

Including the whole family in the Christmas Eve liturgy

- Considerations before you begin
- Scripture readings and childrens lectionary readings for Christmas Eve.
- Resources available for family liturgy
- Some ideas used in other parishes that you might like to adapt



Considerations before you begin to plan

As you begin planning, consider:

- The Christmas Eve liturgy exists as it does for a reason. Please enhance rather than replace what is available, so that all ages find it accessible, relevant and substantial.
- The service belongs to everyone present, so aim to include all ages rather than just children.
- Remember that the new translation of the Mass might still be a surprise to some. Consider handing out Mass leaflets as people arrive, as a welcoming support.
- People love Christmas carols and want to sing them. Invite the choir to lead the whole congregation in song tonight.

Scripture readings for Christmas Eve

The Scripture readings for Christmas Eve are available here:

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/122411.cfm>

From 'Lectionary for Masses with Children, Year A. Study Edition'. Published by LTA in USA. ISBN 1-56854-000-0 . The following readings may be used only when the celebration of the liturgy of the word for the children is held in a place apart from the main assembly. When the full congregation is present, we ALWAYS use the sacred scripture as our words can't replace Gods Word!

THE BIRTH OF THE LORD December 25

FIRST READING Isaiah 9:2-4, 6-7 A son is given to us.

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

Those who walked in the dark have seen a bright light.
And it shines upon everyone who lives in the land of darkest shadows.
Our LORD, you have made your nation stronger.

...

The word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 96:1-2a. 2b-3. U-12a (Luke 2:11)

R. Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

Sing a new song to the LORD! Everyone on this earth,
sing praises to the LORD, sing and praise his name.

...

SECOND READING Titus 3:4-6 Gods grace has been revealed to all people.

A reading from the letter of Paul to Titus

Brothers and sisters:

God our Savior showed us how good and kind he is.

...

The word of the Lord.

Alleluia Luke 2:10-11

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Good news and great joy to all the world:
today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL Luke 2:1-14 Today a Savior has been born for you.

+ A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke

Emperor Augustus gave orders for the names of all the people to be listed in record books.
These first records were made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to go to
their own hometown to be listed.

...

The gospel of the Lord.

Resources for Family Liturgy

Resources – beggars telling beggars where we found bread. We have found nourishment
from parishioners who shared experiences that worked well, from books, videos, websites
and other pastoral workers. Heres some of those resources. We recommend your parish be

responsible about resources by creating a parish space where all liturgy resources are filed, stored and shared.

BOOKS

1-The Complete Children's Liturgy Book and The Liturgy Of The Word With Children

Both books by Katie Thompson

Well worth having in the parish. Every Sunday has two pages – one with the outline of the childrens liturgy and the other with a 'make and do' activity.

2-Roots

This magazine is published every two months. It is an ecumenical publication published in England by groups of Christian churches, which gathers its ideas from writers in Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales. It has lots of material suitable for all ages for each Sunday and in the magazine you are given a code to access teen resources as well as old editions of the magazine online. <http://www.rootsontheweb.com/>

3 - Alive-O Workbooks

These books are used in the schools and there is a matching textbook. They have good black and white pictures suitable for photocopying. The fifth and sixth class workbooks have some very good activities for Pentecost/Confirmation time. Available from Veritas.

4 - Liturgical Calendar for Ireland 2012.

This book costs about 12 euro it is available from Veritas every October, for the following church year (which begins on first Sunday of advent)giving all the information you need to celebrate the liturgy of the word for every day of the year, including all the feast days and special Sundays.

5 - Crafts for Creative Worship.

Great for those who are up for 'make and do'. Full of ideas for banners, hymns, puppets, intercessions, plays, making cribs, altar frontals, etc. With a CD full of downloadable templates and resources.

Cantebury Press, By Jan Brind & Tessa Wilkinson.

6 – Lectionary for Masses with Children

One book for each year of the three year cycle. All the readings and responsorial psalms in simplified but very close-to-scripture form. Liturgy Training Publications, USA.

7 – Our Family Mass: resources

More information and an outline of the 'Year A' edition of this book is available here:

<http://www.catholicireland.net/books/liturgical-a-ritual-resources/2060-our-family-mass-resources-for-the-family-sunday-liturgy-year-a>

WEBSITES:

Text this week: www.textweek.com

A list of lots of resources for each Sunday – with a special section for children, for images, for homilies etc.

Bible gateway: www.biblegateway.com

The bible online, just put in the passage or word / phrase you require. You can choose between versions too.

Sermons4kids: www.sermons4kids.com

Open this site click on the sermon index to find the gospel you need and it will give you a short reflection or ideas to reinforce the gospel message and also links to a colouring page and word activities.

Childenschapel.org

Open site, click on bible stories, scroll down page until you come to New Testament, choose the gospel you require and it will give you a children's version of the gospel with questions and a prayer.

Cafod: Development agency with seasonal resources

An aid and development sister charity to Trocaire, with an excellent school resource section. On left hand side of page under the heading "resources", click on any of the sections for prayers, reflections, readings and practical child friendly ideas on how each of us can make a difference.

