



‘Liturgy of the Word with Children’ Statement and Policy 2021
Our Lady of Sorrows and St. Bridget of Sweden, Isleworth, is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the well-being of all its parishioners. We should always show respect and understanding for the safety and welfare of others. Parishioners are encouraged to be open and to share any concerns or complaints that they may have with the Parish Safeguarding Representative.

Policy Statement

The ‘Liturgy of the Word with Children’ is an ever-growing liturgical activity in the Parishes of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster. In Masses with adults it is necessary to take great care that the children present do not feel neglected because of their inability to participate or understand what happens and what is proclaimed in the celebration.

Key Principles of the ‘Liturgy of the Word with Children’:

- Children's Liturgy of the Word is liturgy, ritual prayer, and not catechesis (religious instruction) or child minding. It is a liturgical celebration and therefore all the principles of good liturgy (active participation, clear symbols, etc) still apply.
- It is Liturgy of the Word, so it is ritual, centred on the proclamation and breaking open of the scriptures. The children do what the rest of the community is doing at this point of the Mass. They listen to the scriptures proclaimed and applied to contemporary life and respond in various ways. It is an experience of prayer and of dialogue with God.

General Principles of ‘Liturgy of the Word with Children’:

- Liturgy is the praise and worship of God.
- Liturgy is the source and summit of the Church's life and our lives.
- It is the right and duty of all the baptised, both children and adults.
- The function of liturgy is to build up the members of Christ's body, to strengthen us in preaching Christ.
- Participating in liturgy forms our habits because we are ritual people and learn through repetition and copying.
- In liturgy we discover the riches of prayer, through word and gesture, silence and stillness.
- The purpose of adapting liturgy for children is to lead them into full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy of the parish.
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- Liturgy with children, as with adults, demands dignity, clarity, and simplicity.

Common themes and expectations of ‘Liturgy of the Word with Children’:



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- **Gathering:** How we come together, the environment (quiet, reflective music, lighted candles, statues). Sign of the cross, focus and examination of conscience.
- **Listening:** A reading from the Scriptures, time to reflect on this and prayer to fit into this theme.
- **Responding:** A ritual movement that everyone can join in with that fits with the theme.
- **Mission/going forth:** The sending out from the celebration, giving the children something to hold onto from their experience of the liturgy that they can take into their lives.

Children are capable of reflection. They will need some guidance so that they learn how to recollect themselves, meditate briefly, or praise and pray to God in their hearts.

At Our Lady of Sorrows and St. Bridget of Sweden, the ‘Liturgy of the Word with Children’ is led by Volunteers. To ensure that each child is fully engaged, actively participates and understands the message of the liturgy, **we strongly recommend that children under 6 (0-5 years) are accompanied by a parent or carer (over the age of 18 years) who will supervise them and offer help if required to aid their understanding and participation. Children aged 6 years and over do not need to be accompanied but must respect the key principles of liturgy. No child is permitted to leave the Hall during liturgy without an adult, either their own parent or carer if supervised or the Group Leader if unsupervised.**

Guidelines to offer a model for celebrating the ‘Liturgy of the Word with children’:

- Children gather with their families in church for the introductory rites of the Mass.
- After the opening song and the greeting, the children, together with their leaders, are called forward.
- A book of the scriptures is presented to a child or leader.
- All process to a nearby place. (In some places this happens after the opening prayer.)
- When the children have gathered, the leader introduces the scripture of the day and lights a candle.
- The Gospel is proclaimed.
- The scriptures are explored through reflection, discussion and other appropriate activity.
- There is a time of intercession for the Church, the world, those in need and the local community.
- All return to the main body of the church for the liturgy of the Eucharist.



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'Liturgy of the Word with Children' Safeguarding Policy:

- The 'Liturgy of the Word with Children' will be led by a minimum of one Volunteer Parishioner who will act as the Group Leader.
- Volunteer Parishioners are responsible for timetabling their volunteering commitments to Children's Liturgy with the support of the Parish Administrator.
- Children's Liturgy Group Leaders will be appropriately checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- Children under the age of 6 must be accompanied by an adult who is over the age of 18 and who must supervise the children they are responsible for during the Children's Liturgy.
- Unaccompanied children, over the age of 6 will be led from the Church to the Church Hall by the Group Leader.
- A headcount of children should be taken.
- The Church hall doors must be shut and manned by an adult over the age of 18 for the duration of the Children's Liturgy.
- Children under the age of 6 must be accompanied by their responsible adult if they need to use the toilet or want to leave the Church Hall for any other reason.
- Children over the age of 6, who are unsupervised must not leave the Church Hall until the Children's Liturgy has finished when all children are led back into Mass by the Group Leader.