

Liturgy of the Word with Children

# Children Celebrate!



**Winter 2022–2023** (Year A)

**NOVEMBER 27, 2022** | FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

through **FEBRUARY 19, 2023** | SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

# Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

## Leader's Guide

Winter 2022-23

Year A

November 27, 2022

*First Sunday of Advent*

through

February 19, 2023

*Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time*

# Additional Resources at Pflaum.com

## Sunday Readings

For your convenience, each Sunday's Lectionary readings for the Liturgy of the Word with Children can be downloaded from pflaum.com. It's as easy as 1-2-3!

1. Go to pflaum.com/readings for a list of Sunday readings (updated at the end of each month).
2. Click on the date you want. That Sunday's readings will open in a PDF.
3. Print or download the file.

*For more about the Sunday Readings, see the Introduction to this Leader's Guide.*

## Available to subscribers of *Children Celebrate!*

Visit <https://bit.ly/3GhrWYv> for weekly Gospel reflection videos. These videos can be used within your Children's Liturgy of the Word program or shared with parents and families to view at home.

Written by Sr. Alice Ann Pfeifer, CSA  
Edited by Blue Willow Publishing Works  
Typesetting by Michelle Gerstel and Cassandra Waung  
Cover design by Lorena Jimenez and Jeff McCall  
Illustrations by Cathy Bruce

Excerpts from the English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for use in the United States of America. Copyright © 1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission.



© 2022 Pflaum Publishing Group, a division of Bayard, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction, transmittal, storage, or retrieval in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, is prohibited without the written consent of the publisher.

**Reproduction of this publication without permission of the publisher is a violation of the U.S. Code of Law for which the responsible individual or institution is subject to criminal prosecution. No one is exempt.**

Pflaum Publishing Group  
3055 Kettering Blvd., Suite 100  
Dayton, OH 45439  
800-543-4383  
pflaum.com

Printed in the United States of America

## *Children Celebrate!* Director's Manual

For an easy-to-follow Director's Manual, go to pflaum.com/liturgy-of-the-word and click on "Bonus Resources" and then "Program Directors." There you will find a manual that outlines practical steps for establishing a program, recruiting and training volunteers, and creating the proper environment and liturgical flow.

In addition, you will learn how to most effectively incorporate *Children Celebrate!* materials into your program. Additional resources are also suggested.

## Bonus Christmas Lesson

Since most Children's Liturgy of the Word programs do not meet on Christmas, a lesson for this day is not included here. Should you need a Christmas lesson, go to pflaum.com/liturgy-of-the-word and click on "Bonus Resources" and then "Program Directors." There you will find a free Christmas lesson and handout!

# Contents

This Issue's Themes .....	4
Using <i>Children Celebrate!</i> .....	5
Introduction .....	6
From Jewish Synagogues to Christian Churches .....	8
First Sunday of Advent .....	10
Second Sunday of Advent .....	14
Third Sunday of Advent .....	18
Fourth Sunday of Advent .....	22
The Holy Family .....	26
The Epiphany of the Lord .....	30
The Baptism of the Lord .....	34
Second Sunday in Ordinary Time .....	38
Third Sunday in Ordinary Time .....	42
The Presentation of the Lord .....	46
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time .....	50
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time .....	54
Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time .....	58
Music .....	62
Leader's Checklist .....	63

# This Issue's Themes

Date	Sunday	Theme
November 27, 2022	First Sunday of Advent	Always Be Ready for Jesus
December 4, 2022	Second Sunday of Advent	Get Ready for the Lord!
December 11, 2022	Third Sunday of Advent	Jesus' Followers Will Be Blessed
December 18, 2022	Fourth Sunday of Advent	An Angel Speaks to Joseph
December 30, 2022	The Holy Family	Joseph Cares for Mary and Jesus
January 8, 2023	The Epiphany of the Lord	The Wise Men Follow a Star
January 9, 2023	The Baptism of the Lord	John Baptizes Jesus
January 15, 2023	Second Sunday in Ordinary Time	Jesus Is the Son of God
January 22, 2023	Third Sunday in Ordinary Time	Jesus Calls the First Apostles
February 2, 2023	The Presentation of the Lord	Jesus Is the Messiah
February 5, 2023	Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time	Jesus Tells Us to Help Others Know God
February 12, 2023	Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time	Jesus Said, "Make Peace!"
February 19, 2023	Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time	Jesus Tells Us to Love All People

# Using Children Celebrate!

*Children Celebrate!* is a complete step-by-step resource for celebrating the Liturgy of the Word with Children. The two components of *Children Celebrate!* are this Leader's Guide and the Children's Leaflets, a book of tear-out, take-home sheets.