Trocaire:

The official overseas aid and development agency of the Irish Catholic Church, they do wonderful Lenten resources -magazines with stories, facts, colouring pages and posters. Children can participate in activities and receive "the better world" award. Confirmation certificates available. At the other times of the year just click on education at the top of the page this will open a page with lots of downloadable resources for all ages.

Silk net. Site for religious Educators.

Lovely site with links to lots of resources for the seasons.

www.catholicmom.com

Click on "enter site", then under heading, "explore [catholicmom.com](http://www.catholicmom.com)"

Click on heading you require such as "Catholic Sunday gospel activities" this will continue to lead you to colouring pages and activities for the Sunday gospel.

Navan Family Mass @ Dublin diocese

<http://litmus.dublindiocese.ie/secmenudisp.php?MID=239>

This webpage has been a great source of ideas for me, with lists of resources on one page. Nice personal commentary makes it relevant and accessible

Diocese of Kerry, liturgy section: <http://www.dioceseofkerry.ie/page/liturgy/>

Occasional seasonal resources for liturgy – very pastoral and practical.

SHOPS AND SOURCES

For Limerick books and resources see: www.limerickdiocese.org/faith-worship/liturgy/resourcesavailable-in-the-limerick-area.html

Veritas: The bookshop of the Irish Bishops conference, resourcing Catholic parishes. Nearest shop is in Cathedral St, Ennis. Main office is 7/8 lower abbey street, Dublin 1. (01) 878 8177

Scripture Union Shop

Scripture union, 68-69 Talbot street, Dublin, Dublin 1, co. Dublin 8363764
Ccripture union, 87 lower George's street, Dunlaoghaire, co. Dublin 2802300

National Bible Society

An excellent source of scripture resources for all ages. 41 Dawson Street - Dublin 2 - Ireland. 01 6773272
Sunday school society

Amazon.co.uk

An online source for books and DVDs you are unable to source in Irish shops. They'll pretty much find you anything!

Some ideas used in other parishes that you might like to adapt.

We all pray with and through the same liturgy. However each community is different and so each liturgy needs to be prepared well locally – copying doesn't work well. These ideas are meant to inspire you, please pull them apart and re-create them as suits you best.

- Bring the baby Jesus to the crib on Christmas Eve. Start your Mass with an empty crib – we are waiting! Shepherds & Kings don't arrive before the baby either!
 - A lot of Christmas eve Masses begin with a procession - as the priest processes in, a small child carries in the statue of the baby Jesus and places it in the crib. Its lovely, but as people are standing, most people can't see it. *Why not do this at the time of the Gospel?*
 - So, the Mass begins with the usual procession for example - some shepherds (10 small children) might lead the altar servers and clergy in procession. They could then sit with parents or as a group near the crib.
 - Before the Gospel, invite all the children forward to the crib to sing the Alleluia. All turn and listen as Father reads the Gospel of Jesus' birth from scriptures (Lukes Gospel from midnight Mass is very helpful for all-age celebrations).
 - Invite all to sit (so they can see). Father can invite one or more children to carry forward the statue of baby Jesus to the crib and place it in the manger. All the children can sing a Carol together around the crib. A short homily can follow which includes both adults and children.
- If you are using the first lines from Marks account of the Gospel, (the genealogy of Jesus), then a *Jesse tree* is very helpful to bring this Gospel to life.
 - You can read all about Jesse trees here:
<http://www.limerickdiocese.org/uploads/File/PastoralDevelopmentFiles/liturgy/Creating%20a%20Jesse%20Tree.pdf>.

- You can have the Jesse Tree and build it up over Advent. Then on Christmas eve, the final piece - Jesus - can be brought forward and a star placed on the top of the tree!
- Why not give people a *Christmas present* on leaving church on Christmas Eve – a Christmas night prayer or a 'grace before meals' that the family can pray on Christmas day. If you're feeling creative, put it on a small card with a ribbon so it can be hung on the family tree too! (so it'll get stored away with the Christmas decorations and found next year!!) If that's not feasible, include the prayer in the parish newsletter this Christmas.
- *Scripture/readings*. Yes, it's good to have children's versions of readings .. but what if this is the only time this year an adult is in church, and they only hear the child's version? Stick to the original text, but consider having a child come forward and read the child's version (see above).
- *Involving teens*. It's good to offer teens a positive experience of Christmas and community here. Include them in the adults work, so they are apprentices to a life long faith, not just the oldest children helping out!
The most important thing is to remember our teens are not 'the help', they are our future! Let's inspire them by engaging with them as we work together. Ask them about their memories of Christmas eve and if they have any positive memories of church. Why are those memories good? Belonging? Lights? Wonder & awe? Family? Ask if they'd like to be part of making those memories for this year's families. Teenagers are great as welcomers, ushers, creative designers etc.
- *Candles*. Loads of candles are very very effective, but do be very careful & practical. Candles are best in lanterns so they can't fall! They should at a minimum be in holders that catch the wax or the carpet will be ruined! Ask if there's candles or holders left over from the Easter Vigil ... they may be transferable. Most Pound-Shops now have battery operated 'candles' which are perfect for children.