

# Introduction

*“A fully Christian life cannot be conceived without participation in the liturgical services in which the faithful, gathered into a single assembly, celebrate the paschal mystery.”*

DIRECTORY FOR MASSES WITH CHILDREN, #8

The Mass is innately fascinating for children. How many of us played Mass when we were young, using candy wafers for communion? One young man I know even wore vestments his mother made for his “home” Masses. Even though my childhood Masses were in Latin, I knew that when I was there, I was giving glory to God. I remember how proud I was when I was able to chime in with “two-two-O” at certain times in the liturgy. I also recall my joy in swinging on a tire my father hung from a tree and singing away with gusto a majestic, “*Et in terra pax hominibus.*”

## **Understanding and Appreciation**

Young Catholics today are fortunate that our liturgies are in English and not a foreign language. However, children still need to be helped to understand and appreciate the Eucharist. It has to be translated for their lives. Why should we take pains to do this for them? Because the Eucharist is the heart and center of the Christian life. It is our most important prayer, our greatest act of worship, the highest point of contact with the incarnate Christ.

During the Eucharist we offer our almighty and loving God thanksgiving and praise. We remember and make present the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which saved us. We participate in the paschal mystery of Jesus: his death and resurrection. We are

nourished by God’s word and then by God’s very self in communion. As a community, the body of Christ, we are united in faith and love as we celebrate the sacred meal that is a forerunner of the eternal banquet of love.

## **More Than Good Feelings**

Children can enjoy Mass because of its repetition, its various forms of human expression, and the experience of sharing an event in community. It is important, however, that they derive more than good feelings from the Eucharist. Granted, liturgy is basically an adult ritual and a mystery; yet, if adaptations are made and children are introduced to its riches on their own level, they will find it has meaning for them and their lives. Moreover, they will be better prepared to participate in the Eucharist when they are adult members of the community.

Teaching children about the liturgy does not mean catechizing them during Mass. Instruction about the significance, parts, and history of the Mass, its prayers, vestments, and vessels should take place outside of liturgy. This can be done in the classroom or during a class or family church tour. Likewise, individual Masses with their particular symbols and rituals should be prepared for prior to the actual celebration.

## Liturgy Teaches

The liturgy is its own teacher; it needs no other. Participating in it can teach children in the way they learn best: through their senses and actions. The experience of a good liturgy can have a powerful impact on children, just as it does for adults. A woman even told me that she began inquiring about the Catholic faith because of a Catholic funeral she attended. She said she was drawn to share the faith, hope, and love of the community that she witnessed worshipping at the Mass.

Of course, one of the most effective ways to teach children about liturgy is through example. I once saw a father at Mass with his daughter, who was about four years old. He stood her on the railing of the pew in front of him so that she leaned against him. When it was time to cross himself before the gospel, he crossed her forehead, lips, and heart. That child was learning worship rituals from her parent, who is her primary teacher in the eyes of the Church.

Recently I saw a young boy returning from communion behind his grandfather. Both had a rosary in their hands. They were even on the same decade. I'm not advocating praying the rosary during Mass, but the example illustrates the influence of adult models on children.

I highly recommend having adults participate in school Masses. Invite parents, grandparents, school staff members, and other significant adults to the children's liturgies, and encourage them to take active roles. Ask the school librarian to do the reading, a parent to read the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful), the custodian to take up the gifts, and the school secretary to be an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist.

Older children can serve as role models for the younger children. Pair the children in the lower grades with children in the upper grades, and have them sit together at Mass. This also motivates the older children to behave better.

## Lively Celebrations

Sadly, all too often children are subjected to dry, unfathomable liturgies. Not only is the celebration over their heads, but it doesn't resemble a celebration at all. No wonder they are bored. No wonder they don't care to go to Mass. With a little creativity and effort, Masses can be more appealing to children. We can involve them in the preparation and as active participants. We can use symbols, actions, and words that speak to their hearts.

What liturgies stand out in your mind? Probably those that were a little different. I recall a Mass where I was the only member of the congregation. Each time the priest prayed "you," he looked at me and nodded. Imagine the impact of the words, "This is my body which will be given up for you." Another Mass that is particularly memorable for me was a celebration at SS. Paul and Augustine Parish in Washington. The music and singing of this predominantly Black community sent my heart soaring.

At another parish Mass on the feast of the Holy Family, we each drew a Scripture verse from a basket. Mine was tailor-made for my family situation at that time. By providing weekday Masses for children that are just a little different, we can make the experience of liturgy more interesting. By exercising creativity and ingenuity and by allowing the children to exercise theirs, we can bring about liturgical experiences that make a lasting impression.

