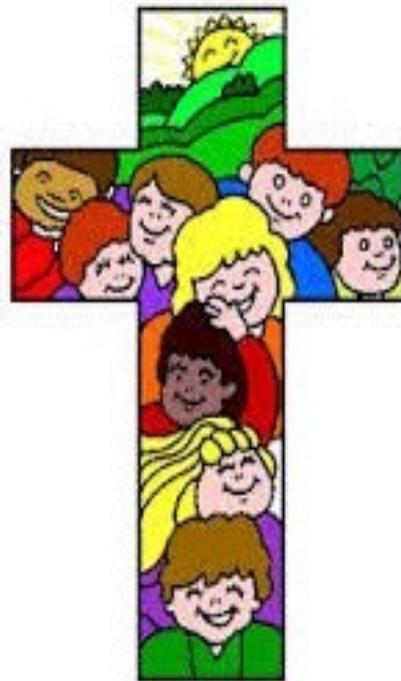




St Mary's Catholic Parish Warwick

**LITURGY OF THE WORD WITH
CHILDREN AT SUNDAY MASS**



GUIDELINES

LITURGY OF THE WORD WITH CHILDREN **AT SUNDAY MASS**

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*"Let the
little children
come to me"*

FOREWORD

This document is intended to encourage all who are involved in Liturgy of the Word with Children at Sunday Mass.

This document uses the principles espoused in the **Directory for Masses with Children (1973)**, a special supplement to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. This directory is, in its own words (DMC#3), one means by which ‘the Church follows its’ Master, who put his arms around the children....and blessed them. (Mk. 10:16)’

If may be helpful for Priests and Children’s Liturgy Leaders to reflect on it together, sharing their experiences, insights and difficulties.

We are trying to:

- ✚ **Help children to have an age-appropriate experience of the Liturgy of the Word.**
- ✚ **Help children to apply the Word of God to their own experiences and actions.**
- ✚ **Help children to become closer to God**
- ✚ **Help children to learn how to participate, both internally and**



“And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.”

Mark 10:16

externally, in the celebration of the word.

INTRODUCTION

What Children's Liturgy of the Word means

The term 'Children's Liturgy of the Word' refers to the practice of children leaving the Sunday assembly during the Liturgy of the Word and gathering elsewhere to celebrate a separate Liturgy of the Word that is more appropriate to their level of understanding. Simplifying this part of the celebration, while maintaining its liturgical character, satisfies the needs of the young so that they, too, can celebrate the Eucharist with 'full, conscious and active participation' which is 'their right and duty by virtue of their baptism.' (CSL#14)

Children
are
A
★ gift
FROM THE
Lord.
THEY are
reward
from Him.
PSALMS 127:3

Children's liturgy of the Word is an act of worship and not just a way of keeping kids occupied during the "boring bits" of Mass. As such it should not be seen as Sunday School.

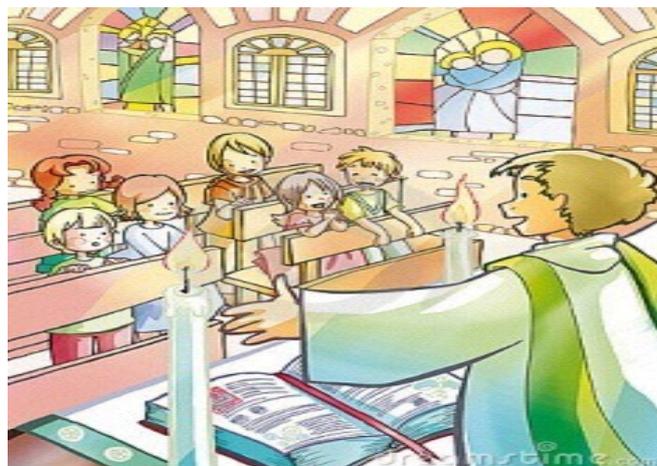
Why it is celebrated

In 1973, the Congregation for Divine Worship in Rome issued the document **Directory for Masses with Children**. This document offers principles and guidelines for adapting the liturgy for children so that they may gradually take a more active and conscious part in liturgical celebrations.

The Directory states:

Sometimes...., if the place itself and the nature of the community permit, it will be appropriate to celebrate the liturgy of the word, including a homily, with the children in a separate, but not too distant room. 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. (DMC#17)

This statement is the rationale for many parishes offering Children's Liturgy of the Word as a parish ministry.

