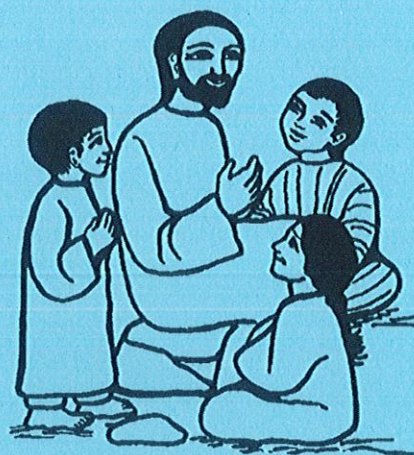

What is the Church?

Parent Leader's Guide: Unit 4

We are People who Celebrate God's Word



Main themes

- ♦ We gather together to listen to our story: the story of God's people.
- ♦ We celebrate the presence of God in the scriptures, responding "Thanks be to God".
- ♦ We allow God's Word to both challenge and encourage us.

Link to the Mass - The Liturgy of the Word

"Each week we gather and in our midst the book (of scriptures) is opened and read. Its words are heard over and over again. They have come down to us through dozens and even hundreds of generations. We in turn read them to another generation and so entrust the book to our children. In these stories, visions, poems, letters - all kinds of writing - we Christians find again and again the meaning of our own journey, the Lord who is our way and truth and life."

(Cardinal Bernardin, *Guide to the Assembly*, page 12)

During the meeting, parents will:

- ♦ discover what the parish catechists or faith friends will do with the children
- ♦ be given an outline of the celebration for this unit and be clear about their own role
- ♦ consider suggestions for supporting their child at home
- ♦ explore the main elements of the Liturgy of the Word
- ♦ understand the importance of the scripture readings and the homily for the Church community
- ♦ appreciate their own involvement through active listening and reflection
- ♦ be invited to pray together

Unit 4 – Approach A

Before the meeting begins: have the following clearly displayed -
the lectionary used in the parish on Sundays, open
at the readings for the coming Sunday, OR, if this
is not available, a bible
a large candle or oil lamp

You will also need:
copies of the parents' leaflets for those attending
one large copy of the Cardinal Bernardin quotation
a flip chart or large sheets of paper
a display of children's bibles and bible stories

1. Warmly welcome everyone and introduce the focus for this next step on the children's journey. Quickly review the journey so far, remembering that we are looking at what we mean when we ask the question **"What is the Church?"** and that an important answer to that question would be today's unit title: **We are People who Celebrate God's Word.**

Give out the parent leaflets and invite the parents to look first at the quotation on the back page. Read this aloud as an excellent summary of what we are doing when we gather to celebrate God's Word each Sunday.

2. Briefly share a favourite story or character from the bible, saying something about why it is a favourite. Invite the parents to share with one another a favourite story or character from the bible (either old or new testament) and after a few moments write these up on a flip chart or on large sheets of paper for display. Using these 'favourites' as illustration, present some or all of the following:
 - ♦ through the different kinds of writing we find in the bible we come to recognise that we are part of a church with a history, a story, and that story is our story too.
 - ♦ the stories of our ancestors help us to put our faith into a context; the church has journeyed through the ages, constantly changing and growing. We continue on that journey, both as individuals and as God's People. The book we carry with us, and open to read whenever we gather together as God's People, is very important. It reminds us who we are and enables us to pass on our story to our children. Just as in our own families, whenever we gather together: for christenings, weddings, funerals, we tell the family stories which remind us who we are and which we want our children to know.
 - ♦ the Catholic faith, passed down to us through the centuries, has always been based on scripture and tradition. Through the scriptures, the Holy Spirit is revealing God's Word to us and is enabling us to hear and respond to that Word.

- ♦ through the gifts of the Holy Spirit received in the sacrament of Confirmation and by continued sharing in the Eucharist, our children will be enabled to develop into mature hearers and doers of God's Word.

Read the following ICEL version of psalm 78: 1 - 7, following it with a period of silence.

Listen, my people, mark each word.
I begin with a story, I speak of mysteries
welling up from ancient depths,
heard and known from our elders.

We must not hide this story from our children
but tell the mighty works
and all the wonders of God.
The Lord gave precepts to Jacob, instructions to Israel,
that the people before us could teach their children.

Let future generations learn and let them grow up
to teach their young to trust in God
remembering great deeds,
cherishing the law.

3. Invite the parents to spend a few moments discussing with one another the following:

what makes a good reader at Mass?

which do you prefer - listening to a piece of scripture with, or without the text in front of you? What is the effect of having no text? (as with the psalm, just now)

After sharing one or two points from the discussions continue with some or all of the following:

- ♦ the Liturgy of the Word in Mass sets a pattern of listening and responding to God's Word:
we normally listen to an old testament reading, and respond with a psalm;
we hear a reading from the new testament letters and prepare to hear the Gospel by singing an acclamation;
the homily helps us reflect on the scriptures we have heard so that it might bear fruit in our daily living;
as God's People we celebrate our identity and shared belief by reciting the creed;
we then place before God the needs of our world, our communities, ourselves.
- ♦ in this way we are not passive during the Liturgy of the Word, but called to respond;
in active listening and reflecting (with our whole self - mind, heart and soul)
in thanks (Thanks be to God)
in praise (Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ)
in prayer (Lord hear us)

- ♦ in many parishes now, there are opportunities for children to be able to listen and respond in ways appropriate for their age and experience, through their own celebration of the Liturgy of the Word. *[If you would like further information about beginning this in your parish contact the RE Centre]*

Finish this part of the meeting by looking together at the third page of the parent leaflet and pointing to some of the resources available e.g. children's bible.

