

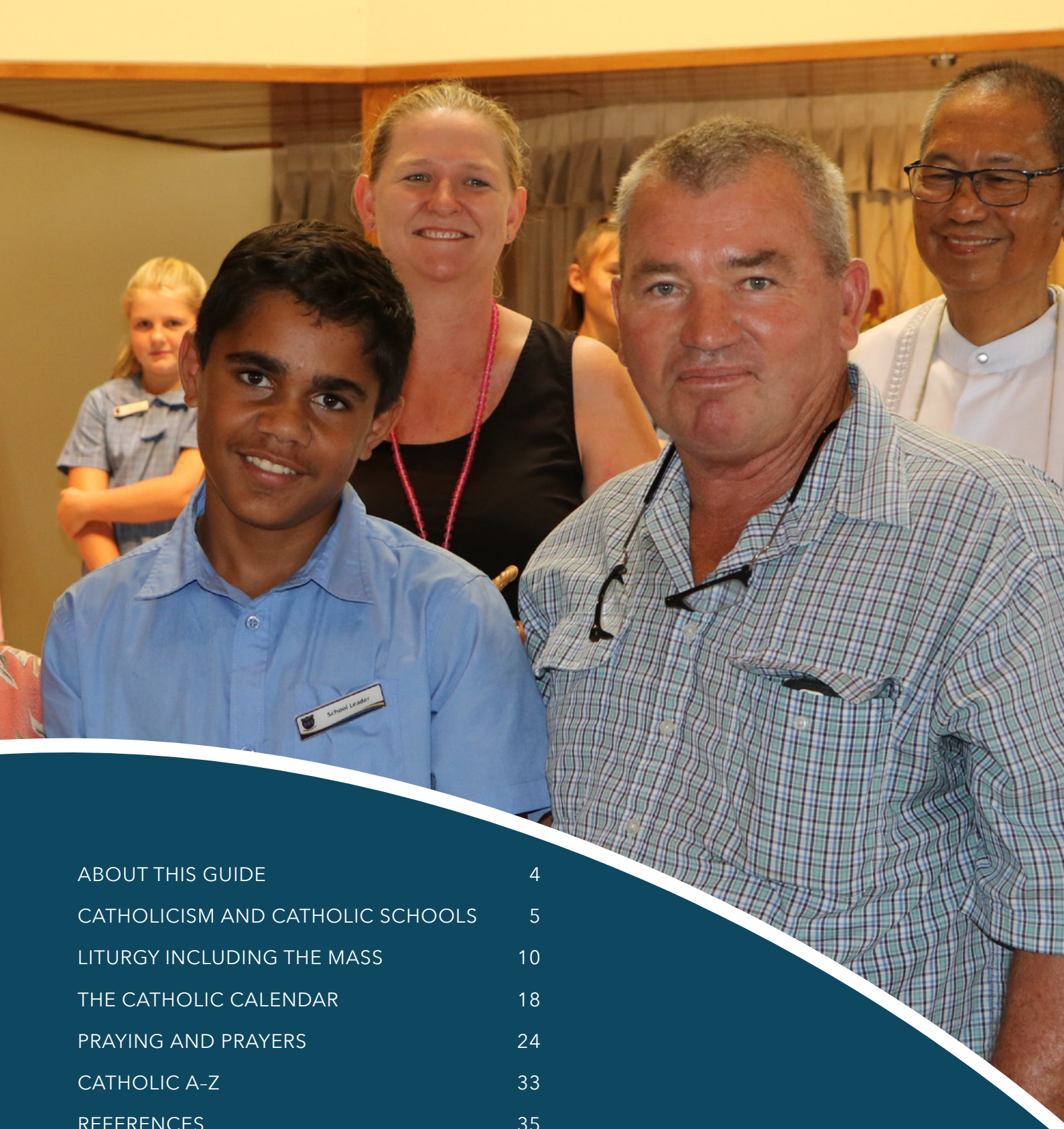
OUR CATHOLIC FAITH

A HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES
OF STUDENTS IN NSW CATHOLIC SCHOOLS



COUNCIL OF
**CATHOLIC
SCHOOL
PARENTS**
NSW

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FOREWORD

Since the opening of Australia's first Catholic school in 1821 to our present day, Catholic Schools have been for everyone.

While our schools are identifiably Catholic, both in word and deed, and although we often give preference to students who are Catholic, our schools nonetheless welcome all those students who seek a Catholic education.

In our proud 200-year history of education, Catholic schools have embraced millions of students and their families. With our low-fee and in some instances no-fee education, we strive to imitate the charity of Christ by making a place for the most needy in our society including the poor, and those from migrant or Indigenous backgrounds.

Whatever has brought you here, we are delighted to welcome you and your family into our Catholic schools. Our schools aim to be places where both academic learning and the cultivation of faith can thrive. It is this holistic education that enriches the lives of not only our students but also their families.

Whether you are Catholic, from some other faith tradition, searching for meaning or even of no faith at all, we want to share with you the richness of our Catholic faith because we believe that this is the greatest gift we can offer to you and your children.

This resource is for all parents and carers, but particularly for those who may be unfamiliar with our Catholic traditions. We invite you to use it to understand the basics of our Catholic beliefs, celebrations, symbols and prayers. My hope is that you will continue to explore the depths of the Catholic faith that is the very foundation of our schools and find within it the heart of a God who has loved you and your children from the beginning of time.

God bless you,

+ Anthony Fisher *OP*



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

As a parent or carer of a student at a Catholic school, you will hear your child talk about things like 'Pancake Tuesday' and 'the Sign of the Cross' and 'Mass' and 'Lent' and 'Advent', and you may be invited to attend liturgies such as Mass and other events at the school. If you're not Catholic or you're Catholic but don't really know much about it, you may be nervous about attending events at the school.

This guide explains some Catholic beliefs and traditions parents and families might hear their child talk about when they're discussing their religious education and Catholic events parents and carers may be invited to attend during the school year. For ease of reading we use 'parents' when referring to all parents and carers.

The section 'Liturgy including the Mass' covers the importance and use of the Bible at these times and describes how Catholics worship.

The traditions of a Catholic school are like traditions in your family. They are sacred and special and are usually celebrated annually. Our schools celebrate tradition through the sacraments, prayer, music, art and with special days like a school's saint day. This guide explains some of the 'Catholic' part of Catholic

schools so that parents and families know about these traditions and are comfortable to get involved.

Prayer and reflection are a big part of being Catholic, so we have included prayers that are said during Mass, traditional prayers, prayers that are suitable for the different seasons throughout the year, some which can be used by parent bodies for their meetings, and some simple prayers you can say at home with your family.

The glossary, 'Catholic A-Z', contains simple definitions and explanations for many Catholic terms, so if you do read a word you're unfamiliar with, you can just look it up.

Catholic schools recognise and support parents in their primary role as educators of their children particularly with regards to the religious development and pastoral care of their children, which is why all parents and families are always welcome and are encouraged to enjoy belonging to their school's faith community.

Everyone is welcome in the Catholic faith community because Catholics believe that all people are made by God, made in God's image, made for God, and loved by God. And that means you, as a parent or carer of a student in a Catholic school.



CATHOLICISM AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, THROUGH ITS MEMBERS,
SEEKS TO RESPOND WHOLEHEARTEDLY TO JESUS CHRIST'S
COMMAND TO LOVE GOD AND LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR.

Catholics are devoted to God, through his revelation in Jesus Christ, using his life, his teachings, and his messages of love and salvation for all people.

'Community' is important to Catholics; a vibrant, worshipping Catholic faith community brings all kinds of people together to worship at Mass, which is available every day of the year, and to support each other with love and compassion.

There are many Catholics who aren't currently practising or never have. Some 'cradle Catholics' (people baptised Catholic as a baby) may actually know nothing about Jesus Christ and never have set foot in a church.

WHAT CATHOLICS BELIEVE

A good summary of what Catholics believe is The Apostles' Creed, which is often said during baptisms and during Sunday Eucharist (Mass). Alternatively, the Nicene Creed is said. This is a revised version of the Apostles Creed developed in the 4th century to clarify confusion about the core beliefs, specifically around Jesus' humanity and divinity. You can find the Nicene Creed later in the booklet.

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into Hell;
the third day He rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God the Father
almighty,
from thence he shall come to judge the living
and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit
the holy Catholic Church
the communion of saints
the forgiveness of sins
the resurrection of the body
and life everlasting.
Amen.*

Catholics are guided by the Holy Bible, which contains many stories about Jesus and his teachings and messages of hope. The Bible, or the Sacred Scriptures, is the word of God; it is a collection of ancient writings by different authors that are believed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, which informs the Mass and is read from in the liturgy. The Bible is also the foundation for all beliefs, rituals and ethical teachings.



WHAT CATHOLICS DO

Celebrating Mass is at the heart of living a Catholic life. The people of the Church gather as a family to be with God and take part in Communion – also known as the Eucharist or Mass – during which they receive Jesus through hearing the Word in the readings and consuming the bread and wine believed to become the body and blood of Jesus Christ through the process of transubstantiation which takes place as the priest consecrates these gifts.

The Eucharist replicates what happened at The Last Supper when Jesus broke bread and drank wine with his apostles and allows Catholics to receive Christ so they can go and ‘be’ Christ for others as they move forth into their week.

Praying is how Catholics talk to God. People can pray alone or together during liturgy – the way Catholics worship – formally or informally, and any time is a good time to pray, although the Church does propose special times to communicate with God including morning and evening, before and after meals, at Mass, and on feast days. Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God, or the petition of good things from Him in accord with His will (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2559-65 2590).

From the Mass, Catholics are called to go out and fulfil the Mission of the Church, which is to make Christ known to others. This includes going out into the broader community to serve in God’s name by performing noble work in many areas of society with the aim of supporting those in need and doing good in the world, such as health, aged care, local and international aid, helping the homeless, assisting migrants and refugees, and of course, education. It also includes how Catholics are to behave in their everyday lives; with love, inclusion, kindness and compassion for all.

