

# FROM THE PASTOR

## ***Cry Room vs. No Cry Room: a Pastoral Response***

Why is there no “cry room” at Our Lady of Guadalupe? That is a good question! The short answer is that one was not a part of the original design, but with good reason. Upon further reflection though, this is a part of a bigger question with regard to promoting full, active and conscious participation in the Liturgy, as is encouraged by the Second Vatican Council Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14: “*Mother Church earnestly desires that all of the faithful should be led to that fully conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy.*”

Many of us are familiar with cry rooms - an environment improvisation from the 1970s to respond to felt need to keep children occupied during the Mass. While all good intentioned, the cry room segregates families from the rest of the faithful engaged in worship at Mass. A church building, on the other hand, should foster inclusivity in matters of worship since all the faithful, no matter how young, are worshipping at Mass. A more theological response would include the important challenge of trying to get all people of all ages involved and participating, rather than keeping them occupied. The cry room in the end does not resolve this dilemma.

It is a very important to bring your children to Mass and to try, as difficult and challenging as that may be, to keep them interested in the liturgical actions of the sacred Liturgy. But what do I do here at OLG when my child is getting just too ram-bunctious? Well, may I suggest a few options?

- First of all, I highly encourage parents to continue the struggle, and embrace it, of bringing your young child (children) to Mass. The cry room does not solve the responsibility that we have as adults to introduce our children to the Liturgy and to appropriate worship with full, conscious and active participation.
- Sit near a quick exit and take the child out as soon as possible to wear off the extra energy. By the way, should anyone learn how to bottle that energy, maybe we could paten it; a sure way to pay off the church! We have the narthex and the daily Mass chapel. Both are equipped with speakers to continue to listen to the Mass. In the future I hope to have video cameras installed in the church and monitors above the doors in the narthex, so that you can continue to follow the Mass.
- In the nicer weather there is the front of the church is available and eventually, there will be the courtyard, both equipped with speakers.
- You can also take advantage of the 9:30 a.m. Liturgy of the Word Service for the children. But not all parents with youngsters go to that Mass. Down the road, once we have the appropriate facility and the volunteers, I would like to offer a nursery option for parents. But this is just not feasible at the present time; the resources just have not been presented yet. Volunteers?



Remember, sometimes your full, active and conscious participation is to tend to your child (children). This is just as much of a call to holiness as being physically present in the worship area, and even considerate of the people around you. Of course it is a judgment call, as to deciding at what point you make a “b-line” for the nearest/quickest exit. My suggestion is don’t fight the child’s pent up energy or try to control it. Bridle it by taking your child out quickly, until he/she can calm down a bit.

What to bring with you to keep your children occupied is a whole other question – food, toys, coloring books and the like? I wish I had an answer for that one. Each parent must make the judgment call. Of course you always need to consider the concern of marking up the pews and leaving items and food behind.

My message is not to lose heart and to keep bringing your children to Mass and even making visits to the Church during the week as a preparation for Sunday Mass. Stay afterward or come early to show and teach the child about the various shrines and pieces of liturgical art in the church. You can light a candle for a special intention, offer a prayer, and teach your child about this important devotion of our Catholic Faith. Children often times surprise us with their ability to rise to the occasion! But they need the opportunity. Cry rooms appear often to encourage behavior which is really not conducive to worship. I personally applaud the parents who are trying to raise their children to appreciate the practice of our Faith. God bless you! Keep coming to Mass and keep trying! I admire what you are doing for your children, and more importantly, so does God.

As for the rest of us, who do not have young children...be patient with those who do! Remember, you were once there too, either as a parent or as a child. Isn’t it interesting how we are all experts on raising other people’s children. The parish church is large and there are other pews, however, sometimes not pews that provide as much entertainment, especially if the homily is boring! Please do not misunderstand my sense of humor, in a rather challenging and difficult situation for all of us. However, sometimes humor allows for a common experience and appreciation that we are all in the same boat together. Joy, laughter, humor are all fruits of the Holy Spirit, so are patience, kindness and understanding.