

Celebrating Mass as a Family

Greetings!

Many of us want to hand on the gift of faith to our children but are unsure where to begin. How do we cultivate mature faith in the children and young people in our lives?

The National Study of Youth and Religion tells us that, with many competing influences in a child's life, the religious practice of parents is the most important. If you want to hand on the faith, it is vital that you practice it. For a child's faith to grow, nothing is more essential than participating in the Mass with your family.

Mass with children is not without challenges . . . but it is absolutely worth it to form your children in the practice of the faith.

Even with good intentions, it can be difficult to get to Mass each Sunday. But if we want our children to have the gift of faith, to be aware of God's love and action in their lives, and to recognize God's call to whatever particular work they are to do in the world, we must begin with the Mass. The Mass is the primary place where we encounter the Lord Jesus. We find him in the Word, in the community, in the priest, and in the Eucharist. As the readings are proclaimed, we hear what God has done in history and become attuned to see what God is doing right now. In our midst, ordinary elements are transformed so that we might be transformed by them and go out into the world, ready to transform it.

Attending Mass with children can be difficult. Little ones are restless, particularly if they cannot see, and as children get older, they might want to sleep in or spend time with friends on the weekends.

Though distractions are many, parents can set themselves up for success. They can make sure little ones are not



When children participate in Mass with their family, they learn that their parents value practicing their faith.

tired or hungry and also provide an opportunity for exercise to reduce the wiggles. Sitting close to the front engages the children's senses.

Reading the day's Scriptures as a family at home or in the car on the way to Mass will encourage children to pay attention during the Liturgy of the Word. Discussing the homily over a meal after Mass will signal the preaching's importance. And of course, Sunday can be celebrated as a day of resurrection with a doughnut or a stop at the playground after Mass.

Mass with children is not without challenges. Many days it will be difficult and frustrating. But it is absolutely worth it to form your children in the practice of the faith through the liturgy. It is a gift for them for this life and the next.