

Word on Worship

Newsletter of the Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark, NJ

Editor's Note:

This issue of *Word on Worship* contains part two of our discussion on the sacrament of baptism. The first part was contained in the Fall 1997 edition. I invite you to visit our website to view back issues. See *Worship Office Website* on page 33.

In This Issue:

- Baptizing Children at Sunday Mass
- Children and the Way of the Cross
- Doing It Right: Lenten Season Reminders
- Worship Office on the Web

According to the *Rite of Baptism for Children* (RB), the sacrament of baptism should be celebrated "during the Easter Vigil or on Sunday, when the Church commemorates the Lord's Resurrection." (RB 9) This article will offer some suggestions for celebrating the baptism of children on Sunday during a parish Mass. It begins by giving the reasons against such celebrations, and then offers the case for celebrating the baptism of children during Mass.

REASONS AGAINST

Among the reasons given why the baptism of children should not take place during Sunday Mass are the following:

1. Baptizing children during Mass unduly prolongs the celebration of Mass.
2. Such celebrations are too complicated.
3. The people are coming for the celebration of Mass, not to witness baptisms.
4. The people at the Mass don't know the children being baptized, nor do they know the families of the children.

5. There are too many children to be baptized, especially in parishes that only have baptism a few times throughout the year.
6. The children being baptized cannot receive the eucharist, so why should they be baptized during a eucharistic celebration. Adults are baptized at Mass, for example at the Easter Vigil, so they can receive the three sacraments of initiation, namely, baptism, confirmation, and eucharist at the same time. This is not the case with children, so it seems logical to baptize children outside of Mass.

REASONS FOR

On the other hand, the following case can be made for celebrating the baptism of children during Sunday Mass:

1. Such celebrations can help those present appreciate the significance of baptism in their own lives. By hearing the prayers and witnessing the ritual action those present are catechized about the sacrament of baptism.
2. The celebration of the baptism of children during Mass can give the worshipping community a deeper understanding of the relationship of baptism to eucharist.
3. The presence of the assembly supports and encourages those having children baptized. It also helps the members of the

assembly to appreciate their relationship to the children and to the families who have come to present the children for baptism.

4. Baptism is seen as a celebration of the entire parish community, and not as a family or private affair.
5. Baptism during Mass allows the parents and godparents, and others who have come for the ceremony, to fulfill their Sunday Mass obligation. If baptism takes place outside of Mass, can we honestly expect parents and godparents, and others invited to the celebration, to first come to Mass in the morning, and then return for another celebration within a few hours?
6. Baptism during Mass allows the parish to easily supply the other necessary ministers for the celebration, for example, servers, greeters, readers, leader of song, musicians, etc. Too often the only minister present at baptism outside of the Mass is the presiding priest or deacon.
7. Baptism during Mass helps to build community in the parish. It helps the parish to see itself as growing and alive.

SCHEDULING

When the baptism of children takes place during Sunday Mass, care should be taken in scheduling such celebrations. Baptisms at Mass should not be scheduled during the season

BAPTIZING CHILDREN AT SUNDAY MASS

of Lent since Lent is a time of preparation for the sacraments of initiation. "Lent should have its full character as a time of purification and enlightenment." (*Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Paschal Feasts* 7, also 2, 6)

Certain Sundays of the liturgical year are especially appropriate for the celebration of baptism; for example, Easter Sunday, Pentecost Sunday, and the other Sundays of the Easter season, the Solemnity of Christ the King, the Baptism of the Lord, and perhaps two or three appropriate Sundays in ordinary time spaced throughout the summer and fall. Baptisms should not be scheduled on a routine basis, for example, the second Sunday of each month. Such scheduling will have baptisms fall at times which are not particularly appropriate.

