

33 MASS LESSONS *AND* ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

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INTRODUCTION

This book is filled with ideas for connecting Sunday Mass to children's lives. As we explore the Mass with children, we invite them to experience God's presence and love. The Mass gives us a glimpse at how much God loves us. The celebration of the Mass should be at the center of our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. We must also live the Mass in our lives during the week.

Celebrating Sunday Mass is something we joyfully do together as the people of God. We celebrate God's unending love for each of us and all of us. We want children to understand how they are part of a community of God's people that supports and loves them. We walk our faith journey together. The Mass reminds us of who God is and who we are as the people of God. We remember all that God has done for us. Participating in the Mass reminds us of what is important in life.

The Mass celebrates our relationship with God and with one another. Our actions show children who God is. When children know that God loves them, then they will be able to respond to God's love. It is important for children and all of us to understand that we participate in Sunday Mass not only to praise our God, but also to support other people by our presence and our prayers.

There are ideas and activities in this book for exploring each part of the Mass. A variety of activities are included that actively involve the children in learning. The ideas can be used in children's faith formation programs, Catholic schools, whole community catechesis, home school programs, family ministry, First Communion preparation, parish celebrations, with groups of families, and as part of a parish-wide study of the Mass.

The activities in this book are for children

ages five to eleven but can be easily adapted for other age groups. The emphasis is on learning activities that speak to the way children learn. The ideas show children the importance of celebrating Sunday Mass together and living the Mass in our lives from Sunday to Sunday.

A strength of this book is the children's take-home idea. Sometimes, children have trouble grasping the central idea of a lesson, because it may include a lot of information or they may not understand what to do with the information presented to them. The children's take-home idea for each part of the Mass gives the children a simple reminder of what they learned and a practical suggestion for living it during the coming week.

There is a family page for each part of the Mass. This gives families some ideas of how to share the Mass with children and some activities they can do together at home. This supports parents as the primary teachers of their children in the ways of faith. There is also a prayer that families can pray together. The family activities show family members how to live the Mass in their lives.

In addition, there is a note to First Communion families at the bottom of each family page. This note is for families and extended families who are preparing children of any age to receive First Communion.

Through the Mass we celebrate who we are as God's people and all that God has done in our lives. We are renewed and strengthened by our time together and then go out to live as Jesus Christ showed us. As we walk with children through the Mass, we can help them explore the connection of Sunday Mass with their daily lives and the joy of being God's children.

Praise and Thanks

→ **Why We Go to Mass**

Catechist notes

At Mass we are called to praise the God who created us, redeemed us, and lives in us. Assure children that God loves each one of us. We must help children connect Sunday Mass with how they live the other days of the week.

Sharing question

Why do we go to Sunday Mass?

Exploring the Mass

We come together at Sunday Mass to celebrate who God is and who we are as the people of God. The Mass is part of our identity as Catholics.

Reasons why Sunday Mass is important

- We lift up our hearts and our lives to the God who created us.
- We respond to God's unending love for each of us.
- We come as we are with our joys and sorrows and bring them to the Lord.
- Together we give thanks to God for all that God has done for us.
- We come to support one another with our prayers and our presence.
- Renewed, we go out after Mass to live what we believe.

At Mass we encounter God in the words of Scripture, in the Eucharist, and in one another. We participate as a community at Mass on Sundays because that is the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Learning activity

Make a heart poster

Show children how to make a heart poster to remember that God loves each of us. Write "God loves us with an unending love" on a sheet of poster board. Each child cuts a heart from red paper and puts their name on it. Then all children glue their hearts onto the poster.

When children know that God loves them, they will be able to respond to God in their own lives. Sunday Mass reminds children that all of us are on this faith journey together.

Children's take-home idea

Remember that God loves you with an unending love. Open your heart this week and look for God's presence in your life through the wonders of creation and the people who care about you. God will always be with you.

