

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