Ideally baptisms should take place once on a particular Sunday. "As far as possible, all recently born babies should be baptized at a common celebration on the same day. Except for a good reason, baptism should not be celebrated more than once on the same day in the same church." (RB 27)

MASS TEXTS AND READINGS

When baptism takes place during a parish Sunday Mass, the Mass for that Sunday is used. (RB 29) That means, the presidential prayers are those of the particular Sunday Mass. The scripture readings "are taken from the Mass of the Sunday or, for special reasons, from those provided in the baptismal rite." (RB 29) This means that one reading, either the first or second reading, or the gospel may be taken from the readings for the Baptism of

Children. (See Lectionary 757-760, *Ceremonial of Bishops* 434) However if baptism within Mass takes place on a holy day of obligation, on a Sunday during the Easter Season, on a solemnity, or on the feast of All Souls, only the readings of the day may be used. (See Lectionary 757-760, *Ceremonial of Bishops* 434).

BAPTIZING DURING SUNDAY MASS

Let us now consider how the celebration might take place during a parish Sunday Mass.

The liturgy begins with the rite of reception that replaces the penitential rite of Mass. The Mass begins with song as the presider and other ministers proceed to the doors of the church where the parents, godparents, and children are waiting. (RB 35) This song is the usual gathering or opening song of the Mass.

If some introductory comments are necessary in order to prepare the assembly for the celebration, they can be made in the following manner. Before the start of the Mass the presider, or another minister, can go before the assembly and inform the people of the baptism and make any necessary announcements concerning the celebration. Then the people could be asked to stand, and the gathering song could be sung as the presider and other ministers process to the doors of the church for the rite of reception.

GREETING

When the song has ended, the presider, if necessary, asks the assembly to turn toward the place of reception. The presider makes the sign of the cross and greets the people. He then welcomes the parents and sponsors in a friendly

manner. This welcome is done by the minister in his own words, it is not included in the ritual text. The rite says "the celebrant (presider) greets all present, especially the parents and godparents, reminding them briefly of the joy with which parents welcomed their children as gifts from God, the source of life, who now wishes to bestow his own life on these little ones." (RB 36)

The presider then asks the parents the name of each child and what they ask of God's church for the child. After receiving their responses, the presider questions the parents and godparents, as a group, about their readiness to accept responsibility for the Christian upbringing of the children.

The presider announces the acceptance of the children by the community and he signs each child with the sign of the cross and invites the parents and godparents to do the same.

PROCESSION

Then "the celebrant (presider) invites the parents and godparents, and the others to take part in the liturgy of the word. If circumstances permit there is a procession to the place where this will be celebrated, during which a song is sung." (RB 42) The celebrant and other ministers process forward, followed by the parents and godparents with the children to be baptized. There should be seats in the front of the church reserved for the families involved in the baptism. In other words the usual opening procession now takes place as the presider and other ministers approach the altar, followed by the parents, godparents, and children.

If the Gloria is required, it can be sung as the procession



moves forward. When the song ends, the presider then prays the opening prayer of the Mass and all are seated for the liturgy of the word.

READINGS

The readings take place in the usual way. If necessary, the children may be taken to another place during the liturgy of the word. "The children to be baptized may be carried to a separate place, where they remain until the end of the liturgy of the word." (RB 43) "Provision should be made for the mothers and godmothers to attend the liturgy of the word; the children should therefore be entrusted to the care of other women." (RB 14)

After the gospel, the presider preaches the homily. The homily need not focus exclusively on baptism. As always, the homily should flow from the scriptures, while not ignoring the fact that baptisms are being celebrated during Mass. As the rite says, "the homily is based on the sacred texts, but should take account of the baptism which is to take place." (RB 29)

INTERCESSIONS

After the homily, the profession of faith is omitted and Mass continues with the general intercessions, these "intercessions are taken from those used in the rite of baptism (47-48, 217-220). At the end, however, before the invocation of the saints, petitions are added for the universal Church and the needs of the world." (RB 29)

Be careful of the wording used for the general intercessions; keep it consistent. Follow either the pattern in the ritual in which the petitions are addressed directly to God, or the pattern usually used for

Sunday intercessions in which the petitions are invitations addressed to the community, calling upon them to pray for specific intentions. It would seem best to adapt the text in the rite to the pattern usually used for the general intercessions.

