

# **THE LONDON ORATORY SCHOOL**



## **The London Oratory School Prayer and Liturgy Policy 2025**

# London Oratory School Prayer and Liturgy Policy

The London Oratory School exists to form young people in the love of God, fidelity to the Catholic faith, and excellence in learning. Central to this mission is the life of prayer and worship. This Prayer and Liturgy Policy seeks to ensure that all staff share a common understanding of the place of prayer and liturgy in the school, so that pupils are consistently invited into deeper communion with God.

## 1. Introduction: The London Oratory Tradition

The London Oratory School is the school of the Oratory of St Philip in London and shares its tradition of solemn and reverent worship, characterised by the use of Latin in the liturgy, *ad orientem* celebration, traditional sacred music, and fidelity to the liturgical traditions of the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church. This particular tradition flows from the mission of St Philip Neri, the founder of the Oratory and his followers, including St John Henry Newman and Father Faber, who recognised the central importance of the Mass worthily celebrated, and who taught that prayer must always begin with the heart.

### Underlying Principles

- Sacrality: Prayer and Liturgy is God-centred, not man-centred, and always marked by deep reverence.
- Authentic Participation: participation in prayer and liturgy is primarily interior, and secondarily exterior.
- Worship: Pupils are formed as worshippers, eschewing liturgical activism.
- Silence: All staff and pupils are encouraged to grow in prayer, including silence, in union with the Church.
- Tradition: The school's prayer and liturgy reflect the Church's living tradition as embodied in the liturgical practice of the Oratory of St Philip Neri in London.

## 2. Why We Pray

The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes prayer as “a raising of one’s mind and heart to God” (CCC 2559) and “a surge of the heart” (CCC 2562). Like a heartbeat in the body, prayer is the foundation of Christian life: it teaches pupils to enter into relationship with God, deepens their love of Him, and prepares them to live the Commandments as His faithful disciples.

For our pupils and staff, prayer is:

- A daily encounter with God, the source of holiness and truth.
- A school-wide commitment to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17).
- A means of forming a living relationship with Christ through the Church’s tradition.

In the Oratorian tradition space for spontaneous individual prayer is found in opportunities for silence. “He who wishes to be perfect should have no attachment to anything but silence

and prayer.” (St Philip Neri) Interior silence allows for contemplation and for the Word of God to take root in the heart.

### **3. Why the Mass is Central**

The Second Vatican Council teaches: “The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life” (Lumen Gentium 11). For this reason, the Mass is the heart of the school’s prayer and liturgy. The faithful are called to a “full, conscious, and active participation” in the liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium 14), which reaches its highest expression in the devout and worthy reception of Holy Communion (Sacrosanctum Concilium 55; Sacramentum Caritatis 55).

#### ***Signs of this Centrality***

At the London Oratory School, celebration of Mass includes the use of Latin, is celebrated *ad orientem* and assisted with the traditional music of the Church. Holy Communion is received kneeling at the altar rail and encouraged to be received on the tongue, in continuity with the Church’s tradition. These practices emphasise the centrality and holiness of Holy Communion and assist in full and active participation.

At the London Oratory School, participation is not understood as multiplying external roles but as fostering the interior disposition by which staff and pupils unite themselves with Christ’s sacrifice. “Active participation does not mean doing something, but being drawn into and sharing in Christ’s action” (Sacramentum Caritatis 52).

### **4. Participation in the Liturgy**

#### **a) Mass**

- Interior first: True participation begins with the heart: attention, prayer, silence, and interior union with Christ.
- Exterior expression: Singing, responses, and gestures such as kneeling are important in the service of true interior participation.
- Highest form: Reception of Holy Communion is the most perfect participation in the Mass, when properly disposed.

Thus, while pupils are encouraged to pray and to contribute to the liturgy through attentive listening, singing, and silence, the school deliberately avoids turning the Mass into an “activist” exercise of distributing roles.

#### **b) Prayer**

- Interior prayer of the heart begins with silence and recollection.
- Vocal prayers inform the Catholic mind and give voice to the prayer of the heart.
- Praying in common with others reminds pupils of their part in a broader community of faith which is the Catholic Church.
- Extra-liturgical prayer is best oriented towards the Liturgy (e.g. the Feasts and Seasons of the Church) and with reference to the needs of the Church and the world.

## **5. Preparation for Mass**

Authentic participation requires authentic preparation:

- Remote preparation: A Christian life lived according to Faith, Hope, and Charity, with prayer, and supported by the Sacrament of Confession (available weekly in school and regularly in parishes).
- Proximate preparation: Recollection, silence, and prayer immediately before Mass. This ensures that staff and pupils are ready to participate fruitfully in the Sacred Mysteries.
- Certain pupils are chosen to serve as Sacristans, and Altar Servers, and Readers, when opportune.

## **6. Daily and Seasonal Prayer in the School**

Prayer is woven into the life of the school:

- Daily prayers in class, chapel, and church.
- Weekly opportunities: Rosary (Thursdays), School Mass (Fridays), Confession (Fridays), Benediction (Fridays).
- Termly: Class Masses in the chapel; Friday Benediction for each pupil once per term.
- Whole-School Masses in the Oratory Church twice a term.
- Liturgical seasons respected with particular practices (e.g. Stations of the Cross in Lent).

The chapel is open each school day for private prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

## **7. Relationship with Parish Life**

The school chaplaincy complements, but does not replace, the life of the parish to which each pupil and staff member belongs. Chaplains are available to pupils and staff, but pupils are also referred to their own parish priests for the ongoing life of faith.

Though The London Oratory School is situated in Fulham the School is in primary relationship with the parish of the London Oratory. The School is conscious that many staff and pupils live in a diverse range of parishes outside the parish of the London Oratory.

## **8. Role of Staff**

All staff, regardless of personal belief, are expected to:

- Respect the Catholic ethos of the school.
- Encourage pupils to take prayer seriously and maintain an atmosphere of reverence at prayer, in chapel, and at Mass.
- Give good example of respectful participation during prayer and liturgy.

Catholic staff are particularly encouraged to make use of the Sacraments and join the prayer life of the school, witnessing to their faith and growing in it.