DIRECTORY FOR MASSES WITH CHILDREN

Return to Spirit of the Season

INTRODUCTION

1 The Church must show special concern for baptised children who have yet to be fully initiated through the sacraments of confirmation and eucharist as well as for children who have only recently been admitted to holy communion. The circumstances of contemporary life in which children grow up are less favourable to their spiritual progress.[1] In addition parents sometimes scarcely fulfil the obligations they accepted at the baptism of their children to bring them up as Christians.

2 In the upbringing of children in the Church a special difficulty arises from the fact that liturgical celebrations, especially the eucharist, cannot fully exercise their inherent pedagogical force upon children.[2] Although the vernacular may now be used at Mass, still the words and signs have not been sufficiently adapted to the capacity of children.

In fact, even in daily life children do not always understand all their experiences with adults but rather may find them boring. It cannot therefore be expected of the liturgy that everything must always be intelligible to them. Nonetheless there is a fear of spiritual harm if over the years children repeatedly experience in the Church things that are barely comprehensible; for recent psychological study has established how profoundly children are formed by the religious experience of infancy and early childhood, because of the special religious receptivity proper to those years.[3]

3 The Church follows its Master, who "put his arms around the little children . . . and blessed them" (Mark 10:16). It cannot leave children in the condition described. The Second Vatican Council had already spoken in the Constitution on the Liturgy about the need of liturgical adaptation for various groups.[4] Soon afterward, especially in the first Synod of Bishops held in Rome in 1967, the Church began to consider more carefully how participation by children could be facilitated. On the occasion of the Synod, the President of the Consilium for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy said explicitly that it could not be a matter of "creating some entirely special rite but rather of retaining, shortening, or omitting some elements or of making a more appropriate selection of texts."[5]

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[1] See Congregation for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory* (hereafter, GCD), no. 5: *Acta Apostolicæ Sedis*, Commentarium officiale (Vatican City; hereafter, AAS) 64 (1972), pp. 101-102.

[2] See Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December 1963 (hereafter, SC), art. 33.

[3] See GCD, no. 78: AAS 64 (1972), pp. 146-147.

[4] See SC, art. 38; see also Congregation for Divine Worship, Instruction *Actio pastoralis*, on Masses with special groups, 15 May 1969: AAS 61 (1969), pp. 806-811.

[5] Consilium for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy, "De Liturgia in prima Synodo Episcoporum" (hereafter, "De Liturgia"), *Notitiæ* 3 (1967), p. 368.

4 All the details of eucharistic celebration with a congregation were determined in the General Instruction of the revised Roman Missal published in 1969. Then this Congregation began to prepare a special Directory for Masses with Children, as a supplement to the Instruction. This was done in response to repeated petitions from the entire Catholic world and with the cooperation of men and women specialists from almost every nation.

5 Like the General Instruction, this Directory reserves some adaptations to the conferences of bishops or to individual bishops.[6]

Adaptations of the Mass for children may be necessary in a given country but cannot be included in a general directory. In accord with the Constitution on the Liturgy, art. 40, the same conferences of bishops are to propose such adaptations to the Apostolic See for introduction into the liturgy with its consent.

6 The Directory is concerned with children who have not yet entered the period of preadolescence. It does not speak directly of children who are physically or mentally handicapped, because a broader adaptation is sometimes necessary for them.[7] Nevertheless, the following norms may also be applied to the handicapped, with the necessary changes.

7 The first chapter of the Directory (nos. 8-15) gives a kind of foundation by considering the variety of ways in which children are introduced to the eucharistic liturgy. The second chapter (nos. 16-19) briefly treats Masses with adults in which children also take part. Finally, the third chapter (nos. 20-54) treats at greater length Masses with children in which only some adults take part.

[6]See nos. 19, 32, 33 of this Directory.

[7]See the Order of Mass with deaf and mute children of German-speaking regions approved, that is, confirmed by this Congregation, 26 June 1970 (Protocol no. 1546/70).

