

# Parish Children's Ministry – Where do we start?

An excellent starting point for a parish beginning ministry to Children and Families is to launch Children's Liturgy of the Word (CLOW).

## What is Children's Liturgy of the Word?

**Children's Liturgy of the Word** is a time during Sunday Mass when children are invited to leave the main assembly and gather in a separate space to hear and reflect on the Gospel in a way that's engaging and age-appropriate. It helps children connect with the message of the Scriptures through storytelling, discussion, and simple activities, before rejoining the congregation for the rest of the Mass. Provision for Children's Liturgy of the Word was given in the Vatican II document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and is outlined further in the *Directory for Masses with Children and the Children's Lectionary*.

Here's a recording from a one-hour workshop on CLOW from the Archdiocesan Ministries Children and Families with more information:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_dBaAQa5iwA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_dBaAQa5iwA) or scan the QR code




## Why start with Children's Liturgy?

CLOW is a great place to start for a number of reasons. Firstly, weekly mass is a familiar part of parish life so introducing CLOW builds on what parishioners already know. Secondly, it communicates clearly to families that they are welcome, their whole family has a space to belong. Thirdly, it supports children's spiritual formation in a developmentally appropriate way, creating opportunities for them to encounter God and to grow into full and active participation in the Church's celebrations. Finally, it can be led by volunteers with minimal training, using flexible resources that are readily available.

## Simple Steps to Make It a Reality:

1. **Start with a Conversation:** Meet with the parish priest and leadership to share the vision and benefits.
2. **Identify and gather a Team:** Begin with 2–3 volunteers who are passionate about children's ministry and willing to learn.
3. **Liaise with your parish safeguarding officer** so that your volunteers can begin the process of registering and completing the requirements to be an Archdiocesan volunteer as soon as possible.
4. **Meet as a team** to develop a plan (The Archdiocesan Ministries Children and Families team can support you with planning, training and resources). Considerations will include:
  1. Decide how often CLOW will be held and at which weekend mass. (Consider the capacity of your team and the mass that has the greatest number of families in attendance). Families respond best when CLOW is scheduled regularly so that they know when to expect it's on. Most parish aim for every week during the school terms, but starting once a month is fine too.
  2. Decide on a suitable space for CLOW to be held.

3. Secure a small budget for resources. Basic starting resources would include: cross, candle, children's lectionary (a bible is fine if you don't have a lectionary), cloths in the colours of the liturgical seasons, pencils and paper. Later you can add other items like sacred pictures, statues and other supplies.
  4. Create a parish activity plan to help prepare for practical considerations such as supervision, moving the children from the main congregation to the CLOW space etc
  5. Arrange the method of communication for the team.
  6. Decide how you will organise your roster as a team, who will lead etc
  7. Plan how you will let the community know CLOW is happening? Remember your target audience are families, including new families, so be sure to promote on your parish's social media and school platforms as well as the parish newsletter. Sometimes it takes many invitations so don't give up!
  8. Discuss which other parish teams could you connect with to make welcome and engage families (and others) even more? For example, could the hospitality team offer morning tea on CLOW Sundays?
5. **Become familiar with Resources:** Weekly gospel-based resources are already available and designed to be flexible—leaders can choose what works best for their context <https://archdiocesanministries.org.au/weekly-scripture-resources/> or scan the QR code
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6. **Launch and Reflect:** Make time to reflect as a team after each CLOW and after a few CLOW's gather feedback from families.
7. **Celebrate and Grow:** Share stories and photos in the parish bulletin or social media. This builds momentum and encourages others to get involved.

Once your CLOW is well established you may want to explore some other great options:

- Monthly family mass
- Primary-aged youth group
- An Encounter Catholic Kids (ECK) fun day or holiday program  
<https://www.encountercatholickids.com.au>

We're here to help!

Children and Families Team, Archdiocesan Ministries

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