Answering the call to serve others, especially the poor and marginalised, is the way Catholics express their faith on the outside. Catholics believe in social justice – where society upholds the dignity and rights of each and every person. Living an authentic Christian life – a life of social justice – means doing what Jesus would do and being God’s hands on earth.

HOW CATHOLICS ARE GUIDED

Ethics are guidelines for life and the Church provides clear direction on how to live a good life.

The core ethical teaching for all Christians is LOVE



coming from Jesus' Commandment of Love, the Golden Rule and the Gospels. This means it is at the heart of all decision making and instructs behaviour in everyday life.

All ethical teachings for Catholics come from four sources: The Bible, Tradition/Authority (such as Papal documents and theologians), Natural Law (all that is part of God's natural order) and Conscience (if it is informed).

WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH?

All Catholics are called to fulfil the goal or mission of the Church, which is to simply make Christ known to others. This is done through word and deed, with the desire to make the world a better place, as we work for the Kingdom of God which exists in the here and now, as well as in our eternal life.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

These principles help guide Catholics in their decision making and in advocating for what is right and just. When faced with a problem or social concern these should underpin a Catholic's view and any follow-up action.

The core principles are:

- ▶ **Human Dignity** – humans are sacred because they are created by God in his image, thus all need to be treated with dignity and respect

- ▶ **Common Good** – we must work for a better world to ensure all people and places offer and receive equal distribution
- ▶ **Solidarity** – this is about working together as one people for the greater good of all, sharing concerns and problems
- ▶ **Subsidiarity** – if anyone is to be affected by a decision they have the right to have a say in the decision-making process

The following have also been added to the list more recently:

- ▶ **Preferential Option for the Poor** – making sure the needs of the marginalised and vulnerable are given priority
- ▶ **Stewardship of Creation** – caring for the earth to ensure the survival of everyone; integral ecology refers to how creation is part of everything

When making decisions Catholics are asked to use the See, Judge and Act Method, developed by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn from Belgium. We are encouraged to:

- ▶ **See** – observe an issue, find out about it, what is happening, who is involved, how are people affected and more
- ▶ **Judge** – discover why this is happening and look for answers in Scripture and other sources so we can make decisions; it is not about judgement
- ▶ **Act** – take steps to help make things right, changing structures and partaking in advocacy



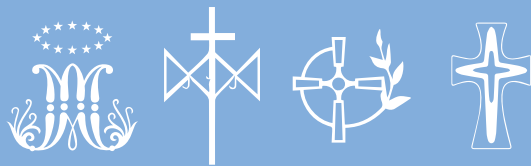
ABORIGINAL AND CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER

Being Indigenous and being Catholic are not two separate ways of being; they are two elements of spirituality that exist side-by-side for First Nations peoples within our Church community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture has been in place for over 60,000 years in Australia and is the oldest surviving culture in the world. However, there was not a singular 'culture' shared by the thousands of language groups that covered the Australian continent at the time of settlement. Each group had different environments and differing kinship systems, dreamtime stories and spiritual beliefs. There were, however, constant threads throughout including the concept of a creator spirit that looks, provides and watches over us. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are a spiritual people, a people who are aware of the spiritual reality of the land and of their own lives.

When early Christian Ministries introduced the Bible to Aboriginal people, the Elders recognised many similarities between the Old Testament stories and traditional stories, laws and the teachings of God (or a creator Spirit). They believed and had faith in their Ancestor Spirit and relied on Him for all their needs. He was their Protector, Provider, Carer and Saviour. His name was honoured.

Traditional culture uses stories to teach about sharing, caring for each other and the land and providing moral guidance. The stories throughout the Bible serve the exact purpose - placing God's teachings into Aboriginal cultural context.



WHAT IS A CHARISM?

A charism is a special 'flavour' of Catholicism, usually associated with a religious order. It means there is a particular emphasis placed on the expression of faith, which could include a special devotion to Mary or a focus on justice and advocacy. Not all schools will have a charism, but if they do it is often connected with their saint and order; for example, the Marist Brothers, Sisters of St Joseph, Christian Brothers and Mercy Sisters.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Catholic schools are recognisable as Catholic to families and the broader community in the way their culture, practices, policies and processes embody the values and spirit of Christ, and the practices and traditions of the Church. Ways a school may express its Catholic identity include:

- The teaching of religion through the K-12 Religion Syllabus
- The integration of Catholic beliefs, values and practices into the curriculum and school activities
- Artwork, icons and symbols – the physical appearance of the school
- The school community's commitment to social justice
- Opportunities for faith formation and development for members of the school community, such as Reflection Days, Spirituality Events and Retreats
- Liturgical events, prayer groups, devotion and other key rituals
- The promotion of Catholic perspectives in the curriculum
- The school's involvement in the life of the parish or parishes, diocese and wider community
- The implementation of appropriate pastoral care and student support programs for students, families and staff based on the authentic teachings and values of the Catholic Church.

In Catholic schools, great emphasis is placed on building relationships: relationships between students, staff, parents, parish and the wider community. Catholics strive to model their relationships on the teachings of Jesus: love, peace, justice, service, compassion and reaching out to others with a kind and loving heart. This guides adherents to develop Right Relationship in their lives – with God, with others, with themselves and with all of Creation.

FAITH FORMATION IN SCHOOLS FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

Faith formation involves providing students and their families with opportunities to learn more about God, to reflect on their spirituality and relationship with God, to explore and grow their faith and knowledge of the Church, and to inspire them to serve God in the world.

Students at a Catholic school are expected to participate in the liturgical and faith life of the school, and parents and families are encouraged to support and be involved in these vital activities.

Students in Catholic schools encounter many aspects of faith formation in the life of the school, which parents and families may be invited to participate in, such as prayer. Times for prayer throughout the school week are an important part of the Catholic school experience. Sometimes prayer can be active and joyful or calm and other times calm and peaceful. These prayerful times help children take a break from the busyness of the school day and to thank God.

At school your child will explore many wonderful stories to help them learn more about God and how to lead good and meaningful lives, and will also take part in Mass and worship, religious education, sacraments such as First Communion and Confirmation, retreats and immersions, and social justice and charity work.

Formation will take place at all ages throughout school life, but as students get older they will partake in more events like Reflection Days and Retreats which allow for a different context for students to stop and spend some time in consideration of their faith and the community. These opportunities allow participants to be awoken to the Spirit in their own lives, guiding them on how to contribute to the bigger picture.

Social justice activities and/or service learning may take place, allowing students, staff and families to give to those who live on the margins of society, not only helping others but also broadening their perspective on the world and their role in it.

Catholic schools want to help parents raise young people who will rise to the challenge of seeing the needs in the world around them and acting on these with kindness and compassion for other people and for care of our natural world.



LITURGY INCLUDING THE MASS

Special events that you can often attend with your child and other members of the school community are liturgies such as Mass.

Liturgy is the way that Catholics worship together. Some examples of forms of liturgy are baptisms, marriages and funerals (see the section 'The Seven Sacraments' later in this chapter), Ash Wednesday liturgy and, of course, Mass. You may be invited to attend a Mothers' Day liturgy at the school, for example, or a Graduation Mass in the church or school.

Liturgy involves action – people listen, respond, sing and perform gestures, like the Sign of the Cross, as they worship together. A liturgy can be held in a church or chapel, or it can be held in a room at the school, an assembly area, or even outside, and it does not have to be led by a priest. A Mass can also be held in places other than a church, but always involves celebrating Eucharist, or Communion, which is when the priest consecrates (blesses) bread and wine and those who have made their First Holy Communion move forward to the altar to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus. This is what separates Mass from other liturgies.

It's important to know that everyone is welcome to attend Mass, and your school would love you to join the students for liturgies. You don't have to be Catholic to enjoy these sacred times of prayer, singing and reflection.

ENTERING AND LEAVING THE CHURCH

As you're entering the church you might see some people dipping their finger in holy water and crossing themselves (see the Sign of the Cross on page 16), which is optional, but open to everyone.

As people make their way to a pew, sometimes they bow to the altar before they sit down as a sign of respect, or they may genuflect (touch their right knee to the floor) towards the altar. These gestures are a sign of reverence for Jesus.

Sometimes people kneel when they get to their seat because they are praying before Mass starts. You can kneel if you want to but it's just as easy to pray while you're sitting.



THE WORD OF GOD: THE HOLY BIBLE

The Bible contains powerful texts and messages that provide Catholics with guidance and inspiration. Most of the content of every Mass and liturgy comes from the Bible. The Church has evolved over 2000 years, and over the centuries every day has been assigned certain readings and prayers from the Bible for use in liturgy.

The Bible, or the Scriptures, is the most important text for Catholics (and for all Christians), because it shares our sacred story. It evolved over thousands of years from stories shared by word of mouth to 'books' written by many different authors.

Catholics believe that the many authors who wrote sections of the Bible were inspired by the Holy Spirit, so the Bible is considered by Catholics to be the written Word of God and is a record of human beings' interactions with God. The Bible is a dynamic source which provides the foundation of the Church, including beliefs, ethics and rituals. Catholics believe that the many authors who wrote sections of the Bible were inspired by the Holy

Spirit, so the Bible is considered by Catholics to be the written Word of God and is a record of human beings' interactions with God, it is interpreted by Church leaders such as your priest within a Mass. It is a dynamic source which provides the foundation of the Church, including beliefs, ethics and rituals.

The Hebrew Scriptures are the first part of the Bible, which was written before Jesus's time, and the Christian Scriptures (or New Testament) contains the story of Jesus and his teachings, as well as the development of the early Christian Church. The Christian Scriptures contains the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, as well various Epistles (Letters) with the Letters from St Paul being the oldest Christian texts.

Sometimes you will see quotes from the Bible in school correspondence or Mass booklets. For example, Matthew 18:20. This means that the quote is from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 18, verse 20 (these are numbered in the Bible):

'For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.' (Matthew 18:20)



WHAT HAPPENS AT MASS

The Mass is made up of two main parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Word includes readings from the Bible, a sermon (Homily) by the priest, prayers and singing. The Liturgy of the Eucharist involves the Preparation of the Gifts, the Eucharistic Prayer and Communion. On the next page are the key moments of Holy Mass, and some of the prayers for Mass are included in Chapter 5.

