

Your child in church



Learning to be comfortable in Church

Children are never too young to come to church. In church we gather as one family in Christ and you and your children are an important part of our gathering.

Everyone realises that bringing children, especially babies and toddlers, to church can be very hard work. It always seems that *your* baby cries louder or *your* toddler wriggles and talks more than anybody elses!

Despite this, coming to church should be a joyful experience for you and your child and we hope the following information will make being in church easier and more enjoyable.

Your Baby in church

If your baby is settled or sleeping, please feel free to remain seated, even if others are standing. Don't be embarrassed if your baby cries. We all understand that babies have special (and often urgent) needs. If you just try to stop him/her crying it usually gets worse; you become stressed, others can't hear and it is hard for the priest leading the service. If you need to walk around to settle your child, feel free to do so. If you need a "time out" feel free to use the either of the confessionals at the back of the church, closing the door for a time if it suits you to do so.

Bringing quiet toys can help, or sitting near the windows where the baby has more interesting things to look at. Older babies may enjoy being near the choir or right at the front where they can see what is happening on the sanctuary.

You and your toddler

An hour at Mass is a long time for a pre-schooler. Bring a few quiet toys or books (there are some lovely children's books available in the Piety stall) for your toddler to enjoy. If your child becomes restless, encourage them to sit a little longer by explaining to them what is happening and asking them to watch for certain events, such as the offertory procession. Explain what the ministers are doing, so that the child can be part of the liturgy.

When things escalate (as they do!), feel free to move around; perhaps to the area behind the pews where you can allow your child to explore quietly. Please always stay with your child, in the interests of his/ her safety and the safety of others.

Children learn by imitation. Encourage even young toddlers to do what the rest of the congregation are doing: holding a missal, sitting and standing at the appropriate time, singing, making the sign of the cross. Little ones love to move or clap to the music during hymns, encourage them to join the hymns in this way.

During communion, take your toddler up for a blessing, teach older children to cross their arms on their chest so that they can go up "all by themselves".

Children are present at the Mass as part of their own faith journey. Even when they are just amusing themselves, they are absorbing the atmosphere of worship. However, we should be seeking ways to involve them and draw their attention to liturgy.

After Mass

All children love to socialize. When after Mass refreshments are offered, we encourage you to bring your baby or toddler over to the Parish Centre for a drink and a biscuit. They will meet parishioners who they can then greet as friends next time they come to Mass.

Children's Liturgy

For the 3-8 year olds, a children's liturgy is held at the 9.30am Mass every Sunday, except during school holidays. Encourage your older children to join this group, as it aims to bring the liturgy alive at a level they will enjoy.