## Leader's Guide (each week has two parts)

**I. Preparation** provides the leader with information about the week's Scripture readings and how they relate to children today. Its elements are the following:

- **Today's Readings** cites the exact Scripture readings you will be using that day. (Remember, these readings do not always match the readings chosen for the adults. See more about the readings on page 6.) A theme sets the tone of that day's liturgy.
- **Prepare with Prayer** helps center you on the task at hand, which is not only helping children hear and understand God's Word but also hearing and understanding God's Word *through* the children.
- **Scripture Background** helps you understand the readings and prepare to break open the Word.
- **Prepare the Meeting Space** gives you suggestions for enhancing the environment for that day's celebration. Review this section a few days before the liturgy.
- **Suggested Music** provides suggestions for appropriate songs during the liturgy. Information on where to find each piece of suggested music is on page 62.
- **Children's Connections** explains each week's theme and Scripture message as it applies to children today.
- **More About...** provides Church teaching about a topic that is related to this week's liturgy.
- **Using the Children's Leaflet** provides brief background information about the take-home sheet.
- **Activity** provides a reproduction of the take-home sheet. Solutions to puzzles are shown as needed.

**II. The Liturgy of the Word** is a ready-made liturgy specifically written for that week's readings and theme. Its elements are the following:

- **Gathering** helps the children settle into their places. Playing appropriate background music or singing a song provides a transition into an attitude of prayer.
- **Collect** sets the tone for the worship experience.

- **Focus Statements** for each of the readings help you give the children a key idea to listen for and to help them better understand the theme of the readings.
- **Responsorial Psalm and Gospel Acclamation** provide liturgically appropriate responses for the children to use.
- **Homily** gives you starter ideas for interesting, creative, and relevant reflections on the Gospel.
- **Profession of Faith** is a simple and interactive declaration of what we believe as Catholics.
- **Prayer of the Faithful** are the prayers for the needs of the world, the Church, and the community. These are often a common first step for children into spontaneous prayer and can be powerful moments for children.
- **Return to Assembly** provides the leader with a cue to prepare the children to rejoin the main assembly and to remind them to take home a Children's Leaflet.

## Children's Leaflets (each leaflet is two-sided)

### Front Side

- **Today's Readings** gives the Scripture citations for that Sunday's liturgy.
- **We Pray** is a short prayer for children based on the week's theme.
- **The Word of God This Week** is a summary of the day's Gospel story.

### Back Side

- **Activity** provides an entertaining way to reinforce the Gospel message.
- **Faith Focus** highlights how the Gospel message can pertain to the family.
- **Family Activity** provides practical suggestions to families on how to put the Gospel into action at home.

## Weekly Gospel Reflection Videos

- **How to access the videos:** Visit <https://bit.ly/3GhrWYv> to view the videos for this quarter (loaded monthly).
- **What's included?** Each weekly video includes a Gospel Reflection, Saint Spotlight, Closing Prayer, and Reflection Question.
- **Promote:** Share these videos with those assisting with Children's Liturgy of the Word for use during your program, as well as with parents and families.

# Introduction

## What is Liturgy of the Word with Children?

Liturgy of the Word with Children is a worship experience geared especially for children. It mirrors the worship experience of the larger community, with a style that is engaging and interactive. Jesus himself recognized that children have a pure spirituality, and he made them the primary spiritual model for all believers.

Liturgy of the Word with Children is not formal religious education, nor is it intended to substitute for attendance at religious education sessions. Rather, it should be considered a partner to religious education programs. Both are important for a child's spiritual development, just as continuing faith formation and growth in spirituality are important to adults.

The Word of God has a message that is as relevant and fitting for children as it is for adults. The children, however, often fail to hear the message simply because the adult vocabulary is beyond their comprehension. Liturgy of the Word with Children offers an experience for the children to hear Scripture in words they understand and to share their own understanding of God's Word.