A Mass booklet will often be provided so that you can follow along. It will include the order of the service, and sometimes when to sit and stand and kneel, or the proceedings may simply be projected onto a screen for all to see in the space.

You can just sit comfortably in your seat if you prefer, or just follow others. When people go to the front of the church to take Communion, if you're not Catholic, you can just sit quietly in your seat, or if you would like to receive a blessing, go forward to the priest or Minister of Communion and cross your arms when you stand in front of them (<https://www.catholic.au/s/article/The-Mass-Eucharist>). If you're coming up for a blessing and there are different people giving out the Body and the Blood (in a chalice), get the blessing from the person handing out the Body of Christ not the person holding Christ's Blood.

MUSIC AND SINGING IN CHURCH

Music and singing are an important part of Catholic worship. Good liturgical music needs to be beautiful as well as theologically correct. At Mass, music accompanies different parts of the service including the entrance procession, the presentation of the gifts and the recessional.

Singing in church is designed to encourage participation and to engage people so that they focus on praising God. Singing together forms a bond between members of the community as they join in one voice. A hymn is a song of worship, generally set in the format of verses and chorus. A hymn is like a prayer that is sung. The melodies are usually rhythmic and easy to sing along to. Hymns can be modern or traditional; just because a hymn is written by a contemporary composer doesn't mean it can't be sacred.

Hymns are chosen for how well they align with the assigned scripture texts for each Sunday or feast day.

WHO'S WHO AT MASS

Priest: The priest leads the congregation in their celebration of the Mass and administers the sacraments, as well as leading a faith community, engaging in pastoral care and taking responsibility for the governance of a parish.

Deacon: The deacon assists the priest throughout the Mass, but not all parishes have one so he may not be present.

Altar servers: The altar servers enter the church with the priest at the beginning of Mass and assist with minor duties

Readers: Members of the parish or school community go to the front of the church to read the First Reading, Responsorial Psalm and the Second Reading during the Mass or other liturgies

Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist: Lay members of the congregation who have been trained to distribute communion within a Mass, and may also take it to elderly and sick members of the parish who cannot attend in person

The People: Members of the parish or school community who celebrate the Mass, deepening their communal relationship with God; the People of God

(The Catholic Mass, Life, Marriage and Family, Archdiocese of Sydney, Sydney Centre for Evangelisation)

THE KEY MOMENTS OF MASS

These are the main prayers and parts of the Catholic Mass on Sunday, which include:

- **Introductory Rite/Gathering Rite:** The Church assembles
- **Liturgy of the Word:** The Church proclaims the living Word
- **Liturgy of the Eucharist:** The Church responds in living action
- **Concluding Rite:** The Church is missioned and sent forth

Variations may exist depending on the liturgical season and the specific form of the Mass being celebrated.

1. **Opening Prayer (Collect):** The priest offers an opening prayer, often reflecting the theme of the day.
2. **Penitential Act:** A moment of acknowledgment of our sins and asking for God's mercy.
3. **Gloria:** A hymn of praise to God.
4. **First Reading:** A reading from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament).

5. **Responsorial Psalm:** A psalm typically sung or recited in response to the first reading.
6. **Second Reading:** A reading from the Christian Scriptures (New Testament), excluding the Gospels.
7. **Gospel Acclamation:** Alleluia, which may or may not include a verse from the Gospel preceding the reading of the Gospel. This is different during the season of Lent as Alleluia is not proclaimed showing the Church waiting for Jesus' resurrection.
8. **Gospel Reading:** A reading from one of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John).
9. **Homily (Sermon):** The priest or deacon provides a reflection on the Scripture readings.
10. **Profession of Faith (Nicene Creed or Apostles' Creed):** A statement of Christian beliefs proclaimed by the Church, usually only during a Sunday Mass.
11. **Prayers of the Faithful (General Intercessions):** Prayers for various intentions and needs.
12. **Presentation of the Gifts (Offertory):** The congregation presents gifts of bread and wine, which will become the Eucharist.
13. **Eucharistic Prayer:** The central prayer of the Mass, where the bread and wine are consecrated to become the body and blood of Christ.
14. **The Lord's Prayer (Our Father):** The congregation prays the prayer taught by Jesus.
15. **Sign of Peace:** The congregation offers a sign of peace to one another, often by shaking hands or nodding in acknowledgement.
16. **Fraction Rite:** The breaking of the consecrated bread for all to receive.
17. **Communion:** The distribution of the Eucharist to the congregation.
18. **Prayer after Communion:** A concluding prayer asking for spiritual nourishment.
19. **Final Blessing:** The priest imparts a blessing upon the congregation.
20. **Dismissal:** The congregation is sent forth to fulfil the Mission of the Church, with a final greeting from the priest.

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH

The seven sacraments are liturgies held to celebrate key moments of human life, connecting us to God's presence in our day-to-day lives. Your child may have been involved in the initiation rites, and you may have taken part in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Each sacrament is a way of encountering the Risen Christ and of receiving the particular grace that the sacrament symbolises.

The sacraments are divided into:

- Sacraments of Christian initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist
- Sacraments of Healing: Penance and Anointing of the Sick
- Sacraments of Communion and Mission (Sacraments of Service): Holy Orders and Matrimony.

The seven Catholic sacraments are sacred rituals that convey God's grace. The sacraments mark key moments in a Catholic's journey and nourish their relationship with God. The sacraments are ceremonies performed in church and have the following in common:

- Initiated by Christ
- Entrusted to the Church
- Nurture, strengthen and express faith
- Are permanent and ever effective
- Necessary for salvation
- Bestow sacramental grace
- Involve signs and symbols
- Involve words and actions
- Link earth to heaven, humans to saints
- Use music and imagery.





BAPTISM

Initiation into the Church

During a Catholic baptism, water is used to cleanse the individual of original sin. The ceremony includes renunciation of sin, anointing with chrism oil, water baptism (either pouring or immersion), a white garment symbolising purity, and a lit baptismal candle representing Christ's light. The baptised person becomes a member of the Church. Catholics believe in one baptism, common across all of Christianity, not exclusive to one denomination.



FIRST COMMUNION

Communion with Christ through bread and wine

During First Communion, children typically receive the Eucharist for the first time. They participate in a Mass where they receive the consecrated bread and wine, that is believed to be transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. It's a significant milestone in their faith journey, often celebrated with family and friends.



CONFIRMATION

Strengthening of faith through the Holy Spirit

A sacrament of initiation that involves the anointing with holy chrism (oil) by a bishop, conferring the gifts of the Holy Spirit on the recipient. This sacrament strengthens the recipient's faith and commitment to the Church, often performed during adolescence as a conscious affirmation of one's faith.



RECONCILIATION

Forgiveness of sins through confession

Also known as Confession or Penance, Reconciliation is a sacrament of healing and forgiveness. Individuals confess their sins to a priest, receive absolution, and perform penance as a sign of repentance. It reconciles the sinner with God and the Church, restoring grace.



ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Healing and spiritual support for the ill

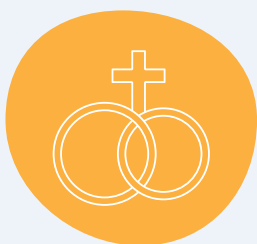
Formerly known as Last Rites or Extreme Unction in a modernised version, this is a sacrament of healing for the seriously ill or those approaching death. A priest anoints the person with holy oil and prays for physical and spiritual healing, offering God's grace and comfort. People can receive the Anointing of the Sick more than once depending on circumstances.



HOLY ORDERS

Consecration of priests and bishops for ministry

Holy Orders is a Catholic sacrament that ordains men as deacons, priests or bishops. Through the laying on of hands and prayer, they receive a sacred mission to serve the Church, administer the sacraments, and provide spiritual leadership, carrying out Christ's work on earth within the ordained ministry.



MATRIMONY

Union of a man and woman in marriage, blessed by the Church

Marriage unites a man and a woman in a lifelong covenant of love and fidelity with each other and God. Through vows exchanged in the presence of a priest and witnesses, the couple receives God's grace to strengthen their union, raise children and support each other's holiness.

CATHOLIC SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

Catholic signs and symbols are everyday objects that take on powerful meaning to help communicate the mystery of God. Light, water, clothing, oil, hands, bread and wine are transformed from ordinary objects into the gift of God's grace and presence. In the liturgy and in all sacraments simple elements from life are brought forward and made sacred.



THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

When Catholics make the Sign of the Cross, they profess their faith in the Father, in the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. It is sometimes described as a way to ward off evil as it calls on the name of the Holy Trinity.

The Sign of the Cross is a Catholic tradition and a simple prayer on its own. Catholics touch the forehead first with the right hand and say, 'In the name of the Father', then move down to the middle of the chest, saying, 'and of the Son', and then left then right shoulder stating 'and of the Holy Spirit, Amen'. Whenever the priest says this in church everyone crosses themselves. The priest doesn't always cross himself, but sometimes makes the Sign of the Cross in the air, around a foot in front of him. When he does this, he's blessing everyone, and you simply cross yourself.



CALVARY

The three crosses of Calvary, which is also known as Golgotha, are a significant Christian symbol associated with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The centre cross represents the crucifixion of Jesus Christ; the cross on the left side of Jesus represents the penitent thief who was crucified alongside Jesus; the Right Cross represents the impenitent thief or the unrepentant criminal who was also crucified alongside Jesus. The three crosses at Calvary together convey themes of redemption, repentance, and the consequences of unbelief. They are a powerful symbol of the Christian faith, reminding believers of the central event in Christian theology – the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the salvation of humanity.



HANDS IN PRAYER POSITION

Catholics, like many Christians and people of various religious traditions, often hold their hands together in a specific way during prayer as a physical and symbolic gesture of reverence and devotion (although there is no strict requirement to do so). This practice is commonly referred to as 'folding one's hands in prayer' or 'praying with folded hands'. Holding your hands together in prayer is a way of showing reverence and humility before God. It can symbolise the unity of mind, body and spirit, and is a way of aligning your inner thoughts and intentions with their outward physical posture.



