

Church behavior deplorable

On Christmas Eve I attended the 4 p.m. vigil Mass at a church in Bethesda, in the Archdiocese of Washington. I have never seen so many people acting so badly in one place. Before Mass a teenager stood in the middle of church, texting on a cell phone while maintaining a conversation with the adult sitting next to him. In my pew, a man took out his cell phone and called a restaurant to change dinner plans. During the offertory, a man and woman began an animated conversation. Two women were likewise engaged in a long conversation. Before Communion two little girls twirled and danced in the side aisle.

The badly behaved people were mostly adults. I realize that people have varying views about the idea of reverence in church but the behavior all around me would have been unacceptable in most social situations. Why do people think that it's OK to behave in such a selfish way in church?

Bad behavior is not limited to the United States. In reports on the attack on the pope on Christmas Eve, many people were holding up cell phones for a picture of the event. It might be helpful if parishes would start teaching children what constitutes acceptable behavior; then maybe children could re-educate their parents.