



Are you someone who attends the 9:30 or 11:15 Mass? If so, you have contributed to the children's sense of belonging to their parish community. You have acknowledged the importance of their presence at Mass by encouraging our young parishioners to attend the **Liturgy of the Word for Children**. Our ritual song, *An Invitation to the Word*, by Fr. James Marichonda, O.P. has become a familiar expression of worship for us:

*Let the children hear the Word of God,
Let the children hear God's Word.
With the blessings and prayers and love of His Church,
Let the children hear the Word.*

As trained facilitators lead the children in procession to the chapel; the children experience the community's warmth as they hear everyone sing about the grace God's Word is for all of us:

*Let us all now ponder the living Word,
as the Scriptures are proclaimed,
that united in love as one family,
we become the Word we hear.*

Have you been curious about the particulars of the liturgy of the Word for children once the kids are blessed and sent on their way? You are always welcome to venture into the chapel with your child, grandchild, niece, nephew, or younger cousin, especially if it's the child's first time to attend as well.

If children are a part of your life, it's likely you've asked yourself a question discussed in this article about the children's liturgy. Hopefully, my answers to these important questions will continue to clarify the mission and vision of this year round, parish program.

Q: Why have a Liturgy of the Word for children?

A: In 1973, the Congregation for Divine Worship wrote a document called the **Directory for Masses with Children**, which offers guidelines for adapting the liturgy so children may take a more active and conscious part as members of the assembly.

Q: Do the facilitators use a children's Bible?

A: We use the Children's Lectionary that is similar in format to the lectionary used for adults at Mass. The translation remains faithful to the original meaning of the biblical text while also making sure the language is easier for children to understand. Use of their lectionary allows children to be drawn into their worship experience.

Q: How old do you have to be to attend the children's liturgy?

A: The guidelines suggest a mixed age group of children in their elementary years, but remain flexible for pastoral reasons. Some children are ready to remain in church with their parents soon after their preparation and reception of their First Communion. However, it's acceptable for children in Grades 3, 4, and 5 to continue to attend the service. When they attend, we're meeting their need for full, conscious, and active participation at Mass.

Q: What activities is part of the Liturgy of the Word for Children?

A: The leaders facilitate an interactive process that guides children to hear and enter in the Word, leading them to encounter Jesus in a personal way. The Holy Spirit is truly the master guide as we journey into the mystery of God's Word.

Through role-play, the children enact the Gospel and "**become the Word we hear.**" When a child becomes one of our biblical ancestors, she/he experiences the story first hand, and brings them greater insight into the story. The purpose and process of facilitating a Gospel enactment is very different from performing a play with costumes, memorized lines, and stage cues where the main goal is entertainment.

Guided meditations are another meaningful way for children to enter into God's Word. This experience allows them to use their rich imaginations and 'walk around' in the story prayerfully. Right after the meditation, there are some children eager to share what their encounter with Jesus was like, and others who would have liked to linger with Jesus a bit longer. Either way, all children take with them a memory of being with Jesus.

Q: *Do the children sing as part of their Liturgy?*

A: There is liturgical music written for children that can be incorporated into their liturgy, that enables them to listen reflectively to lyrics that echo the Scripture story they just heard proclaimed.

We have a piano in our chapel, and it would be a great gift to have more volunteers who have the talent to lead children in song or play a short piece for a time of quiet reflection.

Q: *How does the children's liturgy end before they return to the church for the Preparation of the Gifts?*

A: Ideally, the children hear a prayer that highlights the Gospel theme a final time before returning to the church. The prayer also acts as a special transition for the children. It prepares them to move from their liturgy of the Word to the liturgy of the Eucharist. Here's an example of such a prayer using the Gospel of Jesus' first miracle, the Wedding at Cana.

*Lord Jesus, you rejoice in those who believe in you.
We are thankful for Mary's example
to trust in you as the Son of God.
As you changed the water into wine,
make our hearts ready
to be changed by your loving presence in the Eucharist.
We ask this in your name. Amen.*

Q: *Why do the children sometimes return to the church with a bulletin?*

A: One of the guidelines for the **Liturgy of the Word for Children** encourages parents and their children to talk about the Gospel after Mass. A leaflet or bulletin written for kids is a great tool for having this kind of conversation. It can foster each family member's recollection of the Gospel and act as a visual reminder to live the message they discussed.

--Written by, Mary Jo Trapani
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The new edition of the Roman Missal does not abolish any of the special directories issued in earlier times. Therefore the norms issued in the directory for Masses with Children remain in force. -ROME, 23 July 2013
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