4. Details of the celebration for "We are People who Celebrate God's Word" should now be given.
5. Introduce a time of prayer by using the gesture we use each Sunday before the Gospel is proclaimed and by which we pray that the Good News we hear will be *understood* (forehead) *loved* (heart) and *shared with others* (lips).

Invite everyone to make the threefold crosses themselves and then listen to a part of the Gospel according to John in which Jesus speaks to his disciples on the night before he dies:

"Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me." John 14: 23 - 24.

After a moment for silent reflection, invite some prayers of intercession, which may have been printed and given out to parents during the meeting, perhaps:

That we may grow in our ability to hear and respond to God's Word in our lives, let us pray to the Lord...

That our children will be open to God's Spirit at work in their lives and learn to treasure the stories of God's love for God's People, let us pray to the Lord...

That all who proclaim the Word of God in our schools and in our parish may do so with love and understanding, let us pray to the Lord...

Unit 4 – Approach B

Before the meeting begins: have the following clearly displayed -
the lectionary used in the parish on Sundays, open
at the readings for the coming Sunday, OR, if this
is not available, a bible
a large candle or oil lamp

You will also need:
the room arranged for group work: 5/6 chairs round a table
2 bibles per table, one copy of 'Bible Quiz', blank sheets
of paper & pens/pencils
a flip chart or large sheets of paper
copies of the parents' leaflets for those attending
a display of children's bibles and bible stories

1. As parents arrive, warmly welcome them and invite them to sit grouped according to the room arrangement. Introduce yourself and any other team members and the focus for this next step on the children's journey. Quickly review the journey so far, remembering that we are looking at what we mean when we ask the question **"What is the Church?"** and that an important answer to that question would be today's unit title: **We are People who Celebrate God's Word.**

Invite each group to work together to complete the 'Bible Quiz' which is on the table, explaining this as a light-hearted way of becoming more familiar with the bible.

After ten minutes, ask everyone to stop and go through the answers.

2. Briefly share a favourite story or character from the bible, saying something about why it is a favourite. Invite the parents to share with one another a favourite story or character from the bible (either old or new testament) and after a few moments write these up on a flip chart or on large sheets of paper for display. Using these 'favourites' as illustration, present some or all of the following:
 - ♦ through the different kinds of writing we find in the bible we come to recognise that we are part of a church with a history, a story, and that story is our story too.
 - ♦ the stories of our ancestors help us to put our faith into a context; the church has journeyed through the ages, constantly changing and growing. We continue on that journey, both as individuals and as God's People.
 - ♦ the book we carry with us, and open to read whenever we gather together as God's People, is very important. It reminds us who we are and enables us to pass on our story to our children. Just as in our own families, whenever we gather together: for christenings, weddings, funerals, we tell the family stories which remind us who we are and which we want our children to know.

- ♦ the Catholic faith, passed down to us through the centuries, has always been based on scripture and tradition. Through the scriptures, the Holy Spirit is revealing God's Word to us and is enabling us to hear and respond to that Word.
 - ♦ through the gifts of the Holy Spirit received in the sacrament of Confirmation and by continued sharing in the Eucharist, our children will be enabled to develop into mature hearers and doers of God's Word.
3. Invite everyone to listen carefully to the gospel reading which follows and using the paper and pens provided, jot down one word or phrase which strikes them as they listen.

Read aloud, slowly and clearly, the gospel which will be proclaimed at Mass on the coming Sunday.

Suggest that the parents, in their groups, share with one another the word or phrase which struck them and then look at the questions on the back of the 'Bible Quiz' sheet.

At an appropriate moment, gather together any comments or points arising from this. Continue with some or all of the following:

- ♦ the Liturgy of the Word in Mass sets a pattern of listening and responding to God's Word:
 - we normally listen to an old testament reading, and respond with a psalm;
 - we hear a reading from the new testament letters and prepare to hear the Gospel by singing an acclamation;
 - the homily helps us reflect on the scriptures we have heard so that it might bear fruit in our daily living;
 - as God's People we celebrate our identity and shared belief by reciting the creed;
 - we then place before God the needs of our world, our communities, ourselves.
- ♦ in this way we are not passive during the Liturgy of the Word, but called to respond;
 - in active listening and reflecting (with our whole self - mind, heart and soul) in thanks (Thanks be to God)
 - in praise (Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ)
 - in prayer (Lord hear us)

Invite the parents to look together at the quotation from Cardinal Bernardin on the back page of the parent leaflet.

Finish this part of the meeting by looking together at the third page of the parent leaflet and pointing to some of the resources available e.g. children's bible.

