

Young children & Mass participation

At St. Timothy Catholic Community, we welcome children of all ages! We also recognize the challenge parents sometimes face in having children participate in the Mass. At both the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) Center and the Children's Center, parents frequently ask: **Should young children attend Mass?** The answer is: Yes, children need to attend Mass! However, we also recognize that the youngest children are not always able to fully, consciously and actively participate in Holy Mass in the Sanctuary.

While one of the best ways we can show our children the beauty of our Catholic Faith is to model our commitment to attend and participate in Mass, we also realize that it is natural for very young children to become restless and noisy. When this happens, you, the child and all those present benefit from making use of either the Cry Room or the Children's Center.

As the primary faith educators of your children, we ask you to consider the following thoughts as you teach them how to understand and participate in Mass. We all need to take into consideration what is best for our individual families as well as for our greater parish family so that all may more fully, actively and consciously participate in Holy Mass.

When your young child attends Mass, here are some things that may help make the experience easier for everyone:

- Before leaving home, talk to your child about your expectations and about what they will see during Mass.
- Arrive on time (before the bells ring). Children can have a difficult time settling down when they are rushed.

- Encourage children to use the rest room prior to Mass.

- Whenever possible, children should reverently sit and stand with the rest of the assembly during Mass, especially during the Eucharist Prayer (after the Offertory until the Great Amen).

- If possible, sit where children can see the altar. This will help children participate in Mass.

- The Mass is not a place for toys and snacks. Not only can these be noisy but also they distract children from the purpose of Mass.

The Cry Room, located in the back of the church in Room 10, is designed for children who may not be ready to participate in the main Sanctuary. In the Cry Room we broadcast the Mass on a monitor and chairs are available. When in the Cry Room, we ask parents to model good Mass behavior by saying the responses and singing along with the congregation. While in the Cry Room, encourage children to reverently participate in the Mass as much as possible. Remember, this space is

offered as a stepping stone toward full participation in the Sanctuary. It is not meant to be a play room. Children must be supervised.

We are also very blessed to have a Children's Center available during all Masses at St. Timothy's. Childcare is provided for infants through age six who are not yet ready to attend Mass. Children with special needs are welcome at any age. Our paid staff joins with trained volunteers to care for children age two and under in age-appropriate low-ratio classrooms. Then, beginning at age three, children participate in a lesson based on the Gospel message. This includes a story and a craft, as well as prayer and play time. In this way children can learn about God's message in a loving, age-appropriate environment.

We are blessed to serve your children,

-- DeEtte Milhone,
Children's Center director &
Mindy Longwell,
CGS director



“Let the children come to Me.”

--Matt 19:14