



Prayer and Liturgy Policy

Thornton College is a living Christian community in the Catholic tradition and as such, prayer and liturgy are central to the life of our school. We value the continual prayer of the Sisters of Jesus and Mary for us, and among us and endeavour to ensure that prayer remains at the heart of our school community. Considering our school mission statement, our JM preference to create spaces to experience an encounter with God, and our JM commitment to the Global Compact on Education we understand the prayer and liturgy in our school aims to provide opportunity for all students and staff:

This policy is informed by To love You more dearly: The Prayer & Liturgy Directory for Catholic Schools, Academies and Colleges in England and Wales (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 2023), whose requirements took effect from 1 September 2025, together with relevant guidance from the Diocese of Northampton. Thornton College is an independent Catholic school; daily prayer and opportunities for liturgy are provided as an integral expression of the school's Catholic foundation, governing arrangements and published ethos, and support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development under the Independent School Standards. Prayer and liturgy do not replace curriculum time allocated to Religious Education.

- To contemplate the mystery of God
- To reflect on spiritual and moral issues
- To explore their own beliefs
- To respond to and celebrate life
- To experience a sense of belonging and develop community spirit
- To enrich religious experience
- To develop a common ethos and shared values
- To grow in liturgical understanding and development
- To take time out to 'wonder at', 'come to terms with' and 'to give worth to.'
- To reinforce prayers which are part of the Catholic tradition.

Meaning of key terms:

In this policy, prayer means raising the heart and mind to God; a celebration of the word is a structured gathering centred on Sacred Scripture; and liturgy means the public worship of the Church, including Mass and the sacraments. An assembly may include prayer or a celebration of the word, but is not automatically an act of prayer or liturgy.

The real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is at the heart of our school. In all our JM houses worldwide, we have a chapel where all can find a sacred space in communal prayer as well as in personal worship. It is always open to those who want to find a haven of peace in the midst of a busy and challenging life.

As a result, prayer and liturgy at Thornton College are more than expectation. They are an integral part of school life and central to the Catholic tradition.

We:

- Pray with students at the beginning and end of each day
- Help students to reflect
- Celebrate prayer and learning through assemblies
- Participate in prayer as a staff

- Share with students in liturgical celebrations, including the Eucharist
- Celebrate Harvest Festival with the community, including parents
- Invite parents into school to pray at our Parent Prayer services

Prayer, worship, and liturgical celebration are central to the Catholic tradition. We recognise that at Thornton we have students and staff from other Christian traditions and other faiths, as well as no faith and we seek to be sensitive to their views, respectful of their gifts and mindful of their needs, but we also want to offer them an opportunity to understand why prayer and worship is important to Catholics. Individuals should not feel compelled to respond to collective worship in a particular way. A wide range of responses should be possible including awareness, appreciation, respect, commitment and devotion.

Our prayer can take various forms. It is led by staff or students in class groups, form groups, Houses or formal assemblies, where we meet as a whole school or separately, as Seniors and Prep. The “Tutor Group Prayer Book”, theme of the week biblical quote and other prayer resources exist to help with prayer for Assembly and for morning and end of the day prayer.

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We come together to celebrate the Eucharist and for other non-sacramental prayer and liturgies. We encourage the active participation of all concerned and involve staff and students in preparation, according to their age, capacity and formation. Staff are expected to attend assemblies and other services as appropriate to their role and to model prayerful and respectful participation.

Annual Plan of Provision:

The Head of RE, acting as the Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator, will maintain an Annual Plan of Provision, alongside the Head of RE in the Prep. This will set out the daily, weekly and annual pattern of prayer and liturgy across EYFS, Prep, Senior School, Sixth Form and boarding; the liturgical seasons and significant celebrations; Masses and opportunities for Reconciliation; student and staff leadership; responsible persons; resources; formation; and arrangements for monitoring and evaluation. Daily prayer will be appropriate to pupils’ age and ability. Students will receive progressive opportunities and formation to prepare, lead, serve, participate in and evaluate prayer and liturgy, and will become familiar with the age-related repertoire of common Catholic prayers identified in the Directory.

Monitoring of prayer and liturgy:

- The Head of RE, as Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator, will meet with the link governor for Catholic life, mission, prayer and liturgy and the Headteacher at least annually to evaluate whether provision meets the needs of all students and whether students are making progress in organising, leading and participating in prayer and liturgy.
- New staff will receive induction into the school’s Catholic life and expectations for prayer and liturgy. Staff will be supported through appropriate resources and regular formation or CPD, including whole-staff formation at least annually and additional support for those who lead prayer and liturgy.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy will take place regularly and at least annually. It will draw, as appropriate, on student, staff, parent, clergy and governor feedback; observations; pupil progression and leadership; the Annual Plan of Provision; resources; inclusion; and liturgical appropriateness.

Findings and actions will be reported to the Headteacher and governors and will inform the next Annual Plan.

Responsibilities and resourcing:

Governors are guardians of the school's Catholic life and mission and ensure that this policy is reviewed, provision is appropriately resourced and the requirements of the Prayer and Liturgy Directory and diocesan guidance are followed. The Headteacher provides spiritual leadership and works with the Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator. The Coordinator plans provision, supports staff and students, liaises with clergy, parishes and the diocese, and reports on quality and impact. Appropriate budget, staff time, formation, music, texts, artefacts, chapel provision and prayer spaces will reflect the centrality of prayer and liturgy to the school.

Health and Safety:

- Battery operated candles are used in classrooms and the chapel for health and safety reasons.
- If candles are being used in the Chapel or for the celebration of Mass, staff or parent prayer, a risk assessment is in place to ensure the effective and safe provision of lit candles. Candles are extinguished as soon as practical and never left unattended. Any use of candles by students is supervised by an adult and appropriate instructions are given.
- Visits to places of worship are carried out in compliance with the Educational Visits policy, which includes thorough risk assessments.
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All prayer, liturgy, chaplaincy and sacramental activity will follow the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Visiting clergy and external contributors will be managed through the school's safer recruitment, supervision and visiting-speaker procedures.

Key reference documents:

- To love You more dearly: The Prayer & Liturgy Directory for Catholic Schools, Academies and Colleges in England and Wales (2023).
- Catholic Schools Inspectorate Inspection Handbook and associated prayer and liturgy evidence materials (current version).
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended, and relevant guidance of the Diocese of Northampton.