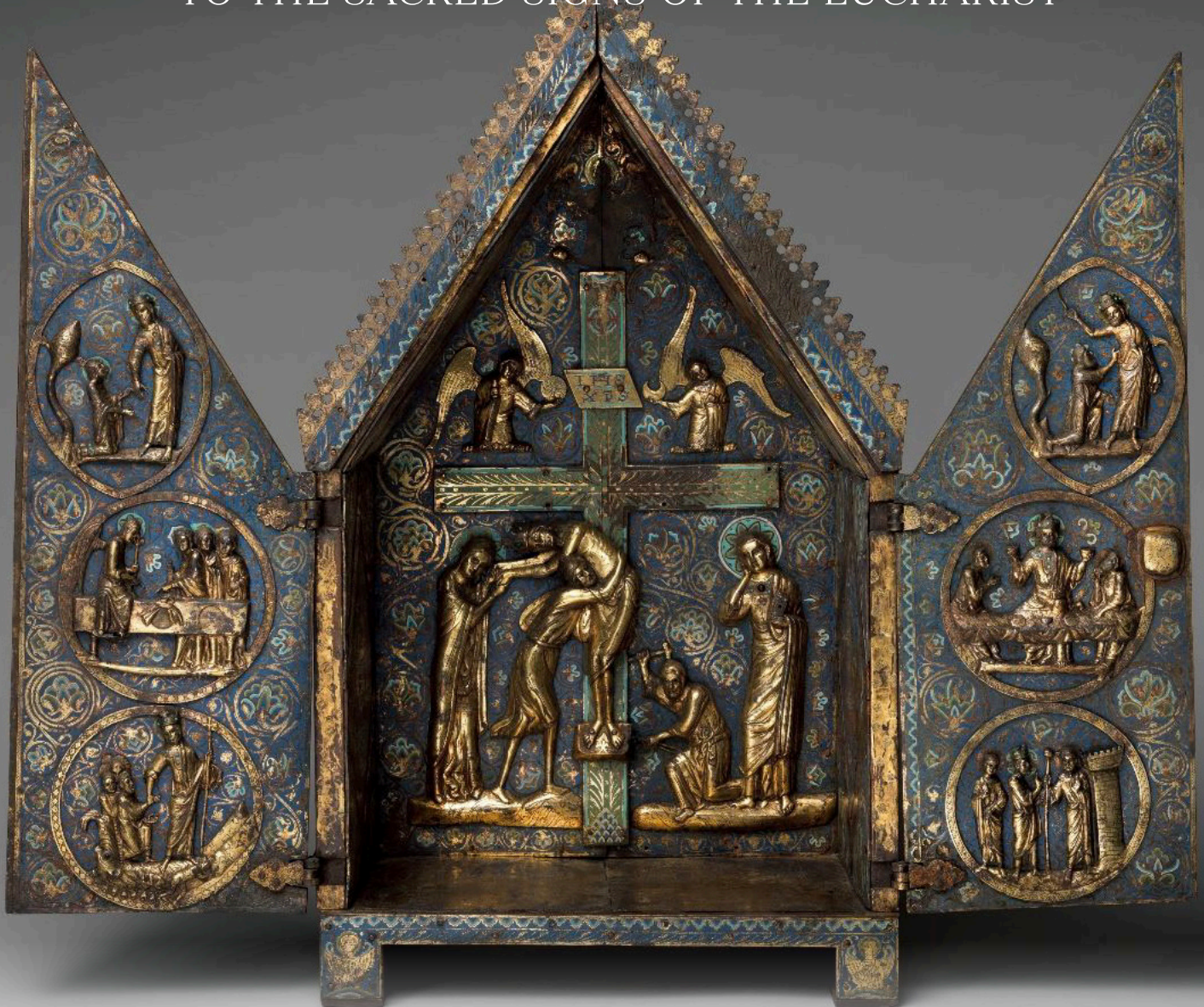


COME LET US WORSHIP:

A CHILDREN'S GUIDE
TO THE SACRED SIGNS OF THE EUCHARIST



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WELCOMING
CHILDREN
in WORSHIP

THE CATHOLIC
UNIVERSITY
OF AMERICA





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INTRODUCTION

FOR PARENTS, PASTORS, CATECHISTS, AND TEACHERS

In 1911, Romano Guardini, an Italian-born German Catholic priest and theologian, wrote a little book called *Sacred Signs*, which was written, in the words of Guardini, “to help open up the world of the liturgy.”¹ This opening up, as Guardini saw it, required a method of liturgical formation that would consider the experience of the whole person, spirit and body. It would also reclaim the capacity of the person to see and understand the signs, symbols, and gestures of the liturgy.