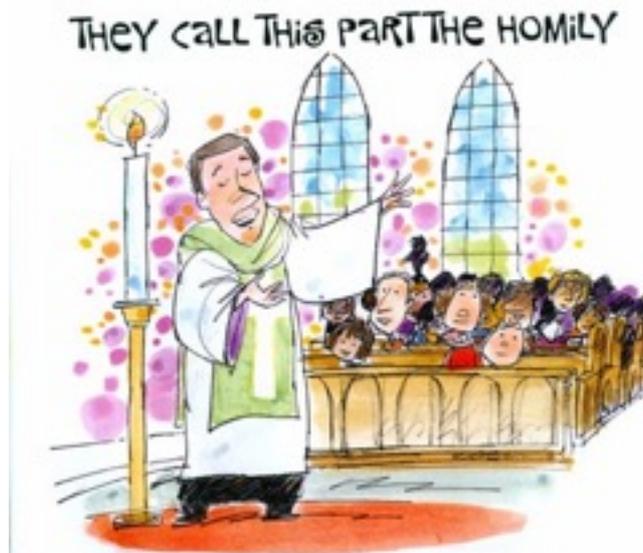


The purpose of adapting liturgical celebrations to make them more accessible to children must always be to gradually lead them to full, conscious and active participation in the Sunday liturgical assembly.

How often it is celebrated

‘Sometimes’ When making decisions about how frequently to schedule Children’s Liturgy of the Word, two different principles need to be taken into account.

1. We need to heed the warning given in the Directory for Masses with Children that spiritual harm may be done if over the years children repeatedly experience in the Church things that are scarcely comprehensible to them (DMC#2)
2. Children do not, and do not need to understand everything going on around them. In fact, they are often fascinated by adult conversation and activity that is beyond their comprehension.



Growing up is a gradual process of growing in understanding of the world around them.

It is essential to embody the unity of a church which includes children as well as adults and to lead children to an adult participation in the parish Sunday Mass.

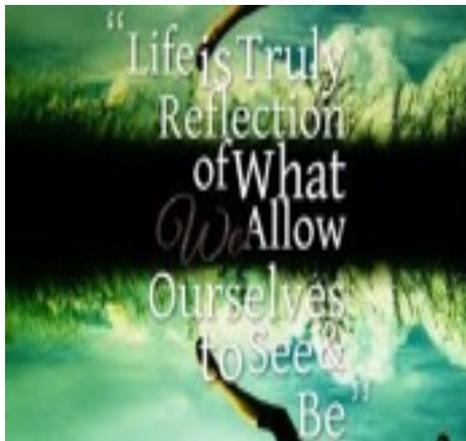
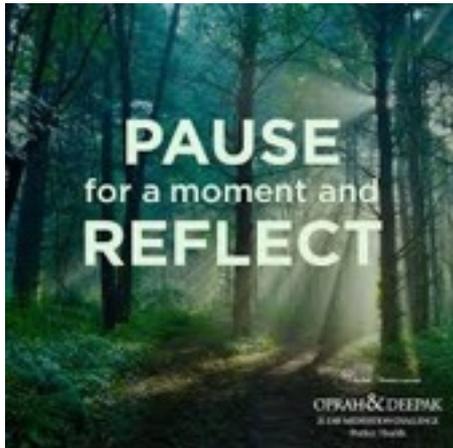
PRINCIPLES FOR CELEBRATING LITURGY OF THE WORD

The following principles ought to be taken into account by priests and ministers when celebrating a liturgy of the Word with children. The following principles are normative for the Diocese of Toowoomba:

- ✚ It must be **liturgy**, that is, ritual prayer. It may not be only a catechist class or simply an activity session (eg: cut and paste, colouring in)
- ✚ The participants would best be children of school age, Kindy – Year 6.
- ✚ This Liturgy of the Word is appropriately celebrated in a room separate, but not too distant from the church.
- ✚ The children re-join the adults in the church before the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins.
- ✚ Since liturgy is ‘an activity of the entire person, participation by means of gestures and postures should be strongly encouraged’(DMC#33)
- ✚ The use of visual elements is to be incorporated (DMC#35). These may include a Lectionary or Bible, candle, liturgical colours, symbols specific to the reading.
- ✚ If three or even two of the readings can only be understood with difficulty, two or even one reading is permissible, as long as the Gospel is always proclaimed. (DMC#42)

