



I will praise him as long as I  
live; I will sing to my God all  
my life.  
Psalm 146:2



# CHILDREN'S LITURGY OF THE WORD

Office of Lifelong Faith Formation

Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland ME



# Intro Notes for Presenter

- ✓ **Welcome**
- ✓ **Introduce diocesan support staff**
- ✓ **This presentation will be recorded**
- ✓ **All slides and PDFs will be provided to parish leaders; follow-up with pastor/staff, volunteers**
- ✓ **This gathering is both informational and practical**
- ✓ **Q & A at the end of the gathering**
- ✓ **Gather in a spirit of unity & simplicity**
- ✓ **Clergy/parish leaders follow up with Georgette at: [Georgette.dionne@portlanddiocese.org](mailto:Georgette.dionne@portlanddiocese.org)**



# Opening prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen

Unafraid to ask our loving God for those things that can make us whole and loving persons, and as people called to be God's servants, let us humbly ask God for all that we need to be faithful and true.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen. (Pflaum Publishing, *Children Celebrate* Leader Guide, 2019)



# Jesus Blesses Little Children

**Lord Jesus, may we hear, love, and live your Word.**

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark (10:13-14, 16)**

Some people brought children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples scolded the people. When Jesus noticed this, he was angry and said to his disciples, "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Then he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on each of them, and blessed them.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

# In a nutshell...



Children's  
Liturgy of the  
Word is ...

...weekly liturgy - our church's public worship and ritual prayer - designed for children, not altered

...not daycare, a faith formation class, an activity/craft time

...an established weekly practice during *Liturgy of the Word* at Mass (roughly 15 minutes)

...a profound ministry for the whole 'family of faith'

**Liturgy** is our church's worship and prayer ritual, rooted in the Bible. It is "how we do it" and 'who we are' as Catholic Christians. Liturgy of the Word & Liturgy of the Eucharist make up the two parts of each Mass that is celebrated globally. A Catholic document called the **Directory for Masses with Children (DMC)** provides guidelines for the parish practice of *Children's Liturgy of the Word*.

The founding **vision** for the renewal of liturgy originates with the **Vatican II Council** (1962-65); the specific and practical **interpretation** of the principles to the Mass, comes from the **General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM – newest edition 2010)**.

"In response to repeated petitions from the entire Catholic world and with the cooperation of men and women specialists from almost every nation" (DMC #4), **The Directory for Masses with Children** "was prepared by the Congregation for Divine Worship. On October 22, 1973, Pope Paul VI approved and confirmed it and ordered that it be published" (DMC #55). It is a formal liturgical document, meant to supplement the GIRM, when children are present at Mass. The DMC's purpose serves to 'enlarge', the foundational and authoritative documents to serve the needs of children and families." *Children's Liturgy of the Word* offers steps toward full immersion of the Mass, which cannot be replaced.

Directed by the DMC and approved by the Vatican for dioceses in the United States, **The Lectionary for Masses with Children** was published (1991-93). It is a liturgical book containing readings and "is primarily intended for use at Masses which are primarily for children and not the ordinary Sunday Mass" (*Forward - Lectionary for Masses with Children*).

## Authority for the *Directory for Masses with Children (DMC)*

*Text portions adapted from Eileen Luthi, [Directory for Masses with Children - Liturgy Brisbane Education News \(weebly.com\)](http://www.weebly.com)*

# Why Children's Liturgy of the Word?

- The children experience the *Liturgy of the Word* on their own level of developmental understanding, they get accustomed to the pattern and parts of the Liturgy, the worship responses, movements, and gestures. They are unified with the local and global community in this experience.
- Children are genuinely capable of hearing and absorbing God's Word, prayers, and short intervals of silence and reflection; they learn to be active worshippers. Many simply need a child-friendly environment to practice in.
- The parents and guardians of the children are given the gift of remaining in church, in community, to experience the liturgy and to reflect on the readings and homily on an adult level, without added distraction.