LAYING ON OF HANDS

One of the primary symbols in the liturgy is the 'laying on of hands'. From ancient times, to impose hands on someone or to extend one's hand over the person's head was the sign of calling down the Holy Spirit. All seven sacraments employ this symbol.



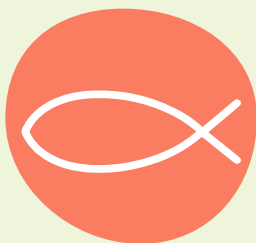
BREAD AND WINE

The act of eating and drinking together is a symbol of fellowship, common life and common love. The breaking of the bread was the ritual gesture that established communion among those at table in a Jewish ritual meal. The Last Supper was such a meal. The Eucharist began at the Last Supper and the early community obeyed Jesus' command to 'break bread' in his name. The bread and wine are symbols of nourishment and food for the Christian journey.



DOVE

The dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. It represents peace, purity and the presence of God. A dove descended on Jesus during his baptism, which symbolised the Holy Spirit.



FISH

In Catholicism, the fish is an early Christian symbol representing Jesus Christ. The Greek word for fish, 'Ichthys', forms an acronym for 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour'. It symbolises the Christian faith and the disciples' identity as 'fishers of men', as called by Jesus.



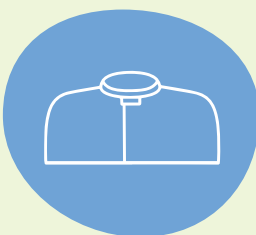
FIRE/LIGHT

Fire is a symbol of God's purifying presence. At Baptism Catholics are given a lighted candle to symbolise the light of Christ. This is the transforming light of faith that drives out the darkness of despair. Christians are to be the light of Christ in the world.



OIL

The word Christ means the Anointed One. Catholics are anointed in Baptism using oils which are blessed during a special Mass called a Chrism Mass. The priest draws the Sign of the Cross in oil on a person's forehead as he says special words according to the sacrament. Oil is also used for Confirmation, Holy Orders and for the Anointing of the Sick.



WHITE CLOTHING

The newly baptised are clothed in white as a symbol of 'putting on' Christ, and the pure new life of grace. White is the colour of Christian baptism. It symbolises the cleansing of the person from all sin. The earliest Christians wore white to signify their union with Christ and their commitment to living a virtuous life. At Mass, the priest wears white vestments during the Seasons of Easter and Christmas which represent his baptismal garment.



THE CATHOLIC CALENDAR

'During Easter many of our schools put on a short play for each day of Holy Week, usually as part of a liturgy. The story is read and the children act out the different scenes.'

The Catholic calendar, or liturgical calendar, contains a year of seasons and feast days that celebrate something or someone important to the faith, such as solemnities and feast days, holy days of obligation, saints' days or days dedicated to the life of Jesus and Mary as well as Ordinary (everyday) Time, and these occasions are an essential part of Catholic school life. Catholic schools integrate the liturgical calendar into their academic and spiritual life in several ways such as Mass, prayer services, educational activities, charitable activities, seasonal colours used for decoration and parish events.

The liturgical calendar serves as a spiritual guide, helping Catholics to deepen their faith, grow in their understanding of the life of Christ and connect with the Church's rich tradition. It provides a sense of continuity and rhythm in the practice of the faith and serves as a means of unity for Catholics as they celebrate the same events and seasons throughout the year.

The 'feast' part of feast day doesn't really mean eating a large meal, rather it's an annual religious celebration, but Catholics do like to extend their hospitality and generosity and love in the form of food!

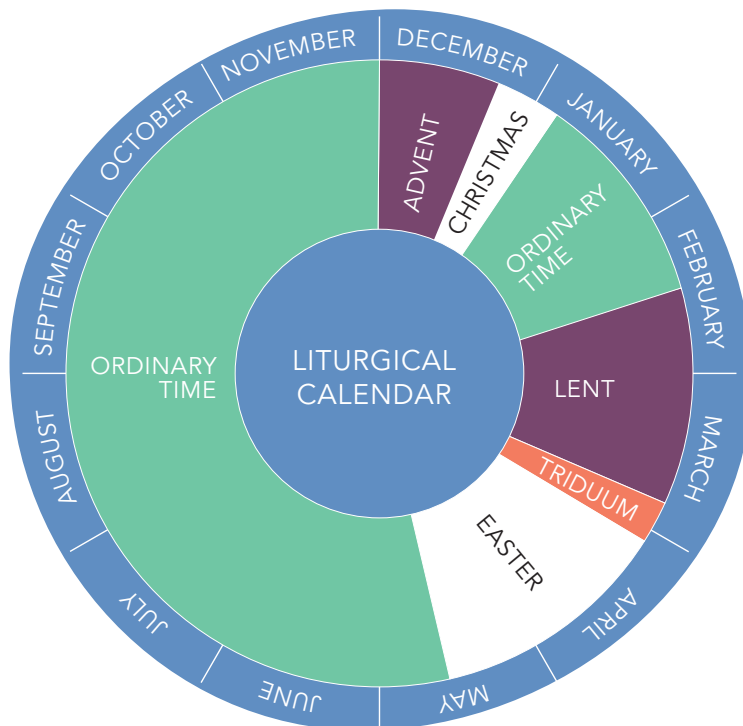
Saints are revered holy men and women, canonised by the Catholic Church and recognised as being truly dedicated to God in their lives. Each day of the year on the liturgical calendar is associated with specific saints, whose feast days are commemorated with prayers and readings. Your child's school may be named after a saint and may have been established by a religious order such as the Presentation Sisters whose founder (Nano Nagle) may be celebrated on Founder's Day. You may be invited to celebrate with the school community on this day. Some saints' feasts are only celebrated in a saint's local town or country; however some, like St Patrick, an Irish saint, are celebrated in countries around the world due to the influence of the Irish in spreading Christianity.

Holy days of obligation are special occasions on which Catholics are obliged to attend Mass on the day. As well as every Sunday of the year, there are two holy days of obligation in Australia: Christmas Day (25 December) and the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (15 August).

LITURGICAL SEASONS

The Catholic Church celebrates the mysteries of Christ's life in a recurrent pattern. Within the cycle of a year the Church remembers and celebrates Christ's conception, birth, death, resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The new liturgical year begins on the first Sunday of Advent (leading up to Christmas) at the end of November, just as many other things like the academic year are coming to an end.

Different colours are used to indicate the season or feast that is being celebrated - these colours are worn by the priest and used to decorate the church and prayer spaces according to the season.



SEASON	DESCRIPTION	COLOUR
Advent	Covering the four Sundays before Christmas during which Catholics prepare to celebrate Christ's birth and anticipate his coming again at the end of time.	Purple
Christmas	Christmas celebrates Christ's birth from 25 December, including the Feast of Mary, Mother of God on 1 January, the Epiphany of the Lord on 7 January, up until the feast of the Baptism of the Lord on the Sunday after 6 January. Orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas on 7 January.	White (or gold)
Lent	The 6-week (40 days) time of preparation for the celebration of Easter, beginning on Ash Wednesday and finishing on the evening of Holy Thursday. Sundays are not counted in the 40 days of Lent because every Sunday is considered a mini-Resurrection	Purple
Easter	The Easter Triduum (three days) is celebrated from the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday to Easter Sunday evening. The Easter Vigil is the high point of the celebration. The joyful celebration of Christ's resurrection continues for the 50-day Easter season from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday when Christ sent the Holy Spirit to his followers. It is significant that the Easter season is 50 days as the celebration needs to be longer than the sacrificial preparation period of Lent. The Ascension of Jesus into Heaven takes place during this time; 40 days after Easter Sunday. Orthodox Christians operate on a different calendar (Julian rather than Gregorian) thus Easter may or may not fall at a different time to our Catholic Easter.	White (or gold)
Ordinary time	The 33 or 34 weeks of the year that do not celebrate a particular aspect of the mystery of Christ are called Ordinary Time. They are devoted to the mystery of Christ and allow for reflection and growth.	Green

(<https://brisbanecatholic.org.au/life/liturgy/>)

'Our primary school always celebrated Mother's Day and Father's Day with a beautiful liturgy and asked a parent to say a few words about their parenting journey - it was always well received and the hall was at capacity each time - our priest would then bless all mothers, mother figures, stepmothers, grandmas, the entire list of caregivers - the children loved it!'

'During Catholic Schools Week, St Joseph's educates the community about St Joseph's story, including that he is the patron saint of workers and craftsmen. Then, to celebrate the parents' contribution to the school and wider community, they ask a few of them to explain to the students gathered what their job is and what it entails. They've had firefighters show up with a truck, for example, which is exciting for the students, but also encourages parents to take on a leadership role in their school, and reinforces the work of St Joseph.'

LITURGICAL YEAR

The Lectionary Cycle in the Catholic liturgical year comprises three cycles: A, B and C. Each corresponds to a year in the liturgical calendar. Year A predominantly features readings from the Gospel of Matthew, Year B from Mark, and Year C from Luke, with consistent selections from the Gospel of John throughout. This rotation ensures a comprehensive coverage of the Gospels.