Celebrating the Liturgy of the Word in this way is an empowering experience, giving children a foundation for understanding and appreciating Scripture. Over several years, the children not only become comfortable with hearing and discussing God's Word but also gain an understanding of and appreciation for their liturgical heritage as Catholics.

## When and how do the children leave the assembly?

The celebration of the Liturgy of the Word with Children follows the same structure as the Liturgy of the Word for the entire assembly. In fact, it begins with the Introductory Rites, which are celebrated in the large assembly, where the children are seated with their families.

After the Introductory Rites, the presider invites any children wishing to participate to join the leader and proceed to the worship space set aside for them. They return after the Prayer of the Faithful to celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist with the entire community.

## What about the readings?

**The readings in the children's lectionary sometimes differ from those used in the adult lectionary.**

When planning liturgies to be used with children, the Church allows some flexibility in the number and choice of readings on Sundays and feast days.

According to the *Directory for Masses with Children*, "If three or even two readings appointed on Sundays or weekdays can be understood by children only with difficulty, it is permissible to read two or only one of them, but the reading of the Gospel should never be omitted" (Chapter III, No. 42). In addition, because of the difficulty some children may have in understanding certain verses, it is sometimes possible to omit one or another verse from the reading. (For a complete reading of the directives regarding selection of readings, see the *Directory for Masses with Children*, Chapter III, Nos. 41-47.)

In *Children Celebrate!* we follow the readings from the *Lectionary for Masses with Children*, which is approved for use in all dioceses of the United States by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. We determine themes and make suggestions for each Sunday's liturgy based on these readings. For this reason, it is important that you check each week's citations as listed in this Leader's Guide before finalizing your plans for that Sunday's celebration.



November 27, 2022

First Sunday of Advent

# Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

## Today's Readings

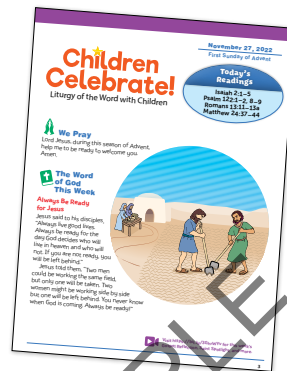
Isaiah 2:1–5  
Psalm 122:1–2, 8–9  
Romans 13:11–13a  
Matthew 24:37–44

Always Be Ready for Jesus

## Preparation

### Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.



## Prepare with Prayer

“Let’s go to the house of the Lord! And because of the house of the Lord our God, I will work for your good.” (Psalm 122:1, 9)

## Scripture Background

In 742 bc, just as the reign of King Jotham was beginning, Isaiah received his prophetic call. The Hebrews no longer were united as one nation, as they had been in the days of David and Solomon. Instead, they were split into northern and southern kingdoms known, respectively, as Israel and Judah.

When Isaiah wrote the words of today’s First Reading, the Hebrews were again straying from the covenant. In pointing out their foolishness, he spoke of a coming era when all nations will abandon their idols, turn to the one true God, and keep his commands. The result will be a transformed world.

In the Second Reading, Paul tells the Romans that they are already living in a time of messianic fulfillment—for the Risen, Ascended Christ remains present on earth in his Spirit-driven Church. The darkness (evil) of the current era is steadily giving way to the overpowering light (goodness) of the Kingdom of God. Here Paul is articulating a view of the End Times known as realized eschatology—“belief that the ‘final things’ are a present reality for the elect of God” (Sheila E. McGinn, Ph.D.).

In today’s Gospel, Jesus speaks of his Second Coming as a cosmic earth-shattering event similar to the Great Flood in Noah’s time. Here, the evangelist presents an alternate

## Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a violet cloth, place:

- ▶ a Lectionary
- ▶ a battery-operated candle
- ▶ a festive houseplant or bouquet of fresh flowers

The following will be needed for the Gathering:

- ▶ a recording of John Foley’s “Patience, People” or a similar Advent hymn
- ▶ a music player
- ▶ tea towels and big rubber bands, one for each child
- ▶ extra rubber bands in case any break
- ▶ hand mirror

## Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

**Gathering:** “Jesus is Coming” (Seeds CD-1, Track #7) or “The Promise Part 1” (Promise & Good News CD-1, Track #1)

**Gospel Acclamation:** “Alleluia” (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)



view of the End Times, variously characterized as thoroughgoing, unrealized, or futuristic eschatology—"a view of the 'last things' as not yet accomplished" (McGinn).

