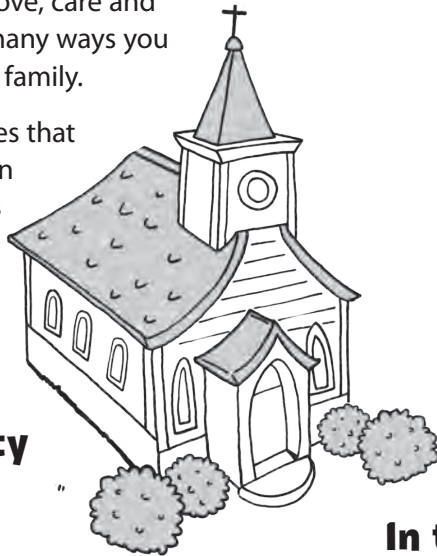


# Tips for Helping Your Child Grow in Faith

Young children imitate the behavior of the most important adults in their lives—their parents. They learn much from how you speak and act in their presence. The same is true as your child begins to take their first steps in faith. Everything they learn is filtered through the example you set. Your child will come to know God's love, care and forgiveness through the many ways you act in the daily life of your family.

There are so many activities that can help your child grow in faith and appreciate God's presence and love in all of life. Below are a few activities that families can enjoy together:



## In the Community

- Place your faith in God at the center of your family life. Participate frequently in your parish's liturgical celebrations. Sit close to the altar so your child can see everything clearly. Encourage your child to sing, respond and imitate the actions of the assembly as much as possible. Invite questions about what we do at Mass.
- Attend parish family events, such as parish picnics and fairs, the blessing of food baskets on Holy Saturday, the All Saints' parade, the blessing of pets on the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, the Christmas pageant and other seasonal opportunities. These activities will help your child feel connected to parish life and begin to recognize the parish as their Church home.
- Explore the beautiful world God gave us with family nature walks either in your neighborhood or a nearby park at different times of the year. Stimulate your child's

awareness of nature through a sense-experience of creation: smelling newly mowed grass, forming a snowball or looking at the clouds and describing the shapes they form. Tell your child that God gave us the world to use, enjoy and care for.

Visit your parish during a quiet weekday to walk through the church together, pointing out the statues and the scenes depicted on stained-glass windows. Identify the sacred objects, such as the baptismal font, the altar, the tabernacle, the ambo, the crucifix and so on.

Find regular opportunities to serve others. Making a card for a sick neighbor or collecting for a needy family will help your child understand that God calls us to show our love and care for others in many different ways.

## In the Home

- Bake a loaf of bread with your child in celebration of the gifts of the earth, laying a foundation for learning about the Eucharist. After the bread has been baked and cooled, help your child trace a Sign of the Cross on the loaf and thank God for the food we eat that keeps us healthy.



- Holiday baking can also have spiritual significance. Home-made pretzels can be a Lenten snack. As you help your child roll strips of dough into pretzels before baking, explain that the shape reminds us of arms crossed in prayer and that prayer is an important part of preparing for Easter.
- Visit a religious goods store and help your child select an illustrated children's Bible with simply-told stories. At bedtime or other quiet times, read a Bible story together and help your child begin to understand the meaning of the story.
- Display signs of faith prominently in your home. A family Bible, a crucifix, pictures/ icons (Christ, the Holy Family, Saints) and photographs of family religious events (Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, Marriage) placed throughout the house will captivate your child's interest about their faith and help them build a sense of Catholic identity.

Remember that you are the most important teacher in your child's life. Be lavish in showing love for your child. Forgive your child whole-heartedly when they express sorrow for misbehavior and affirm your child's efforts to share with and show care for others. In these ways, your child will come to know God and God's love as they continue to grow in faith.

