

OUR CATHOLIC FAITH

AN INTRODUCTION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS



A presentation for parent meetings
and faith formation sessions



Contents

- CATHOLICISM AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
- LITURGY INCLUDING THE MASS
- THE CATHOLIC CALENDAR
- PRAYING AND PRAYERS



Catholic schools recognise and support parents in their primary role as educators of their children particularly with regards to the religious development and pastoral care of their children, which is why all parents and families are always welcome and are encouraged to enjoy belonging to their school's faith community

‘Schools do not replace parents but complement them’

Pope Francis,

Amoris Laetitia, 2016

Being a parent or carer of a student at a Catholic school

As a parent or carer of a student at a Catholic school, you will be invited to attend liturgies such as Mass and other faith events at the school.

If you're not Catholic or you're Catholic but don't really know much about it, you may be nervous about attending these kinds of family and community opportunities at the school.

Just remember that everyone is welcome in the Catholic faith community because Catholics believe that all people are made by God, made in God's image, made for God, and loved by God. And that means you, as a parent or carer of a student in a Catholic school.



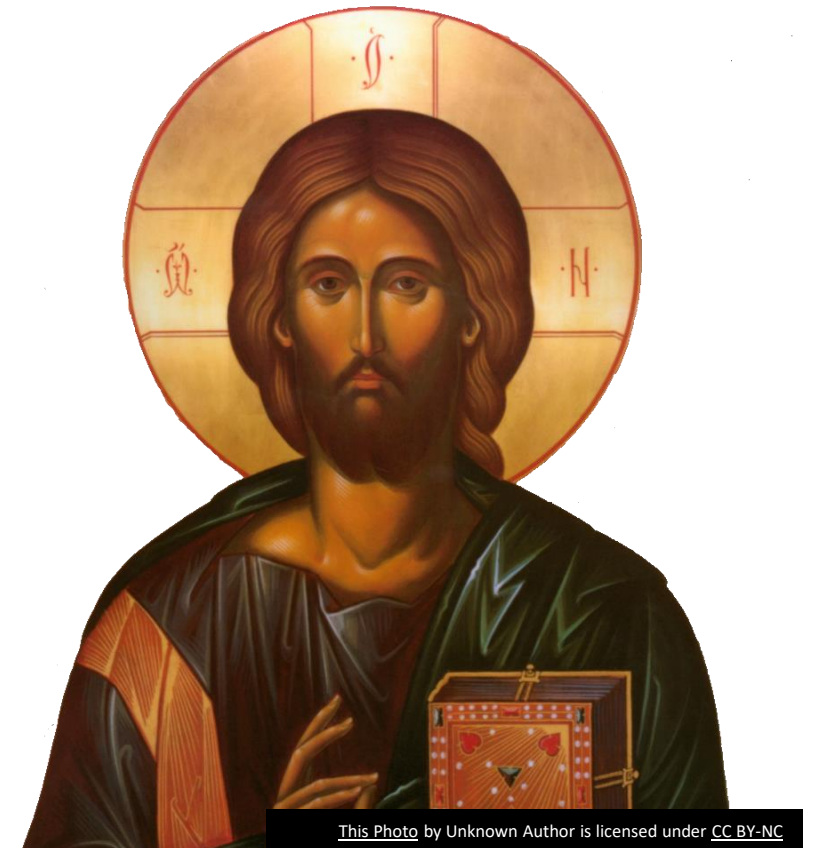
What do Catholics believe?

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, THROUGH ITS MEMBERS, SEEKS TO RESPOND WHOLEHEARTEDLY TO JESUS CHRIST'S COMMAND TO LOVE GOD AND LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR.

Catholics are devoted to God, through his revelation in Jesus Christ, using his life, his teachings, and his messages of love and salvation for all people. 'Community' is important to Catholics; a vibrant, worshipping Catholic faith community brings all kinds of people together to worship at Mass, which is available every day of the year, and to support each other with love and compassion.

Catholics are guided by the Holy Bible, which contains many stories about Jesus and his teachings and messages of hope. The Bible, or the Sacred Scriptures, is the word of God; it is a collection of ancient writings by different authors that are believed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, which informs the Mass and is read from in the liturgy. The Bible is also the foundation for all beliefs, rituals and ethical teachings.