For example:

- For the children about to be baptized through the death and resurrection of Christ. May they be bathed in light, given the new life of baptism, and welcomed into God's holy Church, let us pray to the Lord.
- For the parents and godparents of these children. May they be examples of faith to inspire these children, let us pray to the Lord.
- For our world. That Christ's victory over sin and death may bring forth justice and peace where now, there is violence and hatred, let us pray to the Lord.
- For those in our society without food or shelter; for those without employment or hope. May they find in us generous friends, let us pray to the Lord.
- For those who are burdened with sickness and disease. May God be their hope, let us pray to the Lord.
- For those who have died in faith. May they share Christ's victory over sin and death, let us pray to the Lord.
- For ourselves, and for all the baptized. May the grace of baptism be renewed in each one of us, so the Risen Lord may be seen in the works we do, and the way we live, let us pray to the Lord.

The presider does not conclude the intercessions as he usually does at Mass. The invocation

of the saints immediately follows the final petition. It would be effective for the invocation of the saints to be chanted by the presider or another minister. The names of the saints of those baptized and of the local church should be added to the litany. If any of the children were brought to another place for the liturgy of the word, they are brought back in during the invocation of the saints.

The prayer of exorcism concludes the intercessions and the invocation of saints, and introduces "either the anointing with the oil of catechumens or the laying on of hands." (RB 17) Following the gesture for prayers of exorcism in *the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, the presider prays this prayer with hands joined.

While the anointing with oil of catechumens may follow, it would be better to replace it with a prayer and the laying on of hands, as permitted in the rite. (RB 51) Omitting this anointing avoids duplication and confusion with the more significant anointing with chrism.

At this point in the rite the ministers and the parents and godparents bring the children to the baptismal font. They go there in procession. This procession may be led by a minister carrying the processional cross. During the Easter season a minister might lead the procession by carrying the Easter candle from its place near the altar to the baptismal font.

"If the baptistry is located within view of the congregation the celebrant (presider), parents and godparents go there with the children, while others remain in their places." (RB 52) "If,

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however, the baptistry cannot accommodate the congregation, the baptism may be celebrated in a suitable place within the church, and the parents and godparents bring the child forward at the proper moment.” (RB 52) During this movement to the font, a song may be sung. (RB 52)

When all have taken their places near the font, the presider blesses the water. It would be effective for assisting ministers to pour some additional water into the font at this time. The sound of the splashing water will remind people of its presence in the font and call attention to the water about to be blessed. In keeping with the instruction in the Sacramentary concerning the blessing of water during Easter Vigil, the presider prays the prayer of blessing over the water with hands joined. It would be wise to choose a

prayer of blessing with acclamations that could be sung by the people.

During the Easter Season, water blessed at the Vigil is used. In this case the sections of the prayer asking God to bless and come upon the water are omitted. (RB 55)

RENUNCIATION OF SIN AND PROFESSION OF FAITH

The presider invites the parents and godparents to renew the vows of their baptism, to reject sin and profess their faith in Christ Jesus. The assembly assents to this profession of faith with its “Amen.” (RB 59) This could be done in the following way, after questioning the parents and godparents, the presider could sing “This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus the Lord.” The assembly could respond by singing the Great Amen from the final doxology of the eucharistic prayer.

BAPTISM

Each child is now brought to the font by the parents and godparents. There the final question is asked and the child is then baptized by immersion or the pouring of water. (RB 60) If pouring is used, the presider should use an abundance of water so that a true baptismal bath is signified. The assembly should sing an acclamation after the baptism of each child, the refrain from the Celtic Alleluia is particularly effective.

ANOINTING, CLOTHING, CANDLE

After the children have been baptized, the presider prays the prayer before the anointing. Then he “anoints each child on the crown of the head with chrism, in silence.” (RB 62)

The chrismation should be done liberally. The oil is not wiped off. The chrism should be in a vessel which allows the oil to be seen by the assembly and even poured over the head of newly baptized.

