

Unit Three SECTION G: **WORSHIP, PRAYER AND RITUAL**

PART ONE: SYMBOL, RITUAL AND SACRAMENT

Syllabus Objectives	<p><i>Knowledge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• have a knowledge of the significance of symbol and ritual in secular life, religious life, and in worship• be familiar with the processes of symbol making <p><i>Understanding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• understand that human existence is characterised by the ability to express itself and communicate by means of symbols• recognise that symbol making is a means of interpreting human experience and expressing that interpretation• be aware that ritual and worship have been part of human life from ancient times, and continue to play an important part in the lives of many people• be aware of the importance and meaning of sacrament in the worship and celebration of some Christian traditions <p><i>Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to establish links between the patterns of worship of different religious traditions• to recognise, categorise, and dialogue with secular and religious symbols <p><i>Attitudes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• critical appreciation of the power of symbols used in religious and non- religious contexts
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Topic: 1.1 Symbol

Procedure

Introduction - the nature of symbol and the relationship between symbol and experience & human beings as the symbol makers

Assignment: Pick a symbol that reflects the identity of a team, country, product etc.
Display or depict the symbol for the rest of the class.
Give students time to review the display and match the symbols with the identity of the team, country, product etc.
Identify correct and incorrect matches.

Discuss: How does the symbol reflect the identity of a team, country, product etc.?

Buzz: Give an example of how people use symbols to express love for another person?
Give an example of how people use symbols to remember the dead?
Give an example of how people use symbols to celebrate friendship?
What difficulties do you experience with language in these situations?

Take feedback and note examples of symbols on the chalkboard.

Or Present students with the following statements:

We express ourselves and generate meaning through symbol. We are 'story-telling animals'.
- Thomas Berry *The Dream of the Earth*

There is an unprecedented spiritual hunger in our times. More and more people are awakening to the inner world. A thirst and hunger for the eternal is coming alive in their souls; this is a new form of consciousness.
- John O'Donoghue, *Anam Chara*

A ritual is a communal celebration wherein people's values are revealed at their deepest level. People express in ritual that which moves them most. They celebrate, invoke, give thanks.
-Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process*

Discuss: Why do people use or make up symbols ?
What difficulties are there for people in making symbols that point to deeper realities like friendship, love etc.?

Take feedback and conclude: Human existence is characterised by the ability to create and interpret symbols. Everyday we use words and language to communicate ideas, desires, feelings and information. Words serve us well but begin to flounder when we try to speak about deeper and mysterious realities like love, death or the spiritual realm. When words lose their ability to adequately reflect human experience, symbols are used.

Symbols can communicate a reality that can be reached in no other way. Whereas a sign will convey a single piece of information symbols are multivalent opening up many meanings. A given symbol will mean different things to different people. Symbols can interpret human experience and so can affect people deeply.

the types of symbols & the power of symbolic language – in secular society – in religious traditions

Present students with a range of different types of symbols such as:

- A flag
- Letter
- Colour
- Picture
- Style of dress
- Flower

Discuss: Which of these symbols convey national identity? Why?
Which of these are personal symbols? Why?

Take feedback and conclude that -

- There are symbols that convey national identity such as a flag, colour or style of dress. National symbols can arouse strong feelings and strengthen identity.
- There are personal symbols that may only bear meaning for the individual concerned such as a letter, a picture or a place etc.

Group work: Review Sections B or C and research the symbols central to the identity of major world religions.
Make a wall chart of the symbols central to the identity of the chosen world religions and display in religion room or classroom.

Discuss: Why are these symbols associated with the chosen world religions?
How important are these symbols in the chosen world religions?

Take feedback and conclude that religious symbols can show the nature of the divine or alternatively express the believer's response to such revelation.

Read *Student Work*: The Black Madonna – Story of an Icon

Discuss: What evidence is there that The Black Madonna conveys national identity?
What evidence is there that The Black Madonna has a personal meaning for people?

Research Assignment: Produce a storyboard with information on another place or object associated with a world religion that has symbolic meaning for people today.

Outcomes:

- Explain how symbols work and how they relate to human experience
- Name three different types of symbols, giving an example of each
- Show how the ability to create symbols is a defining characteristic of being human
- Show, with an example from each, the power of symbols in contemporary secular society and in contemporary religion.

Resources which teachers have suggested include:

www.symbols.com
www.symbols.net

Topic: 1.2 Ritual

*Introduction - The meaning of ritual & types of religious ritual
- The personal and collective meanings of religious ritual
- Secular & religious ritual in contemporary culture*

Brainstorm / Discuss: What is a ritual?

