

UNIT TWO: HOW WE CELEBRATE

LESSON 1: LITURGY: Taking Part in God's Work

CONTENTS OF LESSON:

1. **WHAT:** Liturgy is the official divine worship of the Church. It is the participation of the People of God in God's saving work. In it we celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ. In the liturgy Christ continues to save us and give us life. The sacraments, especially the Eucharist, are at the heart of what we call liturgy. [*Youcat 167; CCC 1067-1069, 1113*]
2. **WHO:** The whole Body of Christ takes part in liturgy: Christ himself (the head) and all the people of God, including those in heaven. [*CCC 1655,1656, 2205*]
3. **HOW:** Liturgy is celebrated using signs and symbols, words and actions, singing and music. [*CCC1145-1158*]
4. **WHEN:** Liturgy is celebrated throughout the liturgical year:
 - The various seasons (Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter), feasts and the Ordinary Time unfold the whole mystery of Christ. -The Lord's Day (Sunday) is the high point in each week.
 - The Liturgy of the Hours is a way of celebrating throughout the day. [*CCC1163-1178*]
5. *Like the king who invited people to the wedding feast of his son, God invites us to meet Christ and receive his life in the liturgy. It is up to us to accept this invitation and prepare ourselves to take part. With the help of the Holy Spirit we must come to the feast with hearts that are open and full of faith. Only then can we receive the grace and power God wants to give us. [CCC 1098]*



REFERENCES: Matthew 22:1-14. word-sunday.com; aquinasandmore.com

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts; Copy of the Divine Office; Green, red, pink and purple colour pencils; Bibles, questions for quiz.

I. STARTER:

- We have just completed the first unit called 'What is the Church?' We saw that the Church can be called...? [*The Body of Christ, a Communion of Saints and the House of God.*]
- In the second unit we will look at how we as a Church celebrate. [*Write HOW WE CELEBRATE on the blackboard.*] A key word here is liturgy. [*Write LITURGY*]
- What picture comes to mind when you hear this word? [*As students share, write their ideas around the word LITURGY. E.g. MASS, HYMNS, ALTAR, PRIESTS, PRAYERS.*]
- We will play a game to help us understand 'liturgy' a little better.

(Play a quick game of 'Follow the Leader': Participants stand in a circle. One person (the den) goes out of the class while the others decide who the leader will be. When the den comes back, the leader starts an action and all the others do the same action. E.g. Clapping, stamping feet etc. From time to time the leader changes the action and all follow suit. This is done in a way that makes it difficult to spot the leader. The den has to discover who the leader is.)

- Who do you think enjoyed the game more, the den or those in the group? [*Those in the group*]
All of us like to belong to a group. We like to be in the fun. Can you remember a time when you felt left out or different from everyone else? Maybe everyone was dressed the same way except for you, or all were laughing at a joke which you didn't know.
- God knows that we have this need to belong, and he has given us a way to fill this need. He has given us a big, loving family (the people of God). Unlike any other group or club, this family will remain forever. God has also given us a way of celebrating with the rest of the family. It is like a family language, and it is called... Liturgy!
- So what is liturgy? It is something that all of us, the people of God, do with God. God is doing something and we are joining in (like in the game, where the leader did an action and everyone joined in.) Like in the game, liturgy involves actions and it bonds us together.
- If you have a party at home to celebrate your birthday, can we call it liturgy? [*No!*] Liturgy is unique and sacred because God himself is present in a very real way. Through the celebration he is giving us life, he is saving us. It is as if we are standing beneath the cross of Jesus and his power is flowing over us.

II. DEVELOPMENT:

- We will now try and find out more about this ‘family celebration’ or liturgy. At the end of the class we will have a quiz to see how much you remember, so try and take in all we learn.

[Give out the handouts. Students try to answer the questions in the centre. Using their answers, bring out:]

1. WHAT is liturgy? *[The official divine worship of the Church.]*
2. WHAT is celebrated? *[The death and resurrection of Christ. The most important forms of liturgy are the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.]*
3. WHO celebrates? *[The whole body of Christ: Christ himself and the people of God, including those in heaven.]* At every Mass, try and picture Mother Mary and all the saints and angels around the altar. They are present, even if we can’t see them!
4. HOW do we celebrate? *[Using signs and symbols, words and actions, music and singing.]*
God knows that we are both soul and body, so he communicates to us through outward signs that we can taste, feel, see, smell and hear.
 - Can you give any examples of things we can see that are present in liturgy? *[Wine, bread, water, candles and fire, incense etc.]*
 - How does music and singing help? *[They help us lift our hearts to God.]* When we sing the words of scripture and prayers they are even more effective than if we just say them.
5. WHEN do we celebrate? *[Throughout the year; every week (on the Lord’s Day) and every day (Liturgy of the Hours)]* The liturgy of the Hours contains prayers which are said 7 times a day. They are mostly taken from the psalms. [Show the students a copy of the Divine Office.]

