

A Guide for



Liturgy of the Word with Children

**Diocese of Prince Albert
Liturgy Office**



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Why do we Celebrate Liturgy of the Word with Children?

The Liturgy of the Word with children is not a “Sunday School” or a “Junior Liturgy” or a “babysitting service”. As the name spells out, we gather with children to celebrate the Liturgy of the Word, the first part of the Mass. We do not directly teach the catechism or babysit while parents may peacefully pray. This gathering is not a substitute for a Sunday school, or a preparation for First Communion. This is a Liturgy. We follow the same liturgy as the grownups do but in children’s language and with their active participation. It is about worship and celebration of the Word of God. All learning here takes place through the liturgical prayer and worship.

Following the Second Vatican Council’s teaching on the “full, conscious and active participation” of all the faithful in the Liturgy (SC #14), the Church has issued the Directory for Masses with Children (DMC). Expressing a genuine concern for the liturgical formation of children of all ages the Church gives a “permission for occasional celebrations of the word for children” (DMC #17)

Leaders of the Liturgy of the Word with Children are Ministers of the Word.



Outline for a Liturgy of the Word with Children

- Invitation of Children by the Presider; prayer of sending and handing out of the Lectionary
- Procession with the Lectionary to the separate place of worship
- First Reading
- Responsorial Psalm
- Gospel Acclamation
- Proclamation of the Gospel
- Homiletical Reflection
- Profession of Faith
- Prayer of the Faithful/Universal Prayer
- Return to the Assembly



The Sending and Returning

The proper the time to invite children for their Liturgy and bring them back is; exactly the same as for the Liturgy of the Word for the main congregation. The Presiding Priest calls them to the front after the Opening Prayer (Collect - the prayer before the readings). They all return to the main assembly after the Prayer of the Faithful, during the Offertory Hymn.

How do we send them?

67 in the guideline published by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops tells us that the children should be gathered and sent in a patterned and predictable way. A "praise refrain" could be sung to accompany the sending. Anything cutesy or resembling a mini-homily should be avoided. The priest should not bless the children as a blessing at this juncture would resemble a dismissal. Remember, the children will return and receive the final blessing at the conclusion of Mass with the rest of the assembly.



When should they return?

This is the easy part: They left for the Liturgy of the Word, which ends with the Prayer of the Faithful, therefore, they should return right after the Prayer of the Faithful. The children should be always be present for the Liturgy of the Eucharist in its entirety.

Enhancing Liturgy for Children

The Liturgy of the Word for Children is a component of the ritual prayer of Mass just as it is for adults. Learning may take place during the Liturgy of the Word but it is in the context of liturgical prayer. In fact, the Children's Liturgy of the Word should never be seen as separate from the Mass. It should flow with and in the greater celebration of the Sunday Mass. Although the children may be in a different space for the liturgy of the Word, we should not think of them as having been dismissed from the assembly. For the majority of the time, the children should be with the assembly at Sunday liturgy. When they are elsewhere, it is to enhance their inclusion in the liturgy, not separate them from it.



How often should we Celebrate Children's Liturgies?

When talking about the frequency of the separate celebrations with children the Directory uses the word “sometimes” (DMC 25-27). The Canadian Guidelines explain that The Liturgy of the Word “should not be a weekly or randomly scheduled event” (#62). In planning it, parishes should consider at least two criteria: the Sunday readings and any special rites celebrated within Mass that children attend. The leader in cooperation with the pastor may prepare a seasonal or a monthly schedule of separate ‘Liturgy of the Word with Children.’

Glossary

Feast: Second ranking of liturgical observances of the Lord and of the saints. These days are confined only to the natural day; that is, they do not have a vigil and do not begin the evening before.

Lectionary: One of the indispensable liturgical books of the Mass, it contains the readings for Sundays and weekdays for the entire liturgical year. (**In Canada we also have a lectionary for Ritual and Votive Masses)

Liturgy of the Eucharist: Begins with the Preparation of the Gifts and ends with the Prayer after Communion, during which the action of the Mass is centered around the altar.

Liturgy of the Word: The parts of Mass from the first reading through the Prayer of the Faithful during which the action of the Mass is centered around the ambo.

Memorial: The third ranking of celebrations of the saints. They are either obligatory (that is, must be celebrated) or optional.

Narrative: A story.

Ordo: A book, published locally or regionally, giving detailed information about each day of the liturgical year.

Proclamation: The act of proclaiming, that is, the act of making known publicly. Within the context of the role of the lector, proclamation is the act of making known to the gathered assembly “the continuity of the work of salvation according to God’s wonderful plan.”

Solemnity: The highest rank of a liturgical observance. These celebrations include not only the day itself, but also the evening before, beginning with either Evening Prayer or with a vigil Mass.

The Roman Missal: One of the most important liturgical books used during Mass, it contains all the prayers the priest will need during Mass.

Thank you for your service at the Eucharist.



“Jesus called a child, whom he put among his disciples, and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me’.”

(Matthew 18: 2-5)

