

Bulletin notice: Babies at St Anne's: "But Jesus said to them: Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me: for the kingdom of heaven is for such." [Matthew 19:14]

"The sound of a baby crying in church is one of the most precious sounds we will ever hear. It is a sign of life, that our church is ever youthful. It is one of the most fitting symbols of what we all are before God during Mass - babies crying for help. In every seat at our parish sits one of God's little daughters or baby boys - whether he or she be 9 months or 99 years old! Our prayers ring in heaven as the sound of so many babies crying. And I think God likes the sound. So yes, parents, it is your sacred duty to teach your children how to pray and behave at Mass, but on those particularly challenging days, or whenever you feel you're not getting anything out of Mass since all of your focus is on your children, take heart in the joy your children's presence brings to the God who is their Father." Fr Michael Niemczak

Families in our parish are a treasure, and we welcome every new parish member, young or old. Our new babies are especially precious, and should be a source of great joy for us all.

I appeal to all parishioners, not only to pray for one another, but also to be aware that the young parents in our congregation are doing their very best, and are better helped not by criticism, but by our understanding and assistance.

I am sure that parishioners who are parents of young children are conscious of possible disturbance to others during Mass when babies and little ones are crying, especially during the sermon and at sacred moments like the Consecration.

In order to allow for the needs of all Mass-goers, it is clear that a balance needs to be reached – between the needs of children and the needs of those listening or praying.

Parents, just so you are aware, if you are unfortunately outside during Holy Communion or during Mass, you are still fulfilling your Sunday obligation. If you speak to Father after Mass he will give you Holy Communion then.

Feel free to ask other parishioners you know and trust, experienced with babies and children, who are more than willing to help with calming unsettled children, even to the extent of taking them outside for a while, if necessary, to allow mum and dad to stay with the older siblings.

Parents it is also your responsibility to teach good behaviour in church, particularly if you have children who are nearing the age of reason. There are several means to inculcate good behaviour such as daily family prayer with the awareness of the presence of God, turning off the radio and other distractions on the way to Mass and as far as is practical, talking about God, the Saints, the Mass and piety in general so that a sense of the Sacred mysteries are developed from an early age. Also discussions about the Gospel and Epistle and Father's sermon afterwards and reading good books are other ways of keeping the Sunday holy.

I am happy to chat privately with anyone who has further concerns or practical ideas on this issue.

Fr Michael Rowe,
Rector of St Anne's Church, Belmont.