



# GATHER AROUND

Guidelines  
For Children's Liturgy  
of the Word

Archdiocese of Perth  
Liturgical Guidelines

Centre for Liturgy

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Archdiocesan Centre for Liturgy gratefully acknowledges those who have contributed to the development of this resource.

Sr Kerry Willison RSM

Brenda Auret

And all those who have in anyway supported the preparation of this document.

Desktop Publishing Centre for Liturgy

Graphics © [www.pixabay.com](http://www.pixabay.com)

Imprimatur

+ Most Rev B J Hickey

Archbishop of Perth

Revised version, 2022

Published by

**CENTRE FOR LITURGY,**

**Archdiocese of Perth**

28 Marda Way, Nollamara, Western Australia, 6061

**Telephone: (08) 9207 3350**

**Fax: (08) 9349 0362**

**Email: [cfl@perthcatholic.org.au](mailto:cfl@perthcatholic.org.au)**

**Website: [liturgy.perthcatholic.org.au](http://liturgy.perthcatholic.org.au)**

Excerpts from

The English translation of the Directory for Masses with Children from Documents in liturgy, 1963-1979: Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts © 1982, International Committee on English in the Liturgy. All rights reserved.

© The Archdiocesan Centre for Liturgy 2014

The Perth Archdiocesan Centre for Liturgy owns the copyright in this book. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without written permission. Inquiries should be Addressed to the publisher.

Permission is given to the purchaser to make sufficient copies for use of Groups in local communities only.

ISBN: 978-0-97581052-1

# **Gather Around**

## **Guidelines for Children's Liturgy of the Word**

A Resource for  
Parishes and Schools

**Archdiocese of Perth  
Western Australia**

# Contents

Celebrating Masses with Children	6
Children’s Liturgy of the Word	8
Reading and Explanation of the Word of God	9
Getting Started: Basic Decisions	10
Team Planning & Responsibilities	14
Support	16
Steps in Preparing the Liturgy	19
Appendix	22
. The Liturgical Year	
. Outline and Notes on Children’s Liturgy of the Word	
. Breaking Open God’s Word: Creative Activities	
. Music	
. Resources	
. Archdiocesan Policy and Legal Requirements	
. Weekly Planning Guide	
. Five Week Planning Guide	
Archdiocese Policy and Legal Requirements	39



# Gather Around

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



### Celebrating Masses with Children

The basic principles regarding the participation of children in the celebration of the Eucharist come from the **Directory for Masses with Children (DMC)**.

Chapter 2 of the document is titled *Masses with Adults in which Children also Participate*. The first paragraph of the chapter is a clear statement about the impact adults witnessing to their faith can make on children in their early years and how in turn adults benefit by the participation of children in the Mass.

*In many places parish Masses are celebrated, especially on Sundays and feast days, at which a good many children take part along with the large number of adults. At these Masses, the witness of adult believers can have a great effect upon children. Adults can in turn benefit spiritually from experiencing the part that the children have within the Christian community. The Christian spirit of the family is greatly fostered when children take part in these Masses together with their parents and other family members.*

**DMC #16**

This document is also a very pastoral and practical expression of the needs of children as they develop physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually and suggests how to take these needs into account.

*Nevertheless, in Masses of this kind 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 and what is proclaimed 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.*

**DMC #17**

# Gather Around

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



### Celebrating Masses with Children

*It may also be very helpful to give some tasks to the children. They may for example, bring forward the gifts or sing one or other of the songs of the Mass.*

**DMC #18**

This document then continues clearly outlining the steps that may be taken to ensure the full participation of the children in as much of the Sunday Mass as is possible.

*Each Eucharistic celebration with children should be carefully prepared beforehand, especially with regard to the prayers, songs, readings, and intentions of the general intercessions. This should be done in discussion with the adults and with the children who will have a special ministry in these Masses. If possible, some of the children should take part in preparing and ornamenting the place of celebration...Such activity will help to develop the spirit of the community celebration.*

**DMC #29**

All adults who are to facilitate liturgy with children at a Sunday Mass should be familiar with the **Directory for Masses with Children**. It is important to discuss any adaptations that may be made with the Parish Priest or Celebrating Priest so that both children and adults can participate fully.

# Gather Around

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



### Children's Liturgy of the Word

The Lectionary that is to be used for Children's Liturgy of the Word on a Sunday is **The Lectionary for Masses with Children**. It is published by the Conference of Catholic Bishops United States of America, confirmed by the Apostolic See, by decree of the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on 27 May 1992. **The Good News Bible** may also be used.

The **DMC** recognizes that children may have difficulty understanding the readings proclaimed in the Liturgy of the Word.

In order to make the word of God, which is the main part of the Liturgy of the Word, as accessible as possible to children, certain adaptations are allowed.

*If three or even two readings appointed on Sundays or weekdays can be understood by children only with difficulty, it is permissible to read two or only one of them, but the reading of the gospel should never be omitted.*

**DMC #42**

Even further adaptation is allowed with discretion.

