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'Let the children come to me'

Children's adoration teaches reverence for Eucharist

by KATIE MOORE

staff writer

CHARLOTTE — In Luke 18:16, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God."

This Bible passage illustrates the importance of encouraging the development of an intimate relationship with Christ from an early age.

In response to that call, one Charlotte parish has started a unique catechetical service for children to encourage devotion to Christ in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

For the past year-and-a-half, Father Timothy Reid, pastor of St. Ann Church, has been holding a eucharistic adoration service for children.

Margaret Kennedy, a parishioner, got the idea from a friend in her hometown of Nashville, Tenn.

"I thought it was particularly appropriate for this diocese because we have the Eucharistic Congress," Kennedy said.

When she approached Father Reid with the idea, he agreed to host the service.

"It's a way to educate kids about the Eucharist and what we believe as Catholics," said Father Reid.

"Once a month we invite the kids to come," he said, and each time, "we teach them a little bit more."

The services, which are open to all families of the diocese, are typically held on the second Wednesday of each month during the school year. When they began in October 2007, approximately 75 children came to the first one.

"Parents want to be able to bring their children to adoration," said Father Reid, but "a lot of kids don't know how to behave in front of the Eucharist."

That's where he steps in.

"If you teach them, they can be quiet in front of the Blessed Sacrament for 15 or 20 minutes," he said.

"Father Reid is really good with the kids," said Molly Beckert, a parishioner at St. Matthew Church in Charlotte who brings her three young children to adoration each month.

“He coaches them all along as he’s going,” she said.

“He talks about his vestments and the way we are supposed to be in front of the holy Eucharist,” said Kennedy.

Most of the kids who come on a regular basis can follow along with the prayers in the missal.

“They know the ‘O Salutaris’ and ‘Tantum Ergo’ and they can recite the Divine Praises,” said Father Reid.

“Exposing them at such a young age, I think, has an impact on them that we don’t even realize,” said Beckert.

“In a way the little kids grasp it easier,” she said, referring to her children’s comprehension of the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist. “They just believe innocently.”

Kennedy agreed, “Even my 2-year-old knows to prostrate in front of the holy Eucharist,” she said.

“I want to teach my children that the center of their life has to be the Eucharist,” Kennedy said. “And this has only reinforced that.”

Eucharistic adoration “is a part of our faith,” said Father Reid. “It’s a great gift that we can share with our kids.”

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