For more than a century, Guardini’s little book has continued to inspire, and the principles he sketches out in the introduction to *Sacred Signs* are as relevant today as they were when first published. Above all, they remind us that formation for the liturgy requires more than instruction, which by itself is superficial; rather, what is called for is engagement of the entire self, uniting intellect and experience, as well as the spiritual and material.²

Taken together, these principles have informed the methods we propose in this resource, methods which have proved to be fruitful, especially with children, who, by learning to see and learning to do, assimilate the meaning of the signs, symbols, and gestures of the liturgy.³ These methods include beginning with the basics, privileging experience over classroom instruction, and encouraging repetition to promote understanding.⁴ More specifically, our methods bring to the fore these principles of liturgical formation of children that:

- Highlight the goodness of Creation (body and soul) and prioritize the child’s participation (acclamations and responses, bringing up the gifts);
- Acclimate the child to the physical space (architecture, orientation, the liturgical year);
- Instruct the child in bodily movements (standing, kneeling, walking, hands);
- Present the objects and gestures of the liturgy as part of the child’s lived reality (chalice, paten, linens, epiclesis).

Your primary source of materials is your environment—the church, its structure and layout, its decoration—and the articles it holds for use in the Mass. Each lesson, however, provides the following support:

- Lesson Objective
- Suggested Materials
- Vocabulary
- Guiding Children’s Experience
- Children’s Activity
- Summary Lesson Plan

In addition to materials for artwork and for some activities, the only other item you will need is a Bible in order to locate and read selected passages. We recommend using the New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (NRSVCE) or the New American Bible Revised Edition (NABRE).

Thank you for your interest in using this resource for the liturgical formation of your students and children. May the Holy Spirit guide you and keep you as you carry out the vital ministry of forming the children in your care for worship and prayer.

A WORD ON FORMING CHILDREN FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

In the Catholic tradition the Mass is “the highest point in all our prayer.”⁵ Accordingly, formation in prayer is a natural, and arguably essential, part of liturgical formation. To this end, we have incorporated a period of prayer into the beginning of each lesson.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* mentions five forms of prayer: blessing and adoration, praise, thanksgiving, petition, intercession. Similarly, it identifies three expressions of prayer: vocal prayer, meditation, contemplative prayer.⁶ Against this background, we begin each lesson with *lectio divina*, which familiarizes children with these forms and expressions and the discipline required for participation in the Mass. A description of this practice may be found below.

We also recommend teaching children the responses, acclamations, and prayers of the Mass. These include the Confiteor, the Gloria, the Nicene Creed, the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy), the Our Father, the Invitation to Prayer (Lord, I am not worthy), and the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God). These also may be found below.

Lectio divina and teaching children to pray with scripture

Lectio divina is an ancient practice dating back to the early Church. It is a method of praying with Scripture that helps us to discern what God is speaking to our hearts. There are four steps: **lectio, meditatio, oratio, and contemplatio** or **reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation**. Each of these steps is described below.

Lectio: Once you have chosen a Scripture passage, read it (or have it read to you) slowly and carefully. What does it mean, in the literal sense?

Meditatio: Read or listen to the passage again. Are there words or phrases that stand out to you? Ponder them. How do they make you feel? What is God saying to you?

Oratio: Read or listen to the passage again. In light of your meditation, respond to God. What would you like to say to him?

Contemplatio: Read or listen to the passage again. Now sit in silence, and rest in God. Listen for what he may be speaking to your heart.

With young children, our purpose is to show them that the Bible is a special book. We teach them how to hold it so they can feel its weight, and we let them turn its pages. The passages we read to them are narrative in nature, and we guide their responses with questions. Older children who are seven and above may be led through the usual steps. The passages we read to them may be narrative or not, and their responses, if they wish, may be private. Even so, their responses may still need to be prompted by questions, until they grow in prayer and worship.

