

People of Welcome

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 WELCOME.

The People of Welcome prayer introduces participants to *Lectio Divina* 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 Welcome

Preparation beforehand:

- ✓ Print sufficient copies of the *Welcome* 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 *Welcome* prayer card to distribute towards the end of the prayer. (Included in the school's resource pack.)
- ✓ A bell or chime
- ✓ Identify three people to be Candle Lighters
- ✓ Identify one person as Bible bearer
- ✓ Identify three Readers.
- ✓ Sections identified as 'Leader' may be divided amongst different people but it is helpful to have a recognisable leader of the prayer.

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
- ✓ Three PrayerFire candles labelled 'Head', 'Heart' and 'Hands' (+ matches to light the candles)
- ✓ Display *Welcome* prayer cards
- ✓ Bible and a book stand or small easel to display the Bible
- ✓ Cross or crucifix
- ✓ A3 *Welcome* poster
- ✓ Copy of the 'Capacities Wheel'

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 Welcome who understand and build an ethos of Christian hospitality in every circumstance.

In today's prayer, I'm going to invite you to bring an attitude of Welcome to the way that we listen to scripture. Our prayer style today will be a form of Lectio Divina (*pronounced Lexio Diveena*) that I'll say more about shortly.

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.

Let's now begin by reminding ourselves that we gather ...

All: In the name of the Father, + and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

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: God of openness and hospitality,
You call us to be people of welcome;
embracing each encounter with another
as an encounter with you.
Teach us to be attentive; to welcome your Word,
no matter how it comes to us.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, who welcomes all. Amen**

We Listen and Respond

Leader: Hospitality and welcome are hallmarks of the Benedictine tradition of spirituality. The relationship between guest and host is a privileged one in which the host receives from the guest just as much as they give. The host becomes guest and the guest becomes host.

Today, we bring this same attitude of welcome to our reading of scripture.

We will use a version of Lectio Divina (*pronounced Lexio Diveena*), or 'sacred reading' that comes to us from the Benedictine tradition.

Saint Benedict instructed his monks to "Listen with the ear of the heart." This is an appropriate instruction for bringing an attitude of welcome to our daily interactions and equally appropriate for bringing an attitude of welcome to our reading of scripture.

We will listen to the same piece of scripture several times. This might seem strange at first but we will listen with a different purpose each time.

The first time that we listen, we listen to simply welcome the Word. As you hear the reading, listen for a particular word or phrase that attracts your attention.

I'd like to ask you to put your prayer sheet down and simply listen to the scripture reading, rather than following along as it's read.

(Bible bearer takes the bible from the prayer space and hands it to Reader One.)

Reader One: A reading from the Gospel of Luke.

One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to a meal.

When he arrived at the Pharisee's house and took his place at table, suddenly a woman came in, who had a bad name in the town.

She had heard he was dining with the Pharisee and had brought with her an alabaster jar of ointment.

She waited behind him at his feet, weeping, and her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them away with her hair; then she covered his feet with kisses and anointed them with the ointment.

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who this woman is and what sort of person it is who is touching him and what a bad name she has.'

Then Jesus took him up and said, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' He replied, 'Say on, Master.'

Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman?

I came into your house, and you poured no water over my feet, but she has poured out her tears over my feet and wiped them away with her hair.

You gave me no kiss, but she has been covering my feet with kisses ever since I came in.

You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.

For this reason I tell you that her sins, many as they are, have been forgiven her, because she has shown such great love.

It is someone who is forgiven little who shows little love.'
Then he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.'

(Luke 7:36-40; 44-48)

Leader: We take a moment now in silence with the word or phrase that attracted our attention. Repeat that word or phrase to yourself silently and allow its meaning for you to reveal itself.

(pause for 1-2 minutes of silence)

I now invite you to share your word or phrase with the rest of us. No explanation of your choice is necessary, just repeat the word or phrase. If someone else says your word, it's OK to repeat it.

(pause to allow people to share)

Thank you. We will now hear the second reading of the same passage. This time, as we listen with a sense of welcome, I invite you to reflect on the question, 'Where does the content of this reading touch my life today?'

(Reader One passes the Bible to Reader Two)

Reader Two: *(Reads same reading from above)*

Leader: Again, now, we take a moment in silence, asking ourselves what Christ the Word is saying to each of us in this passage.

(pause for 1-2 minutes of silence)

I now invite you to turn to the person beside you and share a single statement about what you hear or what you see coming out of this passage for you.

(pause to allow people to share)

Thank you. We will now hear the same passage read for the third and final time. This time, as we listen with a sense of welcome, we listen for what the Word invites us to do.

(Reader Two passes the Bible to Reader Three)

Reader Three: *(Reads same reading from above)*

Leader: Again, we take a moment in silence, reflecting on what it is you believe God wants you to do in response to this reading.

(pause for 1-2 minutes of silence)

I now invite anyone who would like to do so to share with us the message or meaning that came to you from this reading.

(pause to allow people to share)

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

The Leader might share their personal experience of using Lectio Divina as a prayer style or a personal experience of Welcome.

We Go Forth

Leader: Let's draw our prayer to a close by praying together our closing blessing ...

**All: As we go about our day, O God;
As we strive to walk with Jesus as people of Welcome,
Teach us to listen with the ear of our heart
so that we might recognise you in all those we meet.**

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

Amen

Leader: As a sign of our welcome of one another, let's offer each other a sign of peace.

People of Welcome ... Listen

We Listen and We Respond

One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to a meal.

When he arrived at the Pharisee's house and took his place at table, suddenly a woman came in, who had a bad name in the town.

She had heard he was dining with the Pharisee and had brought with her an alabaster jar of ointment.

She waited behind him at his feet, weeping, and her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them away with her hair; then she covered his feet with kisses and anointed them with the ointment.

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who this woman is and what sort of person it is who is touching him and what a bad name she has.'

Then Jesus took him up and said, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' He replied, 'Say on, Master.'

Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman?'

I came into your house, and you poured no water over my feet, but she has poured out her tears over my feet and wiped them away with her hair.

You gave me no kiss, but she has been covering my feet with kisses ever since I came in.

You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.

For this reason I tell you that her sins, many as they are, have been forgiven her, because she has shown such great love.

It is someone who is forgiven little who shows little love.'

Then he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.'

(Luke 7:36-40; 44-48)

We Go Forth

All: As we go about our day, O God;
As we strive to walk with Jesus
as people of Welcome,
Teach us to listen with the ear of our heart
so that we might recognise you
in all those we meet.

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

Amen

Spirit of

Welcome

We Gather

All: In the name of the Father, + and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

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: God of openness and hospitality,
You call us to be people of welcome;
embracing each encounter with another
as an encounter with you.
Teach us to be attentive;
to welcome your Word,
no matter how it comes to us.
We ask this in the name of Jesus,
who welcomes all.
Amen

People of Welcome - Listen