*If all the readings assigned to the day seem to be unsuited to the capacity of the children, it is permissible to choose readings or a reading either from the Lectionary for Mass or directly from the Bible, but taking into account the liturgical seasons.*

**DMC #43**

*If, because of the limited capacity of the children, it seems necessary to omit one or other verse of the biblical reading, this should be done cautiously and in such a way "that the meaning of the text or the intent and, as it were, style of the Scriptures are not distorted".*

**DMC #43**

*A shorter reading is not as such always more suited to children than a lengthy reading. Everything depends on the spiritual advantage that the reading can bring to the children.*

**DMC #44**



# Gather Around

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



### Reading and Explanation of the Word of God

*Paraphrases of Scripture should therefore be avoided. The use of translations that may already exist for the catechesis of children and that are accepted by the competent authority is recommended.*

**DMC #45**

*Verses of psalms ... or the Alleluia with a simple verse should be sung between the readings. The children should always have a part in this singing, but sometimes a reflective silence may be substituted for the singing. If only a single reading is chosen, the singing may follow the homily.*

**DMC #46**

## Children's Liturgy of the Word

is about

Breaking Open the Word of God  
for children, from the  
Liturgy of the Sunday



# Gather Around



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

### Getting Started: Basic Decisions

Children's Liturgy of the Word is important for the spiritual well-being of our children.

Leaders should be people of prayer, formed in the Word and aware of the needs of children. Resources should be available to support it.

### Initial Planning

#### 1. Session Leaders

Session Leaders need to have an understanding of liturgy and be trained in setting up and conducting liturgy with children.

- The Centre for Liturgy can assist in training and formation.
- A formal training session could be run by a presenter/coordinator from the parish who is experienced with Children's Liturgy of the Word.
- This resource can be used in the training process.

#### 2. The Children

Children's Liturgy of the Word is part of the total liturgical experience of children. Discuss ways of involving and settling children. Decisions need to be made about the grouping of the children.

- The group celebrating Children's Liturgy will be multi-aged.
- The groups need to be of manageable size.
- Groups that are aged-based will be more appropriate for Breaking Open the Word.

It is preferable that the children involved have not as yet received First Holy Communion.

# Gather Around



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

### Getting Started: Basic Decisions

#### 3. Resources

Consider the availability of resources and the possibility of purchasing further resources to support Children's Liturgy of the Word.

- Assess what resources are available. e.g. photocopier, DVD player, projector, CD player, laptop, reference books, CDs, DVD's, paper, pencils, glue, whiteboard and pens.
- Take into account the use of parish resources and if there is an affiliated school find out if it is possible to borrow some of the school resources from time to time.
- Parishes are members of the Catholic Library of WA, which has many Children's Liturgy resources.
- Plan the needs for the year and develop a time line.

#### 4. Budget

Children's Liturgy of the Word requires some financial support for formation and resources.

- Assess what budget is available. Find out from the Parish Priest, Liturgy Committee or Parish Pastoral Council what funds are allocated.
- If there is no allocation, draw up a budget and submit it to the Parish Liturgy Committee or Pastoral Council. (The Liturgy Committee is responsible for Children's Liturgy of the Word.)
- If the parish is unable to allocate funds, look at the possibility of fundraising.
- Parishioners may wish to donate funds or resources.

# Gather Around



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

### Getting Started: Basic Decisions

#### 5. The Process

Children's Liturgy of the Word is part of the Mass and is only separate in its location.

- It is most appropriate that the Gathering, Entrance and Greeting, is carried out with the entire community, adults and children present.
- The breakaway from the adult community must be visible and carried out with a certain dignity.
- The children are sent out to their meeting place to participate in a Children's Liturgy of the Word where the word of God is proclaimed and broken open for them at an appropriate level.
- The children re-join the main assembly after the Prayer of the Faithful.
- Liaison between the Children's Liturgy of the Word team and the priest is necessary so that the departure and return of the children is reverent and easy for all.

#### *Sending Children to the Liturgy of the Word*

The Celebrant invites the Leaders of the session and the children to come forward and receive the Lectionary. Music can be played or a song can be sung as the children leave the church. The Entrance Song is most suitable.

#### *Welcoming Children back to the Main Assembly*

The children may return before, or form part of, the Procession with the Gifts.

The Celebrant may welcome the children back and ask them for their insights or responses to the readings.

#### 6. Other Basic Decisions

Some other basic decisions need to be made initially when considering the feasibility of Children's Liturgy of the Word in the parish.

# Gather Around



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

### Getting Started: Basic Decisions

#### ***What age range of children will be catered for?***

Consider the demographics of the parish.

Children need to be old enough to understand the presentation.

If the age range is too vast it increases the difficulty of Breaking Open the Word satisfactorily for all the children.

The group may be divided into two with separate areas and separate Leaders.