Chapter One

THE INTRODUCTION OF CHILDREN TO THE EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

8 A fully Christian life is inconceivable without participation in the liturgical services in which the faithful, gathered into a single assembly, celebrate the paschal mystery. Therefore, the religious initiation of children must be in harmony with this purpose.[8] The Church baptises children and therefore, relying on the gifts conferred by this sacrament, it must be concerned that once baptised they grow in communion with Christ and each other. The sign and pledge of that communion is participation in the eucharistic table, for which children are being prepared or led to a deeper realisation of its meaning. This liturgical and eucharistic formation may not be separated from their general education, both human and Christian; indeed it would be harmful if their liturgical formation lacked such a foundation.

9 For this reason all who have a part in the formation of children should work together and consult toward one objective: that, even if children already have some feeling for God and the things of God, they may also experience in proportion to their age and personal development the human values that are present in the eucharistic celebration. These values include the community activity, exchange of greetings, capacity to listen and to seek and grant pardon, expression of gratitude, experience of symbolic actions, a meal of friendship, and festive celebration.[9]

Eucharistic catechesis, dealt with in no. 12, should develop such human values. Then, depending on their age and their psychological and social situation, children will gradually open their minds to the perception of Christian values and the celebration of the mystery of Christ.[10]

10 The Christian family has the greatest role in instilling these human and Christian values.[11] Thus Christian formation, provided by parents and other educators, should be strongly encouraged in relation to the liturgical formation of children as well.

By reason of the duty in conscience freely accepted at the baptism of their children, parents have an obligation to teach them gradually how to pray. This they do by praying with them each day and by introducing them to prayers said privately.[12] If children, prepared in this way even from their early years, take part in the Mass with their family whenever they wish, they will easily begin to sing and to pray in the liturgical community and indeed will already have some initial idea of the eucharistic mystery.

If, however, the parents are weak in faith but still wish their children to receive Christian formation, they should be urged at least to communicate to their children the human values mentioned already and, when the occasion arises, to participate in meetings of parents and in non-eucharistic celebrations held with children.

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[8]See SC, art. 14, 19.

[9]See GCD, no. 25: AAS 64 (1972), p. 114.

[10]See Vatican Council II, Declaration on Christian Education Gravissimum educationis, 28 October 1965 (hereafter, GE), no. 2.

[11]See GE, no. 3.

[12]See GCD, no. 78: AAS 64 (1972), pp. 146-147.

11 In addition, the Christian communities to which the individual families belong or in which the children live also have a responsibility toward children baptised in the Church. By giving witness to the gospel, living communal charity, and actively celebrating the mysteries of Christ, the Christian community is an excellent school of Christian and liturgical formation for the children who live in it.

Within the Christian community, godparents or other persons noted for their dedicated service can, out of apostolic zeal, contribute greatly to the necessary catechesis in the case of families that fail in their obligation toward the children's Christian upbringing.

Pre-school programs, Catholic schools, and various kinds of associations for children serve these same needs in a special way.

12 Even in the case of children, the liturgy itself always exerts its own inherent power to instruct.[13] Yet within religious-education programs in the schools and parishes the necessary importance should be given to catechesis on the Mass.[14] This catechesis should be directed to the child's active, conscious, and authentic participation.[15] "Suited to children's age and capabilities, it should, by means of the main rites and prayers of the Mass, aim at conveying its meaning, including what relates to taking part in the Church's life."[16] This is especially true of the text of the eucharistic prayer and of the acclamations by which the children take part in this prayer.

The catechesis preparing children for first communion calls for special mention. In it they should learn not only the truths of faith regarding the eucharist but also how from first communion on—after being prepared according to their capacity by penance— they can as fully integrated members of Christ's Body take part actively with the people of God in the eucharist, sharing in the Lord's table and the community of their brothers and sisters.

13 Various kinds of celebrations may also play a major role in the liturgical formation of children and in their preparation for the Church's liturgical life. By the very fact of such celebrations children easily perceive some liturgical elements, for example, greetings, silence, and common praise (especially when this is sung together). But care must be taken that the instructive element does not become dominant in these celebrations.