2026		2027	
YEAR A		YEAR B	
Feast of Mary, Mother of God	1 January	Feast of Mary, Mother of God	1 January
The Epiphany of the Lord	4 January	The Epiphany of the Lord	3 January
The Baptism of the Lord	11 January	The Baptism of the Lord	10 January
Shrove Tuesday	17 February	Shrove Tuesday	9 February
Ash Wednesday	18 February	Ash Wednesday	10 February
1st Sunday of Lent	22 February	1st Sunday of Lent	14 February
2nd Sunday of Lent	1 March	2nd Sunday of Lent	21 February
3rd Sunday of Lent	8 March	3rd Sunday of Lent	28 February
4th Sunday of Lent	15 March	4th Sunday of Lent	7 March
St Patrick's Day	17 March	St Patrick's Day	17 March
Feast of St Joseph	19 March	Feast of St Joseph	19 March
5th Sunday of Lent	22 March	5th Sunday of Lent	14 March
The Annunciation of the Lord	25 March	The Annunciation of the Lord	5 April (Solemnity)*
Palm Sunday	29 March	Palm Sunday	21 March
Holy Thursday	2 April	Holy Thursday	25 March
Good Friday	3 April	Good Friday	26 March
Holy Saturday - the Easter Vigil	4 April	Holy Saturday - the Easter Vigil	27 March
Easter Sunday	5 April	Easter Sunday	28 March
Ascension of the Lord	17 May	Ascension of the Lord	9 May
Pentecost Sunday	24 May	Pentecost Sunday	16 May
Our Lady Help of Christians	25 May	Our Lady Help of Christians	24 May
The Most Holy Trinity	31 May	The Most Holy Trinity	23 May
The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus	12 June	The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus	4 June
Immaculate Heart of Mary	13 June	Immaculate Heart of Mary	5 June
The Nativity of Saint John the Baptist	24 June	The Nativity of Saint John the Baptist	24 June
Transfiguration of the Lord	6 August	Transfiguration of the Lord	6 August
St Mary of the Cross (St Mary MacKillop)	8 August	St Mary of the Cross (St Mary MacKillop)	8 August
The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary	15 August	The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary	15 August
The Exaltation of the Holy Cross	14 September	The Exaltation of the Holy Cross	14 September
All Saints Day	1 November	All Saints Day	1 November



All Souls Day	2 November	All Souls Day	2 November
Our Lord Jesus Christ King of the Universe	22 November	Our Lord Jesus Christ King of the Universe	21 November
YEAR B (END OF 2026)		YEAR C (END OF 2027)	
1st Sunday of Advent	29 November	1st Sunday of Advent	28 November
2nd Sunday of Advent	6 December	2nd Sunday of Advent	5 December
Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (which is 8 December but is moved when it falls on a Sunday)	8 December	Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (which is 8 December but is moved when it falls on a Sunday)	8 December
3rd Sunday of Advent	13 December	3rd Sunday of Advent	12 December
4th Sunday of Advent	20 December	4th Sunday of Advent	19 December
The Nativity of the Lord	25 December	The Nativity of the Lord	25 December
Feast of the Holy Family: end of December	27 December	Feast of the Holy Family: end of December	26 December

* The Annunciation of the Lord, typically celebrated on 25 March, will be observed on 5 April in 2027. This change is due to Holy Thursday falling on 25 March that year.

'St Mary's Primary holds an open classroom, then a class Mass, then morning tea, once a term. Many parents/carers are keen to come for the open classroom, then often stay for Mass with their children.'

2026: THE JOURNEY OF HOPE CONTINUES IN FAITH

Now in 2026, the Church carries forward the spirit of the 2025 Jubilee Year, continuing the journey as Pilgrims of Hope.

The Jubilee invited Catholics across the globe into a sacred time of prayer, pilgrimage, and renewal. It was a year marked by profound moments of faith, reconciliation and community, all calling us to live with hope, strive for peace, and care for creation.

Though the Jubilee Year has ended, its message endures. In 2026 and beyond, we are called to live our faith with courage, compassion, and conviction in our families, our communities and our world.



LENTEN TRADITIONS

Lent is a sacred period for Catholics, fostering spiritual growth, repentance, and preparation for Easter through acts of charity and self-discipline. Shrove Tuesday, or Pancake Day, precedes Lent, where indulging in pancakes symbolises using up rich foods before the fasting period. Ash Wednesday marks the start of the 40-day Lenten journey, with church services featuring ash crosses symbolising repentance and human mortality.

Traditionally, Lent involves fasting and abstaining, with many Australian Catholics observing fasting

on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday by abstaining from meat. Fridays in Lent are penitential, with various fasting options. Increased prayer, special Lenten services, and personal devotions deepen spiritual connections.

Almsgiving, exemplified by initiatives like Project Compassion, underscores charity during Lent. Australian families use Lenten calendars, akin to advent calendars, marking each day with scripture, prayer, or acts of kindness. Lenten meals witness a shift to seafood on Fridays, while Lenten reflections, often through retreats or programs, provide an opportunity for spiritual renewal and a deeper connection to the Paschal Mystery. This transformative journey reflects the essence of Lent for Australian Christians, emphasising the significance of faith, reflection and service during this sacred season.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

The Stations of the Cross, also known as the Way of the Cross or the Via Crucis, is a Christian tradition that commemorates the events of Good Friday, particularly the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. There are typically 14 stations, each representing a significant moment during Jesus' journey from his condemnation to his burial.

Devout Christians often engage in the practice of walking or meditating on these stations, especially during Lent and Holy Week, as a way to reflect on the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus for the salvation of humanity. This spiritual journey allows believers to connect with the central narrative of their faith and find inspiration in the enduring message of love, redemption, and hope.

First Station: Jesus is condemned to death

Second Station: Jesus carries His cross

Third Station: Jesus falls the first time

Fourth Station: Jesus meet His Sorrowful Mother

Fifth Station: Simon helps Jesus to carry the Cross

Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Seventh Station: Jesus falls the second time

Eighth Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Ninth Station: Jesus falls the third time

Tenth Station: Jesus is stripped of his garments

Eleventh Station: Jesus is nailed to the Cross

Twelfth Station: Jesus is raised upon the Cross and dies

Thirteenth Station: Jesus is taken down from the Cross

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb

(<https://www.sydneycatholic.org/lent/2019/the-way-of-the-cross/>)

EASTER CELEBRATIONS

Catholics celebrate Easter with profound spirituality, blending ancestral traditions with faith in Christ's Resurrection, enriching both religious identity and Australia's multicultural fabric. Easter, a 'moveable feast', aligns with the first Sunday after the full Moon post the Spring equinox or the subsequent Sunday if the full Moon falls on a Sunday. The Paschal Triduum - Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil - encompass the most sacred days.

Schools often hold Holy Week Liturgies, narrating events leading to Easter. Key customs include the Easter Vigil, marked by candle lighting and Resurrection proclamation, and Easter baskets, blessed during the Vigil and shared with loved ones. Red eggs symbolise Christ's Resurrection, exchanged as tokens of love and renewal.

Following the Easter Vigil or Mass, Catholics gather for a festive meal on Easter Sunday, featuring lamb as a central element, symbolising Christ as the sacrificial Lamb, bridging the celebration with the Passover in Judaism.

ADVENT CUSTOMS

Advent, the season of preparation leading up to Christmas, holds special significance for Catholics in Australia. Advent customs and traditions in Australia help Catholics to prepare both spiritually and culturally for the joyous celebration of Christmas. They foster a sense of anticipation, reflection, and communal worship during this sacred season.

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Advent wreaths: Many Catholic families in Australia have an Advent wreath in their homes. It typically consists of a green wreath with four candles, one of which is lit on each of the four Sundays leading up to Christmas:

- First Sunday of Advent: Hope, candle colour: purple
- Second Sunday of Advent: Peace, candle colour: purple
- Third Sunday of Advent: Joy, candle colour: pink
- Fourth Sunday of Advent: Love, candle colour: purple

The fifth candle, often white, is the Christ Candle and is lit on Christmas Day.

Advent calendars: Advent calendars are popular among Catholic children. These calendars have 24 doors or windows, each of which can be opened to reveal a small gift or piece of chocolate, counting down the days until Christmas.

Nativity scenes: Nativity scenes are commonly displayed in homes and churches. These depict the birth of Jesus and are a visual reminder of the reason for the Christmas season.

Advent Retreats and Reflections: Many Catholic parishes in Australia offer Advent retreats, missions, or reflection sessions to help parishioners deepen their spiritual understanding of Advent and prepare their hearts for the birth of Jesus.

Carol services: Advent is also marked by the singing of Advent hymns and carols, which focus on the anticipation of Christ's birth. Parishioners often gather for special Advent carol services, which may contain readings from scripture that tell the story of the lead up to Christmas, or concerts.

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

Christmas holds great religious significance for Australian Catholics, blending traditional customs with unique Australian elements to create a joyous and meaningful celebration. These customs foster a sense of community and celebration among Australian Catholics during this special time of year.

Attending Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve is a cherished tradition, offering a solemn and festive service with music, prayers, and candle lighting to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Alternatively, Mass on Christmas Day or in the early evening of Christmas Eve is attended by those unable to make the midnight service.

Carols by Candlelight, popular outdoor events, bring families together in parks, singing Christmas carols by candlelight and often raising funds for charitable causes.

Christmas morning Mass is a central celebration for many Catholics, commemorating the birth of Jesus and partaking in Holy Communion.

Gift-giving, symbolising God's gift of Jesus to humanity, is a shared tradition with the global community. Christmas gifts are exchanged and often placed under the Christmas tree.

Families unite for festive meals featuring roast meats, seafood, and traditional Christmas desserts like plum pudding. Christmas lunch is a time for joyous gatherings, further emphasising the communal spirit of the season. Australian Catholics find the perfect balance between religious reverence and cultural celebration during this joyous occasion.



PRAYING AND PRAYERS

When you have a relationship with someone, you want to spend time with them. Sometimes that means just being around them. Other times, it's having a conversation with words. The relationship between Catholics and God works like this too. Prayer is how Catholics talk to God, but praying is for everyone. It can be through traditional prayers in church, or just a peaceful moment to stop and reflect on your day and be grateful for the gifts you have been blessed with.

People pray to give God thanks, to ask for help, to ask for forgiveness and to tell Him how much they love Him. Depending on the school, your child may start each day or lesson with a prayer.

You can pray anywhere, but sometimes setting up a special sacred place that is quiet and beautiful, with some lovely objects, where you can light a candle and perhaps play soft music, can help you focus on God and create a beautiful spiritual experience.

This chapter contains prayers that you may encounter when you attend your child's school for different liturgies including the prayers that can be used for parent meetings at school, some moving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prayers, and prayers you can say with your family at home.

SETTING UP A PRAYER SPACE FOR LENT

You may have seen a prayer table or space set up in your child's classroom or elsewhere at the school. A prayer space is a sacred place that helps people connect with God and deepen faith. It is a place of peace, reflection and spiritual growth that you can set up for a meeting or in your own home.

