

Kids get intro to adoration

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

Eucharistic adoration normally takes place in a starkly silent setting — which means that few, if any, small children are present.

Yet that doesn't mean kids should automatically be excluded from this important ritual. That's the perspective of families who attend the "Children's Holy Half Hour."

On Saturdays at 3 p.m., several families gather at Holy Spirit Church, located on the Webster/Penfield border. Along with adoration of the Blessed Sacrament the group recites the rosary, with a different family — including the children — leading the prayers each week.

The 30-minute ritual's main organizers are Susan Hamilton and Cristine Rembold, whose families belong to Holy Spirit Parish. Hamilton said she got the idea after reading an article about children's adoration in the *National Catholic Register*.

"It really struck a chord with me. I just wanted to be able to expose my son to that, but always felt that the way it was set up was during a quiet time and I didn't want to disturb people," said Hamilton, who, along with her husband, Peter, have a 4-year-old son, Michael.

The weekly gathering began about three months ago, filling in a regular adoration slot at Holy Spirit that was open at the time. "They're developing a really good habit early," Hamilton said. "As they get older they'll understand what the Blessed Sacrament is about, and they will continue with this."

"It's a great environment, just the exposure for the kids. Kids can learn



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Four-year-old Michael Hamilton prays with his parents, Peter and Susan, Jan. 11 during Holy Hour at Holy Spirit Church in Penfield.

'A-B-C' and 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,' so if they hear (the prayers) enough times, it's going to click," Rembold said. She and her husband, Jeff, have three children: Sara, 5; Grace, 3; and Christopher, 18 months.

Hamilton said average attendance is 25 people, with families coming from Holy Spirit and surrounding parishes. Children range in age from infancy through teen years, though most of the children are under age 5.

Although Children's Holy Half Hour began among a group of home-schooling families, organizers encourage all families to their bring children and grandchildren — and for people to come without children. "It's really open to everybody," Hamilton said.

Jeff Rembold reports that feedback from Holy Spirit's regular adoration observers has been strong. "They enjoy hearing the kids say the rosary," he said.

In addition to adoration and rosary recitation, families use this time to say other prayers, do Scripture readings and read books about saints with their children. Silence and reverence are encouraged during the Children's Holy Half Hour, but not expected 100 percent of the time. "If they get rambunctious you can move them about the church and show them the Stations of the Cross," Hamilton said.

So far, Jeff Rembold observed, the event has generated curiosity from children about many key aspects of the Catholic faith. "We've been getting all kinds of questions, not just limited to the Blessed Sacrament," he noted. For example, he said that by reading a book on the saints, "They'll see a picture and ask why is a person in prison. That opens up discussion on the saints."

Another bonus, based on the time slot, is that the Children's Holy Half Hour leads right into regularly scheduled weekly confession at Holy Spirit Church. Not only are parents and older children more inclined to receive the sacrament of penance, but young children are exposed to yet another important part of the faith.

Overall, Jeff Rembold said, the weekly experience is "a powerful combination. Adoration, rosary and confession — it's a power-pack of grace."

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■ **MON. JAN. 20** — Family fun day, celebrate the world's many cultures, 3000 Museum, One Montezuma St., Rochester, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., admission \$7 ages 3-17, 585/271-1620.

■ **WED. JAN. 22** — 10th Anniversary of the American Catholic Peace Center, 1000 W. Genesee St., Rochester, 7 p.m. - 9 p.m., \$10, 585/271-1620.

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