Note answers on the chalkboard and conclude that a ritual is a rite that follows a set pattern using words and symbols to celebrate important events or transitions.

Review Sample Lesson Plan Junior Certificate Religious Education Section E Part 2 *Student Work:* Birthday Rituals or Rituals and complete the accompanying assignments.

Brainstorm / Discuss: Why do people have rituals?

Note answers on the chalkboard and conclude that very significant events are celebrated in ritual. The key transitions in life common to all cultures are birth, puberty / adulthood, marriage / commitment and death. In every culture we find rituals associated with the birth of a baby and the death of a person. These events are deeply personal so the individual needs help in order to interpret their meaning. Through ritual these events become communal and the participation of a community helps reinforce a particular new identity.

Review Sections B or C and present students with a variety of religious rituals associated with major world religions e.g. rite of passage etc.

Discuss: What is the set pattern of words and symbols involved in these rituals?
What important events or transitions are being celebrated in these rituals?

Review Section A Part Two Topic 2.1 Student Work: Death – Rites associated with the following World Religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism)

Or Assignment: Research the religious rituals in a major world religion today associated with the birth of a baby or the death of a person.

Take feedback on the research.

Discuss: Are there secular rituals associated with the birth of a baby or the death of a person?

Assignment: Research the secular rituals associated with the birth of a baby or the death of a person.

Take feedback on the research and conclude: One can speak of two types of ritual – religious and secular.

- Religious rituals (for example celebrating birth, marriage and death) affirm individuals as members of a faith community and deepen their relationship with others and with God.
- Secular rituals for example with a wedding in a registry office a couple gather with their family and friends to celebrate a new identity but without any reference to the transcendent/God.

Secular rituals have been observed in primitive, or pre-modern tribal communities across the world. e.g. “When General Grant came to Asyut, a frontier point in Upper Egypt, a bull was sacrificed as he disembarked. The head was placed on one side of the gangplank and the body on the other, so that Grant had to pass between them as he stepped over the spilled blood. The rite of passing between the parts of an object that has been halved, or between two branches, or under something, is one which must, in a certain number of cases, be interpreted as a direct rite of passage by means of which a person leaves one world behind him and enters a new one.”

(Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* 1908, page 19)

The study of human being in their culture has led to the identification of the different phases that are involved in ritual i.e. separation, transition and incorporation. The separation phase in a ritual is based around a symbolic act that will detach or remove participants from their ordinary or everyday and focus their minds and hearts on the reason for withdrawing, gathering etc. When the participants reach a new horizon or cross a threshold and can see things from a different perspective then they have entered into the transition phase of the ritual. This is where the change /experience /encounter that the ritual aims to bring about actually occurs. The incorporation phase helps participants return to their ordinary everyday world. It reminds participants that they are changed people now. They have been

change / empowered by the transitional phase and are strengthened to face the challenges of the ordinary world.

Group work: Organising a class-based ritual

1. Agree with the students a common theme for the ritual.
2. Divide students into three groups, with one focusing on each of the separation, transition and incorporation phases of the ritual. Each group must decide on the symbols, music, readings etc. that will be used in their phase of the ritual. Advocate to each group the use of symbol over language; encourage 'acting' rather than 'observing'; stress the need for communication with the other two groups.
3. Distribute *Student Work*: Checklist for organising a class-based ritual and give students time to complete it before participating in the ritual.

Or *Written Assignment*:

Review a religious or secular ritual you have participated in or observed and identify how it involved separation, transition and incorporation.

The positive and negative aspects of ritualism

Brainstorm / Discuss: What is ritualism?

Note answers on the chalkboard and conclude that because rituals repeat the same pattern over and over again we can speak of ritualism.

Discuss: How can ritualism be positive? How can ritualism be negative?

Take feedback and conclude with reference to the following:

- Negative - people can just get into a habit of going through the motions in a particular ritual and then it loses its meaning etc.
- Positive - by encountering the same pattern over and over again people can come to an ever-deeper understanding of the meaning behind the ritual etc.