Our aim, of course, is not to make every Mass extraordinary. That will not prepare children for the liturgies they will experience as adults. Most of children's Masses should be recognizable as the rituals that are the tradition and heritage of our Church. For example, certain responses should stay the same. But something special every now and then in the children's liturgies will make them more meaningful.

## What's in This Book

The first part of this book gives general suggestions for how to vary liturgies. The second and major part contains ideas for weekday Masses based on the readings in the *Lectionary for Masses with Children*. This lectionary is no longer in print. If you do not have one available, you will still find this book helpful. The Scripture references are provided for the readings on which each plan is based. This enables you to use them and the suggestions related to them for a Mass. On the other hand, if you prefer to stay with the readings given in the adult lectionary, you will find all of the readings used in this book listed in the back. Planners and homilists can easily see if the day's readings given in the adult lectionary are included in this book.

It's helpful to know that the 1973 *Directory for Masses with Children* states: "If all the readings assigned to the day seem to be unsuited to the capacity of the children, it is permissible to choose readings or a reading either from the Lectionary of the Roman Missal or directly from the Bible, but taking into account the liturgical seasons" (43).

Plans for the Masses comprise an introduction, universal prayer, special features to appeal to the children, suggested songs, and ideas for homilies. Not every priest has the ability to speak to children. The presider may be unable to express thoughts in the simple language of children and be unfamiliar with stories and examples that are geared to them. As a result, he may be uncomfortable and ineffective in addressing children. In this case, the *Directory for Masses with Children* allows the presider to permit another adult participating in the Mass to speak to the children after the gospel reading (DMC, 24). The suggested stories, illustrations, and themes provided here will facilitate this ministry for the presider or the person he designates to speak to the children.

The ideas in this book can also be incorporated into paraliturgical celebrations in classrooms and homes. These celebrations usually include readings, prayers, rituals, and songs and are similar to

our eucharistic celebration. Thus they help foster children's understanding of liturgy.

Suggestions are also given for the proper of saints for the entire year, not only the school months, so that this book is a resource for teachers of vacation Bible schools and other summer religion programs.

## Who It's For

This book is for catechists, DREs, priests, ministers of the liturgy, and anyone else responsible for planning liturgies for children. Many of the ideas draw on the imagination and talents of the participants. Sometimes a minor change will color the whole liturgy for children, just as a small adjustment in a kaleidoscope changes the whole scene.

To those so in awe of the liturgy that they hesitate to make such adjustments, I quote what Aidan Kavanagh warned in his book *Elements of Rite: A Handbook of Liturgical Style*: "To be consumed with worry over making liturgical mistakes is the greatest mistake of all. Reverence is a virtue, not a neurosis, and God can take care of Himself"

By making Masses meaningful to young hearts and minds, we enable children to be more open to their power and lead them to love and prize the Eucharist. Most important, we comply with the request of Jesus, "Let the children come to me" (Luke 18:16).

## General Guidelines

Over the years many people have asked for a resource that they could use for children's liturgies, and this book is a response to that plea. The titles, numbers, and page numbers referred to in this book correlate with the readings in the Liturgical Press edition of the *Lectionary for Masses with Children* (Weekdays). If you do not have this lectionary, ignore these references.

# Season of Advent

## 172 Prepare for the Coming of the Lord

(PAGE W5) ISAIAH 30:19B-21 • LUKE 12:35-38

*We are in Advent, the season when we prepare for the coming of Christ. During this eucharistic celebration, Christ will come to us in word, under the forms of bread and wine, and through one another. Let us be prepared to welcome him. Let our bodies and our voices show our thanks, our praise, and our joy that Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us.*

### Universal Prayer

The response is “*Lord, hear our prayer.*”

That during Advent the Church may become more ready for Jesus’ coming in glory at the end of the world, let us pray to the Lord.

That our government leaders may see Christ in others and serve them well, let us pray to the Lord.

That the poor and the sick may have the grace to know God’s goodness through the help of others during Advent, let us pray to the Lord.

That our hearts will be ready to welcome Christ in all the ways he comes to us, let us pray to the Lord.

### Special Features

- Hold an Advent wreath ceremony and explain the symbolism of the Advent wreath.
- Distribute cards that say “Prepare” or purple ribbons to wear as reminders to pray, listen, and obey all during Advent.
- Play a recording of an Advent song as the children assemble for Mass.

### Songs

Alleluia; Hurry, the Lord Is Near; Come, Lord Jesus; Do Not Delay; The King of Glory; The King Shall Come; O Come, O Come, Emmanuel; Prepare the Way; Let the Valleys Be Raised; Soon and Very Soon; We Long for You, O Lord

### Homily Ideas

*Visual:* A clock

Show a clock and ask the children to recall an experience of expecting someone to come at a certain time. Perhaps a parent was supposed to come home, or a friend or relative was coming to visit.