14 Depending on the capacity of the children, the word of God should have a greater and greater place in these celebrations. In fact, as the children's spiritual capacity develops, celebrations of the word of God in the strict sense should be held rather frequently, especially during Advent and Lent.[17] These celebrations are able to encourage in the children an appreciation of the word of God.

15 While all that has been said remains true, the final purpose of all liturgical and eucharistic formation must always be a greater and greater conformity to the gospel in the daily life of the children.

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[13]See SC, art. 33.

[14]See Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium*, on worship of the eucharist, 25 May 1967 (hereafter, EuchMyst), no. 14: AAS 59 (1967), p. 550.

[15]See GCD, no. 25: AAS 64 (1972), p. 114.

[16]See EuchMyst, no. 14: AAS 59 (1967), p. 550; GCD, no. 57: AAS 64 (1972), p. 131.

[17]See SC, art. 35:4.

Chapter Two

MASSES WITH ADULTS IN WHICH CHILDREN ALSO PARTICIPATE

16 In many places parish Masses are celebrated, especially on Sundays and feast days, at which a good many children take part along with the large number of adults. At these Masses the witness of adult believers can have a great effect upon the children. Adults can in turn benefit spiritually from experiencing the part that the children have within the Christian community. The Christian spirit of the family is greatly fostered when children take part in these Masses together with their parents and other family members.

Infants who as yet are unable or unwilling to take part in the Mass may be brought in at the end of Mass to be blessed together with the rest of the community. This may be done, for example, if some parish helpers have been taking care of them in a separate area.

17 Nevertheless, in Masses of this kind it is necessary to take great care that the children present do not feel neglected because of their inability to participate or to understand what happens and what is proclaimed in the celebration. Some account should be taken of their presence: for example, by speaking to them directly in the brief comments (as at the beginning and the end of Mass) and at some point in the homily.

Sometimes, moreover, if the place itself and the nature of the individuals permit, it possibly will be appropriate to celebrate the liturgy of the word, including a homily, with the children in a separate, but not too distant, location. Then, before the eucharistic liturgy begins, the children are led to the place where the adults have meanwhile celebrated their own liturgy of the word.

18 In these Masses it may also be very helpful to give some tasks to the children. They may, for example, bring forward the gifts or sing one or other of the songs of the Mass.

19 If the number of children is large, it may at times be suitable to plan this kind of Mass so that it corresponds more closely to the needs of the children. In this case the homily should be directed to them but in such a way that adults may also benefit from it. Wherever the bishop permits, in addition to the adaptations already provided in the Order of Mass, one or other of the particular adaptations described later in the Directory may be employed in a Mass celebrated with adults in which children also participate.

Chapter Three

MASSES WITH CHILDREN IN WHICH ONLY A FEW ADULTS PARTICIPATE

20 In addition to the Masses in which children take part with their parents and other family members (which are not always possible everywhere), Masses with children primarily in which only a few adults take part are recommended, especially during the week. From the beginning of the liturgical reform it has been clear to everyone that some adaptations are necessary in these Masses.[18]

Such adaptations, but only those of a more general kind, will be considered later (nos. 38-54).

21 It is always necessary to keep in mind that such eucharistic celebrations must lead children toward the celebration of Mass with adults, especially the Masses at which the Christian community must come together on Sundays.[19] Thus, apart from adaptations that are necessary because of the children's age, the result should not be entirely special rites, markedly different from the Order of Mass celebrated with a congregation.[20] The purpose of the various elements should always correspond with what is said in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal on individual points, even if at times for pastoral reasons an absolute *identity* cannot be insisted upon.

OFFICES AND MINISTRIES IN THE CELEBRATION

22 The principles of active and conscious participation are in a sense even more significant for Masses celebrated with children. Every effort should therefore be made to increase this participation and to make it more intense. For this reason as many children as possible should have special parts in the celebration: for example, preparing the place and the altar (see no. 29), acting as cantor (see no. 24), singing in a choir, playing musical instruments (see no. 32), proclaiming the readings (see nos. 24 and 47), responding during the homily (see no. 48), reciting the intentions of the general intercessions, bringing the gifts to the altar, and performing similar activities in accord with the usage of various peoples (see no. 34).