For good Catechesis the recommended adult to child ratios as the minimum are:

4 - 8 years : 1 adult to 6 children

9 - 12 years : 1 adult to 8 children

*Safeguarding Handbook, Catholic Archdiocese of Perth, page 24.*

#### ***Which Sunday Masses will offer Children's Liturgy of the Word?***

Establish which of the Sunday Masses have the majority of children attending. These will be the Masses that will benefit most from Children's Liturgy of the Word.

Be aware if you are going to break for school holidays that this needs to be considered in your planning.

#### ***At the first meeting also decide:***

Who will be the overall Coordinator/Team Leader?

How many Session Leaders will be needed? [Is recruitment required?]

How will the Session leaders be trained?

Who will draw up the rosters?

Who will be involved in the planning meetings?

How often will planning meetings be held?

Where will the resources be kept?

Who will be responsible for finance and resources?

Who will be representative on the Parish Liturgy Committee?

It is suggested that all Session Leaders attend decision-making meetings.

**Since the Children's Liturgy of the Word session runs parallel to the adult Liturgy of the Word, each session runs for approximately 20-30 minutes.**

# Gather Around



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

### Team Planning & Responsibilities

Once the Children's Liturgy of the Word sessions have begun, planning will need to continue. For continuity, it is necessary to plan four to six sessions in advance and to make all session leaders aware of the theme and materials involved in each session.

#### 1. Session Planning

- If a season, such as Advent, Christmas, Lent or Easter is approaching, plan for the whole season. See **Appendix : Five Week Planning Guide**.
- Use resources like the **Ordo, Pastoral Liturgy, Daily Mass Book**, to find out which Sundays are approaching.
- Use the **Weekly Planning Guide** in the **Appendix** in preparing each Sunday.
- Have a copy of the **Children's Lectionary** available, if possible.
- Use resources to assist with planning, such as **Liturgia or LiturgyHelp**.
- **Annual Liturgical Calendar** available from the Centre for Liturgy website.

#### 2. Rostering

- Roster two Session Leaders, or a leader and assistant, if possible, depending on the number of children.
- Roster new Session Leaders with experienced Session Leaders.
- Have a pool of Session Leaders so that they can be rostered at decent intervals.
- Encourage a sharing of experience and technique between Session Leaders.

#### 3. Timing

- Speak with the parish priest about returning at a specific time and stick to it.
- Ask someone to come over to the Children's Liturgy of the Word venue as the Prayers of the Faithful begin.
- A parishioner might like to be an unofficial part of the team and let the Session Leader know when it is time to return.

# Gather Around



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

### Team Planning & Responsibilities

- An altar minister may come to the Children's Liturgy of the Word venue and lead the children back into the church.

#### 4. Liturgical Seasons

- Check the **Ordo**.
- **Annual Liturgical Calendar** available from the Centre for Liturgy website.
- Be aware of the Liturgical Season and the Liturgical Colours.
- Highlight the Liturgical Year in the prayer focus or prayer space.

Notes on the Liturgical Seasons and the Liturgical Colours are included in the **Appendix**.

#### 5. Team Responsibilities

Team members may share different ongoing responsibilities to support the group.

A team member needs to be responsible for ensuring that all Session Leaders have a current Working with Children Check card before they commence.

A team member is responsible for preparing materials.

Ensure that all materials are prepared and handed out, at least a week before the session. Materials may include notes for the Leaders, the written copy of the session sheet, a copy of the relevant Sunday's page from a reference book, and sufficient activity sheets/material for the children.

# Gather Around



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

### Support

After your Children's Liturgy of the Word sessions have begun, it is still necessary to maintain the enthusiasm.

#### 1. Priest Support

- It is necessary to have the Parish Priest's support.
- Meet regularly with your Parish Priest and summarise what is happening at the sessions and the team meetings.
- Invite him to attend a planning meeting.
- Ask him for his opinion and suggestions.

#### 2. Parish Support

- The Children's Liturgy of the Word is part of the life of the Parish. The community needs to be informed about Children's Liturgy.
- Put an insert in the Parish bulletin or produce a separate leaflet to inform the community about the Children's Liturgy of the Word.
- Involve the community by building into the commentary at the beginning of the Eucharistic celebration a sentence about the Children's Liturgy of the Word.
- When the children return they could at times show their work to the assembled community.
- Invite teenagers to become involved in assisting at the sessions.



# Gather Around



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

### Support

#### 3. Parent Involvement

- The duty of care presumes that parents with children involved in a Children's Liturgy of the Word know what is happening in the sessions and are welcome.
- If parents accompany children to the Children's Liturgy of the Word session, it gives them the opportunity to assist the Leaders with the children, helps them to know what is happening in the session, and could give them the confidence to volunteer to join the team and be leaders of the Children's Liturgy of the Word session.
- It may be worthwhile creating a pamphlet or information sheet explaining Children's Liturgy of the Word that can be given to parents.
- Encourage the parents to train to be Leaders of the sessions.
- Involve the parents in fundraising when this is necessary.

