

A quiet, child-free Mass? No, thank you.



This Sunday I happily headed off to church alone. Our boys were under the weather, so we kept them home, and John and I each went solo.

I didn't have to bring snacks for the car or pack bags of books or try to find a seat at the end of a pew just in case we needed to escape.

It all felt so easy.

Then Mass began.

I realized there was no one squirming in my pew or dropping hardback books or dumping my purse on the floor.

But there was also no one noticing the obscure words I never notice in the readings. "Cloak? What's a cloak, Mama?"

There was no one asking 15 times when Mass would be over and why it is so long and are we almost finished and why does it have to last one whole hour?

But there was also no one standing on the kneeler during the Consecration hoping that this time maybe, just maybe, he'd be able to see when the bread and wine became Jesus' body and blood. "Tell me when to look. How is it blood, Mama? Like my blood?"

There was no one pointing to people in the congregation and talking about each of them. "God, bless that man, and that lady, and the little boy there...."

There was also no one asking to climb into my arms for the "Alleluia" so we could sway to the music together.

There was no one taking his shoes off or needing a tissue at a pivotal moment or grinning to show me the dusty Cheerio he just found under the pew.

And, at the kiss of peace I shook hands with three or four people, rather than scaling a pew to bring our outgoing 4-year-old back from his weekly handshaking spree.

I used to love going to Mass alone. It was a rare treat, a respite from being a mother of two active boys.



I could hear the punchlines to the priests' jokes during the homily, pray quietly after Communion, and not worry about how many times I would need to walk to the back of church with a noisy child.

No more.

My children have changed that.

Seeing the Mass through their eyes has become such an important part of my Mass experience that I found myself missing their squirming and questions and curiosity. I realized their interruptions aren't interfering with my prayer. They're helping me learn how to integrate prayer into my daily life.

Yes, taking them to Mass can test my patience. But having them with me also reminds me why I am there and that we are on this journey of faith together.

I hope we're back in the pew together again next week.



***Joining Reconciled to You and Theology Is a Verb for Worth Revisiting
Wednesday on Jan. 20, 2016.***