

Kids at Mass (yes, you can)

One of the things that struck me at Catholic Mass, when I first started attending with the man I later married, was the presence of families.

There were plenty of gray heads, yes, but there were also kids of all ages.

When I worked in the parish office, I often found myself encouraging other young moms. "No, we don't have a cry room, and I get how annoying that can be. But, really, our parish community is very welcoming toward your children."

And it was true.

In fact, I would say, in my 20+ years of Catholic life, from being a 20-something single to being a 40-something mom of four, the overall impression I have of Catholics is that they're welcoming of children.

Even when the internet would rage with debates about kids in Mass – or I'd find myself tempted to make comments that made me the verbal equivalent of the people who yell during the free throw at a basketball game – I found comfort in the fact that, in my experience, kids were welcome.

Oh, there are badly behaved kids. But there are badly behaved adults, too. (Kneelers slamming, anyone?) There are badly behaved humans of all ages.

And isn't that the beauty of the Catholic Church? We're all welcome. Whether we feel it or not isn't the point.

Sometimes, you find yourself not taking those young ones to Mass. And that's OK. (Sometimes, it's even necessary for sanity's sake. #experiencespeaking) That's your prerogative. But it shouldn't be because you have a perception that you can't or shouldn't.

Here's the thing: [Children belong at Mass](#). Allow yourself to be encouraged. And let the criticism be heard in love, not as shaming or judging. (Sometimes, that's a choice you can make.)

To that end, taking along a book that your child/ren can use to follow along during Mass, like [this one](#), can be helpful.

Check out [these five tips to help make it through Mass with small kids](#). I find, even after 14 years in the trenches, that there's wisdom in these types of posts for me, too. (My three-year-old is routinely beside or under the kneeler. I judge myself far more harshly than the people around me, or so I've been told.)

You don't have to have kids to help, you know. There are [many ways you can encourage those adults who are with young kids](#). This is something I could highlight and quote at length, but I'll share this and let you click over for yourself (you deserve the read):

Catholic families want to feel wanted in church. Unfortunately, instead of receiving a warm welcome, many of us are met with criticism, judgment and a general intolerance of the behavior of our little people. There is a general attitude that these families should come back to Mass when their children know how to sit quietly and "behave."

Looking for some resources to learn more about the Mass and share that with your kids? Check out [this massive list over at The Religion Teacher](#).

Do you have a link or resource to share? Send it to us at takeout@osv.com so we can share it in a future issue!