How does one reconcile the two apparently opposite viewpoints found in today's readings? Catholic Bible scholars generally subscribe to a concept called partially realized eschatology—belief that the Kingdom of God inaugurated by Christ is "already here, but not yet." Christ is indeed present wherever his teachings are carried out in acts of worship and deeds of love, but in a dramatic display of kingly power "he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead."

## Children's Connections

In the *General Directory for Catechesis* (1998), the Congregation for Clergy has written that "various problems exist with regard to the content of catechesis: there are certain doctrinal lacunae concerning the truth about God and man; about sin and grace and about eschatology" (p. 27). This coming month, the liturgies of Advent can be potent tools for filling the "eschatology gap" in children's religious education.

Inescapably, today's readings touch on the subject of the Second Coming of Christ and all that goes with it: final judgment and everlasting reward or punishment. Are these topics too scary for young children? Why should they be? As the New Testament authors remind us repeatedly, the Second Coming will be a joyful time for all who believe in Christ, just as his first coming was joyful for Mary and Joseph, the shepherds of Bethlehem, Simeon and Anna, and all others who had been waiting in faith for him.

To help the children get into the spirit of joy that can be as much a part of Advent as it is of Christmas, you will include a little dress-up play in the gathering activity. Children love taking on other roles, and, as all healthy forms of play do, dressing up brings with it a number of developmental benefits. It counterbalances children's natural egotism and helps them begin to develop empathy—a sense of what life looks like through someone else's eyes, what it feels like walking in someone else's shoes.

Dress-up play enriches the imagination, which is helpful both to present and future enjoyment

## More About ...

### Two Thousand Years and Counting...

Eschatology is that branch of Christian theology which speculates on final things—the last judgment and all else that will accompany Christ's Second Coming. The first Christians thought they would see Christ return to earth in glory before their own lifetimes were over. As the years passed, however, they began doubting that a definitive end to the "powers of darkness" and the world they knew would happen anytime soon. Yet they also realized that Christ's message and ministry had changed them, if not the world, and they could never go back to living the way they had before.

Unrealized eschatology fills the earlier books of the New Testament, including the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke, and the first epistles Paul wrote. *Realized* eschatology marks John's Gospel, 2 Thessalonians, and other later biblical writings. From Christian Tradition comes the concept of *partially realized* eschatology.

and even to future career success. Today's dress-up activity also might encourage children to continue this kind of play at home. Acting out the Bible stories they hear in church and school will reinforce the stories' themes and values. It will also help children remember and internalize the meanings of specialized terms important to our faith tradition.

## The Children's Leaflet

The leaflet for this week helps the children learn Jesus' teaching about goodness, through a prayer, a summary of the Gospel, and a creative activity.

If you distribute the leaflet now and time permits, you may wish to read with the children the summary of the Gospel in "The Word of God This Week" after you have read the Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

## Leaflet Activity

Emphasis in this week's leaflet is on families setting a family Advent theme and establishing an action plan for carrying it out. Children have a craft activity for making their own Advent wreaths.



## The Liturgy of the Word

### Gathering

After the children have gathered in the worship space, ask them:

- ▶ How did your family celebrate Thanksgiving this year?
- ▶ What is the next big holiday your family will celebrate together?
- ▶ What do you like best about Christmas?
- ▶ Why is it hard to wait for Christmas?
- ▶ What do your parents have to do to get ready for Christmas?

Tell the children that they need to get ready for Christmas, too—by making the four weeks of Advent a special time of prayer.

Then have the children form pairs. Give each pair two tea towels and two rubber bands. To demonstrate what to do with the materials, fashion a head covering on one child's head to make him or her look like a child of Old Testament times. Then instruct the pairs to dress each other in their head coverings. Have a mirror handy so the kids can see what they look like.

When all are ready to settle down, tell them you are going to play a song with words about waiting for the Messiah to come. As they listen, ask them to imagine they are little shepherd boys and girls in old Bethlehem waiting for the Messiah to come.