To encourage participation, it will also sometimes be helpful to have several additions, for example, the insertion of motives for giving thanks before the priest begins the dialogue of the preface.

In all this, it should be kept in mind that external activities will remain fruitless and even harmful if they do not serve the internal participation of the children. Thus sacred silence has its importance even in Masses with children (see no. 37). These things should be attended to with great care so that the children do not forget that all the forms of participation reach their high point in eucharistic communion, when the body and blood of Christ are received as spiritual nourishment.[21]

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[18]See no. 3 of this Directory.

[19]See SC, art. 42 and 106.

[20]See "De Liturgia," *Notitiæ* 3 (1967), p. 368.

[21]See pages 7-70, General Instruction of the Roman Missal (hereafter, GIRM), no. 56.

23 It is the responsibility of the priest who celebrates a Mass with children to make the celebration festive, familial, and meditative.[22] Even more than in Masses with adults, the priest should bring about this kind of attitude of mind which depends on his personal preparation and his manner of acting and speaking with others.

The priest should be concerned above all about the dignity, clarity, and simplicity of his actions and gestures. In speaking to the children he should express himself so that he will be easily understood, while avoiding any childish style of speech.

The free use of introductory comments[23] will lead children to a genuine liturgical participation, but these should not be merely didactic explanations.

It will help him to reach the hearts of the children if the priest sometimes expresses the invitations in his own words, for example, at the penitential rite, the prayer over the gifts, the Lord's Prayer, the sign of peace, and communion.

24 Since the eucharist is always the action of the entire ecclesial community, the participation of at least some adults is desirable. These should be present not as monitors but as people who by praying with the children are participating in the Mass and who can help them to the extent necessary.

With the consent of the pastor or rector of the church, nothing forbids one of the adults who is participating in a Mass with children from speaking to the children after the gospel reading, especially if the priest finds it difficult to adapt himself to the mentality of children. In this matter the norms issued by the Congregation for the Clergy should be observed.

Even in Masses with children the diversity of ministries should be encouraged so that the Mass may stand out clearly as the celebration of a community.[24] For example, readers and cantors, whether children or adults, should be employed. In this way a variety of voices will keep the children from becoming bored.

PLACE AND TIME OF CELEBRATION

25 The primary place for the eucharistic celebration for children is the church. Within the church, however, a space should be carefully chosen, if available, that will be suited to the number of participants. It should be a place where the children can act freely according to the requirements of a living liturgy that is suited to their age.

If, however, the church does not satisfy these demands, it will sometimes be suitable to celebrate the eucharist with children outside a place of worship. But in that case the location chosen should be appropriate and worthy of such a celebration.[25]

[22]See no. 37 of this Directory.
[23]See GIRM, no. 11.
[24]See SC, art. 28.
[25]See GIRM, no. 253.

26 For Masses with children the time of day should be chosen that best corresponds to the circumstances of their lives so that they may be most open to hearing the word of God and to celebrating the eucharist.

27 Weekday Mass in which children participate can certainly be celebrated with greater effect and less danger of boredom if it does not take place every day (for example, in boarding schools). Moreover, preparation can be more careful if there is a longer interval between diverse celebrations.

Sometimes it will be preferable to have common prayer, to which the children may also contribute spontaneously, or else a common meditation, or a celebration of the word of God. These are ways of continuing the eucharistic celebrations already held and of fostering a deeper participation in subsequent celebrations.

28 When the number of children who celebrate the eucharist together is very great, attentive and conscious participation becomes more difficult. Therefore, if possible, several groups should be formed; these should not be set up rigidly according to age but with regard for the children's progress in religious formation and catechetical preparation.

During the week such groups appropriately may be invited to the sacrifice of the Mass on different days.

PREPARATION FOR THE CELEBRATION

29 Each eucharistic celebration with children should be carefully prepared beforehand, especially with regard to the prayers, songs, readings, and intentions of the general intercessions. This should be done in discussion with the adults and with the children who will have a special ministry in these Masses. If possible, some of the children should take part in preparing and ornamenting the place of celebration and preparing the cup with the plate and the cruets. Presupposing the appropriate internal participation, such activity may also help to develop the spirit of community celebration.

