Marymount
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL LONDON

Prayer and Liturgy Policy

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1. Mission and Vision Statements

Mission Statement

Marymount International School London is an independent, Catholic, all-girls, IB world school that empowers young women to be "firm in faith, vibrant in hope, rooted in love and one in service". Marymount students question, challenge and contribute meaningfully as intellectual and compassionate global citizens.

Vision Statement

'That All May Have Life' (John 10:10)

This vision, rooted in the charism of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary (RSHM), calls us to fullness of life for all people and all creation.

2. Our Charism and Context

"The celebration of Catholic liturgies and prayers as an integral part of the learning and teaching should enable the school community to become reflective, experience the presence of God and should develop a mature spiritual life." (Rt Rev. Marcus Stock (2012), *Christ at the Centre*, Catholic Truth Society, 23.)

This prayer and liturgy policy is commensurate with *To Love You More Dearly* (Prayer and Liturgy Directory) approved by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, October 2023. The longstanding practice of the school is for worship and prayer to take place regularly in the charism and spirit of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary (RSHM).

Parents are informed that their children are encouraged but not compelled to participate in worship, and the importance of prayer and liturgy in a Catholic school is emphasized. The law recognizes and respects that parents have the legal right to withdraw their children up to the age of 16 from prayer and liturgy (School Standards and Framework Act 1998, s.71(1A)). Students in the sixth form can choose to withdraw themselves from prayer and liturgy (School Standards and Framework Act 1998, s.71(1B)).

3. A Catholic School in the RSHM Tradition

Marymount International School London was founded in 1955 by the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary (RSHM). Guided by our RSHM charism, our guiding principle is for prayer and liturgy to remain both Catholic and rooted in the RSHM tradition. Within such a framework, which is intentionally universal and hospitable to all, every member of our community is included in opportunities for prayer and reflection. Additionally, missionary outreach and servant leadership are fruits of prayer and liturgy, inspiring service in our world.

The school's provision for prayer and liturgy fulfils the pupils' entitlement to experience the range of liturgical treasures of the Church, including a shared repertoire of prayers and liturgical music with which pupils in the school will be familiar.

Prayer and liturgy are not designated curriculum time. In the context of the Catholic school, this means that times of prayer and liturgy are not considered to be part of the allocation of curriculum time for Religious Education.

4. Our RSHM Heritage

Our spirituality and charism as a school community is inseparable from our foundation as an RSHM school. We are stewards and beneficiaries of the RSHM tradition of education founded by Jean Gailhac in 1849 in Béziers, France. The RSHM congregation was established to serve those most in need, particularly young women, and to enable them to have fullness of life.

The RSHM charism is characterized by:

- A deep love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and devotion to Mary
- Commitment to the dignity and potential of every person
- Preferential option for those who are marginalized or disadvantaged
- Education that liberates and empowers
- Building inclusive, international communities
- Contemplative engagement with the world

Our school objectives reflect this heritage, committing the faculty and staff to:

- Encourage each student to understand, live and bear witness to her faith and to deepen her love of and relationship with God
- Help students to love each other, respect each other's beliefs, develop qualities of forgiveness and a joyful sharing of life
- Develop in each student a sense of personal integrity, inner reflection, and responsibility for her own actions
- Cultivate in each student an informed awareness and appreciation of all God's creation
- Stimulate students to think independently, critically and without prejudice
- Instill a lifelong love of learning and inculcate in students the qualities of scholarship, character, service and leadership
- Encourage in students a social consciousness and global awareness which elicit a sensitive and active response to justice and human need in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Focus on the cultural and international diversity within the School as a forum for understanding and cooperation

5. RSHM Core Values: "That All May Have Life"

The RSHM mission statement, "That all may have life" (John 10:10), is central to our school's vision. The person of Jesus Christ is at the heart of RSHM spirituality. Christ is encountered in prayer, in the Eucharist, in Scripture, in service to others, and in the beauty of creation. Our vision remains evident in our encounter with Christ's real presence in Word, Sacrament, and

Service. That encounter with Christ is lived in our professional relationships as a learning community, as colleagues and educators.

The RSHM spirit is characterized by five core values that permeate all aspects of school life:

- **Faith** - Firm in faith, rooted in relationship with God
- **Hope** - Vibrant in hope, trusting in God's providence
- **Love** - Rooted in love, responding to God's love with compassion
- **Unity** - One in service, building inclusive community
- **Justice** - Committed to dignity and rights of all people

These values shape our approach to prayer and liturgy, calling us to:

- Encounter God in contemplative prayer and active service
- Celebrate our diverse, international community
- Respond to the needs of others, especially those who are marginalized
- Nurture each person's gifts and potential
- Build bridges of understanding across cultures and faiths

6. Responsibility

(a) Governance

- The governors, as guardians of the Catholic school's life and mission, have a responsibility to ensure that:
- Prayer and liturgy are central to the Catholic life of the school and therefore are in line with the guidance set out by the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*
- There is a named person(s) who is responsible for prayer and liturgy in the school (the Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator/Director of Spiritual Life)
- The prayer and liturgy policy is updated regularly and shared with all stakeholders
- There is a budget for prayer and liturgy that reflects its centrality to the life of a Catholic school

