



What is the Church?

Parent Leader's Guide: Unit 2

We are People who Pray



Main themes

- ♦ The Holy Spirit enables the Church community to pray to the Father as Jesus taught us.
- ♦ We pray to our Father, not my Father.
- ♦ As members of the Church we pray in a variety of ways during the Mass.

Link to the Mass - The Mass is Prayer

"If we gather as we ought - singing together, being silent together, responding together - we will be a community praying, and know that we are such."

(Cardinal Bernardin, *Guide to the Assembly*, page 10)

During the meeting, parents will:

- ♦ discover what the parish catechists will do with the children
- ♦ be given an outline of the celebration, and be clear about their own role
- ♦ consider suggestions for supporting their child at home
- ♦ appreciate some of the ways their child learns about prayer in school
- ♦ explore different ways of praying
- ♦ recognise the different ways in which the community prays during Mass
- ♦ understand the importance of the Our Father for the People of God
- ♦ be invited to pray together

Unit 2 – Approach A

Before the meeting begins: have the following clearly displayed -

a large candle or oil lamp

a copy of the 'Our Father' prayer card

an icon.

(if possible: some of the prayer books and other resources used in school)

You will also need:

copies of the parents' leaflets for those attending

one large copy of the Cardinal Bernardin quotation

1. Welcome the parents and make some reference to the celebration of 'Presentation', perhaps affirming the parents' involvement and inviting any comments they may have.

Distribute copies of the parent leaflet for this unit and work through the main points which the catechists will be covering with the children. You may wish to include some or all of the following points:

- ♦ the Holy Spirit enables the People of God to be a People who pray together
 - ♦ our children are taking their place within this praying community
 - ♦ prayer can take many forms: individual prayer / community prayer
formal / informal
learnt prayers / spontaneous prayer
silent 'listening' prayer
2. At this point invite the parents to remember the first prayer they ever heard or learnt and to share this with one other person. After a few moments invite them to call out these prayers and see what variety or similarity exists. (If a flip chart is available, it would be good to write these up).
What about their children? What would their first prayer experience have been?

Outline some of the ways in which children will learn about prayer in school:

Teaching about Prayer in Year 3, Salford Guidelines for Curriculum Religious Education - The children will be learning some simple versions of a small number of psalms as ways in which God's people turned to him in times of joy or trouble. They will look at the way people today pray and believe that God is acting in their lives. Some of these psalms have been put to music and the children will learn some of these songs. Children will then be invited to compose their own prayers. They will also be looking at Scripture and finding out about how it can be used in prayer and worship, making their own prayer cards, and creating a special place for the Bible. Children will be developing their ability to use gestures, signs, silence and stillness in their prayer time. They will learn and explore some traditional prayers and some prayers of the Mass.

Continue with some or all of the following points:

- ♦ all prayer leads us closer to God and to one another

- ♦ we don't need to go to a particular place or building to pray; we can pray anywhere and at any time (if possible it would be good to share a personal experience of prayer to illustrate this point)
 - ♦ when the disciples asked Jesus to pray he taught them the Our Father; this is our oldest Christian prayer, handed down from generation to generation
 - ♦ in our celebration for this unit, we will hand on to our children this central prayer of the Christian family, which we pray every time we go to Mass
 - ♦ the Eucharist (the Mass) is the greatest prayer of the Church
 - ♦ the whole of our Mass is prayer: we pray in song; in silence; in our responses
 - ♦ in the bidding prayers, the 'prayer of the faithful', we pray for the needs of the World, the Church and our local community
 - ♦ in the Eucharistic prayer we give praise and we give thanks; we pray that "all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit" (Eucharistic Prayer II)
3. Draw attention to the quotation from Cardinal Bernardin (on the parent leaflet or displayed on a large copy).

Invite the parents to reflect on this for a few moments, thinking especially of the word 'together' and times when they may have experienced this 'togetherness', sharing this with the people around them. Invite them to reflect on their feelings about prayer as adults: has their prayer changed from when they were children?