A good summary of what Catholics believe is The Apostles' Creed, which is often said during baptisms and during Sunday Eucharist (Mass):



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](#)

The Apostles' Creed



*I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into Hell;
the third day He rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty,
from thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit
the holy Catholic Church
the communion of saints
the forgiveness of sins
the resurrection of the body
and life everlasting.
Amen.*

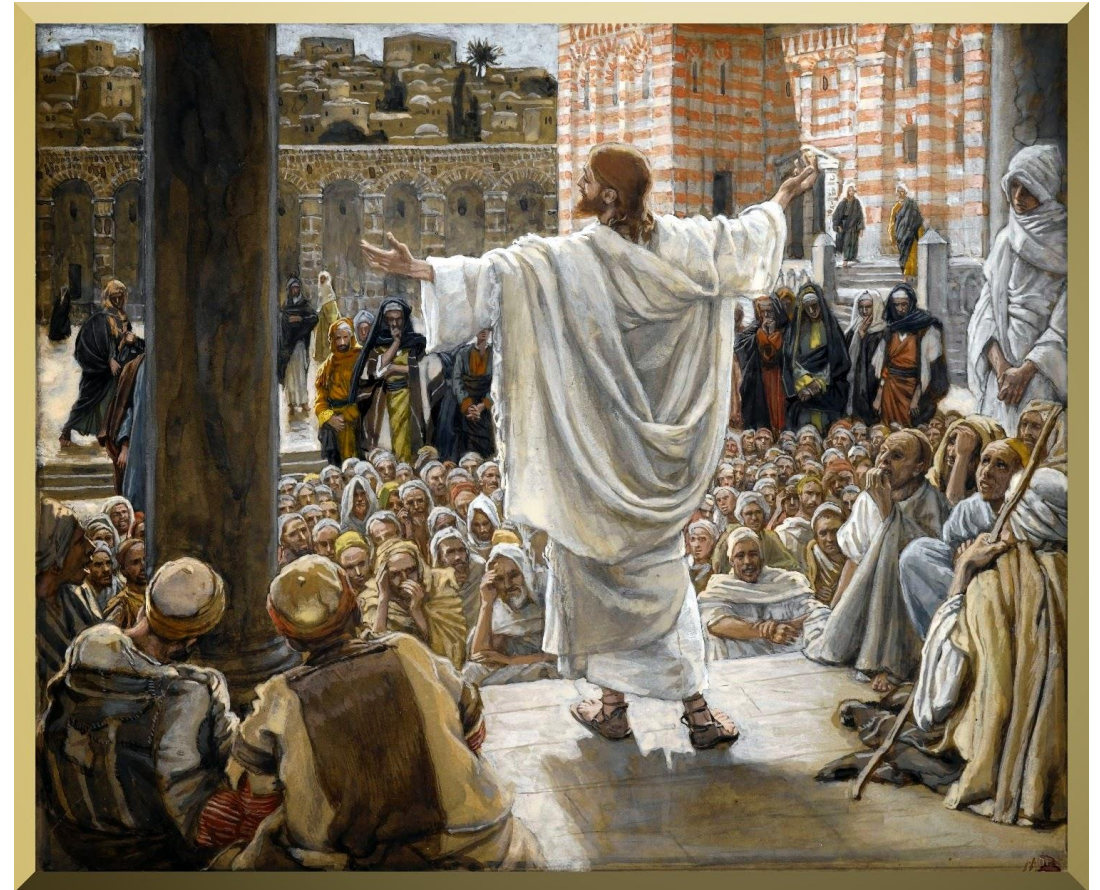
What do Catholics do?



All Catholics are called to fulfil the goal or mission of the Church, which is to simply make Christ known to others. This is done through word and deed, with the desire to make the world a better place, as we work for the Kingdom of God which exists in the here and now, as well as in our eternal life.