4. Details of the celebration for "We are People who Celebrate God's Word" should now be given.
5. Introduce a time of prayer by using the gesture we use each Sunday before the Gospel is proclaimed and by which we pray that the Good News we hear will be *understood* (forehead) *loved* (heart) and *shared with others* (lips).

Invite everyone to make the threefold crosses themselves and then, using the lectionary, proclaim the Gospel for the coming Sunday once more. Allow a period for silent reflection before praying:

Loving God, give us a deeper appreciation of your presence in the scriptures. Help us to teach our children to listen well so that they can find meaning for their lives. Guide us by the power of your Holy Spirit, as we struggle to share our faith with our children.

We ask this in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

BIBLE QUIZ

Using the bibles on your table, find answers to the following questions:

Which book begins the Old Testament?

Which book begins the New Testament?

What are the first two lines of psalm 12?

In which chapter of Matthew's gospel is the story of the Resurrection?

In which chapter of Mark's gospel is the story of the feeding of five thousand people?

In which chapter of Luke's gospel is the story of the lost sheep?

In which chapter of John's gospel is the story of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples?

First of all, share the word or phrase which struck you as you listened to the gospel.

(i) Did you find it easy or difficult to listen to this reading?

(ii) What can make it easier to listen to the readings at Sunday Mass?

(iii) How can we help our children to become 'good listeners'?

Unit 4 – Approach C

Before the meeting begins: have the following clearly displayed -
the lectionary used in the parish on Sundays, open
at the readings for the coming Sunday, OR, if this
is not available, a bible
a large candle or oil lamp

You will also need:
copies of the questions for the opening reflection
copies of the parents' leaflets for those attending
one large copy of the Cardinal Bernardin quotation
a flip chart or large sheets of paper
a display of children's bibles and bible stories

1. Warmly welcome everyone and introduce the focus for this next step on the children's journey. Quickly review the journey so far, remembering that we are looking at what we mean when we ask the question **"What is the Church?"** and that an important answer to that question would be today's unit title: **We are People who Celebrate God's Word.**

Invite the parents to form groups of 4/5 and to reflect together on the following questions:

what do we mean if we say someone is 'a good listener'?

what makes a good reader at Mass?

have there been occasions when a reading or homily has really affected you?

After about ten minutes, gather together on a flip chart, the points they felt made a good listener, then those for a good reader. Then invite one or two responses to the third question. Using the points offered as illustration, present the following:

- ♦ As members of God's People, the Word of God as revealed to us in the scriptures is very important; if we are to celebrate it then each one of us has to be attentive and open to its ability to touch our hearts.
- ♦ It can be very difficult to listen attentively to all the words which are proclaimed during the Liturgy of the Word: we can have all kinds of distraction; the readers may not be as clear as they could be; there may be stories and parts of the bible we find difficult to connect with.
- ♦ Explain that one way in which we can become better listeners is by listening first of all for an image, a picture which forms in our mind, then to allow just one word or phrase to strike us from that reading. Sometimes the reading will be familiar: a story we have heard before. If so, it's good to try to listen just for today as it were, as if hearing it for the first time.
- ♦ Invite the parents to 'have a go' at this method of listening to scripture and ask them to listen for an image/a picture and then for a word or phrase which strikes them.

- ◆ Using the lectionary if possible, read aloud one of the readings for the coming Sunday, choosing the one from the three which will be most suitable for this method. (The gospel is almost always suitable but sometimes the first reading might be a better choice.) After a moment or two of silence, ask for any images which people heard and write these up on the flip chart, then, ask for words or phrases which struck and write these up too.
 - ◆ Once all these have been gathered point to the fact that there are a number of different responses and by sharing what we have heard, the reading becomes more alive for us. In this way it is easier to begin to see what God might be saying to us, as individuals and as a community. By listening for one or two points from the readings, especially the gospel, we can then share these with our children and other family members perhaps on the way home or later in the day.
 - ◆ In many parishes now, there are opportunities for children to be able to listen and respond in ways appropriate for their age and experience, through their own celebration of the Liturgy of the Word. *[If you would like further information about beginning this in your parish contact the RE Centre].*
2. Hand out the parent leaflets and invite the parents to look first at the quotation on the back page. Read this aloud as an excellent summary of what we are doing when we gather to celebrate God's Word each Sunday. Present some or all of the following:
- ◆ Through the different kinds of writing we find in the bible we come to recognise that we are part of a church with a history, a story, and that story is our story too.
 - ◆ The stories of our ancestors help us to put our faith into a context; the church has journeyed through the ages, constantly changing and growing. We continue on that journey, both as individuals and as God's People. The book we carry with us, and open to read whenever we gather together as God's People, is very important. It reminds us who we are and enables us to pass on our story to our children. Just as in our own families, whenever we gather together: for christenings, weddings, funerals, we tell the family stories which remind us who we are and which we want our children to know.
 - ◆ The Catholic faith, passed down to us through the centuries, has always been based on scripture and tradition. Through the scriptures, the Holy Spirit is revealing God's Word to us and is enabling us to hear and respond to that Word.
 - ◆ Through the gifts of the Holy Spirit received in the sacrament of Confirmation and by continued sharing in the Eucharist, our children will be enabled to develop into mature hearers and doers of God's Word.