After the anointing the children are dressed in their baptismal garments. Ideally, the children should not have been brought into the church wearing their white baptismal clothing, but wearing simple clothes of another color. If a blanket is used, it should not be white. It is at this point that the rite foresees the children being dressed in white by the parents and godparents, and wrapped, if necessary, in a white blanket. The fact the rite foresees an actual clothing taking place, and not merely the presentation of a “baptismal bib” or a symbolic garment, is seen in the instruction that “it is desirable that the families provide the garments.” (RB 63)

A baptismal candle is now lighted directly from the Easter candle by a parent or godparent of each newly baptized child. These baptismal candles should be of sufficient size and beauty to bear the meaning attached to them. As the candles are lighted, the presider says, “Receive the light of Christ.”

The prayer over the ears and mouth may now follow. This rite is performed at the discretion of the minister. (RB 65) If there are many children, the prayer can be said once over all the children, without the ears and mouths being touched by the presider.

After these rites at the font have been concluded, those gathered at the font return in procession to their places in the assembly, and the ministers process to their places at the altar. During this procession

the lighted candles are carried for the baptized. (RB 67) As the procession moves through the church the *Rite of Baptism* suggests singing "You have put on Christ, in him you have been baptized. Alleluia, Alleluia." (RB 67).

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

After those in the procession have taken their places, the Mass continues as usual, beginning with the preparation of the altar and gifts. The baptismal candles are extinguished when the assembly sits for the preparation of the altar. Some

of the parents or godparents of the newly baptized could be invited to present the gifts. (*Ceremonial of Bishops* 446)

"The eucharistic prayer should include the intercessions (interpolations) provided in the Sacramentary for the newly baptized and their godparents." (*Ceremonial of Bishops* 446) These intercessions can be found in the section of the Sacramentary containing the text of Ritual Masses. There are special insertions for all four eucharistic prayers.

At the final blessing "the priest

may use one of the formulas provided in the rite of baptism (70, 247-249)." (RB 29) If space permits, the presider might invite the parents and godparents to come before the altar with their newly baptized children to receive this final blessing. The newly baptized and the parents and godparents could also join the recessional. In this way they would be at the doors of the church to receive the congratulations and best wishes of the assembly.+

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DOING IT RITE

Lenten Season Reminders

RITE OF ELECTION

In preparation for the Rite of Election, every parish is encouraged to celebrate the particular rite of sending which fits its circumstances (106ff for catechumens alone; 434ff for candidates alone; 530ff for parishes with both catechumens and candidates). This celebration would best take place on the First Sunday of Lent, prior to the rites at the Cathedral.

Parishes with children of catechetical age who will be baptized, confirmed, and welcomed to the table this Easter are encouraged to send these children to the Rite of Election as well. Parishes are reminded that they are not to delay confirmation for any children of catechetical age who are to be baptized.

COMMUNAL PENANCE SERVICES

Every effort should be made to schedule communal celebrations of the sacrament of Penance during Lent. No parish may schedule "general absolution." Although individual confessions may be scheduled in parishes according to pastoral need, Lenten Communal Penance Services should not be scheduled during the days of the Triduum, nor on the Monday of

Holy Week, April 6, 1998, to allow priests and people to attend the Chrism Mass at the Cathedral.

THE TRIDUUM

In planning and scheduling services "care should be taken especially during... Holy Week and the Easter Triduum not to stage the various liturgies as plays." (*Lectionary for Masses with Children* 52)

HOLY THURSDAY

According to the Church's ancient tradition, all Masses without a congregation are prohibited on this day. The Mass of the Lord's Supper is celebrated in the evening. Every effort should be made not to schedule additional Masses on this day. Only with the permission of the local ordinary may another Mass be celebrated in the evening where pastoral considerations require it; and, in the case of true necessity, even in the morning, but only for those faithful who cannot otherwise participate in the evening mass. Care should be taken to ensure that celebrations of this kind do not take place for the benefit of private persons or of small groups, and they are not to the detriment of the main Mass.

