

Children's Liturgy of the Word

Many parishes use the *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies* for a children's Liturgy of the Word. Intermediate-age and younger children are most likely to be involved in such programs. Children usually gather in a separate area of the church complex and join their parents for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

In some parishes children and their catechists exit after the Opening Prayer. In this case, there is usually not enough time for the whole lesson. Parents need to be alerted as to how to follow through at home. Sending home with the

child a copy of the *Teaching Guide* is essential (guides are also available free online at gospelweeklies.com/catechists-teachers/). In other parishes, children begin their weekly faith formation time before Mass, conclude the lesson with the Liturgy of the Word, and join the parish community for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Other parishes integrate the Liturgy of the Word with their weekly religion class, following the weekly class session with a ritual proclamation for the whole faith formation group.

The *Weeklies* provide the Gospel in drama form, so students can step into the story and several can participate in proclaiming the Word each week. The adult leader of a children's Liturgy of the Word will want to take turns using the Gospel version from the five levels of the *Weeklies*. Guidelines for appropriate rituals for the proclamation are outlined in each online *Resource Manual*.

Consider having a monthly children's Mass, with the children proclaiming the readings, writing the Prayers of the Faithful and bringing the gifts to the altar.

Families in RCIA

In the catechumenate the Church uses the Sunday Lectionary as its source for catechizing people in the process of Christian initiation. Catechumens hear the Liturgy of the Word with the Sunday assembly, then gather together to reflect on the Word, what God asks of them in this Word, and what God in Jesus promises. In the initiation process, the Liturgy of the Word becomes the primary experience of Christian tradition for candidates for Baptism.

The *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies* offer resources for catechesis for children who are preparing for Christian initiation or who have a family member in the RCIA process.

In the RCIA, people move through four stages—inquiry, catechumenate, illumination, and mystagogy. At each stage the experience of hearing and reflecting upon the Gospel of the Sunday Liturgy of the Word is central to the process. In this journey in faith, participants walk with sponsors through story and rite into discovering they live their stories within God's story for all humankind.

Because the *Weeklies* follow the Lectionary, they serve as reflection tools for young people journeying with their parents through the initiation process.

James B. Dunning, writing in *Worship* 53:2, describes seven stages in that process:

1. **Storytelling:** Sharing our life experiences and listening to those of others.
2. **Questioning:** Where have I come from? Where am I going? What are my responsibilities along the way?
3. **Finding Companions** and communities of faith who assure us we are not alone on our journey.
4. **Exploring Tradition**, which grounds us firmly in the roots of our history, Scriptures, and Gospel values.

5. **Conversion:** An ongoing process of change and realization that my story is God's story.

6. **Celebration** of God's presence and gifts in our lives, through prayer, Sunday liturgy, and the Sacraments.

7. **Ministries:** Ways we use our gifts to serve the people of God.

These steps parallel the *Weeklies'* approach to catechesis and coincide with the movement of a *Weeklies* lesson from story to Gospel to application to real life, making the *Weeklies* ideal tools for use with families participating in the RCIA.

A *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies* session focuses on Stages 1, 2, and 3 of the initiation process in its first step—Share Experiences; on Stages 4 and 5 in its second step—Discover Gospel and Doctrine; and on Stages 6 and 7 in its third step—Live the Gospel.

For more information on this program model, as well as other models, including programs for children with special needs, summer intensive programs, and using the *Weeklies* with military families, visit gospelweeklies.com/catechists-teachers/