3. Invite the parents to spend a few moments discussing with one another the following:

how can we help our children to become 'good listeners'?

After sharing one or two points from the discussions continue with some or all of the following:

- ♦ the Liturgy of the Word in Mass sets a pattern of listening and responding to God's Word:
 - we normally listen to an old testament reading, and respond with a psalm;
 - we hear a reading from the new testament letters and prepare to hear the Gospel by singing an acclamation;
 - the homily helps us reflect on the scriptures we have heard so that it might bear fruit in our daily living;
 - as God's People we celebrate our identity and shared belief by reciting the creed;
 - we then place before God the needs of our world, our communities, ourselves.
- ♦ in this way we are not passive during the Liturgy of the Word, but called to respond;
 - in active listening and reflecting (with our whole self - mind, heart and soul) in thanks (Thanks be to God)
 - in praise (Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ)
 - in prayer (Lord hear us)

Finish this part of the meeting by looking together at the third page of the parent leaflet and pointing to some of the resources available e.g. children's bible.

4. Details of the celebration for "We are People who Celebrate God's Word" should now be given.
5. Invite all to join together in prayer beginning with a moment of stillness, recognising God's presence. Indicate the flip chart responses to the reading proclaimed earlier and then, have the same reading read again (possibly by a different reader).

After a moment for silent reflection, finish with a short closing prayer perhaps:

Loving God, may your Word become ever more alive and active in our lives. Help us to share your love with our children. Bless all who proclaim your Word in our parish and school. Bless each one of us with your peace as we leave this meeting.

What is the Church?

Parent Leaflet: Unit 4

We are People who Celebrate God's Word



Main Themes

The children, with their catechists, are thinking about how and when we listen to God's Word.

They are being asked to think about:

- ♦ How we can listen attentively, so that the message we hear gets through to us
- ♦ The fact that the Bible is a very important book for us as Christians
- ♦ The way we celebrate the Liturgy of the Word at Mass
- ♦ How the gifts of the Holy Spirit help us to understand God's Word

The children are also being encouraged to read and think about some Bible stories at home.

From Your Child's Worksheet

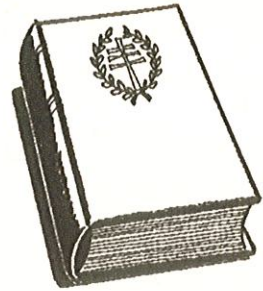
When we gather together at Mass

...we listen to God's Word

The Bible tells us about God and God's people.

In the Old Testament we hear about the people of Israel and their special relationship with God.

In the New Testament we hear about Jesus and those who were his first followers.



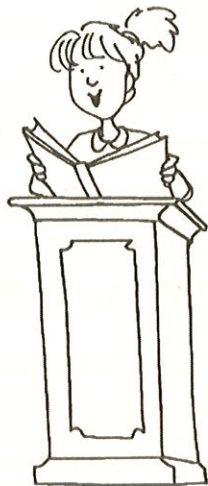
Our readings at Mass are taken from the Bible - both the Old and New Testaments.

They are printed in a special book called the Lectionary.

The reader stands at a special place to read to us.

Our task is to listen attentively - even if we have the words in front of us.

On a Sunday we have three readings and a responsorial psalm.



In the Gospel reading we hear what Jesus said and did when he was on the earth.

Sometimes the Gospel book is carried in a procession, or incense is burnt, or candles are held either side of the lectern as the priest reads the Gospel. All of these show that the Gospel is very important.

After the Gospel reading the priest gives a homily which helps us to reflect on the readings we have heard and think about what they might mean for us in our own lives.



What You Can Do To Help Your Child

If you do not have a Bible or book of Bible Stories at home, consider buying one now. It could be bought for all the family to use, or as a special gift for your child.

Read stories from the Bible to your child.

Talk with your child about the messages in the Bible stories and how we can apply these in our everyday life.

Come to Mass each Sunday so that your child can experience the Word of God being celebrated.

If your parish has a special Children's Liturgy group, encourage your child to attend so that they can consider God's Word at their own level.

Help your child to complete their worksheet - especially the last page.

Please keep your child's worksheet safe, so that they can bring it back to the next meeting with their catechist.

The Liturgy of the Word

"Each week we gather and in our midst the book (of scriptures) is opened and read. Its words are heard over and over again. They have come down to us through dozens and even hundreds of generations. We in turn read them to another generation and so entrust the book to our children. In these stories, visions, poems, letters - all kinds of writing - we Christians find again and again the meaning of our own journey, the Lord who is our way and truth and life."

(Cardinal Bernardin, Guide to the Assembly, page 12)

What is the Church?

Children's Worksheet: Unit 4

We are People who Celebrate God's Word



Listening is very important

Someone once said that God gave us two ears but only one mouth
because listening is more important than speaking

Can you think of some people that you listen to?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

We hear all sorts of different things - that just happens to us
but listening is an activity - something we do

When you want to listen very carefully, what do you do?

_____	_____
_____	_____

We can listen

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------|
| with our ears | - to hear the words people speak to us |
| with our minds | - to understand what they are saying |
| with our hearts | - to accept the message and let it affect us |

When we gather together at Mass

...we listen to God's Word

The Bible tells us about God and God's people.