(see: *Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Paschal Feasts* 47)

GOOD FRIDAY

The celebration of the Lord's Passion is to take place in the afternoon, at about 3 o'clock. The time will be chosen as will seem most appropriate for pastoral reasons in order to allow people to assemble more easily, for example, shortly after midday or in the late evening, however not later than 9 o'clock. (see *Circular Letter* 63)

EASTER VIGIL

The Easter Vigil is not an anticipated Mass, but a true vigil and, therefore, it may not begin until nightfall. This means that the Easter Vigil celebrated on April 11, 1998 should be scheduled 45 to 60 minutes after sunset to assure darkness. Sunset will take place at 7:32 P.M. This means the Easter Vigil is not to begin before 8:15 PM at the earliest. "The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before nightfall.... This rule is to be taken according to its strictest sense." (*Circular Letter* 78)

CHILDREN AND THE WAY OF THE CROSS

“Various kinds of celebrations play a major role in the liturgical formation of children and in their preparation for the Church’s liturgical life.”

(Directory for Masses with Children DMC 13) Sunday Eucharist is vital to the life of the Church and the source of the spiritual formation of the people of God. On the other days the Church has a rich tradition of noneucharistic liturgy and devotions. These celebrations, if celebrated properly, foster the liturgical spirit. During the season of Lent, there is a rich tradition of celebrating the Way of the Cross both privately and publicly. This devotion “should be encouraged” *(Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and the Celebration of the Paschal Feasts CL 20, 72)* and can be celebrated with children.

Often the celebrations of the Way of the Cross available are burdened with wordy reflections which are more conducive to private recitation than public devotion. Even celebrations of the Way of the Cross prepared for use with children are often no more than “a read along” session with a leader. The experience often lacks visual stimulation, movement, music, and seldom jars the religious imagination. In a parochial school and/or religious education situation large numbers of children and scheduling become additional obstacles. The task of leading a large number of children,

usually carrying bookbags for dismissal, to an experience of prayer and worship becomes challenging and often “borderline” impossible.

When the Way of the Cross is celebrated publicly in the context of a gathered community of worshippers, preparation must focus on the elements of ritual prayer. Rather than concentrating on reflective words, preparation shifts to ritual elements such as “gestures and postures, processions, Word, song, dialogue, silence, and use of symbol.” *(Lectionary for Masses with Children LMC 22)* It makes good sense to follow the principles of ritual prayer with children. Worship and prayer with children is “not a matter of creating some entirely special rite, but rather of retaining, shortening, or omitting some elements, or of making a better selection of text.” (DMC 3) In the following paragraphs principles of ritual prayer with children will be discussed and applied to preparing a celebration of the Way of the Cross for a parochial school and/or religious education setting.

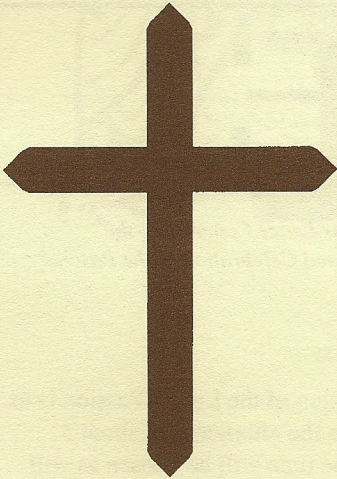
PROCESSION

Beginning with early church pilgrimages to the Holy Land to the present day visitors who retrace the steps of Jesus’ Passion along the *Via Dolorosa*, the experience of the Stations of the Cross always allowed for reflection on the mystery of the cross and the

physical movement between stations. The stations are processional in nature, and as such require movement. Prayer is most engaging when we use our body. Physical movement invites participation in the prayer. In addition, processing unites a group of individuals into a single body, an assembly, a people. “In order to engage children’s authentic participation, worship must respect their need for physical involvement. They should be invited to participate in the actions of the liturgy whenever it is appropriate and possible. Their internal life is still very much dependent upon what they experience through their senses.” (LMC 22) Because of the formative power of moving in procession *(Ceremonial of Bishops CB 1093)*, the entire assembly of children should be encouraged and invited to participate. Sitting and passively watching the movement of a cross from station to station or watching scenic slides goes against the processional nature of Stations of the Cross and is the least effective.