***Best Parish Practice:  
Children's Liturgy of the Word***

**Liturgy is communal by nature and our practice echoes Catholic belief about liturgy. *Children's Liturgy of the Word* is best provided by inviting, engaging, and training multiple baptized Catholic persons to form parish teams.**

Pros of Team Ministry (2 to 6 adults)	Cons of Solitary Ministry
Manageable demand of time and commitment from week to week as CLW leaders rotate service in 1 or 2 weekends a month.	Unrealistic demand of time and commitment from one person, week after week.
Multiple witnesses of faith for the children and parents/guardians to come to know and trust	Single witness of faith for the children and parents/guardians to come to know and trust
Allows team members to participate and reflect on the Liturgy of the Word with adult peers on most Sundays	Deprives that leader of participation and reflection during the Liturgy of the Word in the community of other adult peers
Reflects communal nature of liturgy as "work" shared among many in the community	Increases potential for attitude of personal 'possession' or 'attachment' to a ministry
Easier to maintain safe environment principles and best practices expected by the diocese	Increases risk of compromising safe environment principles and best practices expected by the diocese

# Child Development

Children have a **whole relationship with Christ**, not an incomplete one due to their age. Children are parishioners. “Children’s faith grows and blossoms through liturgical experience appropriate to their developmental level.”

Our Catholic life is not primarily rooted in brain cognition. What does it mean to **‘know’**, **with our being**, the real presence of Christ among us - including the liturgy of the Mass?

Psychological patterns of children demand **respect**. Liturgy is an immersive, social-behavioral experience. RCIA asserts ‘that Christian living is prompted, learned and integrated through the liturgical event’.

“Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that **fully conscious and active participation** in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy.”

(Sacrosanctum Concilium 14,  
Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy  
Pope Paul VI)

Not exclusive to and especially important with children , Montessori principles - **Sensory-rich** rituals, movements, gestures, and environment are embedded in our Catholic experience. We all thrive on this. Not a spectator sport!



## Jesus - Pastoral Authority

**“Christ’s particular care for children teaches us that they are capable of welcoming God’s call and responding to it. Children’s human and, therefore, religious experience is complete and whole in itself and is not determined simply by their potential for adulthood. The fullest reality of the liturgical assembly is children and adults together – not separate celebrations which run the risk of diminishing the place of children in the liturgical assembly…the same thing can happen if inadequate attention is given to their presence in the full assembly.”**  
(Conclusion – Lectionary for Masses with Children, #54, 1991-93)

## We Gather for Mass

### Steps for Children's Liturgy of the Word

#### Together & Separate

#### **TOGETHER:**

The children remain in church for the Introductory Rites (Entrance, Greeting, Penitential Act/Rite of Sprinkling, Gloria, Collect)

#### **SEPARATE:**

The celebrant calls forth the children and leaders, who withdraw (are not dismissed) to a separate space for the Liturgy of the Word:

- 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading
- Gospel acclamation, Gospel reading, and reflection
- Profession of Faith (simplified)
- Universal prayer (simplified from parish intercessions)

#### **TOGETHER:**

The children and leader(s) return to the assembly during the collection, for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

- ❑ **Volunteer time commitment & prayer** – roughly 15 minutes during Mass; prep time and prayer are essential in the week prior: from the lectionary, see which reading is included along with the Gospel; read the Gospel and let it simmer; get guidance from liturgy resource; pray; enjoy the process! Trained subs are helpful as are teen aides who can be given small responsibilities during the liturgy; a lead volunteer creates rotation schedule for parish
- ❑ **Age of children** - ages 4-10 is highly recommended; older children who have received first Communion are encouraged to remain with congregation; yet – they may self-regulate and in due time decide to rejoin the assembly, with gentle encouragement; if younger children wish to attend, a parent/guardian must accompany child (see important notes below).
- ❑ **Protecting God’s Children training & Code of Ethics guidelines for volunteer leaders** - diocesan-mandated safe environment training for all parish **volunteers who have direct and continuous contact with youth**; one trained adult leads the liturgy, with the support of another trained & available adult in the building, who is aware of this support role (catechist, parish catechetical leader, Eucharistic Minister, usher, other trained adult); parents/guardians who regularly attend *Children’s Liturgy of the Word for Children*, with any child(ren) must seek PGC training.
- ❑ **Gathering space** – close to the church; simple and reflects the worship sanctuary/altar – set with white cloth, candles, cross; sensory-rich & reverent items or wall adornments, for “fully active and conscious participation”; (optional – over time, children may process with white cloth, candles, cross to set up the space “altar”)

