

St. Mary Church School Liturgical Service Program

The Church School Liturgical Service Program is designed to encourage all the children and teens in Church School to connect more closely with the liturgy by participating more fully in our liturgical celebration. By doing so, we hope it will encourage them to grow in their relationship with God through the liturgy. The program is an extension of the liturgical service ministry already in place in our parish. It is built around participation at the Gospel reading, the Great Entrance, and at the Blessing of the Antidoron. In some cases, we will be restoring a practice that was done at St. Mary's in the past (e.g. the participation at the Great Entrance.) In other cases, we will be introducing something new. Bishop John has given his approval to this initiative.

The program calls for five (5) church school students to take part in the liturgy each week. They are asked to sit, as a group, in the first pew (on the left side). At the appropriate times during the service, they will participate in the ritual aspects of the service and then return to their seats. In addition, they will be asked to arrive on time as well as dress appropriately for their ministry (i.e. their Sunday best, no jeans/shorts, etc.)

1) Gospel Reading—Two (2) Church School students will join the altar servers holding candles for the Gospel reading. These candles will be placed on the outside of the altar area, from which they will be retrieved and then (eventually) returned. This will help to draw special focus and attention to the Gospel reading.

2) Great Entrance—The procession will include one (1) Church School student carrying an icon of the feast of the day/season (or an icon of the patronal feast of the church) or saint of the day, followed by two (2) Candle Bearers (followed by the other altar servers). At the end of the procession, two (2) Church School students will carry the baskets of Antidoron. Once the procession makes its way to the front, the icon and candle bearers will stand with all the servers in the two rows and then return to their seats once Father enters the altar area. The breadbasket holders will stand in front of the first pew in the middle (and stand/sit there) until they present the Antidoron for the blessing. This helps to draw attention to the gifts as well as the feast or saint(s) that we commemorate that day and in the case of saints, connects us to them when their names are read in the commemoration section of the Anaphora when we recognize their prayers for us.

3) Presenting the Antidoron (baskets of extra bread) for blessing—At the appropriate time in the Liturgy (usually during the Hymn to the Theotokos), two (2) Church School students will bring the baskets of bread (from where they are now sitting in the first middle pew) up to the foot of the solea and give them to Father for their blessing. (They will then return to their seats in the left front pew with the other members of the team.) This ritualizes and publicly announces the blessing of the Antidoron (literally, “in place of the gift;” the extra bread from which the Bread for communion is taken) and helps to integrate it more fully into the offering. Liturgically, this reminds us of the movement in the early church when the entire congregation would bring their offerings to the church. A representative sample would be taken for the Offering with the remainder blessed and then eaten by all (i.e. the Agape meal) and/or the leftovers taken to the poor. This just carries on this tradition in some small fashion.