CROSS

The cross used for the celebration of the Way of the Cross should be visually engaging and should give “eloquent witness” (LMC 50) to the Church’s reverence for this “most cherished sacred image.” (CB 1011) Of all sacred images, “the life-giving cross of Christ is preeminent.” (CB 1011) In the celebration of



the Stations of the Cross with children, attention to the cross used "should be given great prominence." (DMC 35) By its size, beauty, and the reverent way in which it is carried and handled, attention to the symbol/cross stimulates the religious imagination. Most effective would be the use of one cross, which is the same cross for all liturgical celebrations. The cross carried for the celebration of the Way of the Cross would be the same cross that is displayed on the feast of the Holy Cross and the same cross used for the veneration on Good Friday.

SCRIPTURE

The Way of the Cross is more than the reading of an author's spiritual reflection. The devotion prayed publicly is a ritual. A ritual celebration demands a proclamation of the Scripture. There is no story, no scriptural adaptation, no dramatic presentation — no matter how effective — that replaces the proclamation of the word of God. A proclamation of one of the Passion accounts from the *Lectionary for Masses with Children* is more appropriate. The ritual proclamation of the Passion, composed of reading, dialogue in song, silence and reflection, with the use of appropriate gestures and symbols, draws us into the event.

MUSIC

Music must be given great importance in all of the Church's celebrations (*Music in Catholic Worship* MCW 23) but it is to be especially encouraged in every way for worship with children. (DMC 30) Music assists those gathered to express and share the faith that is within them. However, transporting the vital importance of music to all church celebrations, including

those celebrated during the week, has been difficult. Music has always been a part of the Stations of the Cross. Sacred, ancient processions were always accompanied by singing. The *Stabat Mater*, a hymn which sings the stations from the point of view of Jesus' mother, has a long association with the Way of the Cross. The singing of songs such as *Stabat Mater* or *Were You There?* heightens the text so they speak more fully and effectively. (MCW 23)

CATECHESIS

Preparation and planning the Way of the Cross with children take time and must be invested with personal and prayerful faith, care, attention, and enthusiasm. (MCW 9) Part of the preparation for the celebration of the Stations with children is a *suitable* (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* RCIA 75) catechesis that supports this ritual prayer. Children need some supportive catechesis on walking, reflecting, contemplating, and responding. Prayer calls for "informed participants; fruitful participation in catechesis calls for the spiritual enrichment that comes from liturgical participation." (*National Catechetical Directory for Catholic of the United States: Sharing the Light of Faith* USANCD 36) Remember "good celebrations foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations may weaken and destroy it." (MCW 6)

Celebrating the Stations of the Cross with children is about fostering a liturgical spirit. The Stations should be "fashioned in accord with the sacred liturgy," they should in "some way be derived from it," and "lead" our young pilgrims "to it." (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* CSL 13) Walking the Way of the Cross "begins with and flows from a clear

desire to assist them to participate in the worship of the entire community." (LMC 53) A "creative" experience of the Way of the Cross is simply ritual prayer celebrated well. Efforts in celebrating the Stations of the Cross in a parochial school/religious education setting are about forming disciples through the patterning of lives by walking the Way of the Cross!+

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Director-Worship Office



Worship Office Website

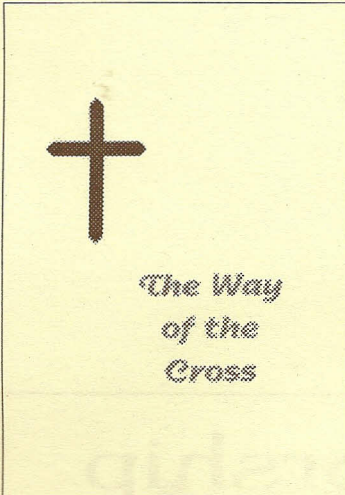
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THE WAY OF THE CROSS



Sister Sandra DeMasi, SSJ

This booklet is prepared in a form that can be used by a presider for the ritual celebration of the Way of the Cross with children. It contains an introduction, suggestions for supportive catechesis, and text for a ritual celebration of the Way of the Cross with children. Cost. \$6 / 2 copies for \$10

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