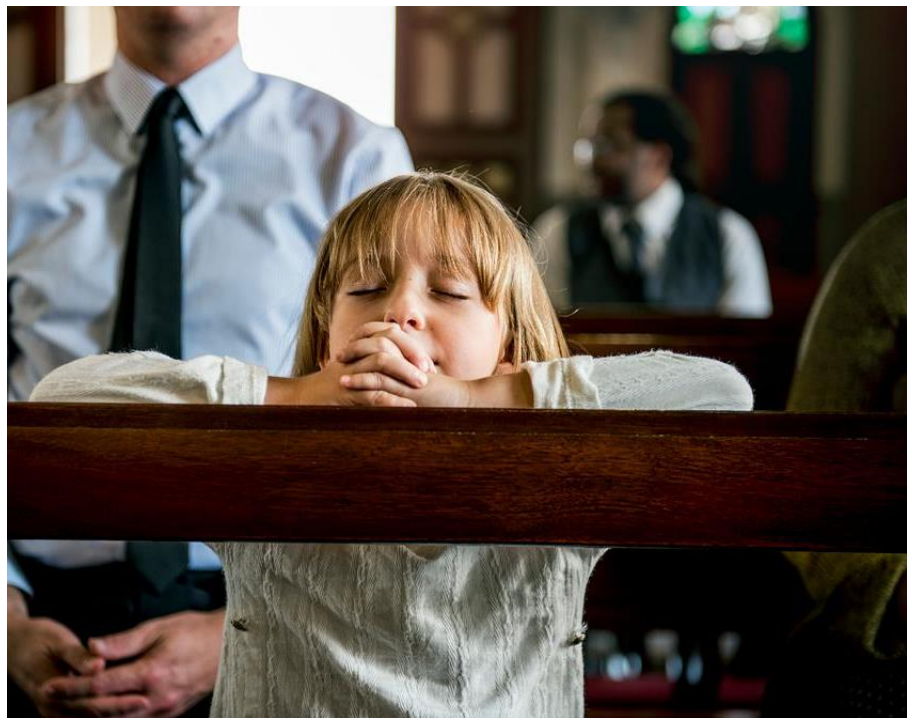
Celebrating Mass is at the heart of living a Catholic life. The people of the Church gather as a family to be with God and take part in Communion, also known as the Eucharist or Mass – during which they receive Jesus through hearing the Word in the readings and consuming the bread and wine believed to become the body and blood of Jesus Christ through the process of transubstantiation which takes place as the priest consecrates these gifts.



What do Catholics do?



Praying is how Catholics talk to God. People can pray alone or together during liturgy – the way Catholics worship – formally or informally, and any time is a good time to pray, although the Church does propose special times to communicate with God including morning and evening, before and after meals, at Mass, and on feast days.



From the Mass, Catholics are called to go out and fulfil the Mission of the Church, which is to make Christ known to others. Answering the call to serve others, especially the poor and marginalised, is the way Catholics express their faith on the outside. Catholics believe in social justice – where society upholds the dignity and rights of each and every person. Living an authentic Christian life – a life of social justice – means doing what Jesus would do and being God's hands on earth.

What makes a school Catholic?



The traditions of a Catholic school are like traditions in your family. They are sacred and special and are usually celebrated annually. Our schools celebrate tradition through the sacraments, prayer, music, art and with special days like a school's saint day.

Catholic schools are recognisable as Catholic to families and the broader community in the way their culture, practices, policies and processes embody the values and spirit of Christ, and the practices and traditions of the Church. Ways a school may express its Catholic identity include:

- The teaching of religion through the K–12 Religion Syllabus
- The integration of Catholic beliefs, values and practices into the curriculum and school activities
- Artwork, icons and symbols – the physical appearance of the school
- The school community's commitment to social justice
- Opportunities for faith formation and development for members of the school community, such as Reflection Days, Spirituality Events and Retreats
- Liturgical events, prayer groups, devotion and other key rituals
- The promotion of Catholic perspectives in the curriculum
- The school's involvement in the life of the parish or parishes, diocese and wider community
- The implementation of appropriate pastoral care and student support programs for students, families and staff based on the authentic teachings and values of the Catholic Church.

What makes a school Catholic?

In Catholic schools, great emphasis is placed on building relationships: relationships between students, staff, parents, parish and the wider community. Catholics strive to model their relationships on the teachings of Jesus: love, peace, justice, service, compassion and reaching out to others with a kind and loving heart. This guides adherents to develop Right Relationship in their lives – with God, with others, with themselves and with all of Creation.