Praying together

*Awesome God,
on a Sunday you raised Jesus Christ to new life,
and the world was forever changed.*

*Guide us to come together at Sunday Mass
on the first day of each new week.*

*We remember that you are the hope
of our lives, of the world,
and of people everywhere.*

Amen.



Why We Go to Mass

FAMILY IDEAS

The Mass is for all ages. We come together at Sunday Mass to celebrate who God is and who we are as the people of God. The Mass is part of our identity as Catholics. At Mass we encounter God in the word of Scripture, in the Eucharist, and in one another. Talk about why Sunday Mass is important to you and to the whole people of God.

- ▶ We respond to God who first loved us and gave us life. At Mass we give praise to our God for all God has done for us. Talk about the signs of God's love that we see in creation and in the people around us.
- ▶ We come to support one another with our prayers and our presence. We are all on this faith journey together. We thank God for all that God has done for us. We ask for the help we need for the week ahead. The Mass brings hope to our lives. Let's share hope with others too.

FAMILY PRAYER

Awesome God, we thank you for the gift of the Mass and your love for each of us. Help us to live in that love as a family and share your love with others. You are the hope of people everywhere. Amen.

Note to First Communion families

Encourage children preparing for First Communion to look for the good in life and in people. Teach them to have hope in God, hope in one another, and hope in the future. Hope is one of the most important gifts we can share with our children.

Gather Together

➔ PART OF THE MASS: *Introductory Rites*

Catechist notes

When we come together for Sunday Mass, we bring all that has happened to us during the week. We bring our dreams, our disappointments, and ourselves to God. Children need to know that God loves each of us with an unending love.

Sharing question

Why does God care about what is going on in our lives?

Exploring the Mass

God created us and has loved us since before we were born. The Mass is a gift that celebrates our relationship with God and with one another. We bring our cares and concerns before the Lord. We join our prayers with our parish community at Mass. We gather together to give praise to our God. The first part of the Mass is called the Introductory Rites.

Parts of the Introductory Rites

- Opening song
- Sign of the Cross
- Penitential Act
- Lord, have mercy
- Glory to God (omitted during Advent and Lent)
- Opening Prayer (Collect)

Learning activity

Join in an action prayer

We come together as a community in the Introductory Rites at Mass to give praise to God.

We want children to know the joy of being God's children and of having a relationship with God.

Children can pray to God with an action prayer. This activity does not depend on good reading skills. Children echo the words and actions of the catechist line after line.

God of all people,	<i>arms overhead</i>
we give you glory and praise	<i>nod head</i>
for your unending love for us.	<i>hands on heart</i>
May we listen to your voice	<i>hands behind ears</i>
speaking in our hearts	<i>hands over heart</i>
at Mass and in our lives.	<i>nod head</i>
Guide us to follow you	<i>walk in place</i>
and share your love	<i>hands on heart</i>
with other people each day.	<i>arms outstretched</i>
Amen.	<i>praying hands</i>

Children's take-home idea

Share your hopes and concern this week with God, who is always with you. Remember that God has loved you since before you were born. Pray in your own words and know that God hears your prayers.

Praying together

*God of all people,
we give you praise and glory
for creating us and calling us to life.
When we gather together at Mass,
help us to show love for you and others.
Guide us to live as a community of your people
after we leave Mass also. Amen.*



PART OF THE MASS: **Introductory Rites**

FAMILY IDEAS

At Mass we join our prayers together in praise of our God. We celebrate God's unending love for us. We bring our cares and concerns before the Lord. We support one another at Sunday Mass with our presence and our prayers.

- ▶ We want children to know the joy of being God's children. Encourage children to delight in God's love and God's creation. Point out signs of God's love in the world: people who care about us, sunshine to give light to our days, and music to speak to our hearts.
- ▶ Encourage children's participation in Sunday Mass by how you talk. Stress that we *get to go* to Mass, rather than we *have to go* to Mass. Make participating in Mass a priority when you plan your family's schedule.