In the Old Testament we hear about the people of Israel and their special relationship with God.

In the New Testament we hear about Jesus and those who were his first followers.



Our readings at Mass are taken from the Bible - both the Old and New Testaments.

They are printed in a special book called the Lectionary.

The reader stands at a special place to read to us.

Our task is to listen attentively - even if we have the words in front of us.

On a Sunday we have three readings and a responsorial psalm.

In the Gospel reading we hear what Jesus said and did when he was on the earth.

Sometimes the Gospel book is carried in a procession, or incense is burnt, or candles are held either side of the lectern as the priest reads the Gospel. All of these show that the Gospel is very important.

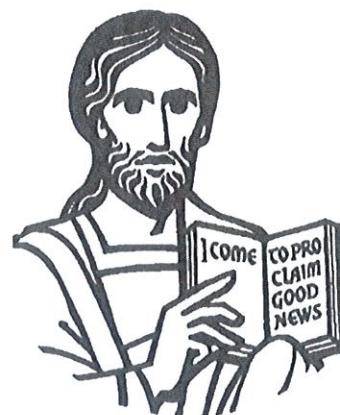
After the Gospel reading the priest gives a homily which helps us to reflect on the readings we have heard and think about what they might mean for us in our own lives.



The Gospel is Good News

The Good News is the fact that Jesus, through his death and resurrection, has made it possible for us to share God's eternal life.

Jesus is the Word made flesh. He came on earth to tell us the Good News himself and to show us how to live as his followers.



When Jesus had returned to heaven, his first disciples decided to write down the things he had said and done so that future generations could also hear this Good News.

What stories from the Gospels can you remember?

The Holy Spirit helps us to listen well



The Holy Spirit helped the first disciples of Jesus to put the Gospel stories together.

We receive the Holy Spirit in our Baptism and at Confirmation.

Amongst the gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit are the gifts of wisdom and understanding. These gifts help us to listen well to the scriptures and think about what they mean for us.

At home...



Find out if you have a family Bible or a book of Bible stories. If not, see if your parents will buy one. Read some of these stories (perhaps with your parents or brothers and sisters) and talk about the message they give us.



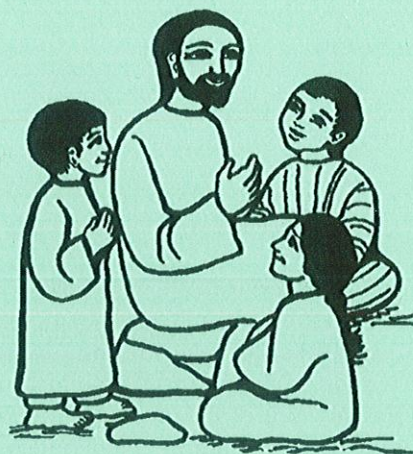
Choose one of your favourite Bible stories and write it in your own words (or draw a picture of it).

This worksheet belongs to: _____

What is the Church?

Catechist's Guide: Unit 4

We are People who Celebrate God's Word



You will need to gather in the children's worksheets from the previous unit (unless this has already been done or unless they are keeping them at home).

Spend a few moments seeing what the children remember from their last session with you - or from the celebration of Reconciliation that took place.

Remind them that they are preparing to become full members of the Church family through Confirmation and Holy Communion.

The aim of this unit is to explore the ways in which we, as the People of God, celebrate God's Word. This will be done by reflecting with the children on a number of themes:

- ♦ We need to listen carefully to God's Word
- ♦ We celebrate God's Word when we gather together for Mass
- ♦ The Gospel - the Good News of Jesus Christ - is very important for us
- ♦ The Holy Spirit helps us to understand God's Word

In preparation for this session, you might like to read and reflect on a few of your own favourite Bible stories so that you can use these in talking to the children.

INITIATION

What is the Church?

Children's Worksheet: Unit 4

**We are People who
Celebrate God's Word**



Listening is very important

Someone once said that God gave us two ears but only one mouth
because listening is more important than speaking

Can you think of some people that you listen to?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

We hear all sorts of different things - that just happens to us
but listening is an activity - something we do

When you want to listen very carefully, what do you do?

_____	_____
_____	_____

We can listen

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------|
| with our ears | - to hear the words people speak to us |
| with our minds | - to understand what they are saying |
| with our hearts | - to accept the message and let it affect us |

Page 1

Talk with the children about how important listening is if we want to know about things that matter.

Prompt them, if necessary, to suggest some of the people they might listen to: parent, teacher, priest, friend.

Try to explain to them the difference between simply hearing things (i.e. our ears receiving sounds) and really listening (i.e. taking in what is being heard).

Again, prompt them to think about the ways they might listen more attentively: sitting quietly, paying attention to the person speaking, turning off other noises (e.g. radio or television), concentrating, not speaking at the same time as the other person.

Talk a little about the idea that when we really listen we try to understand what is being said (listen with our minds) and allow what we hear to have an affect upon us (listen with our hearts).

When we gather together at Mass

...we listen to God's Word

The Bible tells us about God and God's people.