Faith formation in Catholic schools



- Faith formation involves providing students and their families with opportunities to learn more about God, to reflect on their spirituality and relationship with God, to explore and grow their faith and knowledge of the Church, and to inspire them to serve God in the world.
- Students at a Catholic school are expected to participate in the liturgical and faith life of the school, and parents and families are encouraged to support and be involved in these vital activities.
- Students in Catholic schools encounter many aspects of faith formation in the life of the school, which parents and families may be invited to participate in, such as prayer. Times for prayer throughout the school week are an important part of the Catholic school experience. Sometimes prayer can be active and joyful, other times calm and peaceful. These prayerful times help children take a break from the busyness of the school day and to thank God.
- At school your child will explore many wonderful stories to help them learn more about God and how to lead good and meaningful lives, and will also take part in Mass and worship, religious education, sacraments such as First Communion and Confirmation, retreats and immersions, and social justice and charity work.
- Formation will take place at all ages throughout school life, but as students get older they will partake in more events like Reflection Days and Retreats which allow for a different context for students to stop and spend some time in consideration of their faith and community. These opportunities allow participants to be awoken to the Spirit in their own lives, guiding them on how to contribute to the bigger picture.
- Social Justice activities and/or service Learning may take place, allowing students, staff and families to give to those who live on the margins of society, not only helping others but also broadening their perspective on the world and their role in it.
- Catholic schools want to help parents raise young people who will rise to the challenge of seeing the needs in the world around them and acting on these with kindness and compassion for other people and for care of our natural world

Liturgy and Mass

Special events that you can often attend with your child and other members of the school community are liturgies such as Mass.

- Liturgy is the way that Catholics worship together. Some examples of forms of liturgy are baptisms, marriages and funerals (see the section 'The Seven Sacraments' later in this chapter), Ash Wednesday liturgy and, of course, Mass. You may be invited to attend a Mothers' Day liturgy at the school, for example, or a Graduation Mass in the church or school.
- Liturgy involves action – people listen, respond, sing and perform gestures, like the sign of the Cross, as they worship together. A liturgy can be held in a church or chapel, or it can be held in a room at the school, an assembly area, or even outside, and it does not have to be led by a priest. A Mass can also be held in places other than a church, but always involves celebrating Eucharist, or Communion, which is when the priest consecrates (blesses) bread and wine and those who have made their First Holy Communion move forward to the altar to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus. This is what separates Mass from other liturgies.
- It's important to know that everyone is welcome to attend Mass, and your school would love you to join the students for liturgies. You don't have to be Catholic to enjoy these sacred times of prayer, singing and reflection.



The Bible

- The Bible contains powerful texts and messages that provide Catholics with guidance and inspiration. Most of the content of every Mass and liturgy comes from the Bible. The Church has evolved over 2000 years, and over the centuries every day has been assigned certain readings and prayers from the Bible for use in liturgy.
- The Church designates readings to be used in different cycles. It uses a three-year cycle for Sunday Masses, with each of the years dedicated to a different Gospel: Year A (Gospel of Matthew), Year B (Gospel of Mark) and Year C (Gospel of Luke). The Gospel of John is included in all three years on different occasions during the year, most specifically during Lent and Easter. It uses a two-year cycle for weekday Masses.
- The Bible, or the Scriptures, is the most important text for Catholics (and for all Christians), because it shares our sacred story. Catholics believe that the many authors who wrote sections of the Bible were inspired by the Holy Spirit, so the Bible is considered by Catholics to be the Word of God and is a record of human beings' interactions with God, but it is not seen as a literal text thus can be interpreted by modern theologians and Church leaders such as your priest within a Mass.
- The Hebrew Scriptures are the first part of the Bible, which was written before Jesus's time, and the Christian Scriptures (or New Testament) contains the story of Jesus and his teachings, as well as the development of the early Christian Church. The Christian Scriptures contains the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, as well various Epistles (Letters) with the Letters from St Paul being the oldest Christian texts.
- Sometimes you will see quotes from the Bible in school correspondence or Mass booklets. For example, Matthew 18:20. This means that the quote is from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 18, verse 20 (these are numbered in the Bible): *'For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.'* (Matthew 18:20)



What happens at Mass?

These are the main prayers and parts of the Catholic Mass on Sunday, which include:

- Introductory Rite/Gathering Rite: The Church assembles
- Liturgy of the Word: The Church proclaims the living Word
- Liturgy of the Eucharist: The Church responds in living action
- Concluding Rite: The Church is missioned and sent forth

Variations may exist depending on the liturgical season and the specific form of the Mass being celebrated.

The priest leads the congregation in their celebration of the Mass and administers the sacraments, as well as leading a faith community, engaging in pastoral care and taking responsibility for the governance of a parish.



THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

The seven sacraments are liturgies held to celebrate key moments of human life, connecting us to God's presence in our day-to-day lives. Your child may have been involved in the initiation rites, and you may have taken part in the matrimony sacrament.

Each sacrament is a way of encountering the Risen Christ and of receiving the particular grace that the sacrament symbolises.

