

When the Cement is Wet

Six Keys to Evangelizing Baptismal Ministry

There is no more important ministry for a parish to over-haul and *radically* reimagine...if it seeks to attract and accompany young families and grow as a renewing community of faith...than Baptismal Ministry. This means being intentional as a parish from the phone call seeking Baptism through to (hopefully) registration for kindergarten or first grade in the school or parish faith formation. **The cement is wet here at Baptism and in these early years.** Not at First Eucharist and certainly not Confirmation.

- 1. Understand Baptismal Ministry (before, during and after Baptism) as a primary opportunity to evangelize and foster *conversion* in parents and other family members.**

Design every aspect of the ministry upon this primary principle and with missionary intentionality. And pray down the Holy Spirit who brings conversion.



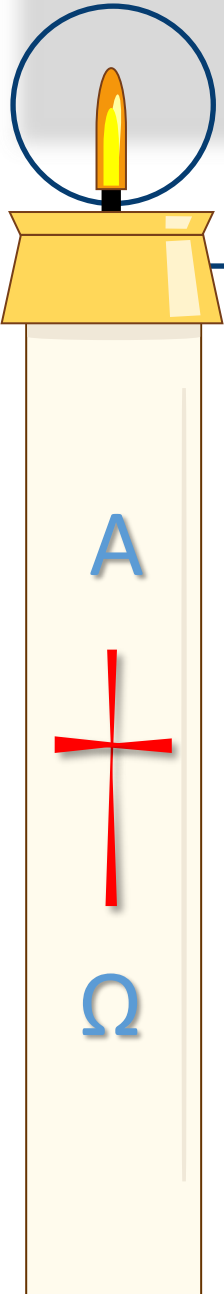
- 2. Focus on team building and team formation.**

Baptismal Ministry should not be seen as the ministry of any particular person(s). It is the ministry of the entire parish community! There are many gifts and charisms present in the people of your parish. And there are a variety of roles needed on any Baptismal Ministry Team. Examples: A single mother on the team should help the ministry be sensitive to the needs of new single moms. You will want people gifted in hospitality and small group facilitation. Who are parishioners gifted with being able to share their own faith journey in a way that will resonate with these parents and evoke a faith response in them? Are there parishioners who can effectively offer a kerygmatic explanation of faith in Jesus Christ that is understandable and attractive...and connect it to Baptism? Find the right mix of gifted people, form them well, empower them as a team and position them for success.

3. Build different tracks; consider requiring participation at more than one session.

There should be one track for first-time parents and at least one different track for others. For example, one track might focus more on core elements of our faith and the baptismal rite itself; one more on things like Catholic parenting and what the parish has to offer families. However, any track should be heavily eucharistic in its focus (as we are hoping to form these young adults to hunger for Jesus in all the ways experienced at the Liturgy of the Eucharist) and designed to foster relationship-building to the community of faith.

Parishes should also consider providing more than one session to parents presenting a child for Baptism, whether additional sessions are required or not. Requiring two quality gathered experiences for parents of a child being baptized gives the parish a better chance of establishing a real relationship with a family, which is a key goal of this ministry. And don't feel timid about asking more of these parents seeking Baptism. Baptism is so theologically significant *and* our best pastoral opportunity with young families!



“There is a pressing need to frame everything in terms of evangelization, as the fundamental principle that guides ecclesial activity as a whole.”

Directory for Catechesis, 297

4. Never call them classes or meetings.

Create more of an *evening/morning of formation* or a *retreat* experience and frame it as such. Mix in strong relational interactions with some time for reflective quiet. Get them talking about themselves (and amongst themselves) and be active, caring listeners. Utilize faith witnessing from team member parishioners. Begin any theological input at the place of their lived experience and provide a core, kerygmatic message of Catholic faith that can speak to their lives as *relevant* good news. Don't skimp on the hospitality and humor. Our joy in Christ should radiate. There should be an extravagance in a parish's welcome of a family and/or a new member into its midst. It is a *big* deal to be celebrated!

