

Some Ideas on Taking the Children to Mass and Enjoying It

The problem of caring for restless, noisy children during Sunday Mass troubles many parents—and non-parents, too, who have to endure the kids' presence. The following article, from TODAY'S PARISH, by a Dallas mother of two preschoolers, has some ideas for improving the Sunday morning "cryroom" or "nursery."

By MRS. DARLA BARTOS

A priest delivering the Sunday morning homily stopped abruptly, mopped his forehead and said, "Would the woman with the crying child take him into the vestibule? It is difficult enough to speak on the Holy Spirit without unnecessary interruption."

The above incident triggered harsh and angry words among mothers of the younger set that next week. But as the air

cleared and rationality returned, they realized that it was simply the same old problem with a new face. What do you do with children during Mass?

"If we leave them at home and take turns with our husbands to come to Mass, then our children will be practically grown before they ever see the inside of a church," said one mother.

"Well, frankly, I just enjoy going to church with my husband," one woman blurted out.

"And let's face it, if we take them, all the discipline in the world won't keep a small child from squirming and crying at times. They simply don't understand why they must keep completely quiet for 45 minutes."

"How do you raise a church-

centered family and get the small ones to love going to church when all they have to look forward to is our reprimanding looks — 'Don't you dare do that again!' or 'Sit up straight!'"

"There is always the cryroom."

That will without a doubt dampen any conversation. Just mention the word "cryroom" or "Little Purgatory," as it is referred to in some circles, and for some reason everyone loses her voice.

And if you, too, have ever done time in the cryroom, then you will eagerly agree that when the people's final response comes—following "The Mass is ended. Go in peace,"—the cryroom mothers seem to be the ones who put real gusto into the "Thanks be to God."

There must be a better way. Wonder what would happen if we threw away all of our preconceived notions, theories and ideas about children during Mass. Wonder what we might come up with? We might even be able to create a workable and enjoyable cryroom.

Let's dream a little.

Remembering that our goal is to give our children a delightful Sunday morning, one which they will each enjoy and look forward to with great anticipation, let's plan an ideal set up for pre-school children six months and up.

From six months to 24 months of age there should be a playtime and story reading time for the children. If enough workers are available, then perhaps the younger children and the older children will enjoy watching the others play and participate in the story reading.

Refreshments add an extra touch to any occasion, and the juice and crackers would tide the children over until lunchtime.

Having parents contribute a dime per child would take care of the refreshments for their own children and would eliminate the need for securing funds from the budget of any particular group, no matter how small it might be in the beginning.

Because of the rapid changes that occur during the ages of two to five, it would be best to have four individual classes.

The two-year-olds should have a planned playtime and story period during Mass. Teaching God to these children on their own level will not only give them the beginnings of an understanding of God, but it will make them eagerly greet each Sunday.

In the three-to-five-year-old groups Bible stories, coloring religious pictures and playing educational games can teach God to them in a fun way. When they understand that learning about God can be enjoyable, then and only then will they begin to want to have a relationship with Him.

They must learn to want to come to church, to visit God's house. To create this desire within the child, one must

teach Him on his own level. This begins as early as we want to start.

In summation, to have an ideal set up we must approach our children on their level to explain God. And we must make them aware of His house and teach them to love His house.

If the ideal cannot be put into operation immediately, then why not set up a Sunday nursery? Announce through the parish newspaper, Sunday bulletin, or pulpit that you want to meet with interested mothers and fathers to discuss creating a nursery for Sunday morning Masses. This can be a simple task if enthusiastic and interested parents take charge.

Don't think you are the only one concerned about sitting through Mass and feeling like you've been to a wrestling match. You might be surprised at how many there are who would like not only to contribute to the parish, but also to enjoy a nice, quiet meaningful Mass once a week and be assured at the same time that their children are enjoying going to church.

proverbial last straw! You won't even recognize it!

The cryroom has gradually become a room of permissiveness, and many children think because of the lack of discipline involved, that it is simply a confined play arena. When some parents make their children act as if they are in church while others do not, something's got to give.