The sacraments are divided into:

- Sacraments of Christian initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist
- Sacraments of Healing: Penance and Anointing of the Sick
- Sacraments of Communion and Mission (Sacraments of Service): Holy Orders and Matrimony





The Catholic Calendar

The Catholic calendar, or liturgical calendar, contains a year of seasons and feast days that celebrate something or someone important to the faith, such as solemnities and feast days, holy days of obligation, saints' days or days dedicated to the life of Jesus and Mary as well as Ordinary (everyday) Time, and these occasions are an essential part of Catholic school life.

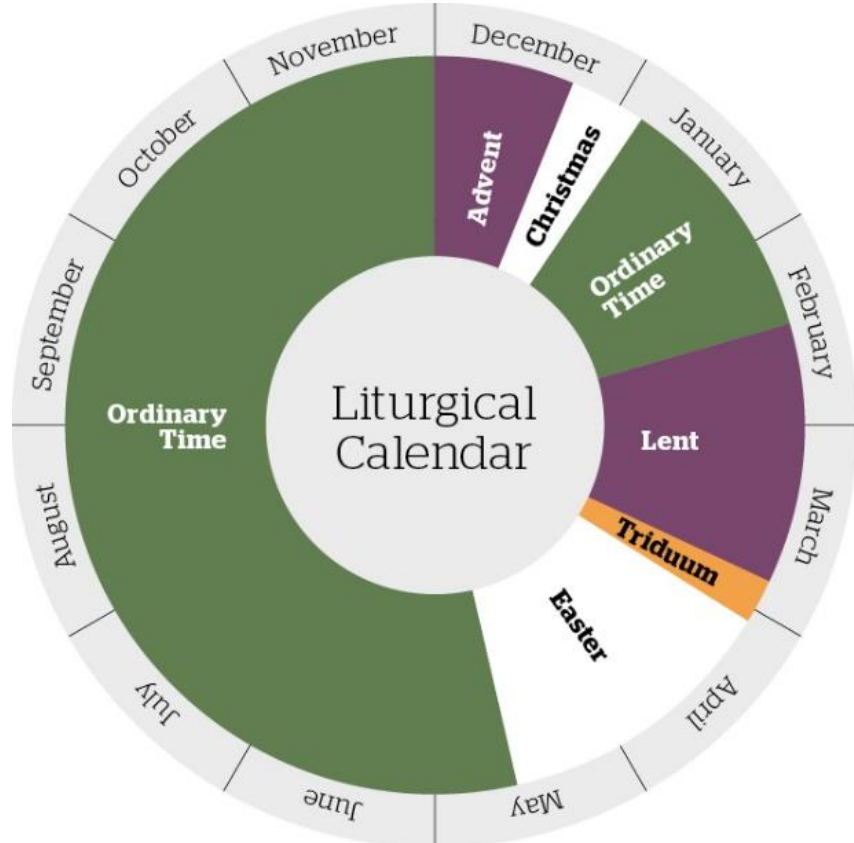
Catholic schools integrate the liturgical calendar into their academic and spiritual life in several ways such as Mass, prayer services, educational activities, charitable activities, seasonal colours used for decoration and parish events.

The liturgical calendar serves as a spiritual guide, helping Catholics to deepen their faith, grow in their understanding of the life of Christ and connect with the Church's rich tradition. It provides a sense of continuity and rhythm in the practice of the faith and serves as a means of unity for Catholics as they celebrate the same events and seasons throughout the year.





Liturgical seasons



Different colours are used to indicate the season or feast that is being celebrated at a certain time of year – these colours are worn by the priest and used to decorate the church and prayer spaces according to the season.

Advent	Purple
Christmas	White or gold
Lent	Purple
Easter	White or gold
Ordinary Time	Green

Holy days of obligation are special occasions on which Catholics are obliged to attend Mass on the day. As well as every Sunday of the year, there are two holy days of obligation in Australia: Christmas Day (25 December) and the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (15 August).

Lent

- Lent serves as a time for Christians to repair their relationship with God, deepening their spirituality, preparing for Easter, and engaging in acts of charity and self-discipline as they journey through this sacred season.
- Shrove Tuesday: The day before Lent begins is known as Shrove Tuesday or Pancake Day. Catholic school students sometimes indulge in pancakes, often served with toppings like maple syrup, sugar, or lemon juice. The tradition of eating pancakes on this day is a way to use up rich foods before the fasting period of Lent.
- Ash Wednesday: Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which marks the start of the 40-day period leading up to Easter Sunday. On this day, many Catholics attend church services where they receive ashes in the shape of a cross on their foreheads. This symbolises repentance and serves as a reminder of human mortality.