#### 4. Training and Initiation of Leaders

All Leaders in Children's Liturgy of the Word need to have ongoing formation, and all new leaders need training. Formation can occur within the group or externally.

- New leaders could be trained by the current leaders of Children's Liturgy of the Word.
- New Leaders could attend formation sessions held by the Centre for Liturgy.
- New Leaders could be trained using this resource as a guide.
- All Leaders need to keep up to date on any formation or new reference materials.
- All Leaders need times of personal and group spiritual reflection.
- All Leaders require a current Working with Children Check card.

# Gather Around

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



### Support

#### 5. Best Practice

In order that the children are kept safe and have a good experience of Liturgy, some decisions related to best practice need to be put in place.

- The location of Children's liturgy of the Word sessions should not be too distant from the Church.
- Prayer Centre  
A prayer centre that reflects the theme of the Word should be set up including coloured material of the season, the Gospel book carried in from the Mass, a candle to represent the *Light of Christ*, and items that reflect the readings.
- An assistant should be available to accompany a child who may need to leave the group.
- Children that do not settle easily may be given a specific task, have a buddy or accompanying parent.
- Consider how all children can be involved and include them.
- Activities should be age appropriate.

# Gather Around



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

### Steps in Preparing the Liturgy

#### 1. Read and Reflect on the Readings of the Sunday Gospel

The theme of the Sunday Eucharist is taken from the Gospel of that Sunday. A central part of the preparation of the Children's Liturgy of the Word is to reflect on the Gospel. The Opening prayer, songs and Breaking Open the Word are also prepared to support the central message of the Gospel of a given Sunday.

#### 2. Consult Available Resources

Consult some resources to better understand the message of the Gospel, and ways to communicate this message to children at their level.

Some of the resources available are listed in the **Appendix**.

#### 3. Decide on the Theme

- The theme is only a few words.
- Keep it simple.
- Make it visual.
- Help children remember the message.

#### 4. Plan the Children's Liturgy of the Word

It is important to understand Children's Liturgy of the Word and know what adaptations can be made.

- It is never possible to emphasise all parts each week.
- Note which parts are emphasised each week so that none is neglected.
- The Opening Prayer, Gospel and Breaking Open the Word are never omitted.
- Many resources are available that highlight the different parts of the liturgy.

Information notes and check lists on the format of Children's Liturgy of the Word are included in the **Appendix**.

# Gather Around

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



### Steps in Preparing the Liturgy

#### 5. Decide on the Reading and/or Psalm from the Children's Lectionary

- Only one reading is required.
- It may be necessary to omit one or two verses of a reading or psalm as long as the meaning isn't altered.
- Words for the Response and the Gospel Acclamation need to be available.

Information notes on music for Children's Liturgy of the Word and some useful resources are included in the **Appendix**.

#### 6. Write Own Prayers as required

The Penitential Act, The Collect and The Universal Prayer can be adapted and written in words the children can understand.

#### 7. Decide on the Music

- Consider the Church Season, the theme and the group.
- The music should assist the children in reflecting on the Word.
- The Responsorial Psalm and Gospel Acclamation should be sung.
- Have music ready or liaise with the music ministry.
- Prepare the words.

#### 8. Breaking Open the Word

##### Keep it short!

If the reading is proclaimed well and the prayer focus clearly illustrates the central message of the Gospel of that Sunday, few words should be needed to further bring the message alive. Three to five minutes should be enough.

##### Keep it simple!

Use words that are suited to the age of the children.

##### Make it interesting!

Have some fun.

# Gather Around



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

### Steps in Preparing the Liturgy

- Make it clear!** Try not to complicate the message of the Gospel by layering it with too many different meanings.
- Keep it down to earth!** Let the story stand for itself. Link it to the life of the children.
- Make it heard!** Keep your voice at a reasonable level so that everyone in the room can hear it.
- Make a difference!** Prepare well and pray beforehand that you will do justice to God's word, and bring it alive for the children.

### 9. Work out an Activity

Children's Liturgy is worship. An activity should assist children to break open the Word at their level by actively participating. Participation should lead to a personal response. Activities could be drama, storytelling, singing, movement, silence, or art work. These should take approximately 6-10 minutes.

### 10. Be Prepared

Write up brief notes for the presentation, clearly setting out all the steps of the Liturgy so it can be followed at a glance.

Each Leader needs a written copy of the planned session.

This together with the materials required should be available at least a week before the session they are leading, so they can reflect on their task and be prepared.