5. Give families an absolutely tremendous experience of Baptism itself.

Let the sacrament and the community evangelize! Again, generous hospitality and joy should mark the posture of the parish throughout. This is more of a challenge at baptisms performed after Mass rather than during Mass. Suggestions for non-Mass baptisms include: Ask the family to attend the prior Mass (where they will be welcomed warmly, seated up front and given mention during the Mass). Mass-goers are invited to remain for the baptism after Mass. Members of the Baptismal Ministry Team warmly accompany the family/families throughout the experience. At least some baptisms each month should be celebrated during Mass. This has a positive formational impact on the parish community.



6. Develop follow-up ministry for families between Baptism and the school years.

There are countless ways to accomplish this, such as having regular and outreaching communication, assigning a mentoring family for ongoing accompaniment and support, offering Children's Liturgy of the Word, and growing a ministry for mothers. These are *the* key years that will help to determine what kind of relationship the family will have with your parish and with the Church. The future religious identity of these families is likely at stake during this period. Consider the window for Baptismal Ministry to be wide open from 0-5 years of age!

What are the outcomes, the fruitfulness of your parish's Baptismal Ministry? If the ministry is badly languishing (or worse) do not try to merely tweak it. Better to deconstruct it entirely and start from scratch with a vision drawn from New Evangelization and designed for New Pentecost. And this likely means investing in the ministry. This is a ministry of fostering conversion and discipleship, and *nothing* about it should feel like "hoop-jumping".

Where should a parish begin to reimagine and redesign itself in pursuit of evangelizing pastoral renewal? Simple. Start at the beginning. Baptism.

Tom Quinlan (tomquinlan@evangelizingcatechesis.org) is the author of *Excellence in Ministry: Best Practices for Successful*

Catechetical Leadership, and is on LinkedIn



and YouTube ("Evangelizing Catechesis" channel)





Parent Sacrament Formation

Prime Parish Evangelizing Opportunity

Doing faith formation with parents is no longer optional. In truth, it hasn't been for a long time. Nor is doing it well...really, really well. I've talked with parents who have been impacted by evangelizing parent formation. It can be a difference-maker for them and for their family. Many of our parents are just primed and waiting to be inspired and enlightened by the good news of Catholic faith, experienced both theologically and relationally! (Every parish should keep this question in the fore: *Do people believe their way into belonging or belong their way into believing?*)

With this as our context, here are some practical ideas for building more vibrant and impactful parent sacrament formation in your parish:

Vision for Parent Formation

1. Parent faith formation is not the same as family faith formation. Parents need to be nourished, spiritually and theologically, in their own right...apart from their children, to whom the focus naturally gravitates.
2. Whatever parent formation we provide (especially that which is mandatory) must be good. Actually, permit me to raise the bar. It needs to be *excellent!* (However, don't let perfectionism paralyze improvement efforts.)
3. Sacrament formation sessions need to be mandatory, with parents (at least one) required to attend. Recording the session is helpful in holding parents accountable and building a culture of accountability over time. This also lessens the need to conduct multiple make-up sessions. And consider, how even a brief chat with parents after viewing the recorded session allows for good personalized interaction.
4. Invest in this ministry because the payoff in bringing families (back) into the life of the parish is incalculable (including, though less important, increased stewardship). Budget and plan for the provision of great sessions. Hire a speaker to facilitate an impactful session, if that is what is required.

Design of Parent Sessions



1. Parent faith formation and sacrament prep today is really more about evangelization than catechesis. This means that we speak to their hearts as well as minds and that we offer spiritual formation as much as theological. Let's call it *evangelizing catechesis*.
2. More than ever, the primary goal is to *foster conversion* in parents, as *adults*, to Christ Jesus and to discover the grace and blessings of Catholic faith in *their* lives. Our messaging to them should include "You can't give what you don't have." Merely helping parents share with their children a faith they, themselves, don't have is inadequate, if not downright bankrupt. Resist this half-measured approach. (Of course, helping evangelized parents pass on their real and living faith is a worthy additional goal that deserves attention, too. And yes, the process of exploring faith with their children can help to open parents to deepening conversion. The benefits of quality *family* faith formation can flow both ways.)
3. A session less than 90-minutes does not allow for the formation to go into any adequate degree of depth. Let's dispel a myth here. Parents (and families) can tolerate longer sessions as long as they are engaging. (Please note: *Engaging* and *entertaining* are not synonymous.) Longer parent sessions can become more retreat-like (and less meeting-like) and this is a good thing.
4. Get parents talking to one another...about their lives. It is the perfect way to get energy going in the room and get them engaged and even form some organic community *among* them. Listen to what they are saying. Then start showing the natural connections between their lives and Catholic faith. Most people in our society today, sadly, see a false dichotomy between life and faith. Be sure to affirm the goodness and holiness already present in their homes, even in the midst of life's messiness.
5. Use a variety of modalities...private reflection, small group/dyad sharing, large group discussion, presentation, panel sharing, personal witnessing, liturgical prayer, use of AV resources, etc.
6. Call the Holy Spirit down upon this ministry and your efforts. Leave room for the Spirit to move and breathe in and through you and the ministry team. Ask for intercessory prayer to bless this vital ministry. And remember, we don't cause conversion. That's the work of the Spirit. But we can create dynamics to help facilitate it.