Some people take the cryroom literally and allow their children to cry the entire time. Another criticism has been that the adults completely ignore their responsibility to participate in the Mass when they sit in the cryroom. Granted, it is difficult to maintain sanity at

times, but isn't it possible to find a solution where everyone might be able to enjoy Mass?

A possible theory such as this might be adopted:

"A cryroom should be a training ground for your children. It should be a place where you feel free to whisper softly to your children and explain quite simply the Mass as they see it enacted. When they gain their first understanding of the Mass, as well as why they are expected to be quiet, then they can be removed from the cryroom. At all times they should be made aware that the cryroom is indeed church also. Parents, remember you are an example. Please participate."

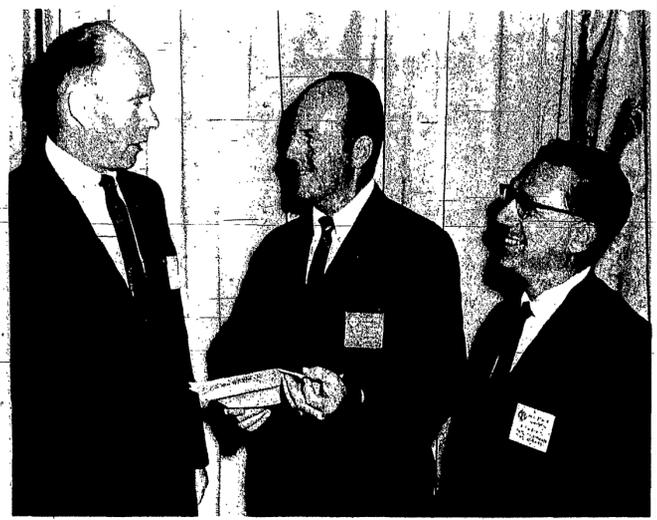
This theory would not have to exclude small children. It would merely require that the parents remove the small children when they begin to cry. Think about it. This seems only fair. Why should an entire group of people be disturbed

when a youngster begins to cry even though the room happens to be labeled as such?

Remember, of course, there are always exceptions to the rule. There is always that Sunday when you are there by yourself with your three small ones. In this case, it is necessary to let one cry for a minute or so. But those exceptions should be rare.

Realize overall that this is your training room for your children. Treat it according to the rules and encourage others to do so. Put the rules in writing and tack them up inside the cryroom on a poster board so that they cannot be overlooked. These training rooms can be effective if everyone works together. It all depends on you.

Who knows, if we unite, maybe we can start participating at Mass rather than serving a weekly "stretch" in "little Purgatory."



Local Knights Head Seminar

Wallace J. Stevenson, center, state deputy of the Knights of Columbus, discusses plans with Paul G. Rombaut of Rochester, left, Oratorical Committee chairman, and Victor S. DeSimon civic affairs chairman. Rombaut and DeSimon were panelists at a three-day seminar for the Grand Knights of the 398 state Knights of Columbus councils at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City.

McQUAID PLANS BENEFIT BALL

Parents, friends, alumni, and faculty of McQuaid Jesuit High School will gather at Oak Hill Country Club Friday evening, Oct. 17, for the third annual McQuaid Benefit Ball. The program will begin with a social hour at 7 p.m., followed by dinner.

A new scholarship program will be prime beneficiary of the fund-raiser. Hearing the committee of McQuaid parents directing plans are Mr. and Mrs. Louis E. Dwyer and Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Eberhardt.

FASHION SHOW

The new Band Booster Club at Nazareth Academy will sponsor a fashion show in the school auditorium at 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 16.

A Sister of St. Joseph will be a "mystery" model among the students and lay teachers who will show the McCurdy clothes. Refreshments will be served. Dollar tickets may be bought at the door or from members of the band, color guard or majorette corps.

NEW SETON BRANCH

The newly formed 67th Seton Branch will meet at the home of Mrs. Edward Rozi of Bryn Mawr Road on Thursday, Oct. 16 at 8 p.m. Final plans for Seton Sale will be discussed.

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