*An outline for Session Leaders is included in the Appendix.*

# Gather Around

Guidelines for the Children's Liturgy of the Word



## Appendix

- The Liturgical Year
- Outline and Notes on Children's Liturgy of the Word
- Breaking Open God's Word: Creative Activities
- Music
- Resources
- Archdiocesan Policy and Legal Requirements
- Weekly Planning Guide
- Five Week Planning Guide

# Gather Around



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

### The Liturgical Year

The Church has its own special calendar called the 'liturgical year', an annual cycle of seasons and major feasts. Within the cycle of celebration, the whole story of Christ's life is made fully known to us as we remember and celebrate the events of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

Within the liturgical year, every Sunday is a celebration of Jesus Christ. Many weekdays are dedicated to the memory of saints and martyrs – people who witnessed to Jesus in a special way. The Seasons within the year last a period of weeks. The **ORDO** provides all the necessary information.

The Church Year is divided into five major seasons:

- **Advent**
- **Christmas**
- **Lent**
- **Easter**
- **Ordinary Time**

**The Season of Advent** which begins the Church year, commences four Sundays before Christmas. During these weeks the Church prepares to celebrate the coming of Jesus. *Violet represents preparation.*

**The Season of Christmas** is next. It begins with the celebration of Christ's birth on 25 December. It ends on the Sunday after 6 January (The Epiphany, the celebration of the visit of the wise men to the infant Jesus).

*White and gold are the colours of joy and royalty.*

**The Season of Ordinary Time** follows. During this time of the year the Church concentrates on the life and message of Jesus. 'Ordinary' in this context means simply the time when the weeks are numbered.

*Green is for growth and life.*

# Gather Around

Guidelines for the Children's Liturgy of the Word



## The Liturgical Year

**The Season of Lent** comes next. It lasts forty days (excluding Sundays), from Ash Wednesday to before the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday. This season is a time to focus on following Jesus more closely. During Holy Week, each of the events that led to the suffering and death of Jesus is recalled and reflected upon.

*Violet represents penance.*

**The Season of Easter** commences on Easter Sunday with the glory and triumph of Jesus' resurrection. It is a time of joy and hope, lasting for fifty days, until Pentecost, which celebrates the birthday of the Church.

*White and gold are the colours of joy and royalty.*

**The Season of Ordinary Time** begins again on the day after Pentecost and ends with the feast of Christ the King. The last weeks of this season celebrate the belief that Jesus will come again.

*Green is the colour of inspiration and commitment.*

The completion of the liturgical year ends the telling of the story of the person and message of Jesus Christ. The cycle then begins anew. As God's people continue to tell and to celebrate the remarkable story of Jesus, they grow in their understanding of their part in the story and the importance of Jesus for their lives. This deeper understanding gives a fresh appreciation of this most wonderful story. It is heard differently each time because it speaks to people where they are now, today, in this year of their lives.

*These colours symbolise the change in emphasis as we celebrate the different events in the Christian*