The colour of the cloth used to cover the prayer table will vary depending on the liturgical season. Other items placed on the table can include flowers in a vase, a Bible, a candle, crucifix, religious items such as holy cards, rosaries, and statues.

Here's an example of how to set up a prayer table during Lent:

1. Place the purple cloth down first; purple is the colour of penance, preparation and sacrifice.
2. Add the open Bible; it is through scripture and prayer that we grow closer to God. The pages are visible as the word of God is alive and open to all.
3. Light the candle as a symbol of God's presence; He is with us, in this place, at this time.
4. Place some stones or a cactus as a reminder of Jesus' time in the desert.
5. Place the crucifix as a reminder of the sacrifice Jesus made for us.
6. Place an empty bowl as a reminder to fast during Lent.

A LENTEN PRAYER

*We begin with the Sign of the Cross.
In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Gracious and loving God,
As we gather in this sacred space,
We enter into the season of Lent,
A time of reflection, repentance, and renewal.*

*We seek your presence in our midst,
To guide our thoughts and actions
During this period of self-examination.
Grant us the strength to let go of
All that separates us from your love,
And to embrace the path of righteousness.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit,
That we may be transformed from within.
Help us to grow in faith, hope, and love,
To become more like your Son, Jesus Christ.
May this season of Lent be a time of renewal,
A time to draw closer to you,
And a time to prepare our hearts
Amen.*

PRAYERS SAID AT MASS

Following are some of the main prayers said at Catholic Mass. In some prayers, the words in bold indicate which parts are said by the people in response to the priest.

THE KYRIE

Lord, have mercy
Lord, have mercy
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy

or:

Kyrie, eleison.
Kyrie, eleison.
Christe, eleison.
Christe, eleison.
Kyrie, eleison.
Kyrie, eleison.

GLORIA

(when recited)
Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of
good will.
We praise you, we bless you, we
adore you, we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great
glory, Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the
Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of
the Father, have mercy on us.
For you alone are the Holy One, you
alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

APOSTLE'S CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into Hell;
the third day He rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God the Father
almighty,
from thence he shall come to judge the living
and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit
the holy Catholic Church
the communion of saints
the forgiveness of sins
the resurrection of the body
and life everlasting.
Amen.

NICENE CREED

I believe in one God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only
Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before
all ages. God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten, not made,
consubstantial with the Father; through him all
things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven, (all bow)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin
Mary, and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius
Pilate, he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom
will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of
life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and
glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic
Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of
the dead and the life of the world to come.
Amen.



THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right and just.

THE SANCTUS

(After the Preface)

(Recited or sung)

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

THE LORD'S PRAYER (OUR FATHER)

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

(Priest says: Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil...)

*For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen*

LAMB OF GOD

*Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
grant us peace.*

TRADITIONAL PRAYERS

OUR FATHER (ABOVE)

HAIL MARY

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

GLORY BE

Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

THE ANGELUS (USUALLY RECITED AT MIDDAY)

Leader: The Angel of the Lord declared to Mary.

All: And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Leader: Hail Mary ...

All: Holy Mary, Mother of God ...

Leader: Behold the handmaid of the Lord:

All: Be it done unto me according to your word.

Leader: Hail Mary ...

All: Holy Mary, Mother of God ...

Leader: And the Word was made Flesh:

All: And dwelt among us.

Leader: Hail Mary ...

All: Holy Mary, Mother of God ...

Leader: Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God!

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



Leader: Let us pray:

All: Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

PRAYERS FOR MEETINGS

BEGINNING OF THE YEAR PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you are with us as we commence our year's work.

Help us to understand our importance in educating our children.

And bless our partners – the teachers. Guide us in our decisions

And open our hearts in friendship to each other.

May we show particular care to those who are most in need.

May we welcome, especially, those who are shy and uncomfortable.

And may this meeting of ours result in many benefits for the children on whose behalf we gather.

Amen.

BEGINNING OF MEETING PRAYERS

1.

Lord, God of creation, your Spirit moves where it will and it can be discerned wherever people of good will are searching for the truth.

Help us to work together in this meeting, to make decisions for the good of our school, our community and our culture.

May we offer the world around us a vision of the good life that is grounded in the Gospel of hope.

May we be reflective and discerning making decisions on what is best for our students, and always holding fast to what is good.

This prayer we offer to you, God of all creation.

Amen.

ROSARY BEADS AND PRAYING THE ROSARY

Rosary beads, typically made of wood or glass, help Catholics keep track of praying the Rosary, aiding in a focused and contemplative experience. There are 59 beads in a Rosary. Catholics often pray the rosary to make a request to God, some to thank God for blessings received or for requesting a special favour, for example if someone is sick to help them recover.

Praying the Rosary is a devout practice that involves reciting specific prayers while using Rosary beads as a counting aid. The Rosary consists of five 'decades', each representing a set of mysteries from the life of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. It begins with the Apostles' Creed, followed by an Our Father, three Hail Marys, and a Glory Be. For each decade, a specific mystery is contemplated while reciting ten Hail Marys. Different days of the week determine which set of Mysteries will be used: Joyful Mysteries (Mondays and Saturdays), Sorrowful Mysteries (Tuesdays and Fridays), Glorious Mysteries (Wednesdays and Sundays) and Luminous Mysteries (Thursdays) The Rosary fosters meditation, reflection, and spiritual connection, promoting peace and devotion.



2.

Father,
We thank you
for the opportunity to gather today.
May everything we do
begin with your inspiration
and continue with your help.
We ask your guidance throughout this meeting,
that all of our thoughts and actions
would reflect your holy will,
and that you would grant us the grace
to love you and our neighbours more perfectly.
We pray in Jesus' name.
Amen.

A LEADERSHIP PRAYER

Leadership is hard to define.
Lord, let us be the ones to define it with justice.
Leadership is like a handful of water.
Lord, let us be the people to share it with those who
thirst.
Leadership is not about watching and correcting.
Lord, let us remember it is about listening and
connecting.
Leadership is not about telling people what to do.
Lord, let us find out what people want.
Leadership is less about the love of power,
and more about the power of love.
Lord, as we continue to undertake the role of leader let
us be
affirmed by the servant leadership we witness in your
son Jesus.
Let us walk in the path He has set and let those who will,
follow.
Let our greatest passion be compassion.
Our greatest strength love.
Our greatest victory the reward of peace.
In leading let us never fail to follow.
In loving let us never fail.
Amen.

PRAYERS FOR DECISION-MAKING

Dear Lord,
Today we meet to plan for and continue our work to
ensure a school that supports equity and excellence in
faith and educational outcomes for all the students in
our care.
We ask in faith that as your Word promises us, you will
give us wisdom in every small and large decision as we
step into our purpose.
We thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit in guiding
our journey and for the commitment and passion of all
those we work with to our mission and purpose.
We make this prayer in Jesus' name.
Amen.

2.

Be with us, spirit of the Lord
As we assemble in your name.
Teach us what we should do.
Walk with us along the path of humility,
justice and love.

Be the source of our inspiration
and the author of our decisions.
Join us, so we may be one in you
and never depart from the truth.
Gathered together, in your name,
may we reach decisions enriched by your spirit.
Amen.

PRAYER OF GRATITUDE FOR OUR FAMILIES

Loving God,
We thank you for the gift of the families in our school.
We ask your blessing on all families today and always.
Be with us in our daily life together.
Be our guide in times of challenge.
Be our strength in times of difficulty
Be our joy in times of delight
Help our families to grow stronger in your love
And show us how to love one another
As you have loved us.
May we welcome Jesus as the unseen guest in our
home.
May we be His voice and hands,
Respecting and caring for those we meet.
May we look to the example of Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
As we strive to be the best family that we can be.
Most Holy Family of Nazareth, pray for us.
Amen.

PRAYER FOR OUR STUDENTS WITH DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS

Lord, please help our children with diverse needs to know they are

loved deeply and they matter to You and the world.

Through

Your Spirit, help parents and communities walk in humility to support and care for all people. May children with diverse needs be afforded access to the variety of services needed to reach their full potential.

Lord, we lift up parents and caregivers of children with diverse needs. Refresh them. Give them strength to press on each day. For families living through hardship, lead them to opportunities to provide each member with the resources to thrive and experience the fullness of life.

Lord, thank You for creating every child as a unique individual

Empower us to recognise and celebrate differences as your

great gift to the human family

Please equip community leaders, families, and Your followers as

they support children with diverse needs, and encourage them on their journey. May they experience Your deep love every day.

Amen.

PRAYER FOR OUR SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS

We give thanks for the Spirit you send to sustain and strengthen us in our work.

Lord, hear us

We give thanks for raising us up to respond with special service, each in our own way to the needs of the parents and families within Australia.

Lord, hear us

We ask for your guidance to use our diverse talents to continue to serve one another, especially the most vulnerable among us.

Lord, hear us

We ask that you bless all volunteers who give of themselves to support others. Bring to fulfilment the gifts they offer in the hope of a better world.

Lord, hear us.

Amen.

DIVERSITY PRAYER

Lord Jesus, give us the courage to welcome new thoughts.

Help us to have an open mind and confidence in the promptings of the Spirit.

Guide us towards harmony and help us trust the wisdom of our friends.

Renew our confidence in your presence as we seek to serve this community.

And bless this meeting of ours where we have to make the decisions that will be in the best interest of our children.

Amen.

RESPECT PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you showed the greatest respect for people – the poor, the sinners, the ill, the outsiders, and especially, the children who have a special place in the Kingdom.

Help us to value each other.

To value our pastor, our teachers and all those who work at our school.

But above all, help us to value our children.

May this meeting of ours deepen our respect for each other and give us the opportunity to help build up your Kingdom in our school.

Amen.

CLOSE OF MEETING PRAYER

1.

Dear God, as we conclude this gathering of parents and carers, we lift our hearts in gratitude for the gift of education and community. Thank you for the teachers, staff and families who have come together to support our children's growth.

Lord, bless our children with wisdom, curiosity and resilience as they navigate the challenges of learning. Strengthen our partnership as parents and educators to provide them with the best opportunities for growth. Guide our discussions and decisions, that they may be rooted in love and concern for every child.

