration and praise
- *Contrition
- *Thanksgiving
- *Supplication

Using:

- *Liturgical formula
- *Oral prayer-traditional, other written prayers and Spontaneous prayers
- *Meditation
- *Contemplation

Silence

Symbolic action

e.g. *Signing with water

- *Placing a private written prayer on display

Mission

Our prayer and worship is not an end in itself. It is meant to inspire and strengthen us to live out the beliefs and values which are celebrated. Acts of worship, then, should always end with prayer which has a sense of 'mission' – of 'being sent out'. This can be done in a variety of ways.

A simple prayer

e.g. *Let us pray*

May all we have thought about help us this day to... (mention some practical action which may follow from the theme of the act of worship).

...We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



A Blessing and Dismissal

We all have the power and duty of blessing others even though we usually think of blessings as being given by ordained ministers. Teachers, especially, have a right to bless the children and young people in their care.

It is possible to use one of the common liturgical forms of bless and dismissal.

L The Lord be with you

All And with your spirit

L May Almighty God bless you, The Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit

All Amen

L Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Alternatively, other blessings from the Roman missal can be used. (Many anthologies of prayers contain good selections of Blessing prayers.)



PRAYING FOR THE DEAD

Praying for the dead is an important of the Roman Catholic tradition of prayer. Every Mass which is celebrated is offered for the living and the dead.

We pray for the dead that they may be healed of any damages which sin has done to them during their life on Earth and so be purified so that they may be able to move into the joy of Heaven. Healing and purification are needed because the Bible teaches that nothing impure can enter into the sight of God.

The Catholic Church believes that, because death does not end our relationships with each other, our prayer can reach out and affect those who have died. Our prayers for the dead assist in their healing and in bringing them to wholeness.

Some prayers for the dead:

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine on them. May they rest in peace. Amen.

May the Souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Psalm 129 and 120 are also often used as prayers for the dead.

PRAYING TO THE SAINTS

The Catholic Church believes that the Church is a 'communion of Saints'. It believes that the Church on Earth is linked with the Saints in Heaven and with those who have died and who are undergoing purification before entering the fullness of Heaven.

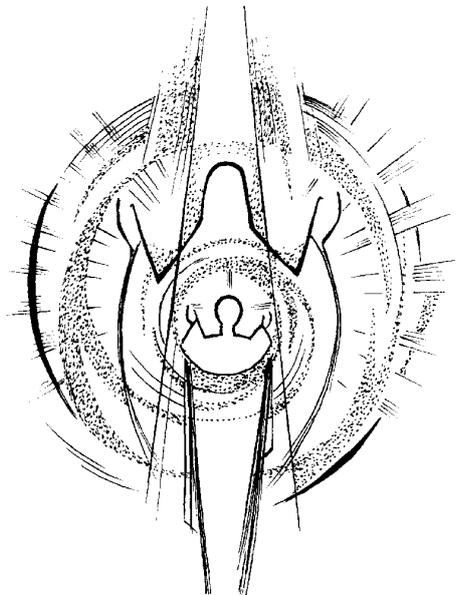
Catholics pray to the Saints, especially to Mary the mother of Jesus. They do not worship Mary nor any of the Saints since God alone is to be worshipped. They pray to the Saints asking them to pray with and for the members of the Church who are on their journey towards Heaven.

Two prayers in honour of Our Lady:

<i>Hail</i>					<i>Mary,</i>
<i>Full</i>		<i>of</i>			<i>Grace,</i>
<i>The</i>	<i>Lord</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>with</i>		<i>thee.</i>
<i>Blessed</i>	<i>art</i>	<i>thou</i>	<i>among</i>	<i>women,</i>	
<i>and</i>	<i>blessed</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>the</i>	<i>fruit</i>	
<i>of</i>	<i>thy</i>		<i>womb,</i>	<i>Jesus.</i>	
<i>Holy</i>				<i>Mary,</i>	
<i>Mother</i>		<i>of</i>		<i>God,</i>	
<i>pray</i>	<i>for</i>	<i>us</i>	<i>sinners</i>	<i>now,</i>	
<i>and at the hour of death.</i>					

Amen.

