

Let the Children Come

Celebrating the Liturgy of the Word with Children

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What is Liturgy of the Word with Children?

Liturgy of the Word with Children:

- is a ritual for the proclamation of God's Word with children appropriate to their understanding.
- is a moment of salvation in which the living God communicates life to God's children and in which they respond with awe, praise, thanksgiving and petition.
- is liturgy, and *is not* Sunday School. Activity sheets can be useful as take home material for family follow-up, but they are not appropriate to be used during a liturgical celebration.
- is time to hear God's Word at an appropriate level.
- is an opportunity to hear the Gospel message and consider how to practice it in life.
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Lay leaders of Liturgy of the Word with Children undergo formation in order to be more effective ministers.

Principles of Liturgy of the Word with Children



It will be appropriate to celebrate the Liturgy of the Word, including a homily, with the children in a separate, but not too distant, room. Then, before the Eucharistic Liturgy begins, the children are led to the place where the adults have meanwhile celebrated their own Liturgy of the Word.

(Directory of Masses with Children 17)

This Liturgy of the Word with Children resource is intended for children aged 5 to 12, as well as older young people depending on their level of understanding.

On a Sunday – the Lord’s Day – at all Masses where children are in attendance, including Vigil Masses, Liturgy of the Word with Children is ideally celebrated. Parishes are encouraged to provide Children’s Liturgy of the Word for all school-age children where possible.

Parishes are strongly encouraged to develop appropriate ‘family-friendly’ space within the Assembly area for pre-school children and their families.

Outline of Liturgy of the Word with Children

The people gather –adults and children, and when the people have gathered an entrance song is sung ‘to foster the unity of those who have gathered’. (GIRM (NZ) 26)

Within the Assembly

- ❖ At a suitable moment following the Greeting, the presider invites the children to the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word with Children.
- ❖ The presider presents the children with a children’s Lectionary (or a children’s Bible) and a lit candle to recognise the presence of God in the Word.
- ❖ The children process to a specially prepared area for the children’s Liturgy of the Word. (When they are in the same age group, the Altar Servers lead this procession and remain with the children until they all return together.)
- ❖ The adults gathered should join in an appropriate *sending song* or instrumental music may accompany the procession. (The procession should always occur with music and/or song, rather than silence).

Entering the Children’s Liturgical Space

- ❖ The children’s Lectionary (Bible) and Candle are placed reverently.
- ❖ The group begins with a simplified opening prayer, echoing the Opening Prayer in the gathering of adults.

Listening to God’s Word

- ❖ All the children and the adults accompanying them are invited by the leader to hear the Word of God.
- ❖ Before the Gospel other readings and the psalm of the day *may be* proclaimed/sung, but are *optional*.
- ❖ The Gospel is welcomed with an Acclamation.
- ❖ The Gospel is proclaimed.

Responding with the Children

- ❖ The leader invites the group to reflect on the meaning of the Gospel (and other readings) in our lives.
- ❖ A simple version of the Creed is prayed.
- ❖ Prayers are offered for people in need.

Reconnecting with the Assembly

- ❖ *Children return to the assembly* as the Gifts are prepared for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- ❖ The children's Lectionary and Candle are received along with the children.
- ❖ On occasion it may be appropriate for the presider and the children to share, either through symbol or through a dialogue, the children's understanding of the Word they have heard.
- ❖ *The children return to parents/caregivers/whanau.*



The presider may include the children in the prayer over the offerings: “Children, you have heard the Word of God and now have returned to celebrate with all God’s people, so now, let us all pray together that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God ...”

Liturgy of the Word with Children in relation to the Sacraments of Initiation.

In the Diocese of Auckland, the order of the Sacraments of Initiation is to be Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist and the Sacraments of Confirmation and the first reception of Eucharist are to take place within the same celebration.

(Belonging and Beyond, Policy Document of the Catholic Diocese of Auckland)

Children old enough for catechesis should be admitted to Confirmation and the Eucharist.

(Rite of Confirmation #11)

Children are to experience in proportion to their age and personal development the human values that are present in the Eucharistic celebration.

(Directory of Masses with Children 9)

The Directory of Masses with Children is concerned with pre-adolescent children. In general, in New Zealand, this is to be considered as primary and intermediate school aged children.

Even those children who have received fully the Sacraments of Initiation, at the age of discretion, being about the seventh year, and who share equally with adults at the table of the Eucharist, are enjoined to celebrate the children's Liturgy of the Word.

Parents, as first teachers, and all adults gathered, take seriously the injunction of Jesus. (Matthew 19:14)