Notes

1. Romano Guardini, *Sacred Signs*, trans. Grace Branham (St. Louis: Pio Decimo Press, 1956), <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/sacred-signs-11190>.
2. Romano Guardini, *Liturgy and Liturgical Formation*, trans. Jan Bentz (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2022), viii.
3. Fr. Samuel Weber, OSB, “Sacred Signs and Religious Formation: An Application of the Teachings of Monsignor Romano Guardini,” *Adoremus* 14, no.1 (March 2008), <https://adoremus.org/2008/03/sacred-signs-and-religious-formation/>.
4. Weber, “Sacred Signs.”
5. Benedict XVI, General Audience, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20120111.html.
6. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana-United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 2626-2643.

PRAYERS OF THE MASS FOR CHILDREN TO KNOW | *printable page*

Confiteor

I confess to almighty God
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have greatly sinned
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done and in what I have
failed to do,
through my fault, through my fault,
through my most grievous fault;
therefore I ask the blessed Mary
ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.

Gloria

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.
We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of
the Father, have mercy on us.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Nicene Creed

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial
with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate
of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and Son,
who with the Father and Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic
Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of
the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE MASS FOR CHILDREN TO KNOW | *printable page*

Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy)

Holy, Holy, Holy
Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Our Father

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed by thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Invitation to Communion

Lord I am not worthy
that you should enter under my roof,
but only say the word
and my soul shall be healed.

Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)

Lamb of God,
you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God,
You take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God,
you take away the sins of the world:
grant us peace.



A young girl with long hair is shown in profile, looking down at a lit candle she is holding in her hands. The candle is bright yellow and has a small flame. The background is dark, and another child is visible in the upper left, looking down. The overall lighting is warm and focused on the candle and the girl's face.

UNIT III | Lesson Seven

WELCOMING CHILDREN TO SACRED SPACE

Sign of the Cross

LESSON OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this lesson is to strengthen children's understanding of the Sign of the Cross and its power as a universal sign of God's love.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS

- Bible
-

VOCABULARY

Blessed or Holy Trinity a name affirming that God is one God in three divine Persons

Sign of the Cross a confession of faith by which we affirm the mystery of the Blessed Trinity and the centrality of the Cross;
also used as a gesture of blessing

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Pray *lectio divina* using Psalm 9:1.

GUIDING CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE

Explain that the Sign of the Cross is a universal gesture. Every day, all over the world, Christians are making the Sign of the Cross. Why is the Sign of the Cross so special?

We already know that the Sign of the Cross is a reminder of our baptism. It is equally a reminder that God is one God in three divine Persons. Like a crucifix, the Sign of the Cross is a powerful symbol of Jesus' death and resurrection. When we sign ourselves with the Sign of the Cross, we are accepting the greatness of his gift.

Make the Sign of the Cross without words. Make it large—from forehead to chest and shoulder to shoulder—and take your time. The Sign of the Cross should be expansive and unhurried—a clear indication of reverence and love of the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Make the Sign of the Cross again, this time including the words. Be sure to connect the words with the gestures: In the name of the Father (forehead), and of the Son (chest), and of the Holy (left shoulder) Spirit (right shoulder). Amen. As previously, it should be expansive and unhurried.

Ask the children if they would like to see a picture of someone who is making the Sign of the Cross. As before, we have provided a list of questions for your use with the children. You may, however, develop your own. For the activity, divide the children into groups of two and ask them to practice making the Sign of the Cross together.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- > *When do we make the Sign of the Cross?*
- > *Is the Sign of the Cross a prayer?*
- > *What are we saying when we make the Sign of the Cross?*

ACTIVITY

Practice making the Sign of the Cross.

- Divide the children into groups of two.
- Have the children practice making the Sign of the Cross together. If the children are very young, have them
- practice the gesture only or say the words for them.