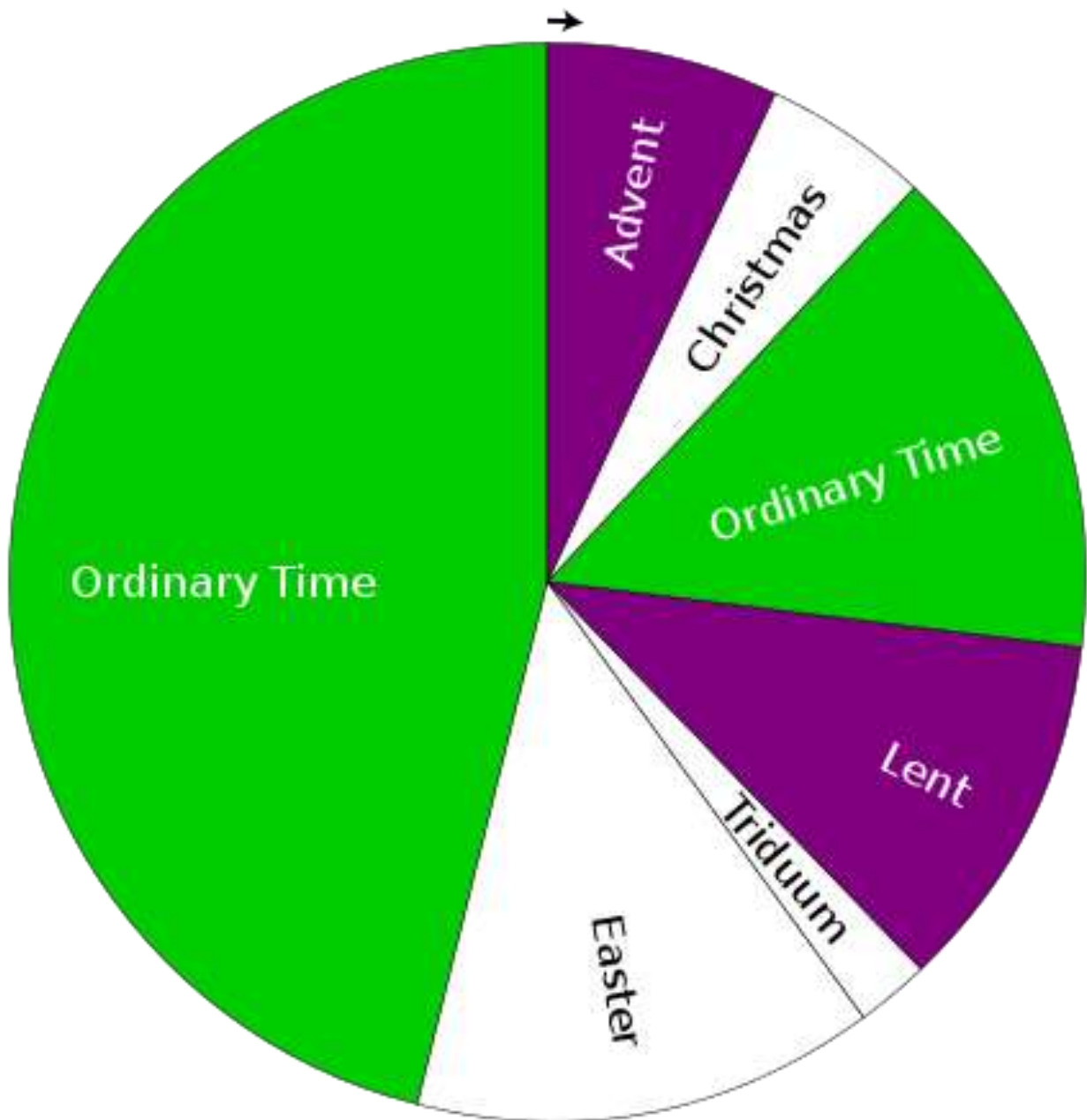


# Gather Around

Guidelines for the Children's Liturgy of the Word



## The Liturgical Year



# Gather Around



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

### Outline and Notes on Children's Liturgy of the Word

#### Introductory Rite

The Introductory Rite of the Mass is comprised of:

Entrance Song  
Greeting\*  
Penitential Act  
Gloria  
The Collect

The **Directory for Masses with Children** gives directives for some of the elements in a Children's Mass or Children's Liturgy of the Word to be omitted or expanded. The Introductory Rite prepares us to listen to the Word.

*It is sometimes proper to omit one or other element of the introductory rite or perhaps to expand another element. There should always be at least some introductory element, which is completed by the opening prayer. In choosing individual elements, care should be taken that each one be used from time to time and that none be entirely neglected.*

#### **DMC #40**

\*The Directory gives no directive for the timing of the dismissal of the children but the adaptation of the Introductory Rite is encouraged. The children can easily be dismissed from the adult assembly after the Greeting then the Introductory Rite be simplified for them in their space.

#### Greeting and Setting the Scene

Once the children have reached the place where they will celebrate the Liturgy of the Word, greet them, refer to the message of the Gospel for the day then continue the Introductory Rite and the Liturgy of the Word.

# Gather Around



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

### Outline and Notes on Children's Liturgy of the Word

#### Penitential Act

In the Penitential Act, lead the children through prayers, songs or simple gestures to admit they may have made mistakes and ask God's mercy without dwelling on negative feelings of guilt or failure. Allow a quiet moment for a simple examination of conscience. Focus on joy and praising God for His mercy. It is good to keep to the actual wording of the responses from the Mass (Lord have mercy...) to develop familiarity. The response can be said or sung.

The options are:

- a. I Confess and Lord Have Mercy etc. (not often used with children)
- b. Invocation addressed to Christ (times 3)  
(ideally relating to readings e.g. "Lord you heal the sick", Lord have mercy....)
- c. A simplified version from those in the missal.

#### Gloria

The Gloria is a prayer of praise which can be spoken or sung, but whatever the format, it should always be joyful. The Gloria is not said or sung during the Seasons of Advent and Lent.

#### The Collect – **MUST BE DONE**

The Collect of the Mass expresses the theme of the day and is found in the Sunday Missal. To prepare this prayer, review the Collect for the Sunday and if necessary rewrite it in words that the children will understand.

# Gather Around



Guidelines for the Children's Liturgy of the Word

## Outline and Notes on Children's Liturgy of the Word

### Liturgy of the Word

The Liturgy of the Word comprises:

- First Reading
- Responsorial Psalm
- Second Reading
- Gospel Acclamation
- Gospel
- Breaking Open God's Word
- Profession of Faith
- Universal Prayer

### Readings of the Day

Only one of the readings is necessary. Some readings may appear unsuitable for the group. Paraphrasing must be avoided. It may be necessary to omit one or two verses of a biblical reading but this should be done with caution, taking care not to alter the meaning of the text. Sometimes the Gospel only will be read. Occasionally when all readings assigned to the day seem unsuitable, it is permissible to choose other readings from the Lectionary.

### Responsorial Psalm

Have the words printed on a large sheet or white board for the children to read or help them to memorise the words beforehand. The Response to the readings can be sung or animated in some way (e.g. clapping or clicking with the response).