SINGING AND MUSIC

30 Since singing must be given great importance in all celebrations, it is to be especially encouraged in every way for Masses celebrated with children, in view of their special affinity for music.[26] The culture of various peoples and the children's own capabilities should be taken into account.

If possible, the acclamations should be sung by the children rather than recited, especially the acclamations that form part of the eucharistic prayer.

31 To facilitate the children's participation in singing the *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, and the *Agnus Dei*, it is permitted to use with the melodies appropriate vernacular texts, accepted by competent authority, even if these do not correspond exactly to the liturgical texts.[27]

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[26]See GIRM, no. 19.

[27]See Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Musicam sacram*, on music in the liturgy, 5 March 1967 (hereafter, MS), no. 55: AAS 59 (1967) p. 316.

32 The use of "musical instruments can also add a great deal" in Masses with children, especially if they are played by the children themselves.[28] The playing of instruments will help to sustain the singing or to encourage the reflection of the children; sometimes in their own fashion instruments express festive joy and the praise of God.

Special care should always be taken, however, that the musical accompaniment does not overpower the singing or become a distraction rather than a help to the children. Music should correspond to the purpose intended for the different times at which it is played during the Mass.

With these precautions and with due need and special discretion, recorded music may also be used in Masses with children, in accord with norms established by the conferences of bishops.

GESTURES

33 In view of the nature of the liturgy as an activity of the entire person and in view of the psychology of children, participation by means of gestures and posture should be strongly encouraged in Masses with children, with due regard for age and local customs. Much depends not only on the gestures of the priest,[29] but also on the manner in which the children conduct themselves as a community.

If, in accord with the norm of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal,[30] a conference of bishops adapts the gestures and postures at Mass to the mentality of a people, it should take the special condition of children into account or should decide on certain adaptations that are for children only.

34 Among the actions that are considered under this heading, processions and other activities that involve physical participation deserve special mention.

The children's entering in procession with the priest celebrant serves to help them better to experience a sense of the communion that is thus being created.[31] The participation of at least some children in the procession with the Book of Gospels makes clearer the presence of Christ announcing the word to his people. The procession of children with the cup and the gifts expresses more clearly the value and meaning of the preparation of the gifts. The communion procession, if properly arranged, helps greatly to develop the children's devotion.

VISUAL ELEMENTS

35 The liturgy of the Mass itself contains many visual elements and these should be given great prominence with children. This is especially true of the particular visual elements in the course of the liturgical year, for example, the veneration of

[28]See MS, no. 62: AAS 59 (1967), p. 318.
[29]See no. 23 of this Directory.
[30]See GIRM, no. 21.
[31]See GIRM, no. 24.

the cross, the Easter candle, the lights on the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, and the variety of colours and liturgical appointments.

In addition to these visual elements that belong to the celebration itself and to the place of celebration, it is appropriate to introduce other related elements that will permit children to perceive visually the wonderful works that God performed in creation and redemption and thus support their prayer. The liturgy should never appear as something dry and merely intellectual.

36 For the same reason, the use of pictures prepared by the children themselves may be useful, for example, as illustrations of a homily, as visual expressions of the intentions of the general intercessions, or as inspirations to reflection.

SILENCE

37 Even in Masses with children "silence should be observed at the designated times as part of the celebration"[32] lest too great a place be given to external action. In their own way children are also genuinely capable of reflection. They need some guidance, however, so that they will learn how, in keeping with the different moments of the Mass (for example, after communion or even after the homily[33]), to recollect themselves, meditate briefly, or praise and pray to God in their hearts.[34]

Besides this, care should be taken, much more than in Masses with adults, that the liturgical texts should be proclaimed unhurriedly and intelligibly, with the necessary pauses.