In the Old Testament we hear about the people of Israel and their special relationship with God.

In the New Testament we hear about Jesus and those who were his first followers.



Our readings at Mass are taken from the Bible - both the Old and New Testaments.

They are printed in a special book called the Lectionary.

The reader stands at a special place to read to us.

Our task is to listen attentively - even if we have the words in front of us.

On a Sunday we have three readings and a responsorial psalm.



In the Gospel reading we hear what Jesus said and did when he was on the earth.

Sometimes the Gospel book is carried in a procession, or incense is burnt, or candles are held either side of the lectern as the priest reads the Gospel. All of these show that the Gospel is very important.

After the Gospel reading the priest gives a homily which helps us to reflect on the readings we have heard and think about what they might mean for us in our own lives.



Page 2

Show them a Bible (or point out the picture on their worksheet) and explain that this is a very special book for us as Christians.

Read what the worksheet says about the Old and New Testaments and perhaps expand on this a little bit with the information provided under *Additional Suggestions and Resources* (No. 1).

Go through what the worksheet says about the readings at Mass (a special book, a special place, perhaps a procession, etc.) and talk about how this is arranged in your own Church.

Talk to the children about listening attentively to the readings and the homily.

The Gospel is Good News

The Good News is the fact that Jesus, through his death and resurrection, has made it possible for us to share God's eternal life.

Jesus is the Word made flesh. He came on earth to tell us the Good News himself and to show us how to live as his followers.



When Jesus had returned to heaven, his first disciples decided to write down the things he had said and done so that future generations could also hear this Good News.

What stories from the Gospels can you remember?

The Holy Spirit helps us to listen well



The Holy Spirit helped the first disciples of Jesus to put the Gospel stories together.

We receive the Holy Spirit in our Baptism and at Confirmation.

Amongst the gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit are the gifts of wisdom and understanding. These gifts help us to listen well to the scriptures and think about what they mean for us.

Page 3

Explain that the word Gospel means "Good News". When there is good news, we want to hear it, we want to find out more about it. So the Gospels tell us lots of stories about Jesus' life and teachings.

Jesus came to earth to invite us to share God's life. God has spoken to us in a very special way by sending Jesus to us. We should listen to him.

Jesus wanted this Good News to be spread to all people in all places and at all times. So his first disciples, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote down the stories about Jesus in the Gospels that we have today.

Prompt the children to see what Gospel stories they can remember and write the name of the story on the lines provided (for example, The Prodigal Son, The Lost Sheep, The Good Samaritan).

Begin to introduce the idea of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that they will receive in Confirmation. Concentrate on wisdom and understanding which help us to listen more attentively and make more sense of the Word of God for ourselves.

At home...



Find out if you have a family Bible or a book of Bible stories. If not, see if your parents will buy one. Read some of these stories (perhaps with your parents or brothers and sisters) and talk about the message they give us.



Choose one of your favourite Bible stories and write it in your own words (or draw a picture of it).

This worksheet belongs to: _____

Page 4

Ask the children to complete this page of the worksheet at home but, if time allows, take them through the ideas that it contains:

It is good to have a Bible or book of Bible Stories in every house. Some families have a special Bible in which they record the names of family members and the Bible gets passed on from one generation to another.

More important than simply having the Bible at home is actually making use of it. They can read it on their own or with other members of the family. They can also discuss the stories they have read so that they come to understand them better.

Writing out a Bible story in their own words (or drawing a picture) will give them the chance to think about what the story is really about.

Get the children to write their name on the worksheet and remind them to bring their worksheet back to the next session. Thank them for taking part, or tell them how much you have enjoyed working with them.

Additional Suggestions and Resources

1. The Bible

The Bible contains lots of stories about God and God's people. It also contains prayers and poetry (like the psalms). All of these writings are from a long time ago and some are very old indeed.

The Old Testament tells us about the People of Israel (the Jews) and how they were specially chosen by God. It tells us about God's love for them, even when they didn't always do what God wanted.

You might like to see if the children can remember any of the characters from the Old Testament: Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, etc.

The children might like to know (or be reminded) that the Old Testament writings were the ones that Jesus would have read or heard when he was on the earth. They are still the Jewish Scriptures today.

The New Testament tells us about Jesus and the things that he said and did when he was on the earth. It also tells us about the first Christian communities - the people who made sure the Good News was passed on so that we could hear it today.

2. Listening Attentively

- ◆ If the session with the children follows directly after Mass, you might want to ask what they remember about the readings (or homily) they have just heard.
- ◆ If the session takes place at some other time, you might ask them to listen whilst you read a passage of scripture to them and then ask what they remember.

3. The Liturgy of the Word

- ◆ First Reading (normally Old Testament, sometimes Acts of Apostles)
- ◆ Responsorial Psalm
- ◆ Second Reading (New Testament Letter)
- ◆ Alleluia Verse
- ◆ Gospel Reading
- ◆ Homily
- ◆ Creed
- ◆ Prayers of the Faithful

4. The Lectionary

This special book contains the readings from the Bible that have been chosen for use in our churches. For Sundays, the readings are arranged over a three year cycle so that we hear all four of the Gospel accounts: Matthew's Gospel in Year A, Mark's Gospel in Year B, and Luke's Gospel in Year C. John's Gospel is used during the special seasons of the liturgical year.

