



On the Journey toward Communion with Christ and with one another

Part One: Prayer with the bell

The pilgrim journey of the Eucharistic Congress Bell is an opportunity for communities to come together drawn by the sound or the peal of the pilgrim Bell. Since antiquity the sound of a pealing bell has been a recognised means of communication, at times a warning that urges people to flee from pending danger and at other times inviting people to a communal gathering to receive news or perhaps to celebrate. A bell is a symbol that is both visible and audible.

For Christians the bell has long been associated with the invitation to gather, the sound being perceived as God's voice, God's call, which draws people to assemble. For early Christian Ireland the sound of the bell of St. Patrick and other great saints across the land heralded the dawn of a new and eternal day for the Irish people – called to hear the good news – Jesus Christ, the Word made Flesh – and in turn become bearers of this news to others, far and near. The image of the bell, associated today with Christmas and wedding cards, is still used to convey joy, celebration and the announcement of good news. Combined, the image and sound of the bell symbolise for us God's call to all people to gather to hear good news.

On the road the pilgrim Bell can be used to invite people to a moment of stillness – just as the Angelus bell at midday and 6pm, inviting the Christian community to pause on the journey of life, to withdraw from busy-ness for a moment, to reflect. The purpose for the Angelus Bell is to invite us to reflect on the Incarnation of Christ the Lord, the eternal Word made flesh (Jn 1:14). In addition we reflect on Mary, the Mother of God, and her response to God's invitation to be intimately involved in God's plan of salvation.

Even on the roadside those present could be invited to observe a moment of silence in the stillness that follows the pealing of the bell, remembering perhaps those who have died and gone before us; or those who are suffering – any number of circumstances could be named; or

perhaps they could be invited to be mindful of family or friends in need; or they could be invited to call to mind something or someone in their lives for who they are grateful. The phenomenon of silence observed together is a powerful witness and expression of communion and solidarity in contemporary living, and the passing of the Congress Bell might be an opportunity for such moments of profound presence.

The ringing of the Congress Bell will cause gatherings that are spontaneous and informal, and these can also be used to invite people to gather for moments of prayer that are a little more formal. One such moment might be a vigil or gathering for prayer at the close of the day.

Whilst it is envisaged that the Bell would be *present* at the prayer vigil, the Bell itself is not the object of prayer, merely the means by which God's people were invited to gather. The prayer itself is a gathering to celebrate a liturgy of the Word. The focus of the prayer is encounter with the living Word of God, Jesus Christ, present whenever and wherever the Community gathers – 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them', the word of Jesus in Matthew's gospel (Mt18:20) A local place of pilgrimage, the parish church, a hospital chapel, the diocesan Cathedral or some of the locations that might be chosen for the event. What matters is that this be a place conducive to reflection and in which people can hear with ease the proclamation of the Word of God.

The aim of the vigil is to gather the people of God and to reflect on the way God communicates with God's people. To assist reflection the bell is accompanied by four icons, each of which symbolises one element of the Eucharist (gathering, listening to the Word; nourishment for the journey; and mission) and corresponds to one of the four Stages of the Pastoral Preparation Programme for the Congress; (for more detail visit www.iec2012.ie and click on the Pastoral Preparation button). These are an opportunity for catechesis and reflection in connection with the stages of the programme, designed to lead us deeper into the mystery of the Eucharist – celebrated, adored and lived.

The Icons (See also the PowerPoint Presentation on Prayer with the Icons)

The icon representing Stage One is named Our Lady of Refuge. It depicts Mary, Mother of God and of the Church, standing in the company of St. John – the disciple Jesus loved, as he is called in the gospel by the same name. This gathering of Mary and John at the foot of the Cross is symbolic of the gathering of all who believe in Christ - who died and is risen. This same Christ continues today to call the community of believers to gather. Stage One invites us to pause to focus on gathering, to acknowledge the context in which we gather – the crucified Christ is unseen but present in this icon, and though Mary and John have faith, they are fully present to the suffering and pain of their reality at the foot of the cross. This perhaps speaks of the context for our pilgrimage too - aware of reality as it is, we come in expectant faith, hope and love, rediscovering and growing in confidence of the love of God, a love that expresses itself as compassion as we gather together as one community, in response to Christ's call.