Outcomes:

- Explain the meaning of "ritual"
- Name two different types of ritual, giving an example of each
- Differentiate between personal and collective meanings of ritual
- Explain "ritualism" and give one positive and one negative feature of ritualism
- Give an example of religious ritual in contemporary culture and explain its significance for those who participate
- Give an example of a secular ritual in contemporary culture and explain its significance for those who participate

Resources which teachers have suggested include:

LOGOS (2002) *'Communities of Faith in Ireland Today'* Dublin: Mater Dei Institute of Education CDROM and website www.logos.ie

Drumm, M. (1998) *Passage to Pasch*, Dublin: Columba Press, pp. 27-37.

Topic: 1.3 Sacrament

Introduction - sacrament as a religious concept

Discuss: How can the experiences of signs / symbols bring about a change in a person?
How can a sign / symbol reveal a deeper reality?
What is sacrament?

Note answers on the chalkboard and conclude that a religious understanding of sacraments - as signs/symbols instituted by Christ to reveal a deeper reality called grace. Grace can be viewed as a special encounter with God.

- The sacraments are religious rituals belonging to the Christian tradition whereby those participating can celebrate an identity that is determined by the life and death of Jesus Christ. Thus sacraments can function as rituals.
- Sacraments use word and symbol to reveal a deeper reality called grace. Thus sacramental symbols not only reveal a deeper reality but also participate in that reality.

the meaning of sacrament in two Christian denominations.

Discuss: Do Christian denominations have the same understanding of sacrament?

Take feedback and conclude that in the Roman Catholic tradition, the seven sacraments are understood as an encounter with Christ. By the action of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit the sacraments make present what they signify. The seven sacraments are central to the life and religious experience of Roman Catholics as it is believed that they were instituted by Christ and for this reason they are a guarantee of grace.

Within the reformed tradition, Anglicans for example underline the objective nature of God's action through the sacraments, but place a stress also on the crucial importance of faith within the individual recipient of divine grace. Anglicans have historically emphasised Holy Communion and Holy Baptism as the two 'Gospel sacraments', flowing as they do from the direct instruction of Christ himself in the Gospels.

Assignment: Research / observe a sacramental gathering in two different Christian Churches identifying their similarities and differences.

Outcomes:

1. Explain "sacrament" and its relationship to ritual and symbol
2. In the case of two Christian denominations, explain the meaning of sacrament for followers
3. Explain the function of the symbols used in each sacrament/sacramental celebration

Assessment Questions

1. Name two different types of ritual and give an example of each.
2. It is claimed that symbols have power. Explain, with one example from each, the power of symbols in contemporary secular society and in contemporary religion.
3. Give an example of secular ritual in contemporary culture and explain its importance for those who participate.

STUDENT WORK: BIRTHDAY RITUALS

1. Think of a birthday you celebrated (your own or a friend’s or a member of your family). Read the following list and in the second column put a tick beside those actions you took to celebrate that birthday:

ACTIONS	TICK	MARK X
Sent a birthday card		
Sent or received birthday wishes (“Happy Birthday”!)		
Gave or received presents		
Went fishing		
Got a birthday cake		
Had or went to a birthday party		
Blew out candles on a birthday cake		
Went to the cinema by myself		
Wore a party hat		
Sang the Birthday Song (“Happy Birthday”)		
Other (Please state)		

2. In the third column put an X beside those activities that are usually part of birthday celebrations?

3. Choose one of the activities you have marked with an X. Explain why people who are celebrating a birthday usually do this.

Sample Lesson Plan Junior Certificate Religious Education Section E Part 2

Student Work: RITUALS

At important times in their lives, people gather together and take part in rituals. Rituals can involve movements, gestures, words or dress that communicate meaning. They are bodily actions that help people express their beliefs, values, and deepest concerns. Rituals are done in a similar way every time they are performed. Shaking hands, standing to attention for the national anthem, singing the birthday song, wearing the colours of a favourite team, or the presentation of diplomas at a graduation ceremony, are all examples of ritual. They are bodily actions by which people communicate their values, beliefs and deepest concerns.

Rituals are closely connected to important events in people’s lives. Many rituals honour “firsts”. Turning the first spade of earth on a building site, cutting the ribbon during an opening ceremony are examples of “new beginning” rituals. Graduation ceremonies, weddings, and anniversaries are other important events that are characterised by ritual.

