

# Introduction

To pray is to communicate with God. When we spend time with God in prayer, we get to know and love God at a deeper level, and we grow in our understanding of God's unconditional love for us.

Section E of the Junior Certificate RE syllabus, 'The Celebration of Faith', explores prayer, worship, and how faith is expressed through rite and ritual, sign and symbol, and by celebrating the sacraments. *Time to Pray* works as an extension of Section E in terms of the practice of faith.

There are six sections in this prayer module, corresponding to the six sections of the syllabus. Each section is divided into four parts:

## Prayers

These prayers/ meditations may be prayed at various times during the exploration of each particular part/section or used to build a prayer service.

## Prayer Services

Prayer services for the class group.

## Sacred Prayer Space

This explores the idea of building a sacred prayer space that symbolises the theme of each section. The sacred prayer space can be used as a focal point during prayer times and as a celebration of the liturgical year.

## Doodle Prayers

'Doodle prayers' involve using our creative imagination as we spend time in prayer for, and with, others.

## The Four Stages of Prayer

The four stages of prayer as described by St Teresa of Avila is a good starting point when initiating a prayer focus for each week with your class. St Teresa described the pray-er in terms of a gardener watering their garden. She described four stages in the gardener's work, and then compared these to the way in which people advance in the art of prayer (see *Know the Way*, pp. 395-6). By describing the four stages of prayer in this way, she helps us to understand that developing a prayer life takes time.

## Organising Prayer Services

It is important to assign the various parts of the prayer services to members of the class before each service begins.

## Creating a Sacred Prayer Space

It is very worthwhile to set up a sacred prayer space in your school. This space can be full of detail or consist simply of one or two items that symbolise the work that has been explored in class. The different lesson introductions in *Know the Way* may help you to come up with ideas for your prayer space. It can be located in the oratory, the prayer room, the RE room, the assembly hall or even in the entrance hall. Try not to confine it to a small corner or to a place that has very little traffic. Think of the sacred prayer space in terms of a web page that has to be updated regularly. If it is a space that changes and grows, it will arouse curiosity and capture the imagination in a more vivid light. In this way, it can serve as an effective means of celebrating and making visible the syllabus sections covered, the liturgical calendar and the natural rhythms of the calendar year.

## Doodle Prayers

There is a 'Doodle Prayers' suggestion for each section of the syllabus. Doodle prayers work well for students of every ability. Everyone can doodle and everyone can 'colour in' – that is what 'Doodle Prayers' are all about. The only materials required are gel pens, markers or crayons (not paints, as it is difficult to doodle with paint!) and plain paper. The end product – 'a doodle prayer' – is a visual reminder of time spent in prayer for others.

## Using a Prayer Bowl

It is a good idea (if funds will allow) to have a 'prayer bowl' for each student (pray-er) or each class, which can be used at any prayer service or liturgy. A prayer bowl is a wooden bowl that fits comfortably into the palms of the hands. It has an important symbolic function: as a container for thoughts and prayers. It is a tangible symbol to be filled, held or offered, and provides a special place for students' innermost prayer requests.

Prayer bowls may be decorated with representations of each student's/class's unique characteristics and displayed in a decorative manner in the prayer room or classroom.