(b) Headteacher

The headteacher, as the spiritual leader of the school as a Catholic community, ensures that:

- Prayer and liturgy are central to the Catholic life of the school and therefore are in line with the guidance set out by the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*
- They work in partnership with the leader for prayer and liturgy

- Those responsible for prayer and liturgy in the school have been given appropriate training and formation to ensure that all guidance is followed and adhered to
- There are suitable resources for prayer and liturgy in the school

(c) Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator (Director of Spiritual Life)

Those responsible for prayer and liturgy ensure that:

- Prayer and liturgy are central to the Catholic life of the school and therefore are in line with the guidance set out by the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*
- There is an Annual Plan of Provision for prayer and liturgy across the school year which identifies liturgical seasons and key celebrations, as well as opportunities for the celebration of the Sacraments
- There is daily planned prayer for all pupils, appropriate to age and ability, as outlined in the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory, t*his includes individual prayer and reflection journals.
- Pupils are supported in their liturgical formation to take an active role, in the planning, preparation, and delivery of prayer and liturgy according to their age and capacity, and in a manner which facilitates their progressive participation
- Resources to support the planning of prayer and liturgy are appropriate and readily available to staff and pupils
- Induction on prayer, liturgy and the RSHM heritage of the school takes place for new members of staff.
- Staff have access to effective training and formation opportunities. Throughout the academic year there are CPD sessions on how to facilitate prayer with student groups.
- Monitoring and evaluation of prayer and liturgy take place regularly and feed back into planning for future liturgies. This includes collection of pupil and staff evaluations, and drop-ins to Advisor group prayer – this is supported by Heads of Year and SLT.
- Monitoring of prayer and liturgy is reported to the headteacher and governing body to support whole-school development and the Catholic life of the school
- There is collaboration with local clergy and parishes. This includes Fr James Raj local parish priest at St Ann's, Kingston.
- Liaison with the Diocesan Advisory Service and others is maintained to ensure they keep updated with best practice, along with membership of the local chaplains 'hub.

7. Overview of Prayer and Liturgy Provision

Prayer and liturgy at Marymount aim to provide opportunities for all pupils and staff to:

- Contemplate the mystery of God
- Reflect on spiritual and moral issues

- Explore personal beliefs
- Respond to and celebrate life
- Experience a sense of belonging and develop community spirit
- Develop a common ethos and shared values rooted in the RSHM charism
- Enrich religious experience
- Grow in liturgical understanding and development
- Pray using prayers which are part of the Catholic tradition and the RSHM heritage
- Reinforce positive attitudes
- Participate fully
- Marvel at God's presence, reflect on life's meaning, and honour the sacred in all

All acts of prayer at Marymount will:

- Give glory and honour to God
- Be a quality activity, fundamental to the life of the school and its Catholic character and RSHM charism
- Enable pupils to develop skills so that they can prepare, organize, and lead prayer times
- Give pupils positive liturgical experiences, appropriate to their age, aptitude, and family backgrounds to prepare them for the liturgical life of the Church
- Acts of prayer will be appropriate to the age and groupings of students.

Daily Prayer

Daily prayer includes morning prayer at the start of the school day in advisory groups and prayer at key moments throughout the day. These times of prayer incorporate traditional Catholic prayers, spontaneous prayer, reflection on Scripture, and prayers inspired by the RSHM charism.

Weekly Prayer and Liturgy

Weekly opportunities for communal prayer include all-school assemblies and grade-level/House prayers. They follow the four-part liturgical structure for Celebrations of the Word mandated by the Prayer and Liturgy Directory:

1. **Gather** - Opening that brings the community together (could be a song, greeting, or opening prayer)
2. **Word (Lectio)** - Scripture reading or religious text is proclaimed
3. **Response (Meditatio/Contemplatio)** - Time to reflect on and respond to what was heard (through silence, discussion, music, prayer, or activity)
4. **Mission (Oratio)** - Sending forth with a call to action or prayer that connects the liturgy to daily life

The Eucharist (Mass): "The Source and Summit of the Christian Life"

The celebration of the Eucharist is central to the prayer and liturgy of the school. It is given priority over all other forms of prayer and occupies a central place in the life of the school. Mass is celebrated:

- At the beginning of the academic year to mark the beginning of the new school year
- As part of the Staff Retreat day
- On holy days of obligation that fall on a school day
- On significant RSHM feast days (Founder's day commemorating Jean Gailhac)
- At the end of the school year
- At other times of school and community importance
- Grade-level Masses each Semester to celebrate students' growth and development
- Sunday Mass for Boarders and others who wish to attend (in the School Chapel and at St Ann's on alternate weeks)

Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available to students at scheduled times during Advent and Lent, and by appointment throughout the year.

Campus Ministry Group

Students are invited to participate in the Campus Ministry Group, which supports the planning and leadership of prayer and liturgy across the school. This group helps students develop their liturgical formation and take active roles in preparing and delivering prayer experiences for their peers. Servers, readers and class Prayer Leaders are all part of the team.