PARTS OF THE MASS

38 The general structure of the Mass, which "is made up as it were of two parts: the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the eucharist," should always be maintained, as should certain rites to open and conclude the celebration.[35] Within individual parts of the celebration, the adaptations that follow seem necessary if children are truly to experience, in their own way and according to the psychological patterns of childhood, "the mystery of faith . . . by means of rites and prayers."[36]

39 Some rites and texts should never be adapted for children lest the difference between Masses with children and the Masses with adults become too pronounced.[37] These are "the acclamations and the responses of the faithful to the priest's greeting,"[38] the Lord's Prayer, and the Trinitarian formulary at the end of the blessing with which the priest concludes the Mass. It is urged, moreover, that children should become accustomed to the Nicene Creed little by little, the right to use the Apostles' Creed indicated in no. 49 remaining intact.

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[32]GIRM, no. 23.
[33]See EuchMyst, no. 38: AAS 59 (1967), p. 562.
[34]See GIRM, no. 23.
[35]See GIRM, no. 8.
[36]SC, art. 48.
[37]See no. 21 of this Directory.
[38]GIRM, no. 15.

A. Introductory Rite

40 The introductory rite of Mass has as its purpose "that the faithful coming together take on the form of a community and prepare themselves to listen properly to God's word and to celebrate the eucharist worthily."[39] Therefore every effort should be made to create this disposition in the children and not to jeopardise it by any excess of rites which are set forth here.

It is sometimes permissible to omit one or other element of the introductory rite or perhaps to expand another element. There should always be at least some introductory element, which is completed by the opening prayer. In choosing individual elements, care should be taken that each one be used from time to time and that none be entirely neglected.

B. Reading and Explanation of the Word of God

41 Since readings taken from Sacred Scripture "form the main part of the liturgy of the word,"[40] even in Masses celebrated with children biblical reading should never be omitted.

42 With regard to the number of readings on Sundays and feast days, the decrees of the conferences of bishops are to be observed. If three or even two readings appointed on Sundays or weekdays can be understood by children only with difficulty, it is permissible to read two or only one of them, but the gospel reading should never be omitted.

43 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 for Mass or directly from the Bible, but taking into account the liturgical seasons. It is recommended, moreover, that the individual conferences of bishops see to the composition of lectionaries for Masses with children.

If, because of the limited capacity of the children, it seems necessary to omit one or other verse of a biblical reading, this should be done cautiously and in such a way "that the meaning of the text or the intent and, as it were, style of the Scriptures are not distorted."[41]

44 In the choice of readings the criterion to be followed is the quality rather than the quantity of the texts from Sacred Scripture. A shorter reading is not in itself always more suited to children than a lengthy reading. Everything depends on the spiritual advantage that the reading can bring to the children.

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[39]GIRM, no. 24.

[40]GIRM, no. 33.

[41]The Roman Missal, *Lectionary for Mass*, typical edition, 1969, Introduction, no. 7d; see also 2nd English edition, 1981, Introduction, no. 77.

45 In the biblical texts "God is speaking to his people . . . (and) Christ is present in the midst of the faithful through his own word."[42] Paraphrases of Sacred Scripture should therefore be avoided. On the other hand, the use of translations that may already exist for the catechesis of children and that are accepted by the competent authority is recommended.

46 Verses of psalms, carefully selected in accord with the understanding of children, or a song in the form of psalmody or the *Alleluia* with a simple verse should be sung between the readings. The children should always have a part in this singing, but sometimes a reflective silence may be substituted for the singing.

If only a single reading is chosen, the singing may follow the homily.

47 All the elements that will help explain the readings should be given great consideration so that the children may make the biblical readings their own and may come more and more to appreciate better the value of God's word.

Among such elements are the introductory comments that may precede the readings[43] and that by explaining the context or by introducing the text itself help the children to listen better and more fruitfully. The interpretation and illustration of the readings from Sacred Scripture in the Mass on a saint's day may include an account of the saint's life, not only in the homily but even before the biblical readings in the form of an introduction.

Depending on the text of the reading, it may be helpful for the children to read it in parts distributed among them, as is provided for the reading of the Lord's passion during Holy Week.

48 The homily explaining the word of God should be given great prominence in all Masses with children. Sometimes the homily intended for children should become a dialogue with them, unless it is preferred that they should listen in silence.