Ask the children to remember how they felt as the time drew near and how they prepared for the hour.

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Ask how the children would have felt if they had missed seeing the person because they were not prepared. Maybe they had the wrong time or were not home on time or fell asleep.

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Remind the children that we must be ready and waiting for Jesus or we will miss him. In the gospel Jesus tells us about a master whose servants wait for him and welcome him. These servants are models for us. They are awake and prepared for their master's return at night. They have their lamps burning and open the door for him. The master was pleased with these good servants and rewarded them.

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Tell the children that the first reading says that the Lord comes to help us and to show us the road to follow. Jesus comes to us in many ways. In Advent we remember how the chosen people

waited for him until he came on Christmas night in Bethlehem. Every day he comes to us in spiritual ways in other people and in the gift of the Eucharist. Someday at the end of the world he will come again, this time in glory and majesty.

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Suggest three ways to be ready for Jesus: pray, listen, and obey. Explain: Pray extra during Advent. Listen to what God is saying through your parents and in the Bible. Try harder to obey God's laws. These three ways will make our hearts ready to recognize and welcome Jesus when he comes. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, got ready for him in these ways.

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Tell the Russian legend of Babushka. It is about an old woman who is told one night that there is a young couple with a newborn baby in a barn. Babushka plans to take gifts to the family, but since she is busy about the house and it is night, she decides to sleep first and go the next day. The next morning when she goes with her gifts to the barn, the family is gone. Babushka missed the savior!

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## 173 The Kingdom of Heaven Is Near

(PAGE W8) ISAIAH 30:19, 23–24, 26 • MATTHEW 9:35–10:1, 5A, 6–7

*God is kind to us. God wants to heal us from all that keeps us from being as well and happy as we should be. For this reason God sent Jesus into the world to save us. During this Mass we pray that Jesus will come to bring us health. We pray for the coming of God's kingdom, in which there will be no sorrow, no sickness, and no tears.*

### Universal Prayer

The response is “*Lord, come heal us.*”

That our church leaders may heal and be healed especially through the sacrament of reconcilia-

tion, we pray to the Lord.

That our world leaders may be instruments of healing for all people, we pray to the Lord.

That those who are sick in mind or body may be comforted and healed, we pray to the Lord.

That sinners may come to know the healing touch of God in their lives, we pray to the Lord.

That we may be people who heal and soothe others, we pray to the Lord.

### Special Features

- At the sign of peace, invite participants to greet one another with “May Jesus heal you.”

- Make “prescriptions” for a happy life on slips of paper. These can be particular virtues or Scripture quotations. After communion pass a box or boxes around and let each person draw out a paper and spend time quietly reflecting on how to develop the virtue or take to heart the Scripture message.
- Give each person a bandaid as a reminder to be a healer like Jesus, or give out cards with a purple chi rho drawn on them as an Advent reminder.

### Songs

Because of Jesus; Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus; Every Valley; Lay Your Hands; Mighty Lord; Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory; My Soul in Stillness Waits; Wake, Awake

### Homily Ideas

*Visuals:* A bandage, a globe

Tell about a time when you were sick and a doctor helped you get well. Ask the children how many of them have been sick. Comment how wonderful it is to feel better again after doing what the doctor says.

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Explain that Jesus is called the divine physician because he brought healing to the whole world. After original sin had brought sin, suffering, and death into the world, Jesus gave us a chance for new life again. (Put the bandage on the globe.) Jesus gave us salvation. The word “salvation” is like the word “salve,” which heals us and soothes us.

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Explain that Jesus’ power over sickness and death shown in his miracles was a sign of his power to give us new life. Give or ask the children to give examples of times when Jesus healed people.

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Name some “diseases” we might have: the crabbies, the gimmies, the lazies, big heads, sharp tongues, itching fingers. Comment that the power of Jesus can heal us and make us better persons, the ones we were meant to be. We need Jesus.

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Name some “diseases” the world has today: poverty, violence, racism, and so on. Give examples from the news that all is not well. The world needs the peace and love that Jesus brings.

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Comment that the chi rho, which stands for Christ, resembles the symbol on a prescription. (You might show cards with the symbols.) Christ is what the world needs to be healed. During Advent we pray that Jesus will come to save us.

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Recall that Isaiah said that as soon as God hears us crying, God comes to help and “binds up his people’s injuries.” We can pray during Mass for a particular healing we would like for ourselves or someone else.

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Point out that in the gospel Jesus gave his disciples power to heal too. (Ask how we can “heal” others by being kind, by loving them, by praying for them.)