## Training & Preparation

### 3 Themes:

- Adaptation – liturgy is not altered, diluted, or replaced
- Participation – what our church calls “fully active and conscious participation”
- Liturgical formation - “know”(understand) the Mass, and Christ’s presence, with heart and mind; intergenerational integration; immersion

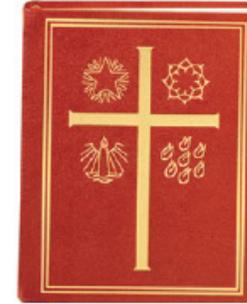
# Principles for Children's Liturgy of the Word

## Directory for Masses with Children (DMC)

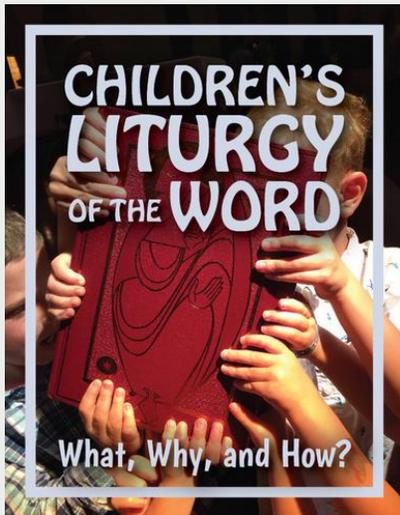
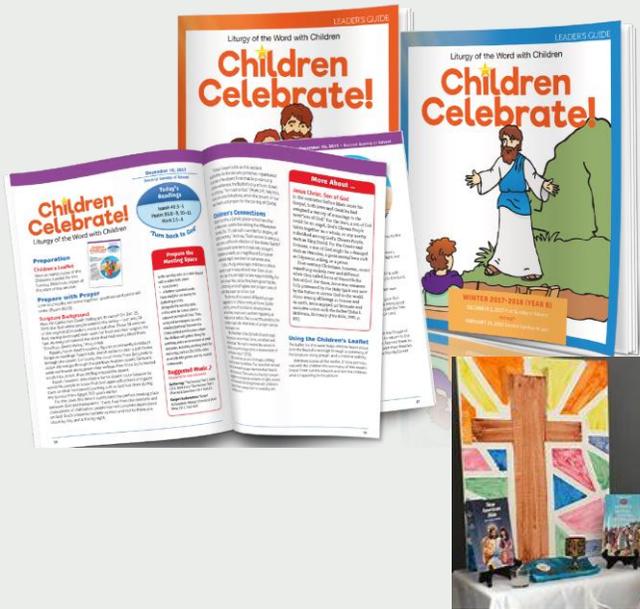
In 1973, the Congregation for Divine Worship promulgated the Directory for Masses with Children. This document offers principles and guidelines for adapting the liturgy for children so that they may gradually take a more active and conscious part in the full Eucharistic assembly. The Directory attempts to respect the nature of childhood and the age and abilities of the young.

“A growing feature of the Sunday Eucharist is the withdrawal of children to celebrate their own liturgy of the Word. Simplifying this part of the celebration, while maintaining its liturgical character, may satisfy the needs of the young so that they, too, can celebrate the Eucharist with ‘full, conscious and active participation’ which is ‘their right and duty by virtue of their baptism.’” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy #14)

*All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the prosperity of your children.      Isaiah 54:13*