SUMMARY LESSON PLAN

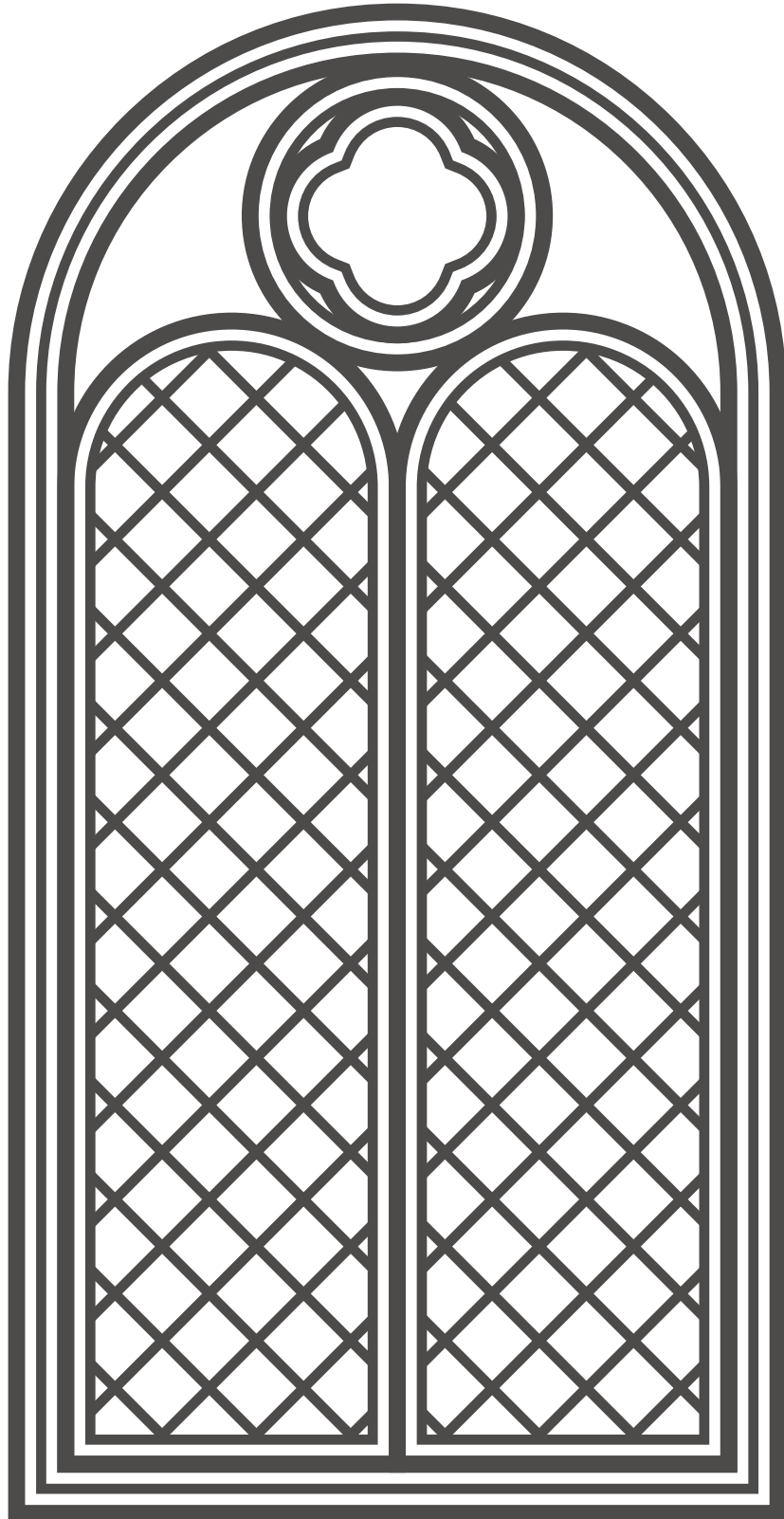
Lesson Seven: Welcoming Children to Sacred Space (*Sign of the Cross*)

MATERIALS: Bible.

MOMENTS	PREPARATION	PRESENTATION/ACTIVITY	NOTES
Gathering and Prayer	Mark Psalm 9:1 in your Bible.	Pray <i>lectio divina</i> : Psalm 9:1.	
1st Moment		Tell children that the Sign of the Cross is a universal gesture. Every day, all over the world, Christians are making the Sign of the Cross. Ask children what makes the Sign of the Cross so special.	
2nd Moment		Tell children that the Sign of the Cross is a reminder of our baptism. It is also a reminder that God is one God in three divine Persons. Like a crucifix, the Sign of the Cross is a powerful symbol of Jesus' death and resurrection. When we sign ourselves with the Sign of the Cross, we are accepting the greatness of his gift.	
3rd Moment		Make the Sign of the Cross without words. Make it expansive and unhurried. Make the Sign of the Cross again. Include the words. Be careful to connect the words with the gestures.	
4th Moment		Ask children to share their reflections, using the questions provided as a guide.	
Activity	Divide children into groups of two.	Have children practice making the Sign of the Cross together.	If children are very young, have them practice the gesture only or say the words for them.
Closing Prayer	Choose closing prayer.	Pray closing prayer.	

BONUS ACTIVITY

Inspired by the stained glass windows you see at your local Church, color this window with colored pencils.