In your name, we pray for blessings on our school community.

Amen.

2.

Father, as we conclude this gathering of parents and carers, teachers, and school staff, we come before you with gratitude in our hearts. We thank you for the opportunity to discuss and collaborate on the education and wellbeing of our children.

We ask for your guidance and wisdom as we partner together in the education and formation of these young lives. Bless our teachers and school administrators, grant them the patience, passion and dedication to nurture the minds and spirits of our children.

We pray for our children, dear God. May they be filled with a love for learning, a thirst for knowledge, and the wisdom to make good choices. Keep them safe, healthy and happy.

As parents and carers, may we continue to support and encourage our children in their academic journeys. Help us to be present and engaged in their lives, offering love, guidance, and understanding.

Lord, we entrust this school year into your hands.

May it be a year of growth, achievement and positive experiences for our children. May our school community be a place of respect, kindness, and cooperation.

We ask for your blessings upon all the families in our school. Strengthen the bonds between parents, teachers and students. Help us to work together for the common good and the success of our children.

In your loving name, we pray.

Amen.

END OF YEAR PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we thank you for your presence in the life of this group and our school.

You have spoken through the events of the year.

In our many discussions about Catholic schooling,

In our shared plans and hopes and dreams,

In the prayers and liturgies and celebration on special occasions,

And, often enough,

In the words of our children.

Bless all of those who have been part of our community.

Bless especially the teachers, children and parents who will not be here next year,

And bless this meeting of ours where we gather to bring our year's work to completion.

Amen.

ABORIGINAL PRAYERS

ABORIGINAL OUR FATHER

You are Our Father, you live in heaven

We talk to you, Father, you are good (repeat)

We believe your Word, Father

We your children, give us bread today (repeat)

We have done wrong, we are sorry

Help us, Father, not to sin again (repeat)

Others have done wrong to us

And we are sorry for them, Father, today (repeat)

Stop us from doing wrong, Father

Save us all from the evil one (repeat)

You are Our Father, you live in heaven

We talk to you, Father, you are good (repeat)

The Lord's Prayer from the 'Missa Kimberley', an approved, culturally appropriate liturgy, Copyright applies. Diocese of Broome, Western Australia.

GOD'S TIME IS RIGHT TIME PRAYER

Be still, wait, do not rush things.

Let life happen by itself.

Work with it, trust in the spirituality and wisdom that is around you.

With confidence, we wait for God too.

His time is 'right time'.

Wait for Him to make His Word clear.

'Right time', gentle time, don't rush.

Sometimes waiting is painful.

Sometimes it's a struggle.

But,

Circle is always turning.

Right time will come

Be patient.

Be still.

Listen.

A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

A voice in the wilderness calls to prepare

For we are standing on the edge of changes.

Across the desert sand and the mountain high

The Lord is coming. Make your way!

I will hear what the Lord will say

A voice of peace for all his people

His voice is never far for those who know

His glory dwelling in our land

Faithfulness and mercy have met

Peace and justice have embraced here

Faithfulness shall spring from the earth

And justice look down from the sky

The Lord our God will make us grow

And earth will bring its fruit in all its splendour

Justice marches on before; he comes

And peace will follow in his way

Amen.

NATIONAL CLOSE THE GAP DAY PRAYER

God of all wonder,

We pause in the busyness of our days to listen deeply to the wisdom of this land and those who belong to it.

May our minds be open to dialogue,

May our hearts be open to transformation, and may our hands do the work of reconciliation.

We ask that the Spirit accompany us on our journey of healing on these lands, seas and waterways.

We also ask the Spirit of peace be with all those who are living a life of fear, dispossession, and distress, especially those living with the threat of the global pandemic at this time.

We pray on this day, National Close the Gap Day, that all Australians work together to ensure that the dignity of every inhabitant of this Great Southern Land is upheld, and that we all work together to close the gaps that are for us all a source of national shame. Stir in us the compassion, courage, and determination to bring about change in many areas of life, including health, education, life expectancy and incarceration. God of all creation, as we journey together in this Great Southern Land, We pray for healing, forgiveness, and unity,

Creating a path of good will, with justice and compassion.

Jesus, through the power of your love,

You have given us the courage, wisdom, and strength to share our gifts and talents in humility.

In peace and understanding, we reconcile with each other.

Creator Spirit, we come together in prayer and thanksgiving for the many blessings we have received.

Allow your Spirit to wash over us and give us strength to walk together as one. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus our brother and friend.

Amen.

PRAYERS FOR FAMILIES TO SAY AT HOME

SAYING GRACE (BLESSING BEFORE MEALS)

1.

Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts which we are about to receive from Thy bounty, through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

2.

For what we are about to receive, may we be truly thankful.

Amen.

3.

Dear Lord, as we gather around this table, we humbly bow our heads in gratitude for the food before us.

We thank you for your presence in our lives and for the nourishment of body and soul. May this meal strengthen us for the tasks ahead and help us grow in love for one another.

Bless our family and all those in need. May our hearts be open to sharing our blessings with others, just as you have shared your love with us.

Amen.

BEGINNING OF LENT PRAYER

Father, as we enter this season of Lent as a family, we come before you with open hearts and humble spirits. We seek to draw closer to you and grow in faith, love and compassion.

Lord Jesus, you walked the path of sacrifice and self-denial. Help us, as a family, to embrace this journey of Lent with sincerity. Grant us the strength to let go of distractions and focus on what truly matters.

Holy Spirit, guide our actions, words and thoughts during these 40 days. May our fasting, prayer and acts of charity deepen our relationship with you and transform us into better versions of ourselves.

As a family, we unite in our commitment to grow in love and service. May our Lenten journey not only bring us closer to you but also strengthen the bonds of love and unity within our family.

We offer our prayers and sacrifices in union with the suffering of Jesus on the cross. May our hearts be prepared to celebrate His resurrection with joy and gratitude.

Lord, bless our family and all families during this sacred season. May our Lenten observance lead us to the joy of Easter, where we find new life in your redeeming love.

In Jesus' name, we pray.

Amen.

AN EASTER SUNDAY PRAYER

Dear God, on this joyous Easter day, we gather as a family to celebrate the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ. We thank you for the gift of new life and the hope that this season brings.

As we gather around this table, bless our Easter meal and the food we share. May it nourish our bodies and remind us of the spiritual nourishment you provide.

Dear God, we also remember those who are less fortunate and those who are suffering. May your love and compassion shine upon them, bringing them comfort and healing.

Lord, help us to live as Easter people, sharing your love, forgiveness, and hope with others. May the light of Christ shine through us, even in the darkest of times.

We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus, our risen Saviour.

Amen.

ADVENT PRAYER

Loving God, it is almost time to celebrate the birthday of your Son.

It is getting hotter each week, school will soon be over and the summer holidays are about to start.

In all our excitement, help us to remember that it is Jesus who shows us how to love and be happy.

Help us to be a more loving family, more generous to our friends and more helpful to our neighbours.

Lord Jesus, we are waiting for you to share your peace and shine your light.

Come and stay with us.

We make this prayer, through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

CHRISTMAS

1.

Lord and Giver of all good things,

the Three Wise Men travelled for miles to bring the Christ child the first Christmas presents. So may we, too, remember with thankful hearts the love that comes with each present we open.

We also thank you for the love you have for each of us, and we thank you for the many gifts that you give us, especially the gift of life itself.

Amen.

2.

Heavenly Father, on this blessed Christmas Day, we gather as a family in awe of the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. We thank you for the love that brought Him into our world, and we rejoice in His birth.

Lord Jesus, as we celebrate your coming, we ask you to be present in our home and in our hearts. May the joy and peace of your birth fill our lives and inspire us to share your love with others.

We pray for all families, especially those facing difficulties. May your grace and love shine upon them, bringing comfort and hope.

As we exchange gifts and enjoy a festive meal, let us remember the greatest gift of all, your Son, our Savior. May His presence always be the centre of our lives.

In your holy name, we offer this prayer.

Amen.

THANK YOU FOR OUR FAMILY PRAYER

Dear Lord, we're very thankful to You, for the gift of our family.

Thank You for allowing us to enjoy each other's company.

Thank You for giving us time to spend with each other every day.

May we always know Your love for us.

We ask that you watch over us and bring us many blessings.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

PRAYERS FOR HEALING

1.

Dear God, we come before you with heavy hearts, seeking your divine mercy and healing for our beloved family member who is ill. We place our trust in your loving care.

Lord Jesus, you walked among the sick and infirm, bringing healing and hope. We ask that you extend your loving touch to our dear one. Lay your healing hands upon them, Lord, and grant them strength and comfort. Holy Spirit, the Comforter, be with our family member in their suffering. Surround them with your peace and the assurance of your presence.

Blessed Mother Mary, our gentle intercessor, we entrust our loved one into your maternal care. Please join your prayers with ours for their healing and recovery.

Lord, grant our family the patience, strength, and faith to endure this trial. May our faith in you grow stronger through this experience, knowing that you are the ultimate source of healing and hope.

We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Amen.

2.

O blessed Mother heart of love, heart of mercy, ever listening, caring, consoling, hear our prayer.

As your children, we implore your intercession with Jesus your Son.

Receive with understanding and compassion the petitions we place before you today, especially the healing of [insert name].

We are comforted in knowing your heart is open to those who ask for your prayer. We trust to your gentle care and intercession, those whom we love and who are sick or lonely or hurting.

Help all of us, Holy Mother to bear our burdens in this life until we share eternal life and peace with God forever.

Amen.





CATHOLIC A-Z

Adherents: People who follow (adhere to) or practise the faith Tradition.

Advocacy: The action of amplifying the voices of those often not heard such as the marginalised in our community. It is working to ensure fair and just treatment of all including refugees, the homeless and our First Nations peoples.

Agnus Dei: During Mass, when the priest breaks the consecrated bread, the congregation prays or sings the Agnus Dei or Lamb of God (see page 26).

Amen: The 'Amen' is a public agreement by the people to what has been said.

Apostles' Creed: A concise statement of Christian faith, outlining key beliefs in God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Church. It serves as a foundational creed in Christianity (see page 5).