Easter

- Easter is a 'moveable feast'; it falls on the first Sunday after the full Moon that occurs on or after the Spring equinox. If the full Moon falls on a Sunday then Easter is the next Sunday.
- The Paschal Triduum are the three most sacred days of Easter for Catholics: Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil on Saturday. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is known as the Paschal Mystery or the Passion of Christ.
- Schools will often hold a Holy Week Liturgy to tell the story of the events in the lead up to the most significant time of the Christian calendar, Easter.





Advent

Advent, the season of preparation leading up to Christmas, holds special significance for Catholics in Australia. Advent customs and traditions in Australia help Catholics to prepare both spiritually and culturally for the joyous celebration of Christmas. They foster a sense of anticipation, reflection, and communal worship during this sacred season.

Advent wreaths: Many Catholic families in Australia have an Advent wreath in their homes. It typically consists of a green wreath with four candles, one of which is lit on each of the four Sundays leading up to Christmas:

- First Sunday of Advent: Hope, candle colour: purple
- Second Sunday of Advent: Peace, candle colour: purple
- Third Sunday of Advent: Joy, candle colour: pink
- Fourth Sunday of Advent: Love, candle colour: purple
- The fifth candle, often white, is the Christ Candle and is lit on Christmas Day.





Praying

- When you have a relationship with someone, you want to spend time with them. Sometimes that means just being around them. Other times, it's having a conversation with words. The relationship between Catholics and God works like this too. Prayer is how Catholics talk to God, but praying is for everyone. It can be through traditional prayers in church, or just a peaceful moment to stop and reflect on your day and be grateful for the gifts you have been blessed with.
- People pray to give God thanks, to ask for help, to ask for forgiveness and to tell Him how much they love Him. Depending on the school, your child may start each day or lesson with a prayer.
- You can pray anywhere, but sometimes setting up a special sacred place that is quiet and beautiful, with some lovely objects, where you can light a candle and perhaps play soft music, can help you focus on God and create a beautiful spiritual experience.



Some traditional prayers

The Lord's Prayer (Our Father)

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive
those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

(Priest says: Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil...)

*For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours now and for ever.*

Amen

Hail Mary

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with
thee; blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,
Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray
for us sinners, now and at the hour of
our death.*

Amen.

Glory Be

*Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and
to the Holy Spirit, as it was, is now, and
ever shall be, world without end.*

Amen.

Following are some of the main prayers said at Catholic Mass.

- The Kyrie
- Gloria
- Apostle's Creed
- Nicene Creed
- The Eucharistic Prayer
- The Sanctus
- The Lord's Prayer (Our Father)



<https://www.cbsp.catholic.edu.au/our-catholic-faith-handbook>

<https://armidale.catholic.org.au/family-resources/>

<https://www.bbcatholic.org.au/mission/life-marriage-and-family/supporting-our-families>

<https://www.lism.catholic.edu.au/faith-family>

<chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://stagneparish.org.au/education/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2020/02/parent-assembly-brochure.pdf>

<https://www.mn.catholic.org.au/church-mission/catholic-life/faith-formation/faith-formation-resources/>

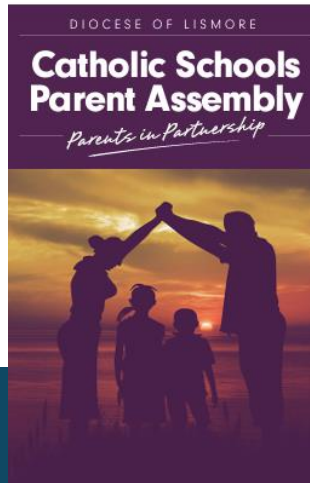
<https://www.cdsale.org.au/news/let-s-connect-a-resource-for-families-in-the-diocese-of-sale#:~:text=Sale%20Diocesan%20Assembly.-,LET'S%20CONNECT!,stages%20on%20their%20faith%20journey.>

<https://www.catholic.au/s/article/Free-faith-resources>

<https://cgcatholic.org.au/faith-resources/marriage-family-and-relationship-resources/>

<https://www.dow.catholic.edu.au/student-experience/faith-formation/living-catholicity>

Links to family faith resources



Our Catholic Faith
A HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES OF
STUDENTS IN NSW/ACT CATHOLIC SCHOOLS



Thank you!