

People of Ritual

Contents:

- Introductory note to the Prayer Leader.
- Full running sheet of the prayer with notes and directions (copy as needed for those reading or doing some other action).
- Prayer handout sheet to be copied for all participants.

Introduction - for the Prayer Leader

Dear Prayer Leader,

Thanks for leading this prayer based on the capacity of RITUAL.

The People of Ritual prayer introduces participants to the use of *Blessing* as a style of prayer.

This prayer forms part of a series of 9 prayers that are based on the capacities of a Christian community as detailed in the *Catching Fire Spiritual Formation Framework*: Principle, Prayer, Presence, Welcome, Ritual, Journey, Purpose, Commitment, Fidelity.

The prayer is intended for use with staff groups in a Catholic school community but can be easily adapted to other contexts.

The structure and ideas included are just suggestions. Please feel free to modify or add to the wording to make the experience more personal and relevant for your staff. Adding your own touches will not only make the experience more enriching for you personally, but also for the rest of your group.

In each prayer there is an invitation for the Prayer Leader to share an aspect of their own experience. This is an invitation only and is not named in the participants' handout.

Each of the prayers in the series follows a common structure of:

Gather - Listen - Respond - Go Forth

People of Ritual

Preparation beforehand:

- ✓ Print sufficient copies of the *Ritual* handout for all staff from the end of this document. (Double-sided A4; colour copied if possible but will print well in black and white.)
- ✓ Print additional copies of the Leader guide for those assisting as readers, etc.
- ✓ Ensure you have sufficient copies of the *Ritual* prayer card to distribute towards the end of the prayer. (Included in the school's resource pack.)
- ✓ A bell or chime
- ✓ Identify three 'voices' for the sign of the cross ritual
- ✓ Identify three people to be Candle Lighters
- ✓ Identify one person as Bible bearer
- ✓ Sections identified as 'Leader' may be divided amongst different people but it is helpful to have a recognisable leader of the prayer
- ✓ Find an audio recording of *Hands* by Jewel and arrange for a speaker to play this.
- ✓ Prepare the oil for the blessing ritual. (Included in the school's resource pack.) Place one or two cotton wool balls into a patty cake paper (use 3 or 4 layers of patty cake papers) and drizzle oil over the cotton wool balls until they are saturated with the oil. Repeat so that there is approximately one oil distribution point for every 10-12 staff.

Creating the space:

Where possible, arrange chairs in a circle or semi-circle around a prayer focus point. Try to create different heights in your prayer focus – even if you conceal a book or box under your cloth to create a different height. Items to incorporate in your prayer focus:

- ✓ Coloured cloth/s
- ✓ Cross or crucifix
- ✓ Copy of the 'Capacities Wheel'
- ✓ A3 *Ritual* poster
- ✓ Bible and a book stand or small easel to display the Bible
- ✓ Three PrayerFire candles labelled 'Head', 'Heart' and 'Hands' (+ matches to light the candles)
- ✓ Either set up a separate point for the Blessing Ritual or distribute the oil-soaked cotton wool balls in their patty cake holders around the prayer space.
- ✓ Display copies of *Ritual* prayer cards

Approximate time required: 20 mins

We Gather

The leader welcomes those present and acknowledges the gift of coming together in prayer.

Leader: Our prayer today continues (begins) our focus on the Capacities of a Christian community. In today's prayer, we are called to be People of Ritual with an understanding of sacramentality and a valuing of reverence in all relationships.

Ritual is fundamental to the meaning-making of human beings and is found in both sacred and secular contexts. In the Catholic tradition, ritual is most evident in liturgy – the formal prayer of the Church.

But ritual is also evident in much simpler actions and attitudes. All Catholic ritual is founded on the belief that God is present and revealed in the world and, in a particular and powerful way, through Jesus. This means that God is revealed and encountered in the real and tangible moments of everyday life, particularly in our interactions with other people.

When we understand this, we cannot help but see the world and each other with eyes of reverence.

In today's prayer, we will emphasise the use of ritual action and honour the relationships that we have in our staff community. Our prayer style today will be a ritual blessing that we will share with another person.

Let's prepare ourselves to enter fully into this time of prayer together by pausing and allowing ourselves to be still and to rest in the presence of God.

(Ring a chime or bell then pause for a moment of silence. Ring the chime again to end the silence.)

To begin, we perform one of the simplest and most common rituals: the sign of the cross. But we will do it deliberately and pause with each action to remind ourselves of the powerful blessing we call upon our community.

All: We gather in the name of the father... the Creator of all *(pause)*

Voice 1: Centre our minds to know your presence; to see you in every face we meet; hear you in every word we speak and know you in every breath we take.