- ✚ If all the readings for a particular Sunday are unsuitable, other reading (s) from the Lectionary or directly from the Bible may be used as long as they are appropriate to the Liturgical season. (DMC#43)
- ✚ The use of a Lectionary appropriate to children is strongly recommended (DMC #43,44,45)
- ✚ Verses of psalms appropriate to the children's understanding sung in the form of psalmody of the Alleluia with simple verse should be sung between the readings, or the Alleluia before the Gospel. (DMC#46)
- ✚ Introductory elements to help the children listen to the reading (s) fruitfully, as well as having the reading read in parts are appropriate.
- ✚ A homily to explain the readings and appropriate to the children's level of understanding, should be given by an adult approved by the Parish Priest. (DMC #17,24)
- ✚ Prayer of the Faithful should be included. If appropriate to the occasion, a simple Profession of Faith may be said.
- ✚ As with adult Liturgy of the Word, 'silence should be observed as the designated times as part of the celebration.....since children are genuinely capable of reflection.'(DMC#37) This means after each non-Gospel reading, and after the Homily.





MINISTRIES

Ministers should be chosen for their ability, competence and example, since children learn through imitation. How ministers act will both enhance the celebration and show the Christian ideal of service. All involved in ministry will need to meet regularly to prepare and to evaluate the liturgy and their own ministry.

Leader

The leader's ministry is to open the hearts of the children to the Word of God and allow them to respond to God's word in prayer and life.

The leader:

- ✚ Focuses the celebration
- ✚ Welcomes the children
- ✚ Proclaims the Gospel
- ✚ Leads the reflection on the Scriptures
- ✚ Leads the Profession of Faith
- ✚ Introduces and concludes the Prayer of the Faithful
- ✚ Facilitates the smooth running of the liturgy



Reader

Is aware that God's people are spoken to in this proclamation

The reader:

- ✚ Proclaims the Scriptures
- ✚ Understands what she/he is reading
- ✚ Communicates well



MUSICIAN

The musician:

- ✚ Leads the children in song
- ✚ Enables them to pray through song



Encourages able musicians among the children to share this ministry.

It is not always easy to find someone to lead the music. If none of the adults have the confidence to begin a song or acclamation, the children themselves may be capable of stating. As a final option, the use of recorded music is possible. It is easier to include music if some of the items are used regularly and so become well known to the children.

PRIEST CELEBRANT

The Priest celebrant presides over the entire liturgy of the Mass. He is a sign of the union of all the baptised in the one Body of Christ. So that the separate Liturgy of the Word with Children is seen as part of the **one** celebration, it is important for the Priest celebrant to

- ✚ Recognise the children as members of the assembly in the introduction.
- ✚ Send the children and leaders with dignity to their Liturgy of the Word

Recognise the children's return to the main assembly at the conclusion of their Liturgy of the Word

The support and encouragement of the Priest to the children and to the whole assembly can foster a sense of ministry among the leaders.



CELEBRATING LITURGIES OF THE WORD WITH CHILDREN

Since the children, with their families, constitute the 'one assembly' gathered to worship, it is appropriate that the children are seated with their families as the celebration of Mass begins.

Their celebration of the Word then follows.

THE PROCESS

- ✚ The Leader processes to the altar with the First Reader holding the Children's Lectionary and a candle. Once at the altar stands to the side near the pulpit.
- ✚ After the **Opening Prayer** the children and their leaders/ helpers are called forward by the Priest who then blesses the children.
- ✚ The Children's Lectionary is presented to a child to carry.
- ✚ A candle is presented to a child to carry (unlit)
- ✚ The children and leaders process out to the place set aside for the celebration of the Word.
- ✚ Begin the session by welcoming the children and inviting them to share briefly about their week's happenings, then prepare the children to listen.
- ✚ Proclamation – Gospel acclamation and Gospel **only**. They may be simply proclaimed, or it may be enhanced by posture, action or using more than one voice.
- ✚ Response – either in song or by silence
- ✚ Homily – may be instructional, question and answer, reflection or meditation
- ✚ Profession of Faith – simple Apostles Creed
Do you believe in God, who.....**Yes, we believe**
- ✚ Prayer of the Faithful – simple petitions allow the children to name the needs of the Church, the world, those in need and the local community. (e.g. "For....., Lord hear us) Allow children to come up with their own intentions from the heart.

✚ Re-joining the Community – may be led by candle, lectionary etc. This candle could be placed on the altar and the lectionary placed on the lectern to link the children’s Liturgy of the Word with the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Children’s Liturgy of the Word usually lasts between 20-30mins and ideally ends with the children returning to the main church in time for the Offertory Procession, which begins the Liturgy of the Eucharist. While two children proceed holding lectionary and candle, the rest of the children move quietly back to their seat.