FAMILY PRAYER

God of all people, we know that you created us and call us to life with you. When we gather at Mass, help us to praise you together. May we lift up our hearts and our voices to you. Help our family praise you by our words and actions each day. Amen.

Note to First Communion families

As we come together at Mass, ask God's help to prepare your child to receive First Communion. Involve extended family by asking them to pray for your child and share their faith stories. Getting ready for First Communion enriches all of us as we remember the importance of the sacrament of the Eucharist in our own lives.

People of God

➔ PART OF THE MASS: *Opening Song*

Catechist notes

The opening song at Mass unites us. Together we give praise and glory to God. Music touches our hearts and fills us with joy. Music is a part of Mass all over the world as people raise their hearts and voices to God. We begin and end our celebration of the Mass together in song.

Sharing question

Why do we begin Mass by singing a song together?

Exploring the Mass

The opening song unites us as the people of God. We joyfully come together as we get ready to begin our celebration of the Mass. We praise our God together. As we sing, the entrance procession begins, led by an altar server carrying the cross. The Book of the Gospels is also brought forward. The celebrant of the Mass comes in at the end of the procession.

Music is part of who we are as God's people. Music is a God-given gift. We are all called to join together by lifting our hearts and our voices in song as we celebrate Sunday Mass. Guide the children to understand that music helps us express our joy at being God's creation.

Learning activity

Encourage children to sing

Encourage children to sing at Mass by helping them become familiar with some of the music. Reassure children that if they don't know all the words, they can sing just the refrain to give praise to God.

Another idea is to pick one gathering song and discuss the words and message with the children. One song often sung as an opening song is "All Are Welcome" by Marty Haugen. Talk about the words in each verse. Sing the song with the children, and add simple gestures if you choose.

Children's take-home idea

Give praise to God this week with music. Sing a song of praise to God or listen to a Christian song on your iPad or other device. God has given us the gift of music that speaks to our hearts. Listen for the message of the song.

Praying together

*Loving God,
we praise you as the Creator of all people,
made in your image and likeness.
Teach us to love one another
as you love each one of us.
May our words, our actions, and our songs
at Mass give glory to you now and forever.
Amen.*



PART OF THE MASS: **Opening Song**

FAMILY IDEAS

The opening song at Mass unites us as the people of God. Through the God-given gift of music, we give praise and glory to God. Songs help us express what we believe. Music touches our hearts and fills us with joy as we lift up our voices to God.

- ▶ Encourage your child to sing with the parish community at Mass. It is fine to sing only the refrain of a song. For children who enjoy singing, check on the age requirement for the children's choir.
- ▶ Invite children to have joy in being children of God. In the car, play a music CD with catchy tunes about God's love, and sing along. Download a song you sing at Mass to your phone and listen to it when you are together. Talk about what it means to you all.

FAMILY PRAYER

Loving God, we gather together at Mass to give you praise for your unending love for us.

Teach our family to love others as you love each of us. May our words, our actions, and our songs at Mass give glory to you now and forever. Amen.

Note to First Communion families

Encourage your child to participate fully in the Mass by singing the songs and saying the prayers. We join our voices with others at Mass as the people of God. This helps us to celebrate the Eucharist in our minds and hearts.

Believe in Jesus

➔ PART OF THE MASS: *Sign of the Cross*

Catechist notes

Before he died, Jesus told his apostles to baptize “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). We begin our celebration of the Mass with the Sign of the Cross as a sign of faith in God. We remember all that God has done for us.

Sharing question

Why do we begin Mass with the Sign of the Cross?

Exploring the Mass

We start each Mass with the Sign of the Cross as a reminder of our baptism and our faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world. At baptism we were signed with the cross by our parents and godparents. At Mass we do it on our own.

The cross reminds us of how much God loves us. It is a sign and a promise that we are to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. We are people created by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and guided by the Holy Spirit. The Sign of the Cross reminds us that we are not alone, because God is always with us.

