

Liturgy of the Word with Children



During Sunday Mass

What is Liturgy of the Word with Children during Sunday Mass?

Liturgy of the Word with Children (LWC) during Sunday Mass is a liturgical adaptation that provides an environment for children to fully, consciously and actively participate in the Mass. In LWC, children hear the words of Scripture in an easier to understand form and have the opportunity to respond to the Word of God in ways appropriate to their experience and capacity.

What official support is there for having LWC at Mass?

Drawing from the Vatican II *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* and the first Synod of Bishops in Rome, the *Directory for Masses with Children* (DMC) notes “how profoundly children are formed by the religious experience of infancy and early childhood, because of the special religious receptivity proper to those years” (#2). When speaking of Masses with adults in which children also participate, the *Directory* states, “... if the place itself and the nature of the community permit, 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” (#17). The *Directory* also provides that, “... with the consent of the pastor or rector of the church, one of the adults participating in these celebrations may speak to the children after the gospel” (#24).

As recommended by the DMC (#43), the Bishops of the United States commissioned a new *Lectionary for Masses with Children* (LMC) which was approved by the Apostolic See for use beginning the First Sunday of Advent 1993. The current LMC (USA) readings are based upon the *Contemporary English Version* of the Bible and follow, with some exceptions, the cycle of readings contained in the regular (adult) *Lectionary for Mass*.

A new LMC for the USA has recently been sent to Rome for approval and may be available for use here within a year or two.

What are the principles of children’s spiritual development addressed by LWC?

“In the upbringing of children in the Church” reads the DMC, “a special difficulty arises from the fact that liturgical celebrations, especially the eucharist, cannot fully exercise their inherent pedagogical force upon children. ... [W]e may fear spiritual harm if over the years children repeatedly experience in the Church things that are barely comprehensible ...” (#2). “The Church follows its Master, who ‘put his arms around the children ... and blessed them’ (Mk 10:16). It cannot leave children in the condition described” (#3).

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In her book *The Religious Potential of the Child* Sofia Cavalletti pleads, "We would like the child -- as the equal of and together with the adult -- to be counted among the number of listeners" (p.28). Later, she observes, "Indeed, not every age can receive every aspect of the Christian reality and, in our estimation, early childhood is the time of serene enjoyment of God. ... [W]e believe it is afforded too little attention in general, and particularly in relation to religious initiation of children" (p.86).

LWC provides a way for children to encounter God through His Word proclaimed in speech, song, music, gesture, movement and visual elements. It seeks to occasion a joyful return of love to God by children who first experience the love He gives them. This joyful exchange of love is the foundational element of the child's religious and moral formation. It permits the child to encounter God with complete trust and to offer perfect praise.

When is LWC offered at Our Lady of Loretto Catholic Church?

Liturgy of the Word with Children is currently offered at the 11:00 AM Sunday Mass during the "school year" beginning in September and continuing, with some days off, through June. Our focus is on children in grades 1-4.

Who leads LWC?

Volunteers! Liturgy of the Word with Children during Sunday Mass is only possible because of the efforts of parishioners whose aim is to provide the best possible liturgical experience for our children. Mass teams consist of leader, helper and cantor/musician. Some also serve as coordinators handling planning, training and logistics. Others are on-call substitutes. All are devoted to the ministry of the Word in our midst.

How can I help?

You can pray for the team members and the children they serve. You can also offer the gift of your personal presence as a member of one of the Mass teams. If you are wondering whether the Lord is calling you to assist once a month in this ministry of the Word, please call Diane Malenfant (248.324.1578) or Bill Millard (313.532.3707).