- It must be liturgy, that is, ritual prayer. It may not be only a class or an activity session (e.g. cut and paste)
- The participants would best be children of school age.
- This Liturgy of the Word is appropriately celebrated in a room separate, but not too distant from the church.
- The children rejoin the adults in the church before the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- Since liturgy is ‘an activity of the entire person, participation by means of gestures and postures should be strongly encouraged’ (DMC #33)
- The use of visual elements is to be incorporated (DMC #35). These may include a Lectionary or Bible, candle, liturgical colors, or symbols specific to the reading.
- If the readings can only be understood with difficulty, two or even one reading is permissible, as long as the Gospel is always proclaimed. (DMC #42)
- If all the readings for a particular Sunday are unsuitable, other reading(s) from the Lectionary or directly from the Bible may be used as long as they are appropriate to the liturgical season (DMC #43)
- The use of a Lectionary appropriate to children is strongly recommended. (DMC #43, 44, 45)
- Verses of psalms appropriate to the children’s understanding sung in the form of psalmody, or the Alleluia with simple verse, should be sung between the readings, or the Alleluia before the Gospel. (DMC #46)
- A homily to explain the readings, and appropriate to the children’s level of understanding, should be given by an adult approved by the parish priest. (DMC #17, 24)
- Prayer of the Faithful should be included. If appropriate to the occasion, a simple Profession of Faith may be said.
- As with adult Liturgy of the Word, ‘silence should be observed at the designated times as part of the celebration....since children are genuinely capable of reflection.’ (DMC # 37) This means after each non-Gospel reading, and after the Homily.
- Keep in mind child protection and safety by having enough approved adults, well lit spaces, rooms with windows, and easy access.
- For Gospel activity ideas visit: [catholicmom.com/category/Sundays-gospel](http://catholicmom.com/category/Sundays-gospel)



Resources are well-designed, diverse, and adaptable. Know your audience!

1. Pflaum Publishing [Pflaum.com](https://www.pflaum.com)

Children Celebrate Leader's Guide, quarterly, week by week (children's take-home leaflets optional, not recommended) click on Weekly Gospel Reflection Videos with [Miss Heidi](#)

2. Growing up Catholic – *Children's Liturgy of the Word* [What, Why, How?](#) (Paul Canavese); informational; order the digital version at no charge or the guide (pictured here) for nominal fee

3. Portland Diocese resources: [Lifelong Faith Formation](#)

PDFs = Power-point slides & "Principles" from Arch of Boston

4. Live demo of *Children's Liturgy of the Word* (18 min) [St. Joseph Catholic Church, Marion, IA](#)

# Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

## Today's Readings

Daniel 7:13–14  
Psalm 93:1, 2 and 5  
Revelation 1:5–8  
John 18:33b–37

Jesus Is Our King

## Preparation

### Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.



## Prepare with Prayer

Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD; cry out to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with a song of praise, joyfully sing out our psalms. For the LORD is the great God, the great king over all gods, Whose hand holds the depths of the earth; who owns the tops of the mountains. (Psalm 95:1-4)

## Scripture Background

Most of the Church's first Christians were Jewish and therefore well versed in the holy books we know today as the Old Testament. Because of Jesus' teachings and his Death and Resurrection, biblical quotations these early believers had known since childhood shone with a brilliant new meaning.

Such was the case for the passage from the Book of Daniel found in today's First Reading. In a vision, the prophet sees a son of man in the midst of clouds being "presented to the Eternal God" (7:13). What better image for the Son of God's glorious Ascension into Heaven after his Death and Resurrection? Next, Daniel sees this man crowned king "of every nation and race" (7:14) in a kingdom destined to last forever. What better image for the Second Coming of Christ, repeatedly promised by Christ himself and later by his Apostles?

Now jump ahead from the Book of Daniel to the last book of the New Testament, Revelation. Here, the author speaks from decades of meditation on the meaning of Christ's life, Death, and anticipated Second Coming. The author knows that protection

## Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a gold or white cloth, place:

- ▶ a Lectionary
- ▶ a battery-operated candle
- ▶ a green plant or fresh flowers

For use during the homily, assemble the bags or print out the worksheets described in Relationship to Children. You also may wish to show the children downloaded pictures of King Wenceslas, King Henry VIII, King Herod Antipas, and Christ the King.

## Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

**Gathering:** "The Trinity" (*Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #22*) or "Upon This Rock" (*Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #21*)

**Gospel Acclamation:** "Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia" (*Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24*)

from his people's enemies had been the primary duty of every Old Testament king. Because Jesus became "the first to conquer death," he is destined to rule over all kings and, indeed, all peoples of the earth (1:5). He has conquered sin and death. As if that singular victory weren't enough to distinguish him from any other king who ever lived, he also plans to share his dominion with all his followers, allowing them to join him as kings and priests in his kingdom! (1:6)

No wonder Jesus tells Pilate in today's Gospel, "My kingdom doesn't belong to this world" (John 18:36). Indeed, what king ever engaged in "power sharing" to the extent that Christ will do when he comes again?

### Children's Connections

Learning how to analyze and classify is part of every young child's intellectual growth, and most enjoy the fun and challenge of simple games like "Which one doesn't belong?" Today's homily will use this game to build up to a careful consideration of how and why Christ the King is different from all other kings.

You will need to prepare ahead of time a few bags filled with assorted household items. Each will contain four items that are fairly similar, except for one that has enough differences to make it out-of-place in the group. Following are some suggestions for items you can collect, along with a brief explanation of why the last one doesn't belong with the others.

- ▶ sandal, boot, tennis shoe, hat (worn on the head, not the foot)
- ▶ knife, fork, spoon, soda straw (used to drink, not eat)
- ▶ saucer, plate, bowl, dog dish (used for pets, not for people)
- ▶ screwdriver, pliers, hammer, spatula (a kitchen utensil, not a handyman's tool)
- ▶ orange, apple, banana, onion (not a fruit)
- ▶ carrot, green pepper, onion, banana (not a vegetable)
- ▶ pencil, pen, crayon, clothes pin (can't be used to draw or write)
- ▶ book, magazine, writing tablet, CD (not made of paper)

### More About ...

#### The Solemnity of Christ the King

- Pope Pius XI hoped that creating this solemnity would help restore respect for Christ and his kingdom in a postwar world rapidly slipping into greed, materialism, nationalism, and individualism.
- After its institution in December of 1925, this feast was celebrated every year on the last Sunday of October.
- In 1969 Pope Paul VI moved this feast to the last Sunday before Advent, so that its emphasis on the Second Coming would cap a year of commemorating all the important events in the earthly life of Christ.
- Currently this solemnity is also observed by Anglicans, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and other Christians.
- References to Christ the King appear in Paul's letters to Timothy, the Gospels of Matthew and John, and the Book of Revelation.

- ▶ penny, nickel, dime, dollar bill (not made of metal, not a coin)

For this game, children will enjoy seeing and handling actual objects, but if you prefer, download free worksheets from the Internet. Simply go to [billybear4kids.com/games/mapedit/mapedit.htm](http://billybear4kids.com/games/mapedit/mapedit.htm) and click on any game you want. Follow the instructions on the site to print.

### The Children's Leaflet

The leaflet for this week helps children learn about Christ the King through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

You may distribute the leaflet now, for use during the session, or before the children return to the assembly. If you distribute the leaflet now and time permits, you may wish to read with the children the summary of the Gospel in "The Word of God This Week" after you have read the Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

## Leaflet Activity

This week, the children will learn about how Jesus is the greatest and most important king of all.

kind

angry

generous

fair

selfish

merciful

caring

jealous

loving

truthful

## The Liturgy of the Word

### Gathering

After reaching the worship space, invite the children to be seated. Make sure each child has plenty of space. Tell them there are hand motions to accompany the opening song, which is about preparing for Christ when he comes again. As the song plays, the children should simply imitate whatever you do. Here are the hand motions:

### Refrain

Prepare the way for the coming of God. Make a straight path. (Wave hands like windshield wipers in front of yourself.)

### Verses

1. Ev'ry valley: fill it in. (*Cup hands and raise them.*)  
Ev'ry mountain: make it small. (*Flip hands over and lower them.*)
2. Crooked pathways: make them straight. (*With right index finger, trace a winding path downward in front of oneself, then a straight path upward.*)  
All the rough land: make it smooth. (*Do the same with left index finger.*)
3. All will see: God's power strong. (*With head turned upward and one hand to forehead, scan sky from left to right.*) God has promised: glory comes. (*With hands straight overhead and fingers fluttering, sweep hands down straight in front of oneself.*)

When the song is finished, ask the children to bow their heads for the opening prayer.