Learning activity

Put together sun catcher crosses

Encourage children to make individual stained-glass crosses as a reminder of the Sign of the Cross. Each child cuts out a large paper cross. Then they cut out the middle of the cross leaving just a ½-inch-wide outline. Children place their crosses on clear, self-adhesive shelf cov-

ering. They overlap squares of colored tissue paper inside the cross outline.

Help each child carefully cover his or her cross with another sticky sheet and then cut around the outside. This makes beautiful crosses to put in a window and let the sun shine through. The colorful crosses are a visual reminder that we called to follow Jesus in our lives.

Children’s take-home idea

The Sign of the Cross is an act of faith in our God. It reminds us and others that we are disciples of Jesus Christ. Every time you make the Sign of the Cross this week, remember how much God loves you.

Praying together

*Almighty God,
we have faith in you and thank you
for all that you have done for us.*

*Helps us to live our faith
by what we say and do each day.*

*We pray in the name of the Father
who created us, the Son who redeemed us,
and the Holy Spirit who guides our lives.*

Amen.



BELIEVE IN JESUS: Sign of the Cross

FAMILY IDEAS

We begin our celebration of the Mass with the Sign of the Cross as a prayer of faith in our God. The Sign of the Cross is also as a reminder of our baptism. We belong to God's family. We are people created by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and guided by the Holy Spirit.

- ▶ Display a cross in your home as a daily reminder that we called to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. There are a wide variety of crosses available, from a simple wooden cross to a beautiful painted cross. You can also make your own cross with your children.
- ▶ Encourage your children to make the Sign of the Cross with holy water as they enter the church for Mass. Explain that this is a sign of what we believe. When we make the Sign of the Cross, we remember that God is always with us.

FAMILY PRAYER

Almighty God, we ask that you bless our family today in all that we do and wherever we go. We pray this in the name of the Father who created us, the Son who redeemed us, and the Holy Spirit who guides our lives. Amen.

Note to First Communion families

Think about getting your child a cross as a First Communion gift. It can be a cross for their bedroom, if they don't already have one, or even a cross necklace.

Ask Forgiveness

➔ PART OF THE MASS: *Penitential Act*

Catechist notes

As a community of God's people, we ask God's forgiveness and we forgive others. We can be confident that God will always forgive us. (During the Easter season the rite of blessing with holy water may be used at the time of the Penitential Act.)

Sharing question

How can we do wrong by what we don't do?

Exploring the Mass

At Mass we pray the Penitential Act together. We ask God to forgive us for what we have done wrong and also for what we have failed to do right. When we do not make God a priority in our lives and when we could have made a difference in the life of someone else but did not step forward, we fail to be the people God created us to be.

We also ask our brothers and sisters to pray for us. We are a community of God's people and must support one another and forgive one another. God will never turn away from us. We encounter God's mercy and love at each Mass.

Learning activity

Draw peacemaker pictures

The Penitential Act reminds us that we are called to be people who live in peace. We are to forgive others as God forgives us. Talk with the children about living in peace with others.

Living in peace

- ▶ Ask forgiveness of others.
- ▶ Treat other people with dignity and respect.
- ▶ Stop making excuses when we do something wrong.
- ▶ Use words to bring healing, not hurt.
- ▶ Make friends with new people.
- ▶ Stand up for the rights of others.

Ask each child to draw a picture of themselves being a peacemaker. Then give children the opportunity to share their pictures with the group.

Children's take-home idea

God calls us to be peacemakers in the lives of others. Look for opportunities this week to live in peace. Make a choice to be who God created you to be. Use your words to bring peace and healing to the lives of others.

Praying together

*God of forgiveness,
we ask your forgiveness for the times
we have hurt others by our words and actions.
Forgive us also for the times
when we have failed to do what is right.
Guide us to live in mercy and forgiveness
and to be peacemakers in our lives each day.
Amen.*