Just as our pilgrimage seeks to be an authentic expression of God's presence in our midst, calling us to draw closer, so too our vigil seeks to be an authentic response to that invitation. Key to the dialogue are the choice of readings for the vigil and reflection on the icons. What follows is merely a suggestion, so feel free to adapt it to your own circumstances.

2. Prayer vigil in response to the call of the bell

The Structure of the Vigil is suggested as follows:

- Introduction
- Liturgy of the Word
 - Reflection on the Word
 - Reading the Icon
- Ritual Action
- General Intercessions
- The Lord's Prayer
- Conclusion

This reflects the normal pattern of Christian worship outside of the Mass. While this pattern is suggested, the content will change to suit the particular Stage of the pastoral journey, the current liturgical season and local concerns.

Offered in the following pages is a resource that is hoped can be used as is, or adapted to local preferences. It includes a suggestion for using the bell to call people to pray; some songs that reflect 'gathering'; scripture readings accompanied by a short reflection; suggestions for ritual action in response to having heard God's invitation to gather and suggested prayers. In addition to the Lord's prayer – the prayer par excellence – we suggest using the Eucharistic Congress Prayer, and the Congress Hymn, both of which are rich in references to the theme of the Congress and to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, the 50th anniversary of which we celebrate in 2012.

Please visit our website www.iec2012.ie and click on the Pastoral Preparation button for further updates and suggestions for prayer moments.

Introductory Rite

The assembly gathers, taking their seats.

The bell is at the door of the cathedral/church.

To begin, the Bell is rung 3 times

The assembly stands.

When the ringing has finished and silence restored

The presider announces:

Let us heed the voice of the bell (Pause)

In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

The Lord has called us to this place,

So let us gather in mind and in heart and pray for one another that our lives may be a living response to God's call to draw near, echoed in the pealing of this bell:

All pray:

Gracious God, source of all life,

We praise you for your abundant blessings.

You sow your seed freely and generously among us.

You nourish, protect, sustain, and strengthen us on our journey of faith.

By our baptism you call us by name and commission us to sow your Word.

We join our hearts and voices in prayer
that every member of your Church will heed
the call to authentic Christian living and service.

Bless each of us as we respond to your call.

May we encourage and support one another
in discerning and living out our Christian vocation.

Help us foster a culture of vocation, in its many forms,
in which the seed of the Good News will bear much fruit.

We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus,
in the power of the Holy Spirit,
with your blessing now and forever. Amen

A suitable gathering song is sung. For example:

- *Gather us in* by Marty Haugen available from GIA Publications
<http://www.giamusic.com>
- *All are Welcome* by Marty Haugen available from GIA Publications
<http://www.giamusic.com>
- *Gathered as one* by Paul Tate available from World Library Publications
<http://www.wlp.jspaluch.com>
- *Song of the Body of Christ* by David Haas available from GIA Publications
<http://www.giamusic.com>

The bell is carried through the Nave of the church but not yet into the sanctuary.

All are invited to be seated (the bell bearers remain standing with the bell).

Following a brief pause for reflection, a number of readers make their way to microphones and the following are read in sequence:

- Hand bells were first used in the catacombs of Rome. Let us remember those who first believed in the Gospel and in silence renew in our hearts our own faith (pause - ring).
- In the fifth century St. Patrick rang his bell heralding a new age for Ireland and the presence of the Good news in the midst of the Irish people. In silence let us thank God for the gift of faith (pause - ring).
- In the eight century bells were first used at funerals. Let us pray for all who have died, whose faith is known to God alone. (pause - ring)
- Since the eleventh century, monastic bells have called the Christian community to gather for prayer. Let us in silence renew our pledge to respond ourselves to that call (pause - ring).
- Throughout the ages, at both religious and secular events, bells have rung in joy and in sorrow, in invitation and in warning. Let us take a moment to recall times when bells have rung for us (pause - ring).
- Bells have long been associated with music and with joy, and with the immanent beginning of something new. Let us in silence thank God for new beginnings (pause - ring).

The readers return to their seats.

The bell is placed on its plinth in a suitable place in the sanctuary, where it will be visible, though not the centre of attention. The bell is rung three times. The bell bearers are seated.

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading: 1 Kings 19:10-13

The Lord appears to Elijah

Psalm

Any of the following or a similar psalm

- *Psalm 19: Lord, You Have the Words* by David Haas available from GIA Publications <http://www.giamusic.com>
 - Psalm 19 is about celebrating the Word, and its effects in our lives. God reveals himself through his word. The psalmist gives six descriptions of the word of God.
- *Lord, Send Out Your Spirit* by Jeanne Cotter available from GIA Publications <http://www.giamusic.com>
 - Lord, Send Out Your Spirit based on Psalm 104 is used at Pentecost, inviting the Lord to send us the Spirit, and expressing our expectation.

