

St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church

Children's Liturgy of the Word Guidelines

Children's Liturgy of the Word emphasizes **liturgy** in contrast to religious education. Therefore, this ministry is all about you being the **leader of prayer**. *The ritual and prayer itself is the activity*. This is all the activity that is needed. You as catechist are here to facilitate the prayer. **Follow the lead of the children**. We do not want to cheat our children of learning to live reflectively on the Word of God or celebrate their uniqueness and own experience of discovering God's Word. Always follow the lead of the children.

After proclaiming the Word of God, ask –WHAT DID YOU HEAR? Refrain from the tendency as an adult to tell the children what God wants them to hear. If you refrain, they will learn that **we really want to hear what they heard God say to them**. Encourage them to really listen and **respond positively to every comment** that they share.

The importance of carefully phrasing questions is essential. Use the material provided. You may find it easier to raise the question after the first reading rather than wait until the reading of the Gospel. The children's attention span is very short and you may find that you need to read the Word of God a second time to help them to listen to God's Word.

General Responsibilities of the Catechist:

1. Your role as catechist for Children's Liturgy of the Word is to **enrich** our children's liturgical experience of God's presence in the ritual proclamation of the Word.
2. Your primary responsibility is to take time to **prepare the readings** before coming to Mass and to **be sensitive to the presence of the Spirit in the lives of the children** gathered to hear the Word of God.
3. Most important principle to remember—FOLLOW THE LEAD OF THE CHILDREN. Your reflections are aimed at listening to what the children hear from the Scripture.
4. Be particularly mindful of the age level of the children gathered.

General Responsibilities of the Youth Helper

- Your role as helper is to **assist the catechist** in leading the children to the Liturgy of the Word room. You need to go to the front of church when the children are called forward during Mass. **Remain behind the last child** to escort them to the room.
- If possible, the helper will read the 1st reading and the Psalm. Please prepare in advance.
- You also need to assist the children in being attentive to the Scripture and prayers. Separate any children who are having trouble listening by sitting next to them.
- You may need to escort children back to their parents if they are not listening or wish to return to their parent. If you do this, please use the side aisles and **not** the center aisle.
- Assist the catechist in knowing when to return back to the congregation. If you hear movement, the usher may have forgotten to alert you that the homily is over.
- At the end of the liturgy of the word, please make sure to **turn out the lights**. You will need to help make sure the children stay at the bottom of the steps until the Prayers of the Faithful are finished. **You will need to be the last person following the children** to make sure all return to their families.

ORDER OF LITURGY OF THE WORD FOR CHILDREN

1. Please arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass begins and go to the Children's Liturgy Room and prepare the materials needed.
 - A. Check to make sure that the leader's guide is on the correct page.
 - B. There will be a stack of Children's Liturgy Bulletins to pass out **when you are finished**.
The Youth Helper can assist in this.
2. Go to the liturgical ministry binder on the back counter in church and place a check mark at your name to mark that you are present and aware of your ministry responsibilities.
3. The Children's Lectionary will be in the supply Sacristy on the counter; **place it on the priest's chair** as a sign that you are present and that Children's Liturgy of the Word will take place at the Mass.
4. **After the gathering hymn and Introductory Rites**, Father will call forward the children. This is when the Catechist and Youth Helper also come forward. The priest will dismiss the group to the Children's Liturgy of the Word room.
5. When you leave for children's liturgy, **take your time**. Process down the main aisle, to the stairs leading to the Youth Ministry Room.
6. A child can carry the lectionary, and the other children follow the lectionary.
7. **Once in the in the room the following outline is followed**. Have all children seated, facing AWAY from the street so that it will not distract them. Since we have already had the gathering song and opening prayer, follow the typical movements in the church:
 - A. BE SEATED. Follow the guidelines in the Leader's Guide. You can read the readings yourself, or the Youth Helper can read them. Whoever reads, make sure that the kids understand. Please note that we NEVER use any lit candles in the room due to safety. There is a battery-operated candle in the room to use.
 - B. STAND for the Gospel Reading. If you wish to sing an Alleluia, please do if you are comfortable doing so.
 - C. BE SEATED for homily – once again follow the Leader's Guide for questions. If there is not much response you can use the following questions, **following the children's lead**:
 - i. GOD THE CREATOR SPEAKS-- WE LISTEN
 1. Review with the children the scripture they have just heard.
 2. **What did you hear?**
 - ii. GOD THE SON GUIDES—WE REFLECT
 1. **What did you hear** (through God's word) **Jesus saying to you or asking of you?**
 - iii. GOD THE SPIRIT EMPOWERS—WE RESPOND
 1. **What can you do? What do you think God wants us to remember today? How are you going to let the Spirit of God guide you?**
 - D. STAND for the Profession of Faith, Prayers of the Faithful, and Closing Prayer
 - E. Pass out the children's bulletins
 - F. **Quietly walk out to the bottom of the steps. Remain at the bottom of the steps until the congregation sits down after the Intercessions. As the congregation is being seated, then immediately guide the children back into church to return to their seats.**
 - G. After Mass make sure that the Youth Ministry Room is neat, bathroom okay, lights out, and return the children's liturgy book to the supply Sacristy where you found it.

The Usher Captain will tell you when the Homily is over – **move immediately to D**