UNIT III | Lesson Eight

WELCOMING CHILDREN TO SACRED SPACE

Gestures

LESSON OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this lesson is to facilitate children’s awareness of gestures as signs and expressions of spiritual truths. (The gestures of the epiclesis and the offering may be introduced together or offered as two separate lessons.)

SUGGESTED MATERIALS

- Bible
 - Clear glass plate
 - Clear wine glass
 - Paper host
 - White linen cloth
-

VOCABULARY

Gesture	a movement that communicates meaning without using words
Epiclesis	the invocation of the Holy Spirit for the consecration of the bread and wine during the Eucharistic Prayer
Offering	a gesture of thanksgiving for the consecration of the bread and wine during the Eucharistic Prayer
Transubstantiation	the doctrine holding that the bread and wine of the Eucharist are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, although their appearance remains the same

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Pray *lectio divina* using Habakkuk 3:19.

GUIDING CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE

Have on hand a white linen cloth, a wine glass, and a small glass plate with a paper host. You will be using them during your demonstrations of the epiclesis and the offering.

Explain that a gesture is a movement—a movement that says something without using words. Demonstrate two or three gestures the children can identify, such as saying “yes” with a head nod or “hello” with a hand wave.

Introduce the idea that some gestures are part of the Mass. These gestures are so important that they happen every time. Two of these gestures are the epiclesis and the offering.

Tell the children that the epiclesis takes place during the Eucharistic Prayer and that when the priest makes this gesture, he is asking the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

Demonstrate the gesture. Lay out the white linen cloth. Place the wine glass and the small glass plate with the paper host in the center. In a standing position, raise your hands, holding them palms down above the wine glass and the plate. Lower them.

Explain that the gesture of the epiclesis is accompanied by a prayer. Recite the prayer, while demonstrating the gesture:

O Lord, we humbly implore you: by the same Spirit graciously make holy these gifts we have brought to you for consecration, that they may become the Body and Blood of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ.

Invite the children to share what they think these words mean. Have they heard them before? Where was it? Who said them?

Tell the children that the offering takes place during the Eucharistic Prayer, when the priest joins the gifts of the bread and wine—which have been transformed by the Holy Spirit into the Body and Blood of Christ—to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Return to the white linen cloth, the wine glass, and the small glass plate with the paper host. Demonstrate the gesture. In a standing position, take the wine glass in your right hand and the plate in your left. Raise them up together.

Explain that the offering is also accompanied by a prayer. Recite the prayer, while demonstrating the gesture:

Through him, and in him, and with him, O God, Almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, for ever and ever. Amen.

Invite the children to share what they think these words mean. Have they heard them before? Where was it? Who said them?

As before, we have provided a list of questions for your use with the children. You may, however, develop your own. For the activity, divide the children into groups of two and ask them to practice the epiclesis and the offering together.