# Ordinary Time

## 193 Light for the World

(PAGE W73) EPHESIANS 5:8-10 • MATTHEW 5:14-16

*Jesus told us to be a light for the world. Whenever we celebrate the Eucharist, we are filled more with the light of Christ's glory and have more power to be shining lights ourselves. Let us pray during this Mass to be light especially for those who are in darkness.*

### Universal Prayer

The response is “*Lord, hear our prayer.*”

That our Holy father, bishops, priests, and deacons may reflect God's goodness, we pray to the Lord.

That our government leaders may spread the light of goodness and truth by their decisions, we pray to the Lord.

That the lives of those who suffer may be brightened by the warmth of love others show them, we pray to the Lord.

That we may have the courage and confidence to be light for people, we pray to the Lord.

That our relatives and friends who have died may soon live in the eternal light of heaven, we pray to the Lord.

### Special Features

- Have an entrance procession with a child from each grade carrying a candle of different color and size. Have them set these candles on boxes covered with cloth that are arranged in the sanctuary like a mountain.
- Add gestures to the gospel and read it as an echo pantomime with the children repeating each line and gesture.
- As a communion reflection, pray Cardinal John Henry Newman's prayer “Radiating Christ”:

*Help me, Jesus, to spread your light everywhere I go. Fill my soul completely with your spirit and life. Then let your light shine through me so that every person I meet will feel your presence in my soul. Let others look and see no longer me but only you. Stay with me, Jesus, and I will be your light to others. The light I give to others will be coming from you; none of it will be mine. Let me praise you in the way you love best—by letting others know you, not so much by my words, but by my joyful spirit and example. I will be you shining on others through me. Amen.*

## Songs

Bring Forth the Kingdom; Christ Be Our Light; I Am the Light of the World; The Light of Christ; Light of the World; Sing Out His Goodness; This Little Light of Mine; Thy Word Is a Lamp; We Are the Light of the World; What You Hear in the Dark

## Homily Ideas

**Visuals:** A flashlight and a pail or box

Ask the children how many of them have ever been afraid of the dark. Talk about the helplessness and fear that dark causes because we can't see when it's dark.

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Introduce Jesus as the light of the world who came into our darkness to bring light and happiness. Explain that because we were joined to Christ at baptism, we are to be light like him. Refer to the first reading in which Paul tells us to act like people of the light. Ask what Paul says we are to do to make our light shine (be good and honest and truthful as we try to please the Lord).

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Demonstrate Jesus' lesson in the gospel by putting a flashlight under a pail. Ask why the light isn't helping anyone. Tell the children that they are to be lights for other people by doing good. They are

to be lights to family members at home by helping. They are to be lights to friends by helping them do what is right. They are to be lights to everyone who sees them. They are to let their love for Jesus show by praying, by participating in Mass, and by doing what they know he wants. That way they will be like a bright city on a hill. All people will see the good they do and be encouraged to do good themselves.

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Talk about being light by showing how to care for others and for the world.

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Mention that our spiritual batteries are recharged whenever we celebrate the sacraments. Then we can be good, steady lights, not flickering lights or lights that go out.

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Tell the children the motto of the Christophers: "It's better to light one candle than to curse the darkness." Ask them what they think it means.

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Give one or two examples of someone in the school or parish who is a light for others. Better yet, have a parishioner who is a light give a three-minute witness talk.

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Quote Mother Teresa of Calcutta's advice, "Make all your life something beautiful for God."

# PROPER *of* SAINTS

Numbers followed by “A” or “B” denote celebrations found in the New Roman Missal but not in the *Lectionary for Masses with Children*.

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## JANUARY

### 234 JANUARY 1

Octave of Christmas,  
Mary, Mother of God (SOLEMNITY)

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### 235 JANUARY 2

Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen,  
*Bishops, Doctors of the Church* (MEMORIAL)

Basil and Gregory were bishops who lived in the fourth century. They were good friends who studied together in Athens, Greece. When Basil formed a group of monks, Gregory joined him, and for about five years they lived in the same monastery. Basil preached against a heresy called Arianism, which denied that Jesus was God. He also wrote rules for monks that are still followed today. Gregory was an outstanding preacher. For a time he was bishop of Constantinople, a city where the Church was sadly divided because of Arianism. Both Basil and Gregory worked for peace and unity in the Church.

**Themes:** Friendship in the faith, monks, divinity of Christ

### 235A JANUARY 3

Most Holy Name of Jesus (MEMORIAL)

Soon after his birth, Jesus received his name officially. Through an angel God directed Mary and Joseph to name his Son Jesus. This name is fitting for the savior of the world because it means “God saves.” The name of Jesus is powerful. He told us that whatever we ask the Father in his name will be given to us. The name of Jesus is holy because it stands for him, the Son of God. The Bible says that the name Jesus is “the name that is above every name” (Philippians 2:9). That is why we are careful how we use it. We say it with love and respect. Saying the name Jesus is one of the simplest ways to pray.