All: And in the name of the son ... the one who showed the way *(pause)*

Voice 2: Move us in the deepest part of our being to walk the way of compassion; to stay the path of painful growth; to hold close to the tender embrace of God.

All: And in the name of the Holy Spirit ... who is with us always *(pause)*

Voice 3: As we lightly touch our shoulders, may we stay open to the Spirit – gentle as the whisper of wings on our days.

All: And together we say, AMEN, in love and peace.

Candle lighter 1: As we gather here in your name,
Open our minds to know your voice. *(light 'head' candle)*

Candle lighter 2: Open our hands to do your work. *(light 'hands' candle)*

Candle lighter 3: And open our hearts to hold your Spirit. *(light 'heart' candle)*

(Bible bearer reverently places the open Bible on the book stand in the prayer space.)

Leader: Let us pray together,

**All: Ever-present God,
You call us to be people of ritual.
Open our eyes to your presence in our world.
Help us to recognise you in one another
and to treat each other with the reverence you deserve.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, your blessing on us. Amen.**

We Listen

Leader: I invite you now to listen to this story from the Gospel of John where Jesus used his hands to serve others – and encouraged his followers to do the same...

Reader: A reading from the Gospel of John (13:4-5, 14)

Jesus got up from the table, took off his outer robe,
and tied a towel around himself.
Then he poured water into a basin
and began to wash the disciples' feet
and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.

Jesus said, "If I, have washed your feet,
you also ought to wash one another's feet."

**All: The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

Leader: As you now listen to this recording of *Hands* by Jewel, reflect on the many ways you use your hands to serve.

We Respond

Leader: Our prayer response today is to engage in a ritual blessing of another person's hands.

In a moment, I'll invite you to come forward in pairs and use the oil here to mark the sign of the cross on one another's palms as a blessing for the other person.

We use oil in blessing for a number of different purposes in the Church: for strength; for anointing; and for healing.

As you bless your partner's hands, have in mind the sort of blessing you pray for them. You might pray your blessing in silence or quietly speak it to your partner.

So, now, I invite you to come forward, one pair at a time and bless one another.

(In larger groups, several stations for blessing may be set up and appropriate directions about movement should be given.)

As pairs move forward to bless one another, play the song, 'Hands' and/or 'These Hands'

Distribute the Quick Fire Prayer Card for this week, 'Ritual' and remind the group of the invitation to continue the style of this week's prayer throughout the week.

The Leader may like to share a personal experience of Ritual or blessing.

We Go Forth

Leader: The prayer that unites all Christian people is the Our Father. As we pray it now, I invite you to hold your hands open in front of you in a ritual gesture of offering.

All: Our Father, who art in Heaven ...

Leader: And together, let's pray our closing blessing ...

**All: As we go about our day, O God;
As we strive to walk with Jesus as people of Ritual,
Remind us to share your blessing with one another
through our words, our thoughts and our actions.**

**May your grace, mercy and peace,
Bless us, keep us and transform us all,
This day, now and forever.**

Amen

Leader: And let's finish our prayer today by offering one another a sign of peace.

People of Ritual ... Bless

As we gather here in your name,
Open our minds to know your voice.
'head' candle

Open our hands to do your work.
'hands' candle

And open our hearts to hold your Spirit.
'heart' candle

**All: Ever-present God,
You call us to be people of ritual.
Open our eyes to your presence in our world.
Help us to recognise you in one another and to
treat each other with the reverence you
deserve.
We ask this in the name of Jesus,
your blessing on us. Amen.**

We Listen

'Hands' PhotoStory

We Respond

Blessing

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As you bless your partner's hands, have in mind what sort of blessing you pray for them. You might pray your blessing in silence or quietly speak it to your partner.

We Go Forth

All: Our Father, who art in Heaven ...

Leader: And together, let's pray our closing blessing ...

All: As we go about our day, O God;
As we strive to walk with Jesus as people
of Ritual,
Remind us to share your blessing with
one another through our words, our
thoughts and our actions.

May your grace, mercy and peace,
Bless us, keep us and transform us all,
This day, now and forever.

Amen
Sign of peace

Spirit of

Ritual

We Gather

All: We gather in the name of the Father... the Creator of all
(pause)

Voice 1: Centre our minds to know your presence; to see you in every face we meet; hear you in every word we speak and know you in every breath we take.

All: And in the name of the Son ... the one who showed the way
(pause)

Voice 2: Move us in the deepest part of our being to walk the way of compassion; to stay the path of painful growth; to hold close to the tender embrace of God.

All: And in the name of the Holy Spirit ... who is with us always
(pause)

Voice 3: As we lightly touch our shoulders, may we stay open to the Spirit – gentle as the whisper of wings on our days.

All: And together we say, AMEN, in love and peace.

People of Ritual - Bless