

Developing a Liturgical Sense in Children

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One of the most enjoyable tasks of catechetical ministry is forming children into the liturgical life of the Church.

Liturgical prayer has such tremendous power to form us in the faith. It is no wonder that it is one of the primary sources for catechesis. However, this rich source of formation is sometimes overlooked in catechesis. In fact, the *General Directory for Catechesis* identifies a weak link between catechesis and liturgy as one of the problems affecting the vitality of catechesis in recent years (*GDC* 30). As catechists, we can develop a liturgical sense in children by celebrating the rich treasury of liturgical prayer, directing catechesis on liturgical symbols, keeping the liturgical year, and respecting repetition.

Liturgical prayer includes Mass and the sacraments, morning and evening prayer, liturgies of the word, blessings, and many other ritual celebrations. Encourage children to become familiar with all types of liturgical prayer throughout their catechetical formation.

By directing catechesis on liturgical symbols, children become aware of the symbols' beauty and placement within the liturgy. The assembly, water, oil, cross, laying on of hands, light, white garment, and bread and wine are the dominant symbols in our liturgical rites that mark and shape us as a people. Catechesis on the symbols and gestures, which go along with these symbols, opens up their many levels of meaning, and using the symbols and gestures in prayer forms us in the faith. By keeping the liturgical year, the children learn the major truths of the faith that are unfolded throughout the liturgical year. Celebrating various liturgical prayers appropriate to a season, catechesis on the season, and respecting the integrity of the season form children in the major teachings of the Church. Good liturgical prayer is repetitious. Repetition allows us to make the liturgy our own, to participate fully.

WAYS TO IMPLEMENT

In Class

Choose one of the prayers or responses that is repeated during each Sunday Mass. Have students make a holy card with the prayer and learn it by heart.

At Home

Make a list of your family members' patron saints. You could choose either a saint for whom the member is named, or the patron of a member's work or hobby. Mark the saints' feast days on your family calendar, and plan a special way to honor the saint and the person whose patron the saint is.

Huck, Gabe. *Preparing Liturgy for Children and Children for Liturgy*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1989.

Mazar, Peter. *School Year, Church Year: Activities and Decorations for the Classroom*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2001.