How to Lead Classroom Prayer

Pray as you can!

The disciples asked Jesus "teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

The most important thing to remember in leading children and young people in prayer is that they are closely observant of how authentic you are. Your leading of prayer needs to be genuinely yours, so as a wise Benedictine monk once said "pray as you can and do not try to pray as you cant" (Dom John Chapman).

This means don’t try to lead a ritual prayer that you feel unable to lead. Keep the prayer simple, gentle, genuine and make it a regular happening in your classroom.

Here’s a simple prayer form:
1. invite the students to be silent in God’s presence
2. begin with the Sign of the Cross
3. introduce a theme e.g. “today we pray for peace
4. use some music or silence for meditation
5. use a brief scripture or prayer verse
6. Pray for your community
7. Finish with the Sign of the Cross.

Catholic school teachers lead students in prayer

We respect the religious freedom of all our students and acknowledge that faith positions other than Catholic Christian are common among our students. Yet our essential role, standing in the long tradition of those who began our schools, is to offer ways for students to experience being close to God.

Prayer is the main means to this intimacy with their loving God. Prayer is God communicating with us, within us. Our role is to offer regular opportunities for them to open their hearts to God.

God is alive in us all anyway, but by praying we can know it.

Drasko Dizdar explains further in our Good News for Living Theological Conversations:
Prayer simply is our relationship with God become conscious, deliberate and concrete. It is more a way of being than something we ‘do’.

Some TCEO web resources to help you

Liturgical Calendar
Helps you to know if there know when seasons, feast or saint days occur.

LiturgyHelp.com
A free online resource with daily scripture and prayer resources - see TCEO website.

Sign of the Cross
Access this simple and other popular resources from the TCEO website.
Ways of involving students

When creating a habit of comfortable regular classroom prayer, make it simple and engaging of the students’ own efforts and desires.

Create a prayer space or environment

Most of our primary and many secondary classrooms have a prayer table or space. Invite students to bring a faith symbol to add to it - a rock, a shell, a plant, a feather. Importantly, ensure that your classroom has some Christian images and symbols – the crucifix, the open bible, an icon and maybe a monitor to care for them.

Teach them to love stillness, silence

Christian Meditation resources can assist you to teach kids, from the early years to College, to spend time still and silent (www.christianmeditationaustralia.org). Breathing and silent mantras ("Jesus, here with us") can help us as they did contemplatives in all ages.

Use scripture, read or sung

Each morning, why not come in and without explaining, bow to the book of the scriptures and open it to a verse, before going on with the routines.

In prayer time teach students to read scripture, introducing it as “A reading from the Word of God” and finish “The Word of the Lord.” to which all reply “Thanks be to God”.

Respond to the happening in their lives

The joys and griefs of the students in your class are delightful to God in Christ who said “let the little children come to me” (Matthew 19:14).

Children can write very simple prayers of thanks, gratitude, praise and asking, and can learn to respond:

“Dear Jesus, be with my nana who's not feeling well. Lord hear Us” to which all reply ‘Lord Hear Our Prayer’.