

# **A SCHOOL'S GUIDE TO THE PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL**

## **WHAT IS IT?**

The Prayer of the Faithful, or Universal Prayer (or Bidding Prayers, as they are popularly known), forms an integral and valuable part of the celebration of the Mass. These prayers provide an opportunity for the community to pray for the needs of the world, for the Church, for those in need and for those who have died.

It is most important that careful preparation is given to these intercessions, for they assist the community in praying for those things that only God can give.

## **STRUCTURE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The priest introduces the prayer in the form of an invitation to the whole assembly. It is not a prayer to God, nor to any of the three persons of the Blessed Trinity. It serves as a bridge between the proclamation of God's word and the response of the assembly in petition, made with faith and trust in God's love. The content of the invitation to prayer and the intentions should relate to the mystery being celebrated, the feast or season, or some particular aspect of the word of God proclaimed in the Scriptures.

### **BIDDINGS**

Both the priest's introduction and those intentions proposed are addressed to the gathered assembly, not to God. The reader presents the prayer and allows a short time for silence. A communal response (spoken or sung) marks the conclusion of the particular intercession. (See examples below).

There should be about four or five bidding prayers:

- for the needs of the Church;
- for the needs of the wider world;
- for those facing oppression or particular needs;
- for the needs of the community.

One or two other bidding prayers may be included which relate to the particular celebration – for example, Advent or the beginning or end of the school year.

### **CONCLUDING PRAYER**

The concluding prayer, said by the priest, is normally in the form of a collect prayer, which collects the silent prayer of all into a spoken prayer addressed to God. The gathered assembly gives assent to this prayer by saying 'Amen'.

## TAKE CARE

Keep the prayers short and simple - so we all know what to pray for.

Make sure the priest's introduction and the biddings are addressed to the gathered assembly - not to God.

Make sure readers are comfortable with the pause (it should perhaps be about 10 seconds - time it with them). There should be only one reader for the intercessions. Don't be tempted to have several readers simply to give children 'something to do'.

Consider enriching the prayers with a simple sung responsory instead of the 'Lord in your mercy', such as the Iona 'Through our lives and by our prayers, your kingdom come.'

## AN EXAMPLE

Priest: Dear brothers and sisters, let us ask God the Father, who listened to the prayers of Jesus, to hear our prayers too:

Reader: For *N.*, our Pope, and *N.*, our Bishop, and the whole Church, that they will always show God's love to the world. *(Pause)*  
Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For world leaders, that they will take care of those who are most in need. *(Pause)*  
Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For those who are sick, lonely, imprisoned or hungry, that others will have care and compassion for them. *(Pause)*  
Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For our school, and especially for the children who will be receiving their first Holy Communion next Sunday. *(Pause)*  
Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Priest: May your mercy, we ask you O Lord, be with your people who call out to you. What we ask of your love may we receive from your kindness. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**