Ash Wednesday: Marks the beginning of Lent, a 40-day period of fasting and reflection in Christianity. It involves receiving ashes on the forehead as a symbol of repentance and mortality.

Baptism: A sacrament that initiates individuals into the Church. It involves the pouring or immersion of water, spiritual cleansing and rebirth in Christ.

Beatitudes: A set of teachings given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-12). They describe the characteristics and blessings of those who live according to God's will.

Bible: The Holy Bible is a sacred text in Christianity, comprising the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and the Christian Scriptures (New Testament). It contains religious teachings, history, poetry, prophecy and the life of Jesus Christ.

Bishop: A high-ranking clergy member who oversees a diocese, providing spiritual leadership, guidance and pastoral care to Catholics in a specific region.

Blessing: A prayer for God's grace, protection or favour. It is often given by clergy members, such as priests or bishops, to individuals, objects, or events, signifying God's presence and bestowing spiritual benefits. Blessings are an integral part of Catholic liturgy and sacraments.

Body of Christ: Refers to both the physical body of Jesus Christ as well as the collective community of believers in Him, symbolising unity and interconnectedness. In the context of the Eucharist, the Body of Christ refers to the consecrated bread and wine, which Catholics believe becomes the actual body of Jesus.

Calvary: The hill outside ancient Jerusalem where, according to the New Testament, Jesus Christ was crucified, signifying a significant site in Christian religious history.

Candles: Candles in Catholicism symbolise Christ as the 'Light of the World'. They represent spiritual illumination, Christ's presence, and the spreading of faith and hope in the darkness of the world.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: Essentially a 'guidebook' that summarises the Catholic Church's doctrine, or beliefs, and assists in teaching the faith. It contains the essential and fundamental content of the Catholic faith in a complete and summarised way. It presents what Catholics throughout the world believe in a question-and-answer format.

Charism: Refers to a unique spiritual gift, often associated with religious orders or communities, that guides their mission and ministry, reflecting a specific aspect of the Christian faith.

Chrism Mass: A service held during Holy Week, where the bishop consecrates holy oils (chrism, oil of the sick, and oil of catechumens) for use in sacraments and blessings.

Christmas: Commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Son of God. It signifies God's love for humanity and the hope and salvation brought by Christ's arrival.

Code of Canon Law: The Code of Canon Law is the 'law book' of the Catholic Church; a systematic collection of laws and legal principles that govern the Church, regulating its organisation, sacraments, clergy and administration. You can find the Code of Canon Law online on the Vatican's website: https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic_index_en.html

Commandment of Love: Jesus' teaching in the Gospels to 'love one another as I have loved you' (John 13:34-35 and John 15:12) 'summarising the moral foundation of Christian ethics. It encourages Christians to love like Christ, thus being aspirational and beyond human limitations.

Crucifix: A religious symbol, typically a cross with a representation of Jesus Christ's body, used in Christianity to symbolise the crucifixion and sacrifice of Jesus for humanity's salvation.

Denomination: A distinct group within the broader Church, such as Catholicism, Anglicanism and Orthodoxy.

Diocese: A geographical region or territory within the Church, overseen by a bishop, responsible for the pastoral care and administration of local Catholic congregations.

Eastern Rites and Western Rites: The Catholic Church comprises Eastern and Western Rites, each with distinct liturgical traditions and practices. Eastern Rites, like Byzantine or Maronite, follow traditions of Eastern Orthodox Churches. Western Rites, primarily Roman, adhere to Latin traditions. Both coexist within the Catholic Church, sharing core beliefs while differing in worship customs.

Ecumenism: The efforts to promote unity and cooperation among various Christian denominations and traditions, fostering dialogue and commonality while respecting differences.

Encyclical: A letter from the Pope to the people of the Church, named after the first few words of the document in Latin. An example is *Laudato Si'* or Praised be.

Eucharist: Also known as Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper, is a Catholic sacrament where the consecrated bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ and are consumed in a sacred ritual during Mass.

Faith: Faith refers to a belief in God, Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Catholic Church, leading to spiritual devotion and adherence to its doctrines.

Gentiles: Non-Jews. All Christians are Gentiles, but in the early Church it spoke about people who were not Jewish as both Jews and Gentiles became Christians.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit: Seven qualities or graces (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord) bestowed upon the faithful, particularly in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Gospel values: Principles and teachings derived from the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, as recorded in the Gospels of the New Testament. They include concepts such as love, compassion, forgiveness, humility, justice, and service to others. Gospel values serve as a moral and ethical guide for Christians, shaping their attitudes, behaviours and interactions with others, and reflecting the core message of Christ's ministry.

Greatest Commandment: When asked what the greatest commandment was Jesus replied with 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' (Matt 12:30) and he followed it with the Golden Rule, 'The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Ultimately all Christians are called to 'Love God & Love Neighbour'.

Holy water: Water blessed by a priest used in religious rituals for purification, protection and as a sacramental signifying spiritual cleansing.

Intercession: Refers to the practice of asking saints, especially the Virgin Mary and other holy figures, to pray on behalf of individuals or groups before God. Catholics believe in the "communion of saints," which means that those who have passed away and are in heaven can intercede or pray for those still on Earth.

Last Rites: Last Rites, also known as the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and Viaticum (Holy Communion for the last time), is administered to Catholics near death, offering spiritual comfort and forgiveness.

Laudato Si': An encyclical by Pope Francis, emphasising care for the environment and a call for integral ecology, linking environmental and social concerns, released in 2015. The title meaning Praise Be in Latin comes from St Francis of Assisi's prayer 'Canticle of Creation' which is the inspiration behind this document and a lot of ecotheology.

Lay person: A non-ordained member of the Church; basically all of us apart from the priests, religious brothers and sisters and bishops.

Maronite Church: The Catholic Church in Lebanon who give particular emphasis to the role of Mary in our faith. It is in full communion with the Pope and the Catholic Church, but is a self-governing rite of the Eastern Churches.

Missal: A book containing the texts, prayers and instructions for the celebration of Mass or Eucharist. It guides the order and content of the Mass for each liturgical day and season of the Church year. Missals may vary based on the liturgical rite (e.g., Roman, Byzantine) and the language used in the celebration.

Orthodoxy: A denomination (or variant) of Christianity which separated from Catholicism at the Great Schism in 1054AD, after differing teachings on the calendar, the Eucharist, leadership of the Church and some nuances in beliefs.

Parish: A local community of the faithful within a diocese, typically led by a priest, serving as a centre for worship, sacraments and pastoral care.

Paschal Mystery: The promise of life after death for Christians which is offered at Baptism because of the death and resurrection of Jesus in the story of the Passion and Resurrection at Easter.

Penance: A sacrament of reconciliation where individuals confess their sins to a priest, receive absolution, and perform acts of contrition to seek God's forgiveness.

Pope: The Pope's role as head pastor (the Bishop of Rome) is central to the Catholic Church's hierarchical structure, and his leadership is highly revered by Catholics worldwide. The Pope serves as a symbol of continuity and spiritual guidance within the Catholic tradition following on from St Peter, who Jesus built his Church on.

Priest: An ordained clergyman within the Catholic Church who administers sacraments, conducts religious services, and provides spiritual guidance to the faithful.

Religious brother: A male member of a religious order or congregation who takes vows and commits to a life of prayer, service and community without pursuing priesthood. They engage in various charitable and religious activities. Examples include the De La Salle Brothers and the Marist Brothers.

Religious sister or Nun: A female member of a religious order or congregation who takes vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and engages in various charitable and religious activities. Examples include the Good Samaritan Sisters and the Sisters of Mercy.

Revelation: Refers to the divine disclosure of God's will, truths, and mysteries to humanity, often mediated through Scripture, tradition, and personal religious experiences.

Service Learning: The practice of learning through service and the key components of justice and advocacy, usually in schools. It may involve volunteering at notable charities and also studying / reflecting on the call to do this.

Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit: The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to Christian theology, are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. These gifts are believed to be granted by the Holy Spirit to empower and guide individuals in their spiritual journey.

Synodal: Refers to a model of governance emphasising collaboration and collective decision-making. It involves active participation of bishops, clergy, and laity in discussions and decision processes, fostering a more inclusive and consultative approach within the Church's organisational structure.

Syro-Malabar Church: An Eastern Catholic Church in communion with Rome, following the East Syriac liturgical tradition. Originating in India, it traces its roots to the Apostle Thomas. Syro-Malabar Catholics uphold unique rituals and traditions within the broader Catholic framework.

The Holy Trinity: A foundational Christian doctrine that expresses the belief in one God who exists eternally in three distinct persons: Father, Son (Jesus Christ) and Holy Spirit.

The Ten Commandments: A set of moral and religious principles in Judaism and Christianity, given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. They guide ethical behaviour and religious practice.

The Virgin Mary: The Virgin Mary, often simply referred to as Mary, is best known as the mother of Jesus Christ, whom Christians believe to be the Son of God and the Saviour of humanity. Her acceptance of the divine plan and her willingness to become the mother of Jesus is a central theme in Christian theology. Various feasts and devotions are dedicated to Mary throughout the liturgical year, including the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the Feast of the Assumption, and the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, among others.

Theology: Theology is the study of God, religious beliefs, and the divine. It explores the nature of faith, doctrine, and the relationship between humans and the sacred.

Transubstantiation: The process of changing the metaphysical substance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ which occurs when the priest consecrates the gifts during the Mass.

Vatican II: The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was a significant event in the Catholic Church, leading to reforms and modernisation, including liturgical changes and greater engagement with the modern world. This is the most recent example of a Church Council which is a gathering of Cardinals, Bishops and other Church leaders from around the world with the Pope to address particular issues or make changes. The first Church Council took place in 49AD (CE) – the Council of Jerusalem which opened the fledgling Church to Gentiles. Others include the Council of Nicea when the Creed (Doctrine of Faith) was developed, and the Council of Trent which was the response to the Reformation.

Vocation: A calling to serve. Usually when a person takes on a job or role that shows deep connection with people and serving them in their lives, for example teaching and nursing.



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