The bell is rung 3 times

The minister who will proclaim the gospel announces:

The word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

Gospel acclamation – Speak Lord, your servant is listening

Gospel: Matt 11:25-28

Come to me all you who are weary

This Gospel speaks to the experience of Elijah many centuries previously:

The context is the discouragement of Elijah, who goes on the run to preserve his life and then begins to ask himself if it is worth bothering anymore. Elijah had felt compelled to confront his contemporaries with some home truths about the shallowness of their religious practices, among other things, which were not well received. God reaches out to Elijah in the midst of his experience of rejection, disillusionment and hopelessness, and offers him a glimpse of God's presence, an experience that revives and refreshes Elijah.

God's call to Elijah to meet in an isolated place is echoed in the invitation extended by Jesus to his disciples and to anyone seeking rest in the gospel. It is in the calm after the storm that God chooses to reveal himself. In the Hebrew Scriptures this gentle whisper is presented as 'the sound of sheer silence' and has been translated in many different ways over time. As well as being called, "a gentle whisper", it is also translated as "a still small voice" and "the soft whisper of a voice". It is a Hebrew term that is very difficult to translate into English, but it is too simple to say that Elijah experienced the presence of God in silence, which might seem to suggest that he experienced no more than an

absence of sound. The stillness is more than simply the absence of sound, just as peace is more than just the absence of war. What Elijah experienced seems to have been much more than an experience of silence. What he experienced was presence, real presence. This was the presence of something deeply still, something deeply communicative, something profoundly personal, something unique to God alone. And it empowered him to go on.

The sound of this bell may be striking on the ear, but it is in the silence that follows that we experience peace and the call to encounter God in stillness. Just as the presence of God to Elijah came in gentleness, Jesus who is gentle and humble in heart offers us rest, offers us hospitality by calling us into communion.

The stillness and the quiet are shared among us. Perhaps the bell may help us to relearn to recognise the presence, the voice of God who speaks, a voice we hear when we are still, a voice calling us to communion, with Christ and with one another. May we be reminded of God's ongoing invitation to gather and be renewed and refreshed in faith, in hope and in love.

'Come to me, all you who are weary, and I will give you rest' – the Word of the Lord.

Reading the Icon

Introduction

To most of us, the term 'icon' is not new. Some of us have been fans of figures in the world of entertainment, sport and politics to name just a few, who are often described as icons. Most of us use smart phones and computers, which have their own icons. You might say we are surrounded by icons.

That said, the icons to which we refer here are neither electronic nor cultural symbols, but belong to a rich and long tradition of faith and art. These icons are not pictures of people in the way a portrait might be – attempting to present the person, telling the viewer something of what this person was like, how they dressed, wore their hair, etc. While they do depict a person, the purpose of an icon is to facilitate an encounter, connecting the person viewing with the person being viewed. Icons in the Orthodox tradition are quasi sacramental in that they are understood to make present, as it were, what they depict.

We venerate icons and the encounter they facilitate by taking time, by being present to the one viewed. Indeed there are those who would ask who it is that views who? – feeling that they have been looked into deeply and respectfully as they looked into the other.

In order to engage in the encounter presented by the IEC2012 Icons we offer a brief introduction to how one reads an icon – decoding the colour, the figures, the purpose of empty space and the invitation to stillness within the icon itself.

Reflect on the Icons according to the Stage of the Pastoral Preparation Programme. While each icon corresponds to one of the Stages of the Pastoral Preparation Programme, they also each invite us into a spiritual communion with the person or persons in the icon.

In Stage One: Our Lady of Refuge.

The focus of our reflections throughout Stage one has been the activity of gathering, reflecting on the fact that it is Christ who gathers us, as community and for Eucharist.

This icon invites us to gather with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with John, the beloved disciple. The context for this gathering, though not evident in the icon, is the hill of Calvary and the crucifixion of the Lord. The figures of Mary and John show us a faith fully present to the suffering and pain at the foot of the cross, but open to whatever God plans to do next. It depicts expectant faith, expectant hope and expectant love. Jesus' words to Mary and John from the cross: "woman, behold your son" and to John "behold your mother" illustrate the provisions made for us in the Body of Christ – the first expression of communion and community. The gift from the cross is the Church. Through Jesus' redemptive work a new family was created, one in which all are welcome, and the family tie is faith in Christ.