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### 236 JANUARY 4

Elizabeth Ann Seton,  
*Married Woman, Religious Founder* (MEMORIAL)

Elizabeth Ann Seton is the first American-born person to be canonized a saint. Born in New York

City in 1774, she belonged to a wealthy Episcopalian family and even attended George Washington's inauguration. Even as a young girl she cared for poor people in her neighborhood. When she was nineteen, she married William Seton. The couple had five children. When her husband's business went bankrupt and he became sick, they traveled to Italy, where after a few weeks William died. In Italy Elizabeth stayed with a Catholic family. When she returned to America, she and her children became Catholics. In Baltimore in 1808 Elizabeth Ann began the first American parish school. The next year in Emmitsburg, Maryland, she began the first religious community in America, the Sisters of Charity.

*Themes:* Vocations, serving the needy

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### 237 JANUARY 5

John Neumann,

*Bishop, Religious, Missionary (MEMORIAL)*

John Neumann, a humble, hardworking saint, was born in Bohemia in 1811. He had a strong desire to work as a missionary in the United States. Before he was twenty-four years old, he had mastered six languages and had completed studies for the priesthood. Because his bishop thought there were enough priests in his country, John was not ordained. He sailed for America and arrived with one suit of clothes and one dollar. Three weeks later he was ordained in New York. At first John did missionary work with German-speaking people, traveling miles on horseback. He joined the Redemptorists and then became bishop of Philadelphia. There he had to deal with an anti-Catholic group and people who did not accept him personally. He encouraged Catholic schools and began the practice of Forty Hours (eucharistic devotion) in the United States.

*Themes:* The priesthood, the Eucharist

### 238 JANUARY 6

André Bessette, *Religious*

André Bessette was born in Montreal, Canada. His parents died young, and he was adopted when he was twelve. André could barely read or write; and when he tried to be a shoemaker, baker, and blacksmith he was unsuccessful. He joined the Congregation of the Holy Cross and was asked to leave because of his bad health.

A wise bishop persuaded the community to let André stay. Brother André was the doorkeeper at the College of Notre Dame for forty years. A man of deep prayer, he had the gift of healing. Throngs of people visited him daily for a cure or spiritual direction. Each year he received 80,000 letters. André gave St. Joseph the credit for his healing miracles.

When his community tried in vain to purchase nearby land, André buried a medal of St. Joseph on the property. The owners suddenly changed their minds. André raised money bit by bit to have a church built in honor of St. Joseph. At the church, people he cured left behind their crutches and canes. It took fifty years to build St. Joseph's Oratory, which stands because of Brother André's devotion to St. Joseph.

*Themes:* St. Joseph, ministry of healing, sacrament of the anointing of the sick

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### 239 JANUARY 7

Raymond of Penyafort, *Presbyter, Religious*

Raymond lived almost a hundred years, from about 1175 to 1275. He was born near Barcelona, Spain, where he became a priest and professor of philosophy and canon law. At the age of forty-seven he joined the Dominicans, who had him write a four-volume work about the sacrament of penance. Then the pope called him to Rome to be his confessor and to make a collection of canon law.

# Commons

## Common of the Dedication of a Church

(PAGE W263) ISAIAH 56:1, 6-7 or EPHESIANS 2:20-22 or REVELATION 21:1-4 • LUKE 19:1-10

*We celebrate today that God is with us in a special way in our churches, in particular in (name of church being celebrated). When we are in church, we are in God's presence no less than Moses was on Mount Sinai or in the Meeting Tent, no less than Zacchaeus was when Jesus came to his house. A church is God's house where we, God's people, gather to worship. Let us sing and pray joyfully to our good God, who is here in this church with us today.*

### Universal Prayer

The response is "*Lord, hear our prayer.*"

That church members may be aware that God dwells in them and strive to be holy, we pray to the Lord.

That those who worship in the church that we celebrate today may come closer to God, we pray to the Lord.

That all people may come to know the one true God, we pray to the Lord.

That people who feel hurt or rejected by the Church feel at home again in the Church through the love of others, we pray to the Lord.

That those who build churches and those who take care of churches may be blessed, we pray to the Lord.

### Special Features

- Include the whole assembly in the entrance procession and recessional.
- Give each child a booklet about the parish church.
- As a communion reflection, show slides of different churches. Conclude with pictures of people who are temples of God.
- Have a special collection for the upkeep of your church.
- Decorate the church with banners.