4. Details of the celebration for "We are people who pray" should now be given.
5. Invite the parents to be still for a moment and to recognise that God is present amongst us, then make the sign of the cross.

Read aloud:

"Jesus was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.

He said to them, 'When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial."

Luke 11:1 - 4 (NRSV)

After a moment for silent reflection, say:

Lord teach us to pray, teach our children to pray, fill us with your Holy Spirit.

Unit 2 – Approach B

Before the meeting begins: have the following clearly displayed -
a large candle or oil lamp
a copy of the 'Our Father' prayer card
an icon.

(if possible: some of the prayer books and other resources used in school)

You will also need: the room arranged ready for group work: 5 /6 chairs around a table

1 copy per group of 'We Are People Who Pray' sheet for each group - a pencil, 2/3 glue sticks, 2/3 pairs of scissors, some coloured felts or pencils.

3 sheets of A3 paper, 5/6 copies of sheets containing prayers copies of the parents' leaflets for those attending

1. As parents arrive for the meeting, warmly welcome them and invite them to sit in groups around the prepared tables. Invite them, in their groups to look at the sheet headed 'We Are People Who Pray' and after discussion to choose what they consider to be the seven best forms of prayer. When you feel they are ready, ask each group in turn to list their answers and point out the variety in the responses. Point out that this is because there is no one form of prayer which is 'best' - prayer works in different ways at different times for different people because it is a means of drawing us to the awareness of God's presence and nearness.

2. Outline some of the ways in which children will learn about prayer in school:

Teaching about Prayer in Year 3, Salford Guidelines for Curriculum Religious Education - The children will be learning some simple versions of a small number of psalms as ways in which God's people turned to him in times of joy or trouble. They will look at the way people today pray and believe that God is acting in their lives. Some of these psalms have been put to music and the children will learn some of these songs. Children will then be invited to compose their own prayers. They will also be looking at Scripture and finding out about how it can be used in prayer and worship, making their own prayer cards, and creating a special place for the Bible. Children will be developing their ability to use gestures, signs, silence and stillness in their prayer time. They will learn and explore some traditional prayers and some prayers of the Mass.

Now invite the parents to make a prayer book for their child; this will make their child feel special and they will be able to use it together at home.

Demonstrate, step by step how to make a book from an A3 sheet:

(i) Fold the paper concertina style into four folds.

(ii) Fold the paper in the middle, length ways and cut across. This produces two 'zig-zag' books.

Once the books are made, each parent can choose the prayers and pictures they most like from Prayer Sheets 2 & 3, cut them out and stick them into the book. Then they can decorate these and put a title on the front cover, perhaps:

A Prayer Book for (child's name).

3. Suggest that parents use the book with their child before going to sleep each night and assure them that they will really appreciate their efforts. Move on to some or all of the following points:

- ◆ all prayer leads us closer to God and to one another
- ◆ we don't need to go to a particular place or building to pray; we can pray anywhere and at any time (if possible it would be good to share a personal experience of prayer to illustrate this point)
- ◆ when the disciples asked Jesus to pray he taught them the Our Father; this is our oldest Christian prayer, handed down from generation to generation
- ◆ in our celebration for this unit, we will hand on to our children this central prayer of the Christian family, which we pray every time we go to Mass
- ◆ the Eucharist (the Mass) is the greatest prayer of the Church
- ◆ the whole of our Mass is prayer: we pray in song; in silence; in our responses
- ◆ in the bidding prayers, the 'prayer of the faithful', we pray for the needs of the World, the Church and our local community
- ◆ in the Eucharistic prayer we give praise and we give thanks; we pray that "all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit" (Eucharistic Prayer II)

4. Details of the celebration for "We are people who pray" should now be given and the copies of the parent leaflet for this unit.

5. Invite the parents to be still for a moment, then read aloud the quotation from Cardinal Bernardin's Letter:

Invite all to pray together the Our Father.