Since earliest times, rituals have been closely connected to religion and worship. Examples of religious rituals are the Sign of the Cross (Christianity), the lighting of the Sabbath candles at the beginning of the Sabbath (Judaism), wearing a garment made of seamless white cloth while on pilgrimage to Mecca ((Islam), and washing in the River Ganges (Hinduism). Religious rituals are actions that help people express something about their relationship with the divine. They are actions that help people communicate their religious beliefs and religious values. Religious rituals are done in a similar way every time they are performed

(Adapted from Celebrating Sacraments, Community of Hope & The Encyclopedia of Religion Vol. 12 - M.Eliade. Macmillan)

- Questions:* What is a ritual?
 Are there particular times when people engage in ritual? Explain
 Could religious rituals be associated with any of these times?

Assignment: 1. What meanings do the following rituals express?

ACTION:	MEANING:
Standing to attention for the national anthem	
Making the Sign of the Cross	
Lighting the Sabbath candles at the beginning of the Sabbath	
Singing “happy birthday to you....”	
Wearing a garment made of seamless white cloth while on pilgrimage to Mecca	
Receiving a diploma at a graduation ceremony	
Wearing the colours of a favourite team	

2. Which of these actions are religious rituals?
3. Explain the meaning of any one of these religious rituals.

Student Work: DEATH - RITES ASSOCIATED WITH THE FOLLOWING WORLD RELIGIONS

Buddhism

According to the teachings of Buddhism, death is not to be feared, as it is only a stepping-stone in the journey towards Nirvana. When someone dies in the Buddhist community, the body is washed carefully. It is laid in a wooden coffin and adorned with flowers. The coffin is carried in a procession to the local Sangha or temple shrine. Gifts of food are taken for the monks and nuns and offerings of flowers are prepared for puja at the shrine. In some communities, the coffin is set down in a prominent position and surrounded by all the flowers and gifts brought by family and friends. The monks and nuns lead the gathering in puja and there may be a sermon on the teachings of the Buddha on death and rebirth. Then the family prepare food and offer it to the monks and nuns. Family and friends share a meal together. The ceremony may give the impression of being more like a festival than a funeral. Friends and relatives greet each other and signs of grief are not displayed. The bereaved hope that the deceased will be reborn in a better life and progress on their journey to Nirvana. The body is later cremated and the ashes collected. Usually they are scattered into the waters of a lake or river or into the sea.

Hinduism

Hindus cremate their dead. The body returns to the elements in the form of ashes and the cremation fire ensures the release of the spirit. Sometimes the funeral pyre is built in the open air. When a Hindu dies the body is washed, anointed with sandalwood paste and dressed in clean clothes. One of the sons of the family, often the eldest, is responsible for the arrangements of the cremation. Offerings, too, are prepared including sandalwood, sweet smelling incense and ghee. The body is carried to the pyre and friends and relatives gather round. The priest may be present to recite mantras or prayers. The fire is lit and ghee is poured over the wood to ensure that it burns vigorously. Later the ashes are gathered up and scattered on the waters of the local river. Many Hindus try to take the ashes to the sacred River Ganges. It is said these holy waters can wash away bad karma and help the soul attain moksha.

Islam

In the Islamic tradition the body is buried as soon as possible after death. Muslims believe that everyone will be raised from the dead. It is for this reason that the body is not destroyed by cremation but is shown great respect. The body is washed three times as if for prayer and then all over with soap and water. It is anointed with perfume and wrapped in three pieces of white cloth. The body is then laid in a coffin on its left side. The coffin is carried to the mosque and is placed so that the body faces Makkah. Prayers are said and the first chapter of the Qur'an is repeated. The coffin is taken to the cemetery for burial. Excessive grief is discouraged as it is presumed that someone who dies as an observant Muslim will go to Paradise. To overdo mourning seems to show mistrust in God's love and mercy. Muslims believe that it is important for sons and daughters to pray for their parents after they have died, and to remember them and to visit their graves.

Judaism

When some Jews first hear of the death of a close relative they make a tear in their clothes as a sign of grief. Friends and family light a special candle in a glass holder and place it beside the dead person as a sign of respect. They stay with the body until burial. Burial of the dead is required by the orthodox tradition. Some liberal and reform communities allow cremation. The burial usually takes place within twenty-four hours of death. The body is washed and wrapped in a white shroud and put into a plain wooden coffin. There are no flowers or wreaths. Family and friends attend the service at the grave. Often women do not attend the funeral service and in Orthodox communities, women are encouraged not to. The burial ends with a prayer recited by members of the close family in praise of God and his goodness. The burial is followed by a week of solemn mourning for the close family. They stay away from work and are visited by friends and relatives bringing food so that they do not have to shop or cook. The mirrors in the house are covered. Soft shoes are worn about the house and a candle of remembrance is lit. On the anniversary of the death the family lights a candle in the synagogue and recites prayers that bless and praise the name of God.