Invite all to read the Icon – pause after each phrase:

View the icon,

Notice its colours, its golden heavenly context and earthy green grounded-ness.

Notice the body language of both Mary and John,

Notice the space around the figures and between them.

Look at Mary's face – serious and concerned,

Perhaps sorrowful at the loss of her son?
 Yet look at her feet, clothed in red, the colour of joy – her faith in the resurrection revealed.

Allow yourself be drawn into this gathering,
 Allow yourself join Our Lady of Refuge, mother of the Church, and
 know yourself to be, like John, ‘the disciple Jesus loved.’

Gather with them, hear God speak to you with them,
 be aware that we all gather with them.
 “Come to me all who are weary and I will give you rest.” (Mt 11:28)

Ritual Action

In response to having heard and encountered the Word of God,

(a) Venerate the Word

All are invited to come forward to venerate the Word – just as they would venerate the cross:

You are invited to process forward to venerate the Word (much as you would the Cross on Good Friday). You can touch the book with your hand, kiss it or bow touching the book with your forehead as an expression of readiness to “make a home in your heart” for Jesus, the Word made flesh, the living Christ.

The bell is rung 3 times

The presider comes forward holding the Book of the Gospels, large Bible or the Lectionary,
 standing in the centre of the sanctuary facing the assembly holding the Book open (much as one distributing Holy Communion would).

A song focused on the Word of God in our lives would be very suitable, or instrumental music.

Or (b) Distribute a Word

- Invite all forward to take one of the quotations to reflect on when they return to their seat:

You are invited to process forward and take a verse of Scripture from one of the baskets. When you return to your seat reflect on what this phrase might mean for your relationship with God, with Christ who is speaking in this place

- Ring the bell 3 times to begin the procession.
- A song focused on the Word of God in our lives would be very suitable, or instrumental music.

Stage 2 of the resources for the Pastoral Preparation programme includes a resource presenting a rich gathering of quotations from the Scriptures that refer to the voice of God, the Word of the Lord and the effect of hearing the Word of God. One suggestion is that these be printed, cut into individual quotations and placed in baskets. These baskets could be placed near the ambo. When they are to be distributed the ministers of the Word could take them and stand in distribution points (much along the way the Eucharist is distributed), and people approach and take one of the phrases.

General Intercessions:

Include prayer for the Church as we all journey into renewed awareness of the Eucharist as communion with Christ and with one another.

For the Church on its pilgrimage of faith

For the local needs of the Church and of society.

For the faithful departed

For all gathered here

The Lord's Prayer

As we pray the prayer that unites us as one family let us recall that this prayer signals the beginning of the Communion Rite during Eucharist. Mindful that we are indeed the Body of Christ, let us pray with one voice:
Our Father ...

Conclusion

As we leave this place to continue our pilgrimage we pray together the Congress Prayer:

Lord Jesus,
 You were sent by the Father
 to gather together those who are scattered.
 You came among us, doing good and bringing healing,
 announcing the Word of salvation
 and giving the Bread which lasts forever.
 Be our companion on life's pilgrim way.
 May your Holy Spirit inflame our hearts,
 enliven our hope and open our minds,
 so that together with our sisters and brothers in faith
 we may recognise you in the Scriptures
 and in the breaking of bread.
 May your Holy Spirit transform us into one body
 and lead us to walk humbly on the earth,
 in justice and love,
 as witnesses of your resurrection.
 In communion with Mary,
 whom you gave to us as our Mother
 at the foot of the cross,
 through you
 may all praise, honour and blessing be to the Father
 in the Holy Spirit and in the Church,
 Now and forever.
 Amen

Let us go to forward to bring the Good News to all whom we meet

Eucharistic Congress Hymn

Though We Are Many

Lyric, Score and mp3 available at www.iec2012.ie under Pastoral Preparation and click on Music.

Readings

The LORD Appears to Elijah

First Reading: 1 Kings 19:10-13

A reading from the First Book of Kings.

The word of the LORD came to Elijah: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁰ He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

¹¹ The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by."

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹² After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

The Word of the Lord.

Psalm

Gospel: Matthew 11: 28

At that time Jesus said, ²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."