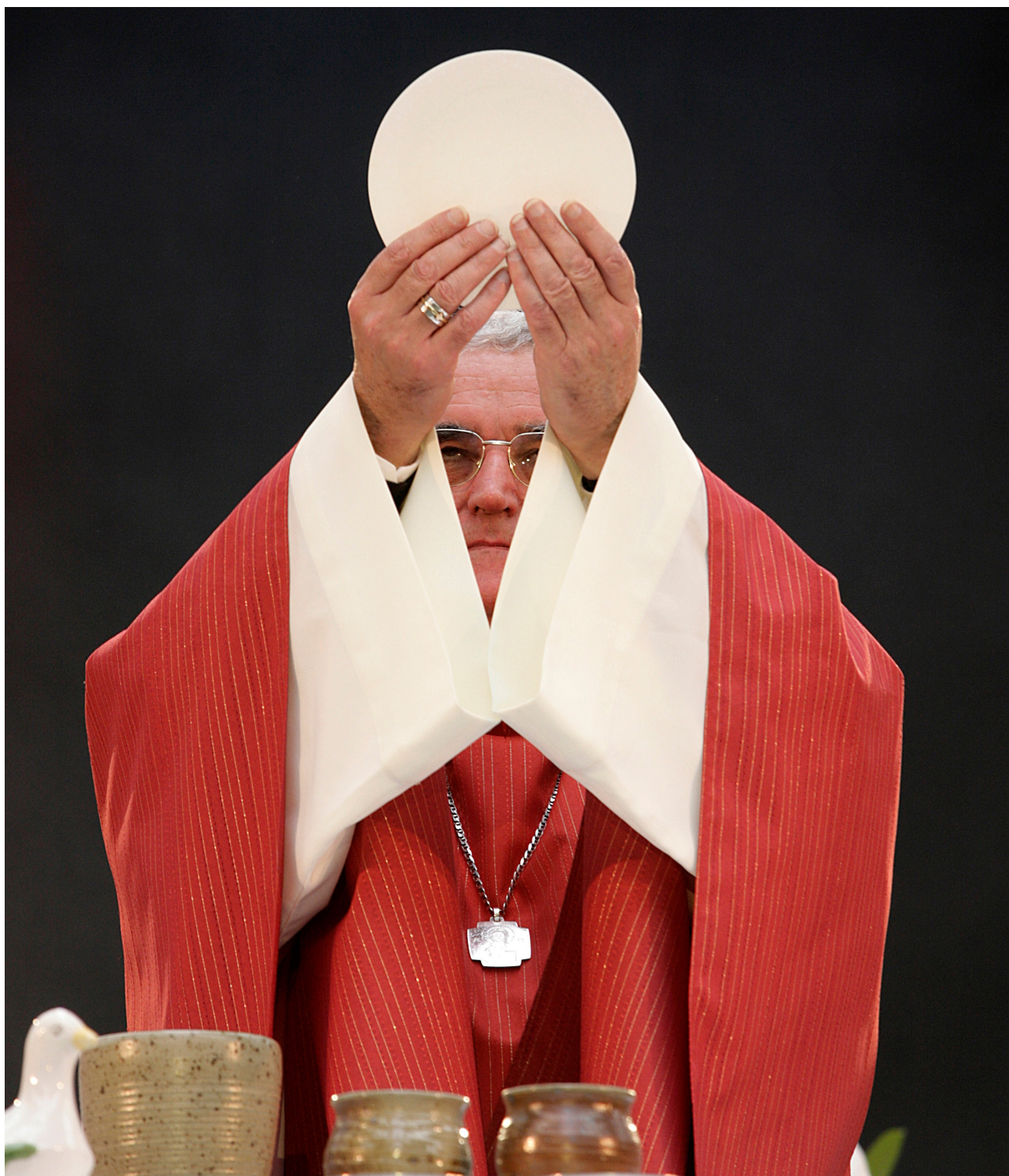
REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- > *How are the epiclesis and the offering similar?*
- > *How are the epiclesis and the offering different?*
- > *When the Holy Spirit transforms the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, can we see the change? Did it still happen?*

ACTIVITY

Practice the epiclesis and the offering.

- Divide the children into groups of two.
- Have the children practice the epiclesis and the offering together. One can make the gesture and the other can say the words. If the children are very young, have them practice the gesture only or read the words for them.



