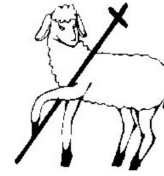


ST AGNES  
LONGSIGHT



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND



ST AGNES  
LONGSIGHT

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Leading Intercessions at the Eucharist

## From the Parish Priest

Thank you for offering to lead the prayers of the faithful during our celebration of the Eucharist.

It is of course a very important part of the service and one which helps to connect the realities of the community and world outside, the problems and joys of our lives, with the reality of the saving power of Jesus Christ which is made real and present in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood on the altar.

It is for the world outside, and for the ordinary and God-given daily lives of the people mentioned in our intercessions, that Jesus Christ offered himself to God our Father as a living sacrifice. The sacrifice of the Eucharist we celebrate in this church is a sharing in that same sacrifice of Christ: the people we pray for are the people Christ died for and the people he died for are the people we pray for. That is why we pray for the world, the Church, the sick, the dying – both ourselves and others.

Hopefully these notes will help you with preparing for this 'ministry of prayer'. If you need any further help or advice, or have any questions, please ask.

Fr Stephen

said here about gender is of course also true of race, age, disability, sexual orientation and marital status.

- Following on from this, avoid stereotypes or words and phrases which are derogatory or judgemental in any way. All people are children of God, made in his image and infinitely valued by God. They deserve the same from us when we undertake the privilege of praying for them.

## On the day itself

- Arrive at the lectern (or wherever the Intercessions are being led from) in good time. Do not run or rush to be there! It is better for there to be a period of silent waiting than a rushed confusion.
- Place your prepared notes on the lectern carefully. Please try not to let them scrape against the microphone! Although you may not hear it, everyone else does – and loudly! The same when you are turning pages or sheets of paper: please remember that the microphone is sensitive.
- Before you begin, wait for everyone to settle. Five seconds of silence may seem a long time to you stood at the lectern but it really helps people to start their time of prayer.
- Speak clearly, slowly and at a normal volume. Do not be afraid to leave time for silence.
- Don't be tempted to add an extra petition unless you are perfectly prepared. It is better to leave something out than to panic and insert a last minute prayer. Remember that God knows the intentions of our hearts and does not need to hear all of the words all of the time.

church at that time. Prayer is an encounter with God and we all need to feel safe if we are to truly talk to God as Abba, Father. Although it is important for our prayers to inspire us, challenge us and enlighten us we must always be sensitive to the position of other people. Do not force your opinions on other people.

Therefore:

- avoid extreme theological viewpoints – they may be normal for you but shocking for others. Bring them to a discussion group, a Bible study or Lent group – they could form an excellent and inspiring theme for a group, but not in the middle of a Eucharist!
- avoid archaic or quaint words. Beautiful and well known phrases from the past and from the Church's history are good, they help us connect with the living tradition of faith, but choosing old fashioned words unnecessarily only turns our act of worship into just an act. Use ordinary everyday language but in an extraordinary and inspiring way.
- use inclusive language. 'Mankind' may mean men and women to you, but to many people it does not and is offensive. Similarly, 'brothers' refers only to men. Instead use 'brothers and sisters' or 'sisters and brothers'. The 'man in the street' is just as likely –if not more likely - to be a woman.

This has been a thorny issue but shouldn't be: it is only thorny when both extremes fail to meet. No-one expects 'manhole cover' to become 'personhole cover', and no-one would describe Jesus as the Son of Person instead of Son of Man. Always choose natural, sensible alternatives if you cannot simply change the wording. What has been

In the Intercessions (or the Prayer of the Faithful as they are also called), the people respond in a certain way to the Word of God which they have listened to and welcomed in faith. The whole congregation exercise the office of their baptismal priesthood, by offering prayers to God for the salvation of all. It is right that such a prayer be included at all Eucharists.

Because "the joy and hope, the struggle and anguish of the people of this age and especially of the poor and those suffering in any way are the joy and hope, the struggle and anguish of Christ's disciples," the Church prays not just for its own needs but for the salvation of the world, for civil authorities, for those oppressed by any burden, and for the local community, particularly those who are sick or who have died.

Even though the intercessions may be quite particular in content, they should always look beyond the concerns of the local assembly to the needs of the whole Church and of the wider world. They are a sign of the communion of the particular assembly with all other assemblies and with the universal Church.

As a rule, the series of intentions is to be:

- a. for the needs of the Church;
- b. for public authorities and the salvation of the whole world;
- c. for those burdened by any kind of difficulty;
- d. for the local community.

Nevertheless, in a particular celebration, such as Confirmation, Marriage or a Funeral, the series of intentions may reflect more closely the particular occasion.

## Preparing Intercessions

- Start by reading the set lessons for the day (see rota). As you read through them you may well find that they will spark off thoughts of your own.
- Read through the newspapers and listen to the TV and radio news before you write; try to include important events in your prayers.
- Before you begin to write decide whether you are going to be addressing God or the people - and don't mix the two forms during the prayers. It is usually easier to write the petitions addressed to the people.

When speaking to the PEOPLE use expressions like “Let us pray for.../We pray for.../Let us pray to God for...”

When addressing GOD you can use a variety of titles, such as “Almighty God”, “Father”, (“Mother”?), “Loving God”, “Lord”, etc. If you choose to address God then stay with the same person of the Trinity – Father, Son or Holy Spirit. It is usual to pray to the Father but on occasion it may be more appropriate to direct our prayers to the Spirit or to Jesus.

- Two alternative responses are printed on the guide sheet; delete the one you are NOT using that day!

You could always invent new ones if you wish – if you do make sure you give a clear example at the beginning.

For example: for a response such as,

Lord of life  
**Hear our prayer**

you could inform the congregation by saying, ‘*The response to ‘Lord of life’ is ‘Hear our prayer’.* And then repeat it, ‘*Lord of life’* hoping that the people respond with ‘*Hear our prayer!*’

- Allow a time of silence in each section before you say “Lord, in your mercy...” or whatever you are using. Silence between petitions is often more useful than too many wordy petitions! Remember you are inviting people to pray to God: you are directing their prayer time. Give them time to actually pray!
- Don't worry! We are NOT looking for beautiful English essays; what we DO want are your ideas and suggestions for prayer. The best prayers are those which make other people think and pray with you; **and they are usually short!**
- Don't try to pray for everything and everyone - we will get religious indigestion and God doesn't need our ‘shopping list’ style of prayer! The Intercessions should be brief and to the point (sometimes they have been longer than the sermon!) and again, remember it is impossible to pray for everything. As a guide, intercessions shouldn't really take more than 4/5 minutes, including the silences.
- Intercessions are not the place for mini sermons! The petitions should be just that – petitions and guides – and not testimonies or theological explorations. You are leading the prayers on behalf of the gathered community. It is *not* the time to preach. Remember you are praying *with* the Church and not instead of the Church!
- Use your skills and your experiences in prayer. Bring in your own insights and experiences of God but remember you are also guiding the prayer time of everyone else in