Note: A system is necessary to inform the group when to return to the church. An indication that the Priest’s homily is finished should give enough time for the leaders to draw the children’s Liturgy of the Word to an appropriate conclusion.

VENUE

- ✚ There should be a primary visual focus – eg. Table draped with coloured cloth appropriate to the liturgical season/celebration, Lectionary, crucifix and candle
- ✚ There may be other symbols appropriate to the Gospel.



CONCLUSION

The Directory for Masses with Children speaks of aims and benefits of liturgy with children:

- ✚ Various kinds of celebration 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 come to appreciate some liturgical elements, for example; greetings, silence and common praise (especially when it is sung). But care must be taken that the instructive element does not become dominant in these celebrations.
- ✚ Depending on the capacity of the children, the word of God should have a greater and greater place in these celebrations.....This will help greatly to develop in the children an appreciation of the Word of God.
- ✚ While all that has been said remains true, the final purpose of all liturgical and Eucharistic formation must be greater and greater conformity to the Gospel in the daily life of the children (DMC#13-15)



God does not ask about our ability or inability, but our availability.

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL

CHORUS

Chorus plays present Scriptural stories in the form of a play with both individual characters and a chorus. The chorus aspects allows for whole group participation. One of the aims of chorus plays is to provide not only a presentation of the story but also – and more importantly – an informed interpretation of it.

Example – The birth of Jesus is announced Luke 1:26-32

Leader: This story from St Luke's gospel tells us how Jesus got his name.

Reader: One day, the angel Gabriel came to visit a young woman. Her name was Mary.

the angel said to her:

Angel: Peace be with you Mary

Chorus: Peace be with you Mary

Angel: God is with you and you are greatly blessed

Chorus: Mary is greatly blessed

Reader: But Mary did not feel greatly blessed, she felt quite worried.

Mary: What do you want with me? I haven't done anything wrong.

Chorus: Mary hasn't done anything wrong; she is greatly blessed.

Angel: Do not be afraid Mary, God is looking after you. You are to have a son and you

will name him Jesus.

Chorus: Mary will have a son, a baby! And his name will be Jesus!

Angel: He will be special, he will be great. He will be God's very own son!

Chorus: Jesus is God's very own son.

(From: Sacramental Resource Kit, Brisbane Catholic Education 2001)



ECHO MIMES

An echo mime is a simple device for assisting (usually younger) people to understand and recall a Scripture story. The method is quite simple: a passage is chosen and rewritten in short, simple statements. For each statement, an action is devised. The leader (an individual or group) voices the statement and performs the accompanying actions. Both statement and action are repeated or echoed by the rest of the group.

Example – Jesus is tempted Mark 1:12-15

Jesus went into the desert.

Walk on the spot, right hand over eyes

He was hot.

Wipe hand over forehead and make a blowing sound.

He was thirsty.

Make a cup with hand and put to mouth.

He was tempted by the Evil One.

Cross hands in front of face.

There were wild animals

Make 'wild animal' actions and noise.

God's angels took care of him.

Hold both arms out as if to embrace.

Good News! Good News!

Raise left hand and make flashing motion.

Do the same with the right hand.

Trust in God.

Circular motions with arms out in front.

Believe in God

Hands in prayer position.

(From *Attending to the Sacred: Resources for Children aged 4-8 years*, Brisbane Catholic Education 2003)



FROZEN TABLEAUX

Visual stimulus assists the children to embrace the story. Some ideas for this are included throughout to gospel reflection. The 'actions' are actually frozen positions which the various characters display at different times throughout the reading. It is suggested that one group of children do the actions involving Mary, Martha and Jesus and a different group read their parts.

Example – Lazarus John 11:3-7, 17-27, 33-45

Reader: One day, Mary and her sister Martha sent a message to Jesus.

Action: Mary and Martha sitting together. Martha has one hand outstretched.

Lazarus is standing to one side.

Sisters: Jesus, your good friend Lazarus is very sick.

Action: Jesus stands some distance from the sisters. He extends a hand towards them.

Jesus: Don't worry Martha. Mary, it'll be okay. Lazarus will not die.

Reader: At this time Jesus was staying in a place some distance from where Mary and

Martha lived. After a couple of days he returned to Bethany to see Lazarus.

Action: Another child enters and gently wraps a large bandage around Lazarus, then leaves.