LITURGICAL YEAR:

- Let us look at the way we celebrate throughout the year. As we go through the year, the story of Jesus unfolds. Just as we have seasons like summer and winter, the liturgical year also has seasons. According to the seasons, the priests wear different coloured vestments.
[As the colours are mentioned, the students shade the blocks with the appropriate colours.]
- When does the Church year begin? *[With the season of Advent]*
Advent means ‘coming’. During this time we are waiting for the coming of Jesus. We are not just waiting for his first coming (Christmas) but also for his second coming at the end of time. This season lasts for 3 or 4 weeks. The colour used is purple (which stands for waiting or preparation), except for the 3rd week, when it is pink, expressing joy.
[Students shade the 1st, 2nd and 4th blocks purple, and the 3rd block pink.]
- Which seasons follows Advent? *[Christmas.]*
The Christmas season begins with the feast of the Nativity, which we call Christmas. It also includes the feast of the Holy Family, the Mother of God (1st Jan), Epiphany (Three Kings) and the Baptism of Our Lord. The colour used is white, which expresses glory. This colour is also used for most feasts throughout the year.
- After the Christmas season we go into Ordinary Time. (Ordinary doesn’t mean ‘saadhaa’ but ‘in order’) This goes on for 33-34 weeks altogether and fills the gaps between the important seasons. The mass readings take us through the story of Jesus’ public ministry. The colour here is green, which stands for life. Which important feasts come in Ordinary time? *[Holy Trinity, Body and Blood of Christ, Sts Peter and Paul, Assumption, All Saints, All Souls, Christ the King.]*
- Around March we have another important season. What is that? *[Lent]*
- What do we do during this season? *[Prepare for Easter, by turning back to God.]* It is a special time of preparation for those who are going to be baptized.

- When does Lent begin? [*On Ash Wednesday*]
- How many Sundays in Lent? [*6*]
- What is the 6th Sunday called? [*Passion/Palm Sunday*]
- What is the last week called? [*Holy Week*]

The colour used for Lent is purple, except for the fourth Sunday, when we use pink again, expressing joy as we wait for Easter. Red (the colour of blood) is used for Passion Sunday and Good Friday. It is also used for the feasts of martyrs (those who were killed for their faith.)

- The high point of the whole year is the Easter Triduum (Tri= 3) Which 3 feasts do you think are included in this feast? [*Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter.*]
The Easter Vigil service is like the peak of the mountain!
- Why do you think the Easter Triduum is considered the most important feast? [*Because through these events, Jesus destroyed death and won life for all mankind.*]
- The season of Easter lasts for 50 days and ends with Pentecost, the day the Spirit came. It is a joyful time, when we remember the victory of Christ, so the colour used is white again. On Pentecost Sunday, however, red is used, which is the colour of fire. Red will also be used on your Confirmation day.
- After Pentecost, we go back to Ordinary Time. The liturgical year ends with the big feast of Christ the King.

III. INTERIORISATION/PRAAYER:

- Jesus told a story about a great celebration: the wedding feast of a prince. It gives us a message about liturgy and our response to it. Let's see if you can get what Jesus is saying to us.

[The passage Matthew 22:1-14 is read aloud, while students follow in their Bibles. After about 5 minutes of quiet reflection, ask students to share their reflections. Bring out:]

- Like the king in the story, God has prepared a feast, a party for us all. Jesus is the prince and all of us are invited to this great celebration, which begins in the liturgy on earth, and continues in heaven.
- But though we have all been invited, many are too busy with other things like family, business etc. They have no time for worshipping God. They miss out on the good things God offers us.
- Some, like the man without the wedding robe, come to the feast, but without any change of heart or love for God. Jesus expects us to come to church or to any of the sacraments with open hearts, believing in God's presence and ready to obey him. If we come with unbelieving hearts, we only invite judgement on ourselves.
 - The Holy Spirit can help us to come in a fitting way. Let us ask him to prepare our hearts to meet Christ each time we come to God's feast.

[Spend a few moments in silent prayer to the Holy Spirit.]

IV. ACTIVITY: Quiz.

[Divide the class into 2 groups and ask them to revise together. They then put away their handouts and sit facing each other. Give each group one set of questions with the answers. (Cut the quiz sheet into half lengthways.)

One student in each group stands, the questioner facing the one who will answer. The sheet is passed down the line as each person gets a chance to ask and answer. First one group asks and then the other. A score is kept on the blackboard (Appoint someone as score-keeper.)

Begin with Group 1, so that the answers follow in sequence.]

HOME ASSIGNMENT: ⇨ Read the handout. ⇨ Conduct the same quiz at home.