

Liturgy of the Word with Children

Easter Season, Year B

General Information

Catechist Background

With a historical emphasis on Lent and fasting, it is sometimes forgotten that Easter lasts for more than one weekend. Lent, the preparation season for Easter (Lent) is shorter than Easter: Lent lasts for forty days, whereas Easter is a season of fifty days, ending with the celebration of Pentecost.

Easter is the most important (and longest) season in the Church's year and so is a time for celebration and feasting! It is also a time in which we prepare to be sent out, as Christ's disciples, to share the Good News with the world, so through Easter God equips us for this and we hear in the Gospel how Jesus prepared his apostles for their task.

Easter also includes the feast of the Ascension which takes place forty days after Easter Sunday, on a Thursday. The ten days between Ascension and Pentecost is often a time of particular prayer for a chosen specific cause.

Setting the Scene

White is the colour for Easter (gold too), and if your Children's Liturgy space allows, you may choose to incorporate these colours into a centrepiece.

We Say Sorry

In some parishes, Children's Liturgy of the Word begins before the Introductory Rite has finished. If you have been in the main body of the church for the Penitential Rite, there is no need to repeat it in Children's Liturgy.

Gloria

If you have been in the main body of the church for the Gloria, there is no need to repeat it in Children's Liturgy.

We Pray (1)

The Opening Prayer expresses the theme of the readings for the day. As above, if you have been in the main body of the church for the Opening Prayer, there is no need to repeat it in Children's Liturgy.

Gospel Acclamation

'Alleluia' (a Hebrew word meaning, 'Praise the Lord!') is back as the normal Gospel acclamation sung during the Easter Season. For the Gospel Acclamation you might like to have a look at:

- Music for Children's Liturgy of the Word by Christopher Walker (Oregon Catholic Press)
- 'Halle, Halle, Halle' by John Bell (Wild Goose Publications), also contained in *Laudate*, no. 178
- Some of the Gospel Acclamations used at your parish mass if suitable
- Try writing your own words using tunes familiar to children (see suggestions in *The Complete Children's Liturgy* by Katie Thompson (Kevin Mayhew publishers))

Gospel

This year is year 'B,' and most of the Gospel readings for Sunday Mass come from the Gospel of Mark. Although it appears as the second book in the New Testament, Mark's Gospel was probably written before the others, and that Matthew and Luke used it as a reference.

Mark portrays a very human side of Jesus, while emphasising his Messianic qualifications. Mark's style is very streamlined, with little conversation and lots of action from the main characters. He writes with a sense of urgency, expecting (as did many first- and second-generation Christians) that Jesus' return to earth was imminent, that is, they expected Jesus to return within their lifetime. Indeed, they only started to write the Gospels down when those who knew Jesus started getting old and approaching death and yet Jesus had still not returned, and so there was a need to record what people saw and heard from Jesus before they died, for future generations.

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

Questions are given as suggestions of how to draw out salient points of the Gospel story with the children. Children may need to be guided back on track, but it is helpful insofar as it is possible, to let them explore ideas and thoughts of their own.

Response

An activity is suggested for each of the Sundays, although it may need to be adapted due to your space, size of group, etc. Sometimes very small children will need more assistance doing a particular activity. Responding to the Gospel in a child-appropriate way helps solidify the particular message of the week's Gospel and plan how they will live it out in their own situations.

We Believe

If your Children's Liturgy of the Word rejoins the main body of the church for the Creed, there is no need to go through its counterpart in question-form here.

We Pray (2)

If your Children's Liturgy of the Word rejoins the main body of the church for the Prayer of the Faithful ('Bidding Prayer'), there is no need to incorporate this Prayer into Children's Liturgy.

'All liturgy is prayer and it is right that a liturgy of the word with children should end with a time of intercession. The prayer may arise from the children's reflection but it is always concerned with the needs of the whole Church and the world. It is important to remember that the petitions are invitations to pray not the prayers themselves, so a short phrase that invites the children to pray is better than a long or detailed list of concerns. This model of intercession is easily learned by children.'

(Liturgy of the Word with Children – Guidelines –Commentary ¶17)

