

## Keeping Sundays Holy with Little Ones

We have 4 little ones under 5 in our house and so it would be a struggle for us to watch Mass online with the children. Instead, we have been setting up our own little altar and celebrating a little Sunday service together. This is based on parts of the Catholic Mass but we keep it short and *simple* enough that it is meaningful for the children and they get something prayerful out of it for the ages they are at.

First, we ask the children to gather items to make our little altar special.

### Ideas of what to put on your home altar (you don't have to have them all)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cross/Crucifix</li><li>• Flowers</li><li>• Children's Prayer Books/ Bibles</li><li>• Holy ornaments or pictures</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rosary Beads</li><li>• Candles</li><li>• Holy Water</li><li>• Jug and basket of bread</li></ul>
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One of our children chose a plastic blue beaker from the 'stacking cups toys' She decided it was a pretend chalice and so that went on the table too! This way, it was meaningful to her as part of her worship. Let the children lead on what is significant to them.

Our children also like to place out their little chairs to sit on and arrange it like church. Or you could gather in a circle on the floor.

Get shakers out for the children to play along with while you are singing hymns! 😊



A lay-out below of how we celebrate together. You could tweak this to suit what would work well for your own family. Different things might work in different weeks etc. These are just suggestions.

This takes us about 15 minutes, and we've been amazed at how engaged the children are and of how much they remember from the Mass. It also gives us a chance to spend some special time in prayer as a family.

- **Sing a hymn** together that the children know well. Children can use shakers to join in and make music!
- **Make the Sign of the Cross** together
- Tell Jesus we are **very sorry** for things we shouldn't do. Sing **Lord have Mercy** together
- Read the **Gospel** with the children from the Children's Liturgy Book (or you could use a children's Bible)
- **Bidding Prayers** - As a family go around in a circle and each person to say one person or one intention to pray for. (Remember sick at this time, people who lonely, parish priest and community, Pope Francis and so on)  
*Say: Lord in your mercy*  
*Response: Hear our Prayer*
- Children to pick up bread and jug and walk up the room carrying them to the altar table. (A **mini offertory** procession) You could sing a hymn at this moment such as 'This is my Body'
  - Gather together in a circle, holding hands, and say the **Lord's Prayer** together as a family.
  - Give each other the **Sign of Peace**, shaking hands, giving cuddles, saying 'peace be with you' to one another
  - Take the bread and remember the words of Jesus, *Take it and eat it, this is my body which will be given up for you.* Get the children to repeat these words to remember how important and special it is. **Break the bread** together and then each child gives it to another family member to eat.
  - **Make the Sign of the Cross** and finish with another hymn that the children are familiar with. Give me Joy in My heart/Sing my Soul/ If I were a butterfly/Shine Jesus Shine