## Collect

**Leader:** Invite the children to bow their heads and pray. At the end of each prayer, repeat, "Lord, have mercy." Lord Jesus, when you came to earth as a little child, you were the long-awaited joy of your people. Lord, have mercy.

**Children:** Lord, have mercy.

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, you remain present among us today in your word and your sacraments. Lord, have mercy.

**Children:** Lord, have mercy.

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, we know you will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. Lord, have mercy.

**Children:** Lord, have mercy.

*Light the candle and begin the First Reading.*

## First Reading

**Leader:** In today's First Reading, the prophet Isaiah tells us what the world will be like the day everyone accepts the teachings of the one true God.

*Read Isaiah 2:1-5. Then say, "The word of the Lord."*

**Children:** Thanks be to God.

## Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be sung or spoken. Before beginning the psalm, sing or announce this response.

**Leader:** Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

**Children:** Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

**Leader:** *Read Psalm 122:1-2, 8-9.*

## Second Reading

**Leader:** In our Second Reading, Saint Paul compares waiting for Christ to waiting for daybreak at the end of a long, dark night.

*Read Romans 13:11-13a. Then say, "The word of the Lord."*

**Children:** Thanks be to God.

## Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you

choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the proclamation of the Gospel.

## Proclaim the Gospel

**Leader:** In today's Gospel, Jesus reminds us that he will come again, so we need to be ready at all times to welcome him.

The Lord be with you.

**Children:** And with your spirit.

**Leader:** A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

**Children:** † Glory to you, O Lord.

**Leader:** *Read Matthew 24:37-44. Then say, "The Gospel of the Lord."*

**Children:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.  
*Ask the children to be seated.*

## Homily

Present the children with this "what if" situation: what if the boy Jesus came to your house to spend special time with your family? How would you and your family get ready?

- ▶ How would you prepare the house?
- ▶ What foods would you prepare?
- ▶ How would you spend the evening?
- ▶ What would you most want to tell Jesus?

Conclude by telling the children that saying their night prayers is a little like having Jesus at their house for a sleepover. They can tell him anything they want, then listen for his answers in their heart. They can keep talking with him until they fall asleep, just as friends do at sleepovers.

Conclude by saying that night prayers are important because they help keep us prepared for all the special ways Christ comes into our lives every day (*in his Word, in the sacraments, in the goodness of creation, and in the goodness of those who live as he did—for others*).

## Profession of Faith

**Leader:** Please stand for the Profession of Faith and respond to each question with, "Yes, I do believe."

Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth?

**Children:** Yes, I do believe.

**Leader:** Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only

Son, who came to earth as our Savior and will come again as our Lord and King?

**Children:** Yes, I do believe.

**Leader:** Do you believe in God, the Holy Spirit, who keeps faith and hope alive in the Church until Christ comes again?

**Children:** Yes, I do believe.

## Prayer of the Faithful

**Leader:** Let us pray for the spiritual gifts we need to truly live the spirit of Advent. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord."

**Children:** Hear us, O Lord.

**Leader:** That our Holy Father and all Church leaders will help keep faith and hope alive in the world today, we pray.

**Children:** Hear us, O Lord.

**Leader:** That we and all the people of our parish will be ready at all times to welcome Christ into our lives, we pray.

**Children:** Hear us, O Lord.

**Leader:** That the faith and generosity of Christians everywhere will help feed and clothe the poor until Christ comes again, we pray.

**Children:** Loving God, lead and guide us.

**Leader:** For each of us, that the goodness in our hearts will grow each day.

**Children:** Hear us, O Lord.

**Leader:** *Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:*

Heavenly Father, during this holy season of Advent, we remember your people longing for the Messiah to come and save them. We, too, are a people who long for Christ to come again and complete the work of building his kingdom among us. Come, Lord Jesus! This we ask through the same Christ our Lord.

**Children:** Amen.

## Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to complete the Family Corner activities as a family.

Liturgy of the Word with Children

# Children Celebrate!

SAMPLE  
Pflaum Publishing Group

**PfLAUM**  
PUBLISHING GROUP

*A Division of Bayard*

3055 Kettering Blvd., Suite 100

Dayton, Ohio 45439

800-543-4383

[pflaum.com](http://pflaum.com)

LIT-LD232