### Songs

Christ Be Our Light; The Church's One Foundation; Father, We Thank Thee; I Rejoiced; Into the House of God; Out of Darkness; Sing a New Church; Sing of the Lord's Goodness; Song of the Body of Christ; We Have Been Told; Where Two or Three Are Gathered

## Homily Ideas

**Visual:** A tabernacle lamp

Comment that the Catechism calls God not only God Most High but God Most Near. God is near us by being with us in churches in a special way. Explain that people long ago considered mountains to be holy places where God was. They went up a mountain to meet God and to offer sacrifice. We do not have to go up a mountain to meet God. Today a church is sacred space, for it is God's house.

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Point out the tabernacle lamp, which is a sign of God's presence. The ever-burning light is a symbol of God's glory and love. In church we can find strength, comfort, peace, and joy.

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Discuss church etiquette: genuflecting reverently, taking holy water and blessing ourselves reverently when we enter and leave the church, keeping quiet and being silent in the sacred space.

• • •

Mention that church is a foretaste and reminder of our eternal home where we will be with God forever. The church is not only God's house, but our house too, for we are God's children.

• • •

Encourage love for the church by reminding the children that important events in our lives are celebrated there: baptisms when we become children of God and members of the faith community, wed-

dings, and funerals. Explain that the greatest act we can perform takes place in church: the offering of Jesus to the Father in the sacrifice of the Mass.

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Refer to how happy Zacchaeus was when Jesus said he would come to his house and eat with him. Remind the children that we can also be with Jesus when we come to church. Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us, in the Blessed Sacrament. At Mass we express sorrow for our sins, as Zacchaeus did, and we share a sacred meal.

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Point out that some people say they don't have to pray in church. They can pray anywhere. Tell the story about the priest who visited a woman who asked why she should go to church. As they talked, a live coal fell out from the fireplace onto the floor. Apart from the other coals, it soon cooled off and died. The priest said, "That is why you need to worship with other members of the Church."

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Talk about the church whose dedication is being commemorated. Point out features of the parish church. Explain that people make sacrifices so that their church is a fitting dwelling for God.

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Explain that God dwells in us, too, and that is why Paul tells us in the letter to the Ephesians that we are like a holy temple. Together all the church members are a building, and Christ is the most important stone.

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## Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary

(PAGE W267) ISAIAH 9:2-3A, 6-7A or ZECHARIAH 2:14-15 or ACTS 1:12-13A, 14 or EPHESIANS 1:3-6  
LUKE 1:26-38 or LUKE 2:41-51 or JOHN 19:25-27

*Because Mary agreed to be the mother of Jesus, she became the holy mother of God. She is honored above all people on earth. Mary is also our mother. We look*

*to her for help. Mary is our model of how to live like Christ. We try to imitate her faith in God, her obedience, and her love. During this Eucharist we think of*

*Mary and honor her as we offer the sacrifice of her Son, who redeemed us.*

### Universal Prayer

The response is “*Lord, hear our prayer.*”

For the Church, that its members may resemble their mother, Mary, we pray to the Lord.

For mothers everywhere, that they may truly love their children and be willing to sacrifice for them, we pray to the Lord.

For sinners, that they may turn again to God, we pray to the Lord.

For ourselves, that we may have the faith of Mary, we pray to the Lord.

### Special Features

- Arrange flowers and candles around the image of Mary.
- Use a musical setting for the second responsorial psalm provided, which is the Magnificat. Accompany it with a dance by a few students.
- Display banners with the titles of Mary.
- Distribute holy cards of Mary to the children, perhaps Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

### Songs

Blest of the Lord; Hail Mary: Gentle Woman; Hail, Holy Queen; Hail, Mary; Holy Is His Name; Immaculate Mary; Mary Full of Grace; Mary’s Joy; Mary’s Song; My Soul Rejoices; Sing of Mary

### Homily Ideas

**Visual:** A picture of Mary and Jesus

Comment that most pictures of Mary show her with Jesus. Explain that because Mary is Jesus’ mother, she is very important. When God asked her to be the Mother of God, Mary said yes. As a

result, God came into the world as a human being, like one of us. Jesus was born, and we were saved from sin and death.

Elaborate on what it meant to be the Mother of Jesus. Mary gave birth to him, fed him, taught him to speak and walk, washed his clothes, and taught him to pray. Recall how frightened she must have been when he was missing for three days. Point out that when Jesus was found in the Temple, she reacted as their parents would have by asking, “How could you do this to us?”

Refer to the picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Help to reinforce the relationship between Mary and Jesus. Tell the children that this picture shows Jesus with a shoe partly off. It is said that in Jesus’ hurry to run to his mother’s arms, it came loose.

Explain that because Mary was the Mother of God, she had the privilege of being free from sin from the first moment she existed. She is the greatest Christian.