Special Liturgical Celebrations

Throughout the year, special liturgies mark important moments in the Church's calendar and the RSHM tradition, including Advent and Christmas, Ash Wednesday and Lent, Holy Week and Easter, and RSHM heritage celebrations.

8. Planning, Content, and Celebration

Prayer and liturgy are planned following a structure with reference to the Church's seasons and liturgical calendar, the RSHM calendar and heritage, feast days, the curriculum, and significant dates (e.g., CAFOD Family Fast Day & Mass of Thanksgiving Day, Jean Gialhac's Birthday)

Parish members, parents, and other members of the community are invited to participate in some celebrations when appropriate. (Anniversary Mass, Advent Lessons & Carols, Graduation Mass, Confirmation Mass)

Students are supported in planning and leading prayer according to their age and capacity, with the Campus Ministry Group taking particular responsibility for major liturgical celebrations.

9. Resourcing

Prayer and liturgy are central to the school's understanding of itself as a Catholic school in the RSHM tradition, and this is reflected in the annual budget allocation and available resources, including staff time, chaplaincy provision, and dedicated spaces for prayer and liturgy.

The Catholic character of the school is reflected in religious artifacts and images on display throughout the building, including symbols of the RSHM heritage such as images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, representations of Mary, and references to founder Jean Gailhac.

Dedicated spaces for prayer and liturgy will be furnished and maintained as such and updated to reflect the Church's liturgical season and RSHM traditions. The school chapel serves as a focal point for prayer and celebration. There is also a Prayer Space located near the Spiritual Life Office and RE suite of rooms that is available for members of all faiths for prayer and reflection.

Staff training and formation costs will be funded separately to ensure that all staff are able to fulfil their responsibility to contribute to the prayer and liturgical life of the school.

10. Training and Formation

All new staff are supported during induction and beyond, so that they fully understand the responsibility they carry within their individual role for leading prayer and liturgy in the school, and for understanding and living out the RSHM charism.

Individual training needs are identified and addressed through training and formation. There is the opportunity for whole-staff professional development at least once a year, so that all staff understand the importance of prayer and liturgy and relevant staff are well supported to lead as required. This normally follows on from the annual staff retreat day.

Formation in the RSHM tradition will be provided for all staff, including understanding the history, charism, and spirituality of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary.

11. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy will take place regularly, and at least annually, and involve all key stakeholders: pupils, parents, staff, chaplain, clergy, and governors.

Areas for development will be identified and issues raised will be actioned and evidenced as appropriate. Monitoring will assess:

- The quality and variety of prayer experiences offered
- Student participation and engagement in prayer and liturgy
- The extent to which prayer and liturgy reflect the RSHM charism
- The integration of prayer and liturgy into the life of the school
- The impact of prayer and liturgy on the spiritual development of students and the school community

12. Review

The policy will be reviewed as part of the regular cycle of policy review conducted by the School.

Appendix 1: The Role of the Coordinator for Prayer and Liturgy (Director of Spiritual Life)

The Director of Spiritual Life/Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator is responsible for:

- Formulating a written policy for prayer and liturgy
- Ensuring that prayer and liturgy are appropriate to the age, aptitudes, and faith backgrounds of pupils
- Ensuring that prayer and liturgy take account of the religious and educational needs of all who share in it and are rooted in the principles of the 'Directory for Masses with Children'
- Organizing themes for prayer times in accordance with the liturgical calendar and RSHM heritage
- Assisting the governors and the Headteacher to carry out their legal responsibilities regarding prayer and liturgy, including withdrawal from collective worship
- Developing staff confidence and expertise (e.g., through modelling different prayer styles, planning, recording, monitoring, and evaluating)

- Maintaining and developing effective procedures and documentation
- Observing acts of prayer and liturgy and providing feedback
- Informing the Headteacher of standards and developments in prayer and liturgy
- Communicating to members of the school community the significance and content of prayer and liturgy
- Reporting to and consulting with the governors and the Headteacher regarding matters of concern and development
- Acting as consultant to colleagues
- Encouraging positive attitudes towards prayer and liturgy
- Informing newly appointed colleagues of school policy regarding prayer and liturgy, including formation in the RSHM charism
- Communicating with parents, governors, and the parish community
- Liaison with the school chaplain (if applicable)
- Liaison with the Diocesan Department for Education regarding professional development and ongoing formation
- Leading and organizing in-service training and ongoing formation for prayer and liturgy, including RSHM heritage and spirituality
- Attending appropriate in-service courses, reporting back, and leading staff training
- Keeping up to date by personal reading
- Evaluating existing resources
- Developing the resources available for prayer and liturgy.
- Managing the budget for prayer and liturgy efficiently
- Supporting and coordinating the Campus Ministry Group
- Planning and coordinating the Annual Plan of Provision for prayer and liturgy
- Ensuring opportunities for celebration of the Sacraments are provided

This policy reflects our commitment to prayer and liturgy as central to our identity as a Catholic school in the RSHM tradition, where we strive to live out our mission: "That all may have life" (John 10:10).

Approved by Board: February 2026
Next Review by SLT: February 2029