SUMMARY LESSON PLAN

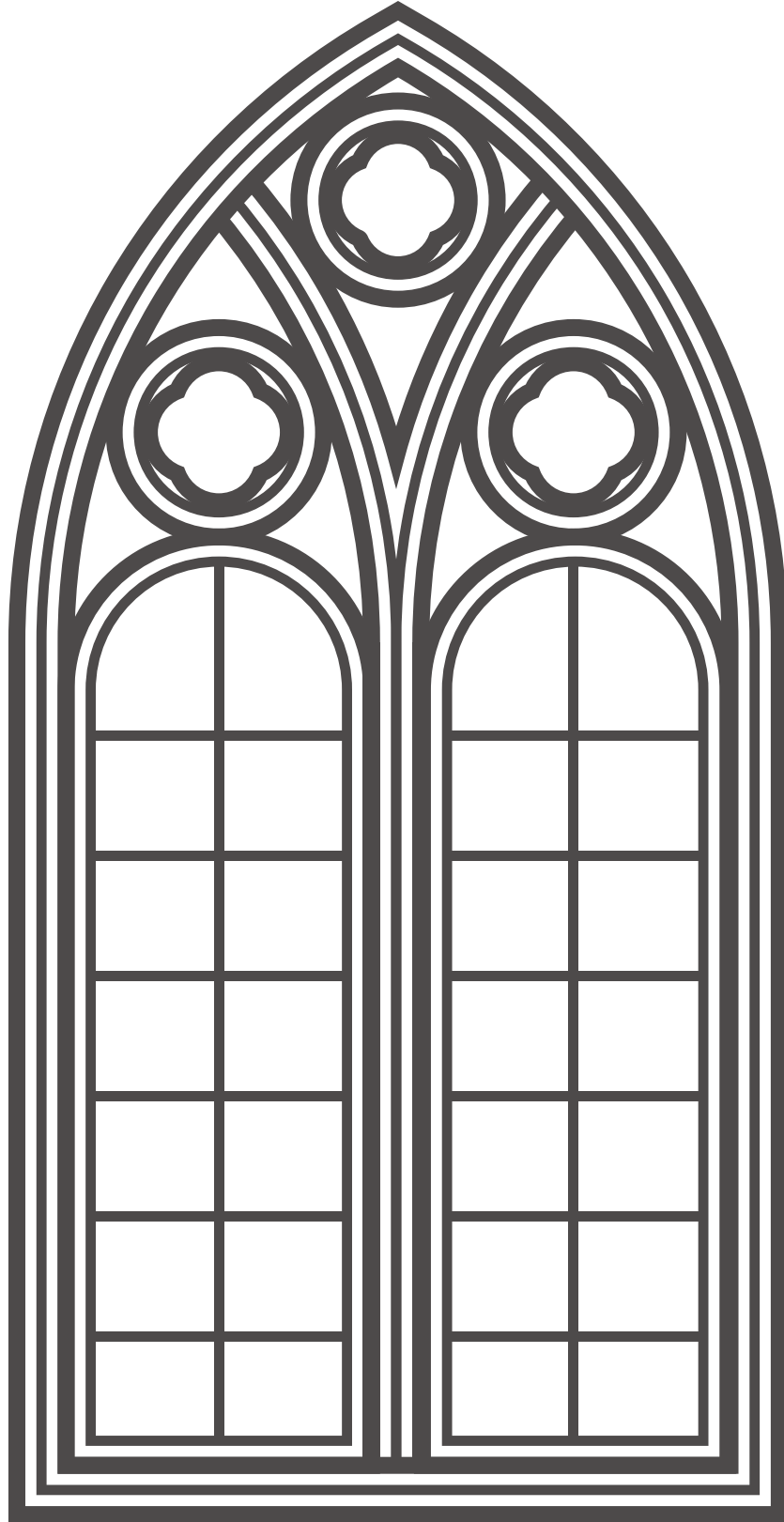
Lesson Eight: Welcoming Children to Sacred Space (*Gestures*)

MATERIALS: Bible, clear glass plate, clear wine glass, paper host, white linen cloth

MOMENTS	PREPARATION	PRESENTATION/ACTIVITY	NOTES
Gathering and Prayer	Mark Habakkuk 3:19 in your Bible.	Pray <i>lectio divina</i> : Habakkuk 3:19.	
1st Moment		Tell children that a gesture is a movement that says something without using words. Demonstrate two or three gestures the children can identify.	
2nd Moment		Tell children that some gestures are part of the Mass. These gestures are so important that they happen every time.	Two of these gestures are the epiclesis and the offering.
3rd Moment		Tell children that when the priest makes the gesture of epiclesis, he is asking the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. Demonstrate the gesture. Tell children the gesture is accompanied by a prayer. Demonstrate the gesture with the prayer.	<i>O Lord, we humbly implore you: by the same Spirit graciously make holy these gifts we have brought to you for consecration that they may become the Body and Blood of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ.</i>
4th Moment		Tell children that when the priest makes the gesture of the offering, he is joining the gifts of the bread and wine to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Demonstrate the gesture. Tell children the gesture is accompanied by a prayer. Demonstrate the gesture with the prayer.	<i>Through him, and with him, and in him, O God, Almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is your, for ever and ever. Amen.</i>
5th Moment		Ask children to share their reflections, using the questions provided as a guide.	
Activity	Divide children into groups of two.	Have children practice the epiclesis and the offering together.	If children are very young, have them practice the gesture only or read the words for them.
Closing Prayer	Choose closing prayer.	Pray closing prayer.	

BONUS ACTIVITY

Inspired by the stained glass windows you see at your local Church, color this window with colored pencils.





UNIT III | Lesson Nine

WELCOMING CHILDREN TO SACRED SPACE

Postures

LESSON OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this lesson is to further children’s awareness that reverence for God is expressed through our bodies.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS

- Bible
 - Image of El Greco’s *St. Dominic in Prayer*
 - “All Glory Laud and Honor,” performance on *Welcoming Children in Worship* website <https://wccworship.wpenginepowered.com/all-glory-laud-and-honor/>
 - Phone or other device for playing video
 - Copywork template
 - Pens or pencils
 - Colored pencils
-

VOCABULARY

Posture the position in which we hold our bodies

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Pray *lectio divina* using Psalm 4:8.