<i>Hail,</i>	<i>Holy</i>	<i>Queen,</i>	<i>Mother</i>	<i>of</i>	<i>Mercy,</i>				
<i>our</i>	<i>Life,</i>	<i>our</i>	<i>Sweetness,</i>	<i>and</i>	<i>our</i>	<i>Hope.</i>			
<i>To</i>	<i>Thee</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>cry,</i>	<i>poor</i>	<i>banished</i>	<i>children</i>	<i>of</i>	<i>Eve.</i>
<i>To</i>	<i>Thee</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>send</i>	<i>up</i>	<i>our</i>	<i>sighs</i>	<i>mourning</i>	
<i>and</i>	<i>weeping</i>	<i>in</i>	<i>this</i>	<i>valley</i>	<i>of</i>	<i>tears.</i>			
<i>Turn</i>	<i>then,</i>		<i>most</i>	<i>gracious</i>		<i>Advocate,</i>			
<i>Thine</i>	<i>Eyes</i>	<i>of</i>	<i>Mercy</i>	<i>toward</i>	<i>us,</i>				
<i>and</i>	<i>after</i>	<i>this</i>	<i>our</i>	<i>exile</i>	<i>show</i>	<i>us</i>	<i>the</i>		
<i>Blessed</i>	<i>Fruit</i>	<i>of</i>	<i>thy</i>	<i>Womb,</i>	<i>Jesus.</i>				



O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Pray for us O Holy Mother of God

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

HIGH DAYS AND HOLY DAYS

Like every community, the Catholic Church has special times and days in which we focus on:

Celebration

Preparation

Self-denial and fasting

In England and Wales there are seven Holy Days of Obligation (days on which we are expected to take part in the celebration of Mass). These Holy Days are:

Christmas Day 25th December

Epiphany 6th January

Ascension Day Date moveable (40 days after Easter, always on a Thursday.)

Corpus Christi Date moveable (2nd Thursday after Pentecost)

Sts Peter and Paul 29th June

Assumption of Our Lady 15TH August

All Saint's Day 1st November

There are two days of fasting and abstinence:

Ash Wednesday-the day that marks the beginning of Lent

Good Friday-the commemoration of the Passion and Death of Jesus.

In addition to the two days prescribed by the law of the Church, we are encouraged to exercise self-denial on Fridays in honour of the death of Jesus.

Fasting involves eating only one full meal and two light meals or taking only enough which is safe for health but which allows one to feel the edge of hunger. This law of the Church binds people between the ages of 18-65.

Abstinence means that we refrain from meat and meat products. This law applies to all members of the Church.

THE CHURCH'S YEAR

The Christian Year does not follow the calendar year. It begins on the First Sunday of Advent which begins the period for the Feast of the Nativity (Christmas).

The Church's year is structured in this way:

Advent – there are four Sundays in the Advent period.

Christmas Season – begins with the Feast of the Nativity and end with the Feast of the Epiphany.

Ordinary Time – a period of weeks which is variable, depending on the date of Easter.

Lent – a six week period which begins on Ash Wednesday. There are six Sundays in the Lenten period.

The Triduum – the three day period; Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Vigil of Easter Day (Holy Saturday) in which we celebrate the Passion and the Death of Jesus.

The Easter Season – the time from Easter to the Feast of the Ascension in which we celebrate the central belief of the Christian Church- the Resurrection of Jesus- and reflect on the 40 days during which Jesus appeared to his followers and prepared them to continue his work on Earth.

Pentecost – which celebrates the day on which the Holy Spirit came to the early Christians and filled them with confidence and power to begin to preach the Christian message. Pentecost is sometimes called the 'birthday of the Church'.

Ordinary Time – the period form Trinity Sunday (the Sunday after Pentecost) to the Feast of Christ the King which is the last Sunday of the Church's year.