## Collect

**Leader:** Invite the children to bow their heads.

Then pray:

Lord Jesus Christ, when you come again in glory, may we be ready to greet you in hope and joy. Forgive us for the times we have not done what you ask of us, but have followed our own desires instead. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, may we become ever more faithful to you.

**Children:** Amen.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

## First Reading

**Leader:** Hundreds of years ago, the prophet Daniel had a great vision of what it will be like when Christ comes again.

Read *Daniel 7:13-14*. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

**Children:** Thanks be to God.

## Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning, sing or announce the response.

**Leader:** The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.

**Children:** The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.

**Leader:** Read *Psalm 93:1, 2, 5*.

## Second Reading

**Leader:** In today's Second Reading, Saint John talks about the things Jesus accomplished in his life on earth, then talks about his Second Coming. Read *Revelation 1:5-8*. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

**Children:** Thanks be to God.

## Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Gospel Acclamation, proceed to the proclamation of the Gospel.

## Proclaim the Gospel

**Leader:** We have just heard Saint John say that Jesus became the king of all humanity because he conquered death. In today's Gospel, Jesus reminds us that his kingdom is different from any other. The Lord be with you.

**Children:** And with your Spirit.

**Leader:** A reading from the Gospel of John.

**Children:** † Glory to you, O Lord.

**Leader:** *Read John 18:33b-37. Then say,*  
"The Gospel of the Lord."

**Children:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

### Homily

1. Take one of the bags you prepared and draw the objects out of it one at a time, each time asking the group, "What's this?" Then ask, "Which one doesn't belong with the others?" and "Why not?"
2. Invite volunteers to step forward and do the same with the items in the remaining bags.
3. Explain that now you want to say something about four different powerful men who lived long ago. Then have the children tell which doesn't really belong with the others.
  - ▶ Wenceslas was a beloved duke of Bohemia about 1,000 years ago. He helped establish Christianity in his country, shared his riches with the poor, and after his death was named a saint.
  - ▶ Henry VIII was the wicked king of England about 500 years ago. He ordered the execution of many people, including two great saints (John Fisher and Thomas More) and two of his own wives!
  - ▶ Herod Antipas was a proud Jewish king who ordered the death of John the Baptist and later played a role in the Death of Christ.
  - ▶ Christ the King rules the Kingdom of Heaven. He won it by conquering sin and death with the power of love.
4. Explain why Christ doesn't belong with the other kings.
  - ▶ He was the Son of God, not just an ordinary human being, and completely without sin.
  - ▶ His kingdom does not belong to this world.
  - ▶ His kingdom will not be complete until he comes again.
  - ▶ When he returns, he will gather into his kingdom members of every race and nation.
  - ▶ He will give every member of his kingdom the gift of everlasting life.

- ▶ He will even make all his followers kings and priests just like himself (Revelation 1:6).

### Profession of Faith

**Leader:** Please stand for the Profession of Faith and answer each question with the words, "I believe." Do you believe in God the Father, almighty and all-loving, who put the world in place so that it will never be moved?

**Children:** I believe.

**Leader:** Do you believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son?

**Children:** I believe.

**Leader:** Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life?

**Children:** I believe.

### Prayer of the Faithful

**Leader:** Now let us pray for all God's people. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord."

**Children:** Hear us, O Lord.

**Leader:** For all people in cold northern lands, especially those who need shelter, let us pray to the Lord.

**Children:** Hear us, O Lord.

**Leader:** For all people in hot southern lands, especially those who need enough water to grow their crops, let us pray to the Lord.

**Children:** Hear us, O Lord.

**Leader:** For all people in lands east and west torn apart by injustice and war, let us pray to the Lord.

**Children:** Hear us, O Lord.

**Leader:** *Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:*

Let us pray, Holy God, we look forward with hope and joy to the day your Son returns to earth. May all people praise him, now and forever.

**Children:** Amen.

### Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families.