We Are People Who Pray

Prayer is a means of drawing us to the awareness
of God's presence and nearness.

In groups, discuss which of the following you would consider to be prayer:

Saying the Our Father, Hail Mary etc.

Taking part in the Mass

Listening to beautiful music

Talking with your child

Saying thank you to God at the end of the day

Silence

Reflecting honestly on your day

Recognising the good in other people during the day

Being struck by the beauty of nature

Singing in church

Making up a prayer

Reciting a verse from the Bible

Sharing the day with your family

Finding out about your child's day and giving thanks to God together

Reading from a book of prayer

Anything else?

Choose the seven which the group considers to be the 'best' prayer forms.

Thank you God, for friends.

Thank you for fun and games and parties.

Thank you for my best friend,

Help me to be a good friend and to keep my promises.

Help me to be friends, even with those I don't much like,

Because you love us all.

May the Lord bless you with peace,

Close your eyes in restful sleep,

And wake you with joy in the morning.

Heavenly Father, bless those who starve while we have plenty to eat;

Those who are homeless while we lie safely in bed;

Those who have no clothes while we throw clothes away.

Help us to care for those less fortunate than ourselves

And to do all we can to help them.

Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial.

Bless all those I shall meet today

Help us to help each other.

Creator God, we praise you for the wonderful things which you have given to us:
For the beautiful sun,
For the rain which makes things grow,
For the woods and the fields,
For the sea and the sky,
For the flowers and the birds,
And for all your gifts to us.
Everything around us rejoices.
Enable us also to rejoice and give us thankful hearts.

Thank you God for trusting us.
We can all do something to make the world
a better place.
Help us to trust you, and to use whatever you've
given us to make others happy.

I can say it to my family,
I can say it to my friends,
I can say it at school - so I'll say it to you:
Good morning, God, you're great.

May the love of God our Creator
Be in all our homes today.
May the love of the Lord Jesus
Keep our hearts and minds always.
May his loving Holy Spirit
Guide and bless the ones I love:
Parents, grand-parents, brothers, sisters,
Keep them safely in his love.

When I know how much you love me, Jesus,
And that you're always with me,
I can talk to you about being afraid.
You understand, you won't laugh at me.
Give me courage, make me brave,
Not just tonight - but tomorrow as well.

We thank you loving God, that when we come to say sorry, you are always ready to forgive.
Please help us to be like you.
When people say sorry to us may we forgive them straight away,
Ready at once to be friends again.

Bless, Lord Jesus, my parents and all who take care of me.
Make me loving to them, polite and obedient,
Helpful and kind.

Loving God, please guide the leaders of many different countries, at the meetings
where they try, by working together, to make the world a better and safer place.
Help them to want peace rather than power, and show them how they can share the
food in the world so that no one need be hungry.

Almighty Father,
help us to know how much you love us,
so that we may never be afraid
to come home to you
when we have done wrong.

For shelves full of food,
 thank you Lord,
For the colour of chocolate, carrots and cherries,
 thank you Lord.
For the feel of wood, bedclothes and cats' fur,
 thank you Lord.
For sunshine and snowflakes,
roses and oak trees,
the songs of the birds
and the waves of the sea,
 thank you Lord.

Unit 2 – Approach C

Before the meeting begins: have the following clearly displayed -

a large candle or oil lamp

a copy of the 'Our Father' prayer card

an icon.

(if possible: some of the prayer books and other resources used in school)

You will also need:

copies of the parents' leaflets for those attending

one large copy of the Cardinal Bernardin quotation

CD or tape of Taize, Veni Sancte Spiritus or similar

copies of prayer images

1. As people arrive for the meeting, have a Taize chant playing. Introduce the main themes and invite people to form small groups of 4/5. Give out copies of the prayer images and ask them to share with one another the ones they like and dislike. Then, as a group, to try to choose the one image which they feel speaks most to them of 'prayer'.

After sharing the groups' findings, outline the school's Religious Education programme for prayer for the children of Year 3.