49 If the profession of faith occurs at the end of the liturgy of the word, the Apostles' Creed may be used with children, especially because it is part of their catechetical formation.

C. Presidential Prayers

50 The priest is permitted to choose from the Roman Missal texts of presidential prayers more suited to children, so that he may truly associate the children with himself. But he is to take into account the liturgical season.

51 Since these prayers were composed for adult members of the faithful, however, the principle simply of choosing from among them sometimes does not serve the purpose of having the children regard the prayers as an expression

[42]GIRM, no. 33.

[43]See GIRM, no. 11.

[44]See Consilium for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy, Instruction *Comme le prévoit*, on the translation of liturgical texts for celebrations with a congregation, 25 January 1969, no. 20.

of their own life and religious experience.[44] If this is the case, nothing prevents the text of prayers of the Roman Missal from being adapted to the needs of children, but this should be done in such a way that, preserving the purpose of the prayer and to some extent its substance as well, the priest avoids anything that is foreign to the literary genre of a presidential prayer, such as moral exhortations or a childish manner of speech.

52 The eucharistic prayer is of the greatest importance in the eucharist celebrated with children because it is the high point of the entire celebration.[45] Much depends on the manner in which the priest proclaims this prayer[46] and on the way the children take part by listening and making their acclamations.

The disposition of mind required for this central part of the celebration and the calm and reverence with which everything is done must make the children as attentive as possible. Their attention should be on the real presence of Christ on the altar under the elements of bread and wine, on his offering, on the thanksgiving through him and with him and in him, and on the Church's offering, which is made at that moment and by which the faithful offer themselves and their lives with Christ to the eternal Father in the Holy Spirit.

For the present, the four eucharistic prayers approved by the supreme authority for Masses with adults and introduced into liturgical use are to be employed until the Apostolic See makes other provisions for Masses with children.[47]

D. Rites Before Communion

53 When the eucharistic prayer has ended, the Lord's Prayer, the breaking of bread, and the invitation to communion should always follow,[48] because these elements have the principal significance in the structure of this part of the Mass.

E. Communion and the Following Rites

54 Everything should be done so that the children who are properly disposed and who have already been admitted to the eucharist may go to the holy table calmly and with recollection and thus take part fully in the eucharistic mystery. If possible, there should be singing, suited to the children, during the communion procession.[49]

The comments that precede the final blessing[50] are important in Masses with children. Before they are dismissed, they need some repetition and application of what they have heard, but this should be done in a very few words. In particular, this is the appropriate time to express the connection between the liturgy and life.

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[45]See GIRM, no. 54.

[46]See nos. 23 and 37 of this Directory.

[47]After the promulgation of this Directory, three eucharistic prayers for children were published by the Congregation for Divine Worship on 1 November 1974. These prayers may be used at Masses in which the majority of those present are children, in those countries in which the conference of bishops has approved their use.

[48]See no. 23 of this Directory.

[49]See MS, no. 32: AAS 59 (1967), p. 309.

[50]See GIRM, no. 11.

At least sometimes, depending on the liturgical seasons and different occasions in the children's life, the priest should use more expanded forms of blessing, but at the end should always retain the Trinitarian formula with the sign of the cross.[51]

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55 The contents of the Directory have as their purpose to help children readily and joyfully to encounter Christ together in the eucharistic celebration and to stand with him in the presence of the Father.[52] If they are formed by conscious and active participation in the eucharistic sacrifice and meal, they should learn better day by day, at home and away from home, to proclaim Christ to others among their family and among their peers by living the "faith, that works through love" (Galatians 5:6).

This Directory was prepared by the Congregation for Divine Worship. On 22 October 1973, Pope Paul VI approved and confirmed it and ordered that it be published.

Congregation for Divine Worship, 1 November 1973, the solemnity of All Saints.

By special mandate of the Supreme Pontiff.

+ Jean Cardinal Villot
Secretary of State

+ Annibale Bugnini
Titular Archbishop of Diocletiana
Secretary of the Congregation for
Divine Worship

[51]See no. 39 of this Directory.

[52]See Order of Mass, Liturgy of the Eucharist, Eucharistic Prayer II.

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