

The Eucharist is the vital centre of all that the Church is and does. At its heart is the real presence of the crucified, risen and glorified Lord, who continues his saving work among us. The Second Vatican Council reminded us: ‘the most holy Eucharist holds within itself the whole spiritual treasure of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Passover and our living bread’. (cf. *One Bread One Body* 3)

All who exercise a liturgical ministry need a proper preparation for their responsibilities. They are to have the competence to perform the particular ministry with which they have been entrusted. (cf. *Celebrating the Mass* 29)



This leaflet is one of a series of leaflets prepared for liturgical ministers to help them refresh their understanding of their role at Mass. The series draws on the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and *Celebrating the Mass*, a document of the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales.

It is one of the collection of resources produced by the Liturgy Office to assist the work of liturgical renewal in England and Wales.

What the Church says about...

In Masses where the majority of those present are adults it is necessary to take great care that the children present do not feel neglected because of their inability to participate or to understand what happens ...in the celebration. Some account should be taken of their presence: for example, by speaking to them directly in the brief comments (as at the beginning and the end of Mass) and at some point in the homily.

Sometimes, moreover, if the place itself and the nature of the individuals permit, it possibly will be appropriate to celebrate the liturgy of the word, including a homily, with the children in a separate, but not too distant, location. 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 for Masses with Children (DMC) 17

Responding to the needs of children

The *Directory for Masses with Children* recognises that Mass may need to be accommodated to the needs of children when they constitute a significant proportion of the assembly. This does not suggest composing rites that are altogether special or different from the Order of Mass as it is usually celebrated. One of the purposes of specially prepared Masses for children is to lead the children to the celebration of Mass with adults, particularly the Sun-

day Mass of the community.

Celebrating the Mass (CTM) 136

Stories of faith

Christian communities discover and deepen their faith by sharing the stories of salvation proclaimed in the scriptures and relating them to their own lives and situations. Story is a way to everyone’s heart and understanding; children especially become involved and enjoy stories of all types. The way in which we pass on biblical stories to children will influence the way in which they will hear the message of the scriptures proclaimed in the liturgy.

Liturgy of the Word with Children Guidelines (LOWC) pg 7

Silence

Silence or stillness is another integral element of liturgy. The whole way in which liturgy is celebrated should foster reflectiveness. In addition, the dialogue between God and his people which happens through the power of the Holy Spirit requires short intervals of silence. The *Directory for Masses with Children* reminds us that children are capable of reflection. They will need some guidance so that they will learn how to recollect themselves, meditate briefly, or praise or pray to God in their hearts.

LOWC pg 8

Preparation

In preparing to hear the Gospel proclaimed, the highpoint of the Liturgy of the Word, Christ's faithful people trace the sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips and heart.

Those three focuses suggest the nature of the preparation a leader of a Liturgy of the Word with children

- **Understanding the scriptures.**

Considering the scriptures of the Sunday and what they mean to me. How do they relate to the season and the prayers of the Mass? What is God saying to us?

- **How will I speak God's Word to the children?**

Will they hear only the gospel, or others of the readings too? How will I help them to understand what God is saying to us? What questions can I ask to see how they are understanding what God is saying? What music will we use to greet and respond to the word of God?

- **Spending time in prayer.**

Who are these children I have the opportunity of serving? What is the life situation of the children and their families? Making time to bring them, and my ministry to God. Praying too for others in the ministry team.

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life —this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it

1 John 1: 1–2



Father,
You have taught the ministers
of your Church
not to desire that they be served
but to serve their brothers and sisters.

May we be effective
in our ministering of your Word,
and persevering in our prayer,
performing our ministry with gentleness
and concern for others.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Collect for the Ministers of the Church
(adapted)

**Liturgy
Office**
ENGLAND
& WALES

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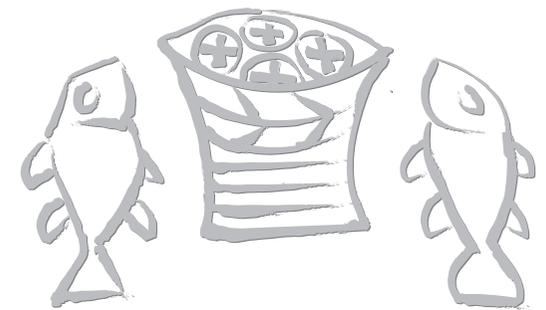
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Ministering the Liturgy of the Word to Children at Mass



*Whoever welcomes you welcomes me,
and whoever welcomes me
welcomes the one who sent me.*

MATTHEW 10: 40