What is the Church?

Celebration Guide: Unit 4

We are People who Celebrate God's Word

The main focus of this celebration is the PROCESSION and PROCLAMATION of the Gospel. We make it a 'big thing' in order to learn and remind ourselves that Jesus Christ actually speaks to us in the Holy Scriptures. The more effort we put into HOW we proclaim and listen to the Gospel, the more we will see it as it should be seen - God speaking to a listening people.

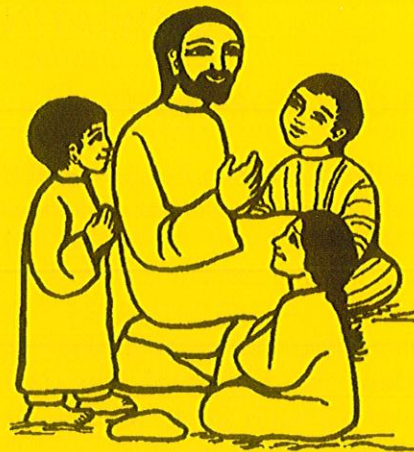
An optional part of the Rite is the presentation of a book of the Gospel to the children and their families. If a parish community decides to do this, it would be suitable for the Gospel chosen to be that of the current Sunday cycle.

1. Our children are learning what it is to be part of the Church: they are learning what it is to be "together" with everyone who makes up the Body of Christ. So the aim of this celebration is to experience being part of the "people who listen" - those who, Sunday by Sunday, come together to listen to the Word of God. By careful listening, thought and prayer, we allow the story of the Scriptures to become *our* story.

2. This celebration ideally takes place during a normal Sunday Mass, some time in late January or early February. In choosing a particular Sunday, it would be worth while looking at the Sunday readings (the Gospel in particular) to see which Sunday would most suit the celebration with the children.

If a celebration during Sunday Mass is not possible, a form of celebration outside Mass is presented. In the celebration outside Mass, the readings chosen may still be of the Sunday, or some other appropriate readings may be chosen.

3. In places where the children normally celebrate the Liturgy of the Word in a separate place, it would be suitable for all to remain on this occasion.



4. In accordance with the principles of the "Directory for Masses with Children" it is liturgically legitimate on this occasion to limit the Liturgy of the Word to a single reading before the Gospel. It should be remembered that this is an exception to the norm, and that the full Liturgy of the Word should normally be celebrated.

5. It is recommended that all the details of this Rite (especially the Gospel procession) be thoroughly prepared with parents and children beforehand.

Readers, commentators and other ministers should be selected on the basis of liturgical competence. Some younger children are able to read the Scriptures well, but the witness of adults ministering with care and reverence is often more effective in giving good example, and enabling the word of God to be heard. This is especially important in this celebration!

6. In the Rite of Presentation during Mass the norms regarding musical priorities remain the same. Particular emphasis should be given to the Gospel Acclamation - which will have to be longer than usual for the procession. Also the "Holy, holy", Mystery of Faith and Great Amen should be sung. Other music should be chosen for its appropriateness to the occasion. Where possible the Responsorial Psalm should be sung, but never replaced by a non-Scriptural hymn (Although in this celebration it may be replaced by the Gospel Acclamation straight after the First Reading).

7. If the Celebration takes place outside Mass, musical priority should be given to the Gospel Acclamation, and other music should be chosen for its appropriateness to the occasion and the part of the Rite.

CELEBRATING THE WORD OF GOD

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Before the celebration begins, the Book of the Gospels should be placed prominently at the back of the Church (or in another similar place).*

A commentator may introduce the Mass:

My dear children and friends here at (name of Church). Every Sunday we come together to meet Jesus. One of the ways we meet him is by LISTENING. We listen to the story of Jesus, and this then becomes our story, because we are the family of God, the brothers and sisters of Jesus.

So let us get ready to listen, by standing and singing together

The Opening Hymn is sung. The priest and ministers enter in the usual way. When the hymn is over, the priest says:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All reply: Amen.

The priest greets the congregation in these or similar words:

My dear children, parents, and all members of God's Family here at (name of Church). I welcome you with great joy. May the Lord, who speaks to his people, be ever with you.

All reply: And also with you.

*** The Book of the Gospels.** *If the parish does not possess a Gospel Book, then something should be created which is worthy and impressive. If necessary, the Gospel of the day can be copied and inserted into any large and impressive book. Book covers can be bought (or even, if there is time, made by parishioners or the children themselves.)*

Priest:

We take our place here as members of God's family, the Church, together with all his people in heaven and here on earth. We prepare to listen to the Word of the Lord now, by joining together in our great song of praise:

The "Glory to God in the highest" follows immediately.

The Opening Prayer is of the occurring Sunday.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

INTRODUCTION TO THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

It would be good to write a specific short introduction to the Readings, which will help all present get the most from them. This is a general introduction:

Commentator:

We now sit, and listen to our story. First we will hear something from the time before Jesus came. We will hear how people lived as they waited for Jesus, and how they got ready. As we listen, let us think about how we get ready to listen to Jesus in the Gospel.