Reader: When Jesus finally arrived at the home of Mary and Martha, he discovered

that Lazarus was already dead.

Martha: Jesus is here at last and I'm going out to welcome him.

Action: Martha moves to stand near and look at Jesus.

Martha: Jesus, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. But you can

still save him because God will do anything for you.

Jesus: Martha, Martha, fear not. Lazarus will live again. He will rise to new life.

Martha: I know that he is living with God and that if we believe in God we will have

eternal life. And I know that you are God's Son, the one we've been waiting for.

Jesus: You are right Martha. I am the resurrection and the life. Now let's go and find

your sister Mary.

Action: Martha and Jesus move to stand near Mary. Mary crouches at the feet of

Jesus, head bowed, deep in sorrow.

Mary: Jesus, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Reader: Jesus was deeply moved by the sorrow of Mary and Martha and he too began to

weep.

Action: Martha and Jesus bow heads in deep sorrow.

Reader: Mary led Martha and Jesus to the tomb where Lazarus was buried.

Action: All turn towards Lazarus.

Reader: when they arrived at the tomb, Jesus gave an order.

Jesus: take the stone away from the tomb. Lazarus, come out!

Action: Lazarus turns to face Jesus.

Jesus: Untie him and let him go free!

Action: Two children remove the bandage from Lazarus, who stands with arms

elevated in praise of God.

Leader: Many people say what happened that day and believed in Jesus. This is the

Good News of Jesus.

(From Children's Activities for the Lenten program, Year A, Brisbane Catholic Education 2002)





LIQUID PICTURES

Liquid pictures is a form of drama which allows a story to be presented in a flowing or liquid manner. The process follows this pattern:

- Choose a familiar Scriptural story and divide into five or six main sections.
- For each section choose one or two short phrases.
- Choose a simple action for each section
- Choose one person for each section. These five or six people stand with their backs to the rest of the group.
- A leader introduces the story with a simple statement
- The first student, turns to face the group, repeats a phrase two or three times then freezes. Process continues until the last student finishes
- Leader concludes with a simple statement.

Example – Jesus is tempted Mark 1:12-15

Leader: God's Spirit made Jesus go into the desert.

- Into the desert, into the desert, into the desert!
- For a long time, for a long time, for a long time!
- There were wild animals, wild beasts, wild animals everywhere.
- But Jesus was safe, safe and sound, safe in the desert.

- The time has come, the Kingdom is here, here right now, this is it!

Leader: turn back to God and believe, believe, believe the Good News!!

(From Attending to the Sacred: Resources for children aged 9-14yrs, Brisbane Catholic Education 2003)



ECHO REFLECTION

Example - Promise to Noah Genesis 9:8-15

Leader: God told Noah and his family, I am going to make a promise.

All: A promise

Leader: A promise to all people and all creation

All: All people and all creation

Leader: This is an important promise.

All: A really important promise.

Leader: A very serious and important promise.

All: A serious and important promise

Leader: And this is it.

All: Here it comes.....

Leader: I promise to look after the earth and all the creatures on it.

All: Everybody in fact!

Leader: The earth and those living on it will never again be destroyed by a flood.

All: Never again will a flood destroy the earth.

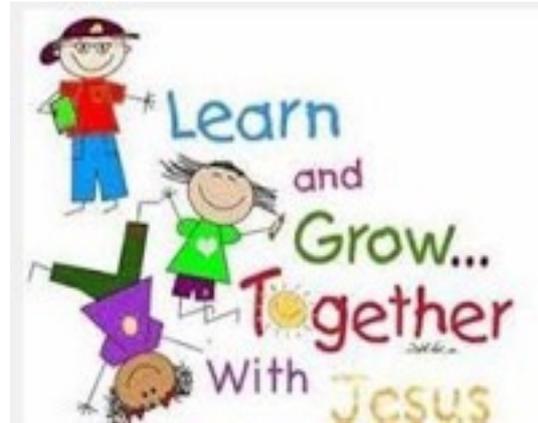
Leader: There will be a special sign in a sky.

All: A rainbow!

Leader: To tell you that I will keep my promise.

All: A rainbow in the sky.

(From Attending to the Sacred: Resources for Children aged 9-14years,
Brisbane Catholic Education 2003)



RAP

Example – Zacchaeus Rap

Jesus went to Jericho one fine day
The crowd gathered round him along the way.
A little man, Zacchaeus, climbed a big huge tree
He waited, excited, for Jesus to see.

Zacchaeus climbed a big, huge tree
Jesus, Jesus, he wanted to see.