Ask the children what they think Mary was doing when the angel appeared to her in Nazareth. Explain that Mary was like us, but she is a model for us to follow. Ask the children for examples of Mary’s love for God and others (the Annunciation, the visitation, the wedding feast of Cana, standing at the foot of the cross).

Explain that Mary is our mother, too. Jesus said on the cross, “Behold your mother.” In the early days of the Church she was with the apostles and first Christians to help them. Mary loves and cares for us today. Recall her appearances at Guadalupe, Lourdes, and Fatima. Mary prays for us.

Tell the story of someone who experienced Mary’s help, for instance, Father Patrick Peyton, who was cured of tuberculosis by praying to her.

# Sacraments

## Baptism

(PAGE W303) EZEKIEL 36:24-28 or 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-13 or GALATIANS 3:26-28  
MATTHEW 22:35-40 or MARK 10:13-16 or JOHN 15:1-4 or JOHN 15:5-8 or JOHN 15:9-11

*At this Eucharist we celebrate the sacrament of baptism when we become children of God and members of the Church. Through baptism, God fills us with the divine life of grace, and we become joined to Christ. We make an agreement with God to live as children of God in faith and love. Today let us pray to be true to our baptismal promises. [If someone will be baptized during the Eucharist, add: Let us pray especially that (Name) will live up to the call to be a Christian.]*

### Universal Prayer

The response is “*Lord, hear our prayer.*”

For the Church, that the members may teach and baptize people of all nations, let us pray to the Lord.

For world leaders, that they may govern with Christlike love and justice, let us pray to the Lord.

For the newly baptized, especially (*Name*), that they may realize how much Christ loves them and live out their baptismal promises faithfully, let us pray to the Lord.

For ourselves, that we may draw others to Christ by our lives of love, let us pray to the Lord.

### Special Features

- Display a banner with a fish and water or other symbols of baptism.
- Begin Mass with the sprinkling rite.
- After the homily have the children renew their baptismal vows.
- Distribute buttons or badges with an image of a fish and the Greek acronym for Christ: ICHTHYS.

### Songs

All My Days; Awake, O Sleeper; Center of My Life; Christ Is Here; Church of God; God’s Holy Family; The Goodness of God Cries Out; I Am the Vine; If You Belong to Me; In Christ There Is No East or West; In Him We Live; The Lord Is My True Shepherd; New Life; Out of Darkness; Sing a New Church; Song of Baptism (at a baptism); We Are Many Parts; We Have Been Told; You Have Put on Christ

## Homily Ideas

**Visual:** A basin and water in a pitcher

Pour water into a basin in a long, visible stream. Tell the children that St. Francis wrote a song in which he called water “Sister Water, who is so useful and precious and pure.” Ask the children what is so wonderful about this creation of God (water has no color. It fits its container. It sparkles in the sun. It’s fun to play in. It washes and heals. It gives life).

• • •

Elaborate on the relationship of water to life. Early life forms came from water. We cannot survive if we go many days without water. All living things, all plants and animals, need water to live. When we were babies still inside our mothers, we were surrounded by water. Seventy percent of our weight is water.

• • •

Comment that because water is necessary for life it is a good symbol for the sacrament of baptism. At baptism we receive new life, God’s life. We are born again as God’s adopted children. This is awesome. It is somewhat like becoming princes and princesses. We are royal people who can someday live in God’s kingdom of heaven.

• • •

Tell the story of a man whose baby son was brought home after being baptized. The man knelt down and prayed before the baby because he knew that God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, were now living in the heart of his son.

• • •

Point out that if we are all children of God, then we are all brothers and sisters. We must love and care for one another, even our brothers and sisters on the other side of the world.

• • •

Explain that at baptism we become Christians, members of Christ’s body. After baptism we are as close to Christ as branches on a vine. We are filled with Christ’s life. We can live good lives as long as we stay connected to him. We do this by trying to

be like Christ, by following Christ’s commandment of love. Then Christ will love us. If we separate ourselves from Christ by sin, then we will not be able to bear fruit. We will be like a branch that is cut off from the vine. Ask what happens to that separated branch (it shrivels up and dies).

• • •

Point out that the members of families sometimes have things in common. For instance, the members of the Smith family might all be fun to be with, or the members of the Ling family might all like to keep things neat and clean. People should be able to tell we are members of the Christian family, God’s family, because of how loving we are.

• • •

Explain that the early Christians used a fish as a secret way to identify themselves when they were being hunted and killed for being Christian. They chose a fish because in Greek each letter of the word “fish” (ICHTHYS) begins a word in the phrase “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.” Also, when we are baptized, we become like little fish in the big ocean that is Christ. We are surrounded by his love and care.