### Gospel Acclamation

The Gospel Acclamation should be sung. The same acclamation can be used for an entire season. The Alleluia is not used during Lent.

# Gather Around



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

### Outline and Notes on Children's Liturgy of the Word

#### Gospel – **MUST BE PROCLAIMED**

Invite the children to stand to highlight the importance of the Gospel. Always read the Gospel as written where possible. Use the children's version if available.

#### Breaking Open God's Word – **MUST BE DONE**

This should help the children make a connection between the Word of God and their everyday lives. Try to encourage as much child participation as possible at this stage. Share your own experiences, ask questions and invite the children to respond. Flash cards, focus pictures or short videos may be helpful. Keep it brief.

**Remember:** Experiencing the Word is more effective for children. If time permits, try to get the children to respond through an activity. **Be creative!**

#### Creed

A simple version could be used. The Apostles Creed is shorter than the Nicene Creed. The Creed can also be sung.

#### Universal Prayer

These prayers are an invitation to those present to pray for specific intentions. Prepare a simple wording to suit the theme of the day. Spontaneous prayers from the children could replace the formalized ones. Responses can be presented on a chart. The prayers should follow a simple format.

# Gather Around



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

### Outline and Notes on Children's Liturgy of the Word

#### Elements of a Good Children's Liturgy

1. Has an atmosphere of reverence.
2. Has:
  - a simplified theme
  - language that carries meaning for the age group
  - involvement in the liturgy.
3. Employs symbols. A visual reminder of the message.  
Example: processioning in the book with the Gospels, a candle, etc.
4. Has a high esteem for Scripture.
5. Makes a connection with the lives of young people that "continues" during the week.
6. The experience is enhanced with appropriate music.
7. Demands creative effort on the part of planners.

**It must be well planned. It does NOT just happen!**

Always remember that Children's Liturgy of the Word is the Liturgy of the Word as presented in the Sunday Mass – at the children's level. We do not change the theme and readings except in exceptional circumstances.

# Gather Around



Guidelines for the Children's Liturgy of the Word

## Outline and Notes on Children's Liturgy of the Word

### Outline

Procession from the main assembly to separate area

Welcome and setting the scene

Penitential Act

Gloria

**COLLECT [Opening Prayer]**

First Reading

← only one reading is required

Responsorial Psalm

Second Reading

Gospel Acclamation

**GOSPEL**

**BREAKING OPEN THE WORD (Associated Activity)**

Creed

Universal Prayer

Procession to the Main Assembly

# Gather Around

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



### Breaking Open God's Word: Creative Activities

#### IDEAS TO CREATE INTEREST

Use a story. Children love stories that are told or read to them.

Use pictures that capture the interest and imagination of the children.

Use objects linked to the theme of the Mass.

Use a short film or video that tells the story or is related to the message.

Engage in a dialogue. This is a shared process that involves the children. The leader is part of the process, listening carefully to gauge what is going on in the child's mind and guiding the discussion back to the central point. Control is important.

Creative activities and experiencing the word are more effective for children than talking at them. Activities do not mean 'just doing things' but involvement and participation leading to a response.

Occasionally offer an alternative activity or activities which would provide for the different skills and personal response of the children.

Children should **participate actively**.

Make sure the activity takes **no more than ten minutes**.

#### PLANNING AN ACTIVITY

When planning an activity it is important to consider its appropriateness to the age group, interest and ability of the children. Younger children (5-7 years of age) can be involved in movement, singing, games, various kinds of art, craftwork, dough modelling, plasticine, picture making etc. Children in this level usually work alone. Older children (8-9 years of age) can also be involved in drama, liturgical movement, creative writing etc. At this level children can plan and be involved in group activities.



# Gather Around

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



### Breaking Open God's Word: Creative Activities

Will the children be involved in a creative, personal way?

Does this activity challenge the creativity and response of the children?

Are the necessary materials and equipment available for the activity?

Is the activity suitable for the time available in Children's Liturgy of the Word or will it be taken home?

### PRESENTING AN ACTIVITY

Explain briefly the procedure of the activity and the materials available.

Give clear, simple directions.

Motivate the children so that they will respond through the activity in a personal way.

Recognise and acknowledge each child's effort and invite the children to share their activity or understanding with the group.

Avoid forcing anyone to display their work.

# Gather Around



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

### Music

*Singing must be given great importance in all celebrations, but it is to be especially encouraged in every way for Masses celebrated with children, in view of their special affinity with music. DMC #30*

Within the Mass there is an order of priority for certain parts to be sung. Two of the highest priorities are part of the Children's Liturgy of the Word. They are:

**The Gospel Acclamation**

**The Responsorial Psalm**

The Acclamations are expressions of joyful praise that highlight parts of the Mass. The Gospel Acclamation should be sung whenever possible. The Responsorial Psalm is both a song and the word of God. As a song it ought to be sung. As the word of God it is proclaimed. Seasonal Psalms can be used instead of the specific Psalm set down in the Lectionary.