When Jesus saw him, he said 'Come on down.
Invite me to your place. I like this town.'
Zacchaeus got down in a great big hurry
He welcomed Jesus with an enormous flurry.

Zacchaeus climbed a big, huge tree
Jesus, Jesus, he wanted to see.

The crowd turned around and began to mumble
'He's a sinner, he's no good!' each one grumbled.
Zacchaeus just stood there and said "I'm sorry.
I don't want to cause any more worry."

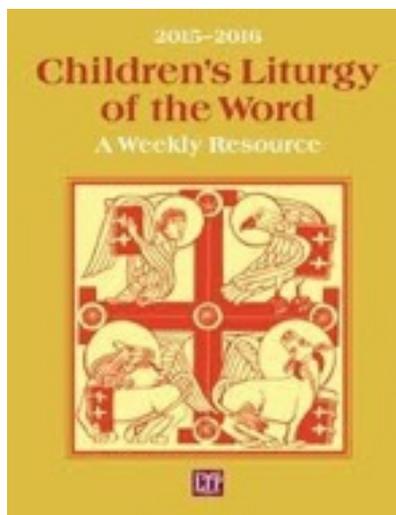
Zacchaeus said 'Lord, I am sorry.'
Jesus said, 'Zac, don't you worry.'

'I'll change my ways and give to the poor.
I don't want to hurt anyone any more.'
Jesus said, 'Zac, I'm glad you're back.
Let's go and have this snack.'

Zacchaeus said 'Lord, I am sorry.'
Jesus said, 'Zac, don't you worry.'

(From Sacramental Resource Kit, Brisbane Catholic Education 2001)

RESOURCES



Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is a prayer leader?** Someone who breaks open the Word with the children. The leader is not focused on teaching but on being a channel of God's Word, accompanying the children on their faith

journey, listening to them, and helping them share their own experiences of God's presence in their lives. To ask the right questions and let the children lead the way. No homily is to be given.

2. **Who can be a prayer leader?** Anyone who wishes to help children in their growth as disciples of Christ and to promote their love of God can lead the Liturgy of the Word with children. A Blue Card is required by our diocese.

3. How are parents involved?

- Encouraging their children to attend, but never forcing or bribing them to do so.
- Emphasizing that the Liturgy of the Word with children is part of Mass, and should be taken seriously.
- Engaging their children in conversations about the Sunday Scripture.
- Helping their children to live out the Sunday Scripture.
- Helping their children live out the Sunday Scripture in their daily lives.
- Working with leaders of the liturgy of the Word with children to address any discipline problems that may arise.
- Reinforcing the importance of prayer and Mass attendance in all aspects of family life at home.

POPE FRANCIS' FIVE FINGER PRAYER

1.) THE THUMB IS THE CLOSEST FINGER TO YOU. SO START PRAYING FOR THOSE WHO ARE CLOSEST TO YOU. THEY ARE THE PERSONS EASIEST TO REMEMBER. TO PRAY FOR OUR DEAR ONES IS A "SWEET OBLIGATION."

2.) THE NEXT FINGER IS THE INDEX. PRAY FOR THOSE WHO TEACH YOU, INSTRUCT YOU AND HEAL YOU. THEY NEED THE SUPPORT AND WISDOM TO SHOW DIRECTION TO OTHERS. ALWAYS KEEP THEM IN YOUR PRAYERS.

3.) THE FOLLOWING FINGER IS THE TALLEST. IT REMINDS US OF OUR LEADERS, THE GOVERNORS AND THOSE WHO HAVE AUTHORITY. THEY NEED GOD'S GUIDANCE.

4.) THE FOURTH FINGER IS THE RING FINGER. EVEN THAT IT MAY SURPRISE YOU, IT IS OUR WEAKEST FINGER. IT SHOULD REMIND US TO PRAY FOR THE WEAKEST, THE SICK OR THOSE PLAGUED BY PROBLEMS. THEY NEED YOUR PRAYERS.



5.) AND FINALLY WE HAVE OUR SMALLEST FINGER, THE SMALLEST OF ALL. YOUR PINKIE SHOULD REMIND YOU TO PRAY FOR YOURSELF. WHEN YOU ARE DONE PRAYING FOR THE OTHER FOUR GROUPS, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO SEE YOUR OWN NEEDS BUT IN THE PROPER PERSPECTIVE, AND ALSO



THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended into hell.
The third day he rose from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of
God the Father Almighty.
From there he will come to judge
the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.



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