• • •

Tell about Martin Luther King, Jr., who worked for civil rights for all. One day in a march through an all-white neighborhood, he was pelted with tomatoes and eggs. People screamed and cursed him and the other marchers. Later a reporter asked him whether he was afraid and what he was thinking during the march. Martin Luther King answered, “Yes, of course, I am always afraid, but I keep thinking, ‘I’m baptized. I’m baptized.’” Ask what he meant. (He had courage to witness from the grace of his baptism. God was with him.)

• • •

Explain the symbolism of the candle (the light of faith) and the white garment (the new life of Christ) which are presented to the baptized.

• • •

Tell the children that at baptism, in return for all that God does for us, we promise to believe in God, try to do good, and stay away from evil.

# Masses for Various Needs and Occasions

## Beginning of the School Year

(PAGE W333) 2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-12, 16

MATTHEW 13:44-46 or MATTHEW 25:14-30 or JOHN 14:23-26

*Today we celebrate the beginning of the school year. Together this year we will grow in many ways and learn many things. Most importantly, we will learn more about Jesus Christ and his teachings. At this Eucharist in which Jesus is present with us, let us ask him to open our minds and hearts to all that is true, good, and beautiful. Let us ask him to help us know him.*

### Universal Prayer

The response is “*Lord, hear our prayer.*”

That the Church may grow in the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, let us pray to the Lord.

That our leaders may govern us with true wisdom, let us pray to the Lord.

That those persons who work at (Name) School may help the children be better people, let us pray to the Lord.

That the children of (Name) School may be good students and not waste their talents, let us pray to the Lord.

That children who do not have the opportunity to

learn in fine schools may be helped, let us pray to the Lord.

### Special Features

- In the entrance procession have children carry objects from school life and add them to a display, for instance, a globe, textbooks, a basketball, a pencil case, a DVD, a notebook, a school jacket, and crayons.
- If the gospel about the parable of the talents is chosen, children might pantomime it.
- Pray the following as a communion reflection:

*Teach me, Jesus, to be like you: to use my talents, to work hard, and to do my best. Teach me the lessons that will help me live a good life: the lessons of hope, kindness, and love. Teach me to be unselfish and generous, to make friends, and to be a good friend. Teach me to be patient with myself and others. Teach me to forgive and to be a peacemaker. Teach me to choose what is right. Above all, teach me, Jesus, to do the will of our Father in heaven.*

## Songs

All That We Have; Bloom Where You're Planted; City of God; Come, Holy Ghost; I Say "Yes," Lord; If the Lord Does Not Build the House; I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light; Lead Us On; Seek Ye First; They'll Know We Are Christians; We Are the Church; We Are the Family; We Have Been Told; Living and Loving and Learning

## Homily Ideas

*Visual:* A textbook

Ask the children what they learned during the summer. Tell them that we never stop learning. Show a textbook and explain that with the help of teachers, other students, books, and computers, they learn in school. Comment that in the first reading, Paul tells us not to waste time loafing but to work. Ask the children what their work is (to learn in school).

. . .

Comment that Jesus had to learn. He learned how to walk and talk. He learned the history of his people and how to read Scripture. He probably learned the trade of carpentry. The gospels tell us that Jesus lived in Nazareth with Mary and Joseph and grew in wisdom, age, and grace. He is an example for us.

. . .

Tell the children that our minds make us like God instead of like the animals and other created things. Ask what we can do with our minds (think, learn, create, solve problems, make decisions). God wants us to develop our minds and use our talents. Quote the saying "A mind is a ter-

rible thing to waste." Ask the children how a mind can be wasted. Encourage them not to be like the lazy, good-for-nothing servant who buried his money.

. . .

Point out that knowledge is like the treasure or pearl in Jesus' parables. We must work hard to obtain it. We must read books, think, do homework, make reports, discuss. If we do these things, we will have a wonderful treasure that no one can take from us.

. . .

Tell the story of St. Isidore of Seville. When he was a boy, he often didn't do his homework and skipped his studies. One day when he should have been studying, he was out walking and saw an old stone well. In its walls were grooves that had been worn by thin wet ropes. By constant rubbing over a long time, rope had changed stone. Isidore realized that if he kept at his studies the way the rope had kept rubbing, he would someday be smart. Isidore began to study hard and became known and highly respected for his intelligence. Urge the students to study even when it's hard, even when they don't feel like it.

. . .

Explain to the students that the Holy Spirit in them will help them learn what is more important than arithmetic, history, or science. The Holy Spirit will help them learn more about Jesus and his teachings. Ask how the children will learn about Jesus this year (through religion class, Masses, the Bible). Comment that Jesus is called the master teacher. Those who followed him were called disciples. Suggest that the children try hard to be good disciples of Jesus.