The children will be learning some simple versions of a small number of psalms as ways in which God's people turned to him in times of joy or trouble. They will look at the way people today pray and believe that God is acting in their lives. Some of these psalms have been put to music and the children will learn some of these songs. Children will then be invited to compose their own prayers. They will also be looking at Scripture and finding out about how it can be used in prayer and worship, making their own prayer cards, and creating a special place for the Bible. Children will be developing their ability to use gestures, signs, silence and stillness in their prayer time. They will learn and explore some traditional prayers and some prayers of the Mass.

All this will help them to begin to see that there are many forms of prayer as they take their place in the Church as people who pray.

2. Continue with some or all of the following points:

- ♦ all prayer leads us closer to God and to one another
- ♦ we don't need to go to a particular place or building to pray; we can pray anywhere and at any time (if possible it would be good to share a personal experience of prayer to illustrate this point)
- ♦ when the disciples asked Jesus to pray he taught them the Our Father; this is our oldest Christian prayer, handed down from generation to generation
- ♦ in our celebration for this unit, we will hand on to our children this central prayer of the Christian family, which we pray every time we go to Mass
- ♦ the Eucharist (the Mass) is the greatest prayer of the Church

3. Now display the quotation from Cardinal Bernardin's letter:

Try to share a memory of a time when you have experienced a sense of 'being together' at Mass; this may well have been a Mass for a special occasion, perhaps connected with school, or a family occasion, perhaps even a funeral.

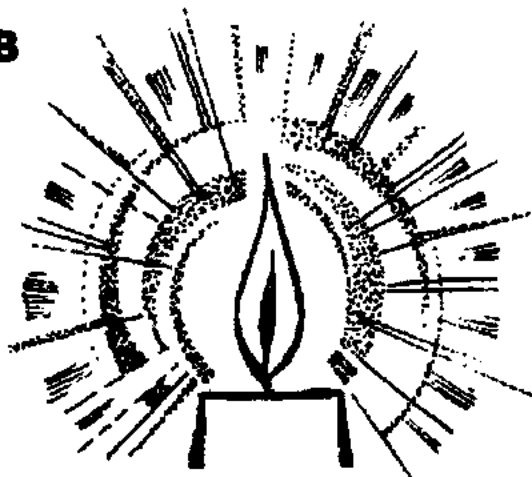
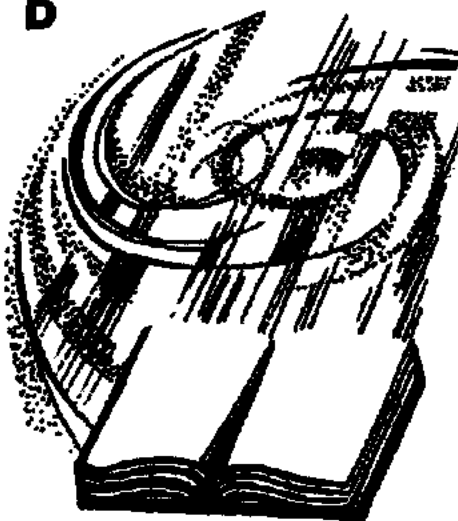
Invite the parents to think of any particular times when they have experienced that sense of being 'a community praying' and to share this with one other person. Lead a discussion centred on the following questions:

- ♦ What can we do, as a parish community, to help our children experience this sense of being 'a community praying' through our Sunday Masses?
- ♦ What difficulties do we need to work through?

The main purpose of this part of the meeting is to raise the questions, rather than come up with answers, though if practical suggestions are made it would be good to try to find ways of taking them further.

4. Distribute copies of the parent leaflet and encourage the parents to try some of the suggestions for further support at home. Give details of the celebration for this unit.
5. Play the Taize chant used at the beginning of the meeting again, inviting everyone to be still and aware of God's presence.

Fade the music and read aloud Matthew 6: 5 - 8, then with the words, "Pray then in this way" (beginning of verse 9) invite all to join in praying together, 'Our Father ...'

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