A Gathering Song could open the session. Songs can be helpful in breaking open the Word.

Consult with the music ministry in the parish. The music should not differ too widely from that of the main assembly but be suited to the group of children. It should be concise. Repetition is desirable. Above all it should be easy to sing. A musician may be available to support Children's Liturgy of the Word and return with the children at the Procession of Gifts.

# Gather Around

Guidelines for the Children's Liturgy of the Word



## Music

### Suggested Music Resources

**God Delights in You** - Monica Brown, Emmaus Productions.

**Let's Celebrate** - John Burland, Ovation Music.

**Let's Celebrate Too** - John Burland, Ovation Music.

**God Loves Me** [suitable for older children] - John Burland, Ovation Music.

**As One Voice for Kids** - 7 CD Set, Various Artists, Willow Publishing Pty Ltd.

**Forever I will Sing** – Michael Mangan, [Litmus Productions](#)

**Let the Children Come** - Michael Mangan, [Litmus Productions](#)

# Gather Around



Guidelines for the Children' Liturgy of the Word

## Resources

**Directory for Masses with Children with Index:** Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Concanan In., 1996

**Lectionary for Children:** National Conference of Catholic Bishops, USA Catholic Book Publishing Co, 2012

**The Liturgy of the Word for Children:** Katie Thompson, Kevin Mayhew Publishing, 2004

**The Complete Children's Liturgy Book:** Katie Thompson, Kevin Mayhew Publishing, 1995

**Welcome the Word:** Joan Brown, SND, Kevin Mayhew Publishing, 2010

**Footprints in Faith:** Katie Thompson, Kevin Mayhew Publishing, 1999

**Step by Step:** Katie Thompson, Kevin Mayhew Publishing, 1999

**Celebrating with Children, Volume 1- Resources:** R Borg, G Kelly, B Lucas, St Pauls Publications, 2012

**Celebrating with Children, Volume 2- Readings:** R Borg, G Kelly, B Lucas, St Pauls Publications, 2012

**Join the Circle, Children's Liturgy of the Word, Lectionary Cycle Years A, B, and C:** Margie Abbott, RSM, Media Com Ed. Inc., 2003

**Just Imagine 1, Creative Ways of Presenting Scripture:** Rina Wintour, Mountjoy Enterprises, 2000

**Just Imagine 2, More Creative Ways of Presenting Scripture for People of all Ages:** Rina Wintour, Mountjoy Enterprises, 2002

**Just Imagine 3, Even more Creative Ways of Presenting Scripture:** Rina Wintour, Mountjoy Enterprises, 2003

**Just Imagine 4:** Rina Wintour, Mountjoy Enterprises,

**Gather the Children: Year A, Year B, Year C :** Mary C Berglund, OCP, Third Edition  
[Centre for Liturgy](#) online resources.

# Gather Around

Guidelines for the Children's Liturgy of the Word



## Weekly Planning Guide

Liturgical Week:	
Date:	
Leaders:	
Runner:	
Theme:	
Collect:	
Song:	
Penitential Act:	
Readings:	
Gospel:	
Breaking Open the Word:	
Creed:	
Universal Prayer:	
Activity:	
Closing Prayer:	
Songs:	
Other parts of the Mass to be used:	

# Gather Around



Guidelines for the Children's Liturgy of the Word

## Five Week Planning Guide

	WEEK				
	One	Two	Three	Four	Five
DATE					
INTRODUCTORY RITE					
Introduction					
Penitential Act					
Gloria					
*Collect					
LITURGY OF THE WORD					
First Reading					
Responsorial Psalm					
Second Reading					
Gospel Acclamation					
Gospel					
*Breaking Open the Word					
ACTIVITY					
Creed					
Universal Prayer					
Drama					
Mime					
Movement & Song					
Discussion					
Glue					
Colour					
Make					
SONGS ON SEPARATE SHEET					

\*Not to be omitted.

# Gather Around

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



### Archdiocesan Policy and Legal Requirements

All church workers (paid and unpaid) are required to adhere to the policies, guidelines, and procedures of the Perth Catholic Archdiocese.

A 'Working with Children Check' card is required by Western Australian State Government legislation for all who are considered to work with children in the course of their duties, that is, for those who are working with any person under eighteen (18) years of age.

Information is available from your parish Safeguarding officer or the Archdiocesan Safeguarding Office regarding policies, guidelines and procedures.

W: <http://safeguarding.perthcatholic.org.au>

T: 9221 7762

E: [safeguarding@perthcatholic.org.au](mailto:safeguarding@perthcatholic.org.au)



Centre for Liturgy

28 Marda Way, Nollamara WA 6065

T: 08 92073350 E: [cfl@perthcatholic.org.au](mailto:cfl@perthcatholic.org.au)

W: [liturgy.perthcatholic.org.au](http://liturgy.perthcatholic.org.au)