

## The ministry of a child

D.C. Benson, in the foreword to *Children as Partners in the Church* (Dennis Benson and Phyllis Heusser, Judson Press), tells of a Sunday worship service in which a special ministry took place:

While his parents listened to the sermon, a young boy busily coloured a picture of Jesus and wrote in crooked letters across the page "Jesus loves you." Despite his mother's embarrassment, the boy insisted on giving the picture to a man sitting farther along the pew.

A few weeks later, the man stopped the boy's mother and remarked that he was so thankful for the young boy's gift of the picture.

He shared that he had been struggling with his wife's death and that when he received the boy's picture he felt God come into his heart.



Through that simple act, God used the ministry of a child to help comfort a grieving and lonely person. Children experience God's presence in their lives and have faith to share. The youngest among us are capable of being partners in the total ministry of the church.

Jesus blessed and welcomed children. When children are welcomed and included in worship, we follow Jesus' example. Young children may not be able to remember the words of a service, but they will remember the experience of being part of an accepting, worshipping community, where all ages are on a faith journey together.

# The Ministry of Children



*Jesus said, "Let the children come..."*

*Mark 10:14*

## Jesus and the children

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There is a story, told in three of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), about an argument among the disciples. They were arguing about who would be the greatest in God's realm. Jesus settles the argument by saying, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not me but the one who sent me." (Mark 9:37)

Later, in the gospel of Mark, we read another story about Jesus and children. On this occasion, Jesus was deep in conversation with the religious leaders and his disciples.

Some children were brought to Jesus so he could bless them, and the disciples turned the children away. When Jesus noticed this he was indignant, and said, "Let the little children come to me, do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs." (Mark 10:14)

From these stories we see that children can show us God's way, God's love, and God's reign.

## Why include children in worship?

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**Children bring unique gifts** of wonder, excitement, and creativity that can make worship more meaningful for all.

**Children have important things to teach us about God.** Children worship with each new discovery in their lives. Reverence, adoration, respect, love, awe, and praise come naturally to children.

**Children give us the gift of trust** and a fresh point of view; adults can share the gift of acceptance, experience, and the wisdom of the Church through the ages.

**When a child is baptized,** the parents and the adults in the congregation promise to be active in nurturing that child's faith. We are called to nurture our children in their faith, and we will be nurtured by them in return.

**Worship is a celebration of belonging.** By participating in worship, children learn they belong to Christ and are welcome in Christ's church. What better way for children to learn about their faith than to be a part of a community that laughs together, cries together, struggles together, and worships together.