GUIDING CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE

Have on hand a small, flat cushion or towel folded over several times. You will be using it during your demonstration of the posture of kneeling.

Explain to the children that a posture refers to the way we hold our bodies, and that a posture, like a gesture, is a way of saying something without using words. There are some postures we see all the time, but they take on special meaning when we see them at Mass. Two of these postures are kneeling and standing.

Introduce kneeling as a posture of adoration. When we kneel, we are showing that we are mindful of God's greatness. All-powerful, all-knowing, and present everywhere, God is the creator of everything and everyone. Add that kneeling is also a posture of humility and shows that we recognize our smallness in God's presence.¹

Demonstrate the posture. Lower your knees to the cushion or towel, making sure that your demeanor is deferential and unhurried. The posture of kneeling should be upright and not slouched. Kneeling, as a posture, may seem trivial or insignificant, but when we kneel before God, it becomes meaningful as an expression of reverence.²

Introduce standing as a posture of deference. When we stand for people we consider important, we are showing our respect for their achievements or position. How much more worthy is God of our consideration? This is why we stand for the Gospel during the Mass.

Demonstrate the posture. Straighten your back and lift your head, making sure not to fidget or shuffle your feet. The posture of standing should appear disciplined, but not rigid. Standing, as a posture, may seem immaterial or unimportant, but when we stand before God, it becomes a way for us to honor or show our deep respect for him.

Ask the children if they would like to see a picture of someone kneeling in prayer. Show them *St. Dominic in Prayer* painted by El Greco. Point out St. Dominic's posture and demeanor and the way he is holding the crucifix in his hands. These are indications of his reverence and humility.

As before, we have provided a list of questions for your use with the children. You may, however, develop your own. For the activity, have the children copy and illustrate Psalm 95:6, while listening to "All Glory Laud and Honor."

Notes

1. Romano Guardini, *Sacred Signs*. trans. Grace Branham (St. Louis: Pio Decimo Press, 1956)
<https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/sacred-signs-11190>
2. Guardini.


REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- > *Why do we kneel during the Mass?*
- > *Why do we stand during the Mass?*
- > *What are you thinking about when you are kneeling or standing at Mass?*

ACTIVITY

*Using the template provided, have the children copy and illustrate Psalm 95:6, while listening to **All Glory Laud and Honor**.*

*O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!*



SUMMARY LESSON PLAN

Lesson Six: Welcoming Children to Sacred Space (*Liturgical Calendar*)

MATERIALS: Bible, image of El Greco's *St. Dominic in Prayer*, "All Glory Laud and Honor," phone or other device for playing music, copywork template, pens or pencils, colored pencils

MOMENTS	PREPARATION	PRESENTATION/ACTIVITY	NOTES
Gathering and Prayer	Mark Psalm 4:8 in your Bible.	Pray lectio divina: Psalm 4:8.	
1st Moment		Tell children that a posture refers to the way we hold our bodies. A posture, like a gesture, is a way of saying something without using words. There are some postures we see all the time, but they take on special meaning when we see them at Mass.	Two of these postures are kneeling and standing.
2nd Moment		Tell children that kneeling is a posture of adoration. Kneeling is also a posture of humility. Demonstrate the posture.	Kneeling shows we recognize God's greatness and our smallness in his presence.
3rd Moment		Tell children standing is a posture of deference. Tell children standing can be a way of honoring God and showing our deep respect for him. Demonstrate the posture.	When we stand for people we consider important, we are showing our respect for them.
4th Moment	Print copies of <i>St. Dominic in Prayer</i> .	Examine <i>St. Dominic in Prayer</i> together. Point out that St. Dominic's posture and demeanor are signs of his reverence and humility.	<i>St. Dominic in Prayer</i> was painted by El Greco between 1586 and 1590. It is held in an unnamed private collection.
5th Moment		Ask children to share their reflections, using the questions provided as a guide.	
Activity	Print copies of the copy work template and Psalm 95:6. Have "All Glory, Laud, and Honor" ready to play.	Have children copy and illustrate Psalm 95:6. Play "All Glory, Laud, and Honor."	
Closing Prayer	Choose closing prayer.	Pray closing prayer.	

St. Dominic in Prayer (c. 1586-1590)
El Greco, Private Collection

