

LITURGY OF THE WORD WITH CHILDREN



During this period of the coronavirus many parishes have found innovative ways of continuing to offer a Liturgy of the Word with Children. It seems likely that offering Children's Liturgy online or in some other distanced way may continue for some time.

If you are offering Children's Liturgy in a virtual way we would love to be able to share your experiences to help others.

Four parishes have offered their experiences, for which we thank them, all different, just as all our parishes are different. Each parish has different skills and gifts and it's always fruitful to be able to share those gifts.

You'll see that copyright is referred in the pieces below. Do ensure that you check copyright for both images and music.

For information regarding music copyright go to <https://onelicense.net/>





SACRED HEART

PAUL writes: 'Over the months, we've learned a thing or two, here are some of them.'

1. Zoom with children is technically challenging e.g. muting/unmuting, screen sharing, hand-raising, chatting, annotation etc. Our experience is that a smooth presentation comes only with perseverance and practice. It's also good to have just one, non-participating host running things.
2. Within limits, the more catechists who participate in planning the better - and with delivery too leading to a variety of voices and styles.
3. Similarly, the more the children participate, the better. So far with Liturgies, this has been confined to children reading prayers, readings and contributing Bidding Prayers, but, after the experience of our FHC catch-up sessions this will extend to participation in games, quizzes etc.
4. Children participating presents particular problems. Children's access to chat and annotation needs to be restricted to only when it's required. We begin every session with 5 minutes free chat but after that, it's turned on only when needed. Same with annotation. For the same reasons, the annotation is often best restricted to the 'stamp' tool

We're really only beginning and, given that Zoom may well become long-term and even permanent, we're looking to develop new practices - group-work, children screen sharing their own presentations etc

PDF's of some of the powerpoint presentations can be accessed [here](#) and [here](#)

THE TRANSFIGURATION

ANDREA writes: 'The WhatsApp Group at the Transfiguration was started just to keep parents and children in touch. We thought it would only be a matter of weeks and then we'd be back to normal. (If we'd only known!). As well as the weekly lesson taken from the Katie Thompson book, we've also been able to share news and photos with each other. Recently First Holy Communion took place and there have been new arrivals in families to celebrate.

Our group numbers continue to grow through word of mouth and new families are added to list. I am conscious now that this might be excluding new parishioners so perhaps I should write something for the weekly newsletter that has returned to church.

If you had said I would still be doing children's liturgy this way in March I would not have believed you.

There are currently 18 families in the WhatsApp Group.'

HOLY TRINITY

VITTORIA writes: 'My group addresses children from 4 to 7 years old so pre-Communion. We started making the rota as per usual at the beginning of September (I sent an email followed by phone call.)

We decided the quota of 1 catechist per Sunday as it is practically difficult for 2 to liaise and share the session = fewer sessions per head

Everyone has the Powerpoint template which is what you see on Facebook; however, they/we can change the colour and format. A typical session includes:

1. Welcome (sometimes we record an initial song)
2. Sorry song or 3 simple Sorry prayers
3. Gloria sang or recited
4. Gospel acclamation 'Alleluia' usually sung in Ordinary Time, or recited
5. Signing the Gospel - with visual
6. Gospel (at times simplified if necessary and with child friendly terms if possible)
7. Gospel reflection
8. The Creed as 'Do you believe in God/Jesus/Holy Spirit?'
9. 3 simple bidding prayers
10. Usually a goodbye and sometimes a closing song (with or without web link)

The catechist sends me the Powerpoint, I edit it (add/take away/add pictures etc. Lots of pictures * as I believe in visuals x children). I save it as jpeg file interchange format which divides the file into single slides.

On my simple Samsung 6 my son Laurence and I record the reading of each slide, interchanging roles and singing. We also record the possible initial or final song in the same recording; I take songs from Youtube (pls.check the copyright)

I send the recording and the slides to our catechist Paul who masters everything together.

Paul sends it back and we load it on FB clocking it for Sunday morning.

NB. It takes me between 1 and 3 hours to edit the initial Powerpoint.

It takes around 2 or 3 times to record it (inevitably there is a telephone ringing, someone calling, etc.)

The catechists usually send the Powerpoint by Wednesday max so that we can edit and send it to Paul by Thursday or Friday eve. However, the catechists have been given the dates and paper sheets in September to cover all the sessions until Christmas so some send their Powerpoint in advance.

Before Christmas we shall have a Zoom to fill in the new rota and talk about any issues.

* Pictures: I use pictures mainly from the free website 'Unsplash'. However, we also use some from other websites as long as they say 'they may be subject to copyright'; this usually means that there is no problem as long as we do not use for profit, etc. In any case, it is always better to check the small print if possible.'

The sessions can be seen at the parish Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/109169967400813/videos/vb.109169967400813/625577381684296/?type=2&theater>



ST MARY'S

HOLLY writes: 'At St Mary's we have been live streaming a 30-40-minute Children's Liturgy each Sunday morning via the Twitch platform, using a mobile phone. Families can choose to either watch live and join in with the liturgy in real time or alternatively they can watch it later as a video. Our viewing numbers have ranged from 8-30 live and from 20- 90 watching later.

Those watching live can interact with us through the chat function on Twitch. This has been great as it means we can know who's watching and welcome them by name, we can get them involved in the liturgy by asking questions and them answering, even get them moving around their own houses to find items etc.

We have kept as many things as possible familiar to the parish children using items they would see at children's liturgy in normal times. For example, we set up a small table with a cloth in the liturgical colour, display the banner they would usually carry, use the same candle, crucifix and icon that they would usually use and begin with our usual welcome song. My children help me out, the two youngest are on camera with me and the two older ones are the tech support, monitoring and moderating the chat and passing the comments into the liturgy. They can stop the chat at any time if it becomes distracting (which we haven't had to do yet!) and we have set it up so that only "followers" are able to comment in the chat, this helps as we can then refuse followers if we don't know who they are.

As with all Children's Liturgies, some weeks seem to work really well and others not so well. There have been a few weeks where we've had technological disasters due to internet connections, these are always disappointing.

Usually with Children's Liturgy we have a team of volunteers who take it in turns, being on the rota means only doing it once every half-term. From a personal point of view, it has been amazing to do this every week as I've been so aware of being able to build week on week on what we've been learning about by referring back to previous readings and liturgies.

We do the liturgy from our sofa for a relaxed, family feel rather than a school classroom (we tried it from the church once but it didn't work well at all). The liturgy itself can be a bit chaotic with the two children chatting and moving around but it is at least a reflection of our normal family life and how we bring God into it!

The feedback has been largely positive with all ages in the parish watching and enjoying it - even our elderly parishioners!

St Mary's Children's Liturgy Lockdown Box-set can be viewed here:

<https://www.twitch.tv/saintmarys/videos?filter=collections>