Student Work: ‘The Black Madonna’ - Story of an Icon

This icon is in the monastery of Jasna Góra (Bright Mountain) in the city of Czestochowa, Poland. The word ‘icon’ derives from the Greek term ‘eikēnai’, meaning ‘to resemble’. An icon is a painted image of a religious figure or event. This painting depicts Mary holding the infant Jesus in her arms. The ‘Black’ of the icon’s title refers to the characteristic heavy or dark shading of this style, which has darkened further over the centuries from age and exposure to incense. Scientific tests have shown that the icon was painted around the sixth century. The icon was donated to the Jasna Góra monastery in 1384. In the fifteenth century, a dedicated shrine of stone and brick was built to house the icon, which has a rich history. The Jasna Góra monastery and its Black Madonna have drawn pilgrims for hundreds of years.

In 1430, the icon was stolen. It is thought that enemies of King Wladyslaw, the protector of the monastery at the time, were responsible for the theft. According to legend the icon grew so heavy that the thieves were unable to carry it and so had to abandon it. In frustration, they slashed the icon across the face of the Blessed Virgin, which began to bleed. Upon its recovery, it was taken to the city of Krakow to be restored. But a cut or gash across the face of the Virgin is still visible on the icon today. In 1655, the Swedes inflicted a six-week siege on the monastery. They failed to conquer it, despite having superior weapons and almost four thousand troops, compared to just two hundred and fifty Polish defenders. In 1717, The Black Madonna was crowned Queen of Poland, in an attempt to generate patriotism and restore the country after Russian attack. Jasna Góra was the scene of yet another heroic defence in 1770, again from Russian force. In the formal partitioning of Poland Czestochowa was annexed by Prussia and served as a frontier fortress of the Russian Empire for more than a century. After World War I, Czestochowa was incorporated into the new Polish state and after World War II, it developed into a model communist city, but Jasna Góra became a major focus of opposition to the communist regime. It promoted a pilgrimage as a display of patriotism and passive resistance. Poland’s history has seen attack from Sweden, Russia and Germany. Each of these enemies has tried to destroy Jasna Góra, laying siege to it, but without success on any occasion. These encounters have added to the icon’s reputation. A gold rose lies at the foot of the icon today which was a gift given by Pope John Paul II after his survival of an assassination attempt. The icon today is housed in a separate church, the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin, in Jasna Góra. Much of the time, the icon is out of view, concealed behind a screen. Each raising and lowering of the screen is accompanied by a solemn brass band fanfare, the band members hidden from the pilgrims. When the icon is on show, the painting in its entirety is still not visible, as the Madonna and Child are both dressed in crowns and robes made from diamonds and rubies. Pilgrims adore the image on bended knee. The walls of the chapel where it is housed are adorned with tokens, ranging from medals and pieces of cloth to artificial limbs, symbols of the trust placed in this icon. Many people make the journey to Jasna Góra annually, travelling on foot, even from hundreds of miles away. Reproductions of the icon can be seen all across Poland, in homes, churches and public places. Many people even have shrines in their gardens housing replicas of The Black Madonna.

Questions:

What evidence is there in this article that The Black Madonna conveys national identity?

Why evidence is there in this article that The Black Madonna has a personal meaning for people?

Student Work: Checklist for organising a class-based ritual

○ Before you begin make sure that every member of your group is certain of what their phase of the ritual is about and what they want to achieve within that phase.

○ Not every phase needs a song and a reading and a visual symbol etc. Choose **one** of these rather than all three. There should be space for personal reflection in each ritual phase. Don’t overload people with content, or they will not have time to process it in their minds / hearts.

○ Make sure that there is a sense of ‘difference’ about the room /space /venue for the ritual. It cannot retain its ordinary atmosphere. It has to signal that something out-of-the-ordinary will occur here.

○ Make sure you know who’s doing what and when in your phase. Provide any materials that participants will need for your phase e.g. If they will be asked to write, they will need pens and paper.

○ Make sure that all of the content for the ritual relates to the chosen theme. Content should not be over-explained. Remember, the value of symbols is that they can say something very different yet very meaningful to every person present.

○ Ritual is a communal, group event. Everybody is a participant, nobody is a spectator. Do not include anything in your phase that you will not be happy to do yourself. Everybody should feel able to participate whenever the group is asked to do something.