

Christian Prayer 2

Leading others to prayer

Leading others to what?

Leading them to prayer – inviting them to a time and place, an opportunity to raise (to try to raise) their hearts and minds to God.

Leaders cannot ‘do’ prayer for others, but they can help others make the most of the opportunity.

The Leader

Leaders come as all sorts. Some are strong in Christian faith, pray regularly, by themselves and with others. Some are Christians but not strong in faith and they pray rarely. Others are of another faith - and some pray regularly and others do not. Some are of no religious faith - and some of these are antagonistic towards faith and religion: and some of these are into meditation and others are not. We are who we are, and that’s as it is. In leading others to prayer we do not have to pretend to be what we are not. Indeed it is much better that we do not pretend to be what we are not.

However as a teacher in a Catholic school you are expected to understand what it is students are invited to in times of prayer, and to be ready and able to help them develop a certain familiarity with, and skills in prayer.

You yourself are also asked to **share** in this **time** of prayer with them. You are not asked to pray, if you do not wish, but you are asked to **share in the time**, making it for yourself – as you choose – a time of prayer, or of meditation, or simply quiet time for reflection.

You are Leader with responsibility for oversight of what others do, but this prayer-time is also a liminal time, a time shared in as equals by leader and led. You remain leader, but as a participant – and however you participate - you are one with the student body, sharing a common enterprise.

- If you are comfortable in explaining how you will be participating and why – as a Christian praying, as a person of another faith but familiar with prayer, or as an agnostic who will be meditating and so on – this can be helpful to the students.

It can help them know they too have the same freedom as to how they participate. It helps them to see that not everyone prays, and that there is something different and distinctive about Christian prayer which makes it attractive and possible for some, but not available for others. It also shows something of how we can show respect for another’s religious tradition even when we do not share in it, or agree with it.

The Led

Like the leader, students are not *required* to pray.

Prayer is a voluntary action. We may sometimes need to be encouraged to it, but it is an expression of our existing relationship with God.

So if students do not wish to pray, they are free to use the time as a time for meditation, reflection, quiet. They should do this out of respect for what prayer means to believers, and the proper place it has in a Catholic school.

Have a structure for times of prayer

Having a regular structure for times of prayer helps participants greatly.

It helps us to know what we are invited to in the different moments, and to relax into an established pattern, and make best use of the opportunity. Within the structure all sorts of different things can happen. Structure supports and enables, it is not intended to constrain. A simple structure is discussed on *Christian Prayer 3*.