FIRST READING

The First Reading is proclaimed from the Ambo/Lectern.

THE GOSPEL PROCESSION

All then stand for the Gospel Procession. The children are invited to gather with the priest/ deacon and servers at the Gospel Book. They will then lead the procession through the Church to the Ambo/Lectern. On arriving there, the children may gather around the ambo for the proclamation of the Gospel. Each parish will work out its own way of making this procession truly joyous and a highlight of the celebration. During all of this, a suitable hymn should be sung, preferably one including the word "Alleluia". It should be long enough to accompany the whole procession.*

GOSPEL

The Gospel is proclaimed by the priest or deacon.

After the Gospel, the children may be invited to remain around the ambo for the Homily, or can return to their places.

HOMILY

GIFT OF THE GOSPEL

If a Parish so wishes, at this point a book with one Gospel (or all of them) could be presented to the families. If this is done, the following could be said:

Priest:

My dear parents; day by day you pass on the story of your families to your children. I invite you to receive this book now; it contains the Good News of Jesus, which is the story of the family of the Church. Receive this with love, cherish it, and share it with your children day by day.

The parents come forward with their children to receive the Gospel. During this a suitable hymn should be sung.

Mass continues as normal with the Profession of Faith and the Intercessions.

Outside Mass the Intercessions follow immediately, followed by the Our Father and the Concluding Prayer (below).

During Mass: HOLY COMMUNION

The children may be invited to come forward in the Communion Procession to receive a form of blessing. It would be suitable to use the gesture of laying on of hand(s), with a phrase such as "May God, who loves you, care for you now and always. Amen." Eucharistic ministers can also use this prayer. (The Trinitarian form of blessing and the sign of the cross, which occur at the end of Mass, and which Eucharistic Ministers cannot use, is not recommended here.)

CONCLUDING RITES

At Mass the concluding prayer is from the Sunday.

Concluding Prayer (for use **outside Mass**)

**Loving Father in heaven,
your Son Jesus spoke to us,
and your Holy Spirit makes his story
our own.**

**Listen to the prayers of your children
now and always,
and open our hearts to hear of your
love.**

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

Priest:

The Lord be with you.

All:

And also with you.

The priest stretches his arms over the people and says:

**God our Father,
complete the work you have begun
and keep the hearts of your people
full of love.**

**Make them ready to live the Gospel
and eager to do your will.**

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
All: Amen.

Priest:

**May Almighty God bless you, the Father,
+ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**

All: Amen.

Priest:

**Children, each day you are moving
forward on your journey. All of us here
now ask you to listen to Jesus, and
prepare well for the rest of this year.
Our love goes with you.**

**Let us go in peace, to love and serve
the Lord.**

All: Thanks be to God.

The Final Hymn is sung.

IDEAS FOR THE CELEBRATION

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Priest:

Together we have listened to the Word of God. We know that God loves us, and will listen to the prayers we now make.

Reader:

1. Let us pray for the family of the Church. (Pause) May we grow closer to each other by listening to all that Jesus says to us. Lord, in your mercy...

2. Let us pray for those who have never heard of Jesus or listened to his story. (Pause) May the way we live help them to find him. Lord, in your mercy...

3. Let us pray for our children, today taking another step on their journey. (Pause) May they always grow in love and knowledge. Lord, in your mercy...

4. A Prayer for local intentions.

In silence let us make our own prayers to the God who listens to us.

Priest:

**Lord God,
we gather as your children
listening to your Word.
Help us to take into our hearts
all that Jesus says to us,
for he is Lord, for ever and ever.**

SUGGESTIONS FOR MUSIC

Hymns

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God
Other hymns should be chosen according to the readings used.

Gloria

Gloria, gloria (Mike Anderson)
Gloria (George Salazar)

Gospel Acclamation

'Celtic' Alleluia
Seek ye first
Alleluia, give thanks

Taize Chants

O Lord hear my Prayer
Confitemini Domino

Instrumental Music: the organ or solo melody instrument or a music group can be very effectively used as an alternative to a song at moments like the distribution of Gospels (if this is done).

READINGS (OUTSIDE MASS)

Note: the Sunday readings may always be used.

Other readings may be selected, particularly those emphasising our attentiveness to the Word of God.

A SUGGESTED BULLETIN INSERT

"Our [Year 3] children continue their preparation journey. The next celebration is "A People who Celebrate God's Word" on _____."

Every week we come to Church, and listen to a part of the great Story of God's love. The Readings at Mass give us a wonderful picture of God's plan, unfolding through the ages. This is particularly true of the Gospel, where we hear of Jesus our Saviour. But the story is not just about the past. We believe that Jesus speaks to us, today, when we listen to the Word of God.

Our children, like all of us, need to listen to this Word. It is sometimes hard, and demands concentration. As always, the example of the parish community coming together for Mass will say more to the children than a thousand words. How do we listen? Is it obvious that this story is important to us? How could we improve the way we celebrate the readings at Mass?

Every family passes on its story. The family of God is just the same. Please come and join our children, and let's help them to listen and learn, by our listening and learning!"