Delivery of Parent Formation

1. Develop attractive marketing materials and *over-communicate* for sessions...by multiple means.
2. Pay attention to the environment. Provide a comfortable setting and hospitable experience, including refreshments (and food, ideally) and possible break-time for organic relationship-building.
3. Do not assume much in terms of where parents are at in their faith life. Indeed, an increasing number are inclined toward some degree of unbelief and antipathy toward the Church. Meet them on their terms, even showing awareness and responsiveness to their concerns and doubt. Lean into our discipleship joy and our reasoned confidence in Catholic faith...but *not* judgment toward them.



4. Tap into the gifts of parish staff and parishioners to provide a transformative session. Know what your gifts are (and are not). Have multiple voices helping to lead the session, especially some great witnessing from parents (or other adults) in the parish who can attest to the blessings of conversion in Christ Jesus, of Catholic faith, and of the parish. (Parents will listen to the faith-journey stories of authentic parent witnesses more than anything else.) Be sure to make room for stories of past and current struggle, too. These make life in Christ more relatable and accessible.
5. Sacrament prep sessions need to keep the logistical stuff (deadlines, forms, attire, fees) to a minimum. Spend as few minutes on this as possible, as there are other ways to address these issues.



Parent sacrament formation sessions are not the be-all and end-all for fostering conversion in our parents. There should be other opportunities for parent formation, both gathered and through resources (written and multi-media, adult-oriented and family-oriented). There is family formation (within which parent formation can occur). There is the life of the parish, including (but not confined to) liturgy. There are service opportunities and guided family faith practices and conversations.

Countless are the ways adults move toward a living and active faith. The entire parish should work to help parents come to faith (or deepen faith) by any and all such means. However, a great starting point is parent sacrament formation. This is a way to reach vast numbers of parents still seeking the sacraments for their children. Keep in mind that as we wrack our brains for how to reach and engage with young adults, we have lots of them right there (in our schools and religious education programs), participating in our sacrament preparation processes...each and every year!

So, move the needle, make a difference...and in a large-scale way. Parent sacrament formation is one of the “high-impact” opportunities that we simply need to do better if we hope to stem the massive erosion going on out there. As goes the parents, so go the children...at least to a meaningful degree. And the earlier we can impact parents, the greater the potential effect on the family. A *frontloaded* vision and approach to ministry invites us to seriously reimagine Baptismal Ministry. See my *Six Keys to Evangelizing Baptismal Ministry* article to explore this essential vehicle for pastoral renewal.



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Adult Gatherings That Engage

Whether or not you are charged with Adult Faith Formation, adult gatherings are a big part of any catechetical leader's ministry. Our faith is not a subject to be learned but a relationship to be built, and the style of our gatherings should reflect this. Use this template to thoughtfully prepare for your next catechetical gathering of adults.

What: (What is the purpose of this gathering/ event?)

Who: (Who is the audience? What are their needs, interests, fears, barriers, realities? Are they ready for catechesis, or do they first need to be evangelized or reevangelized?)

Objectives: (Based on the above, what are my objectives in this gathering? Consider: mind [what I want them to know or understand], heart [what I want them to feel, desire, or experience], and will [what I want to invite/challenge them to decide to do as a result].)

Environment: (Where is our gathering being held? What space will be most conducive? What adaptations can be made to create a joyful, welcoming, and comfortable atmosphere [seating, lighting, set-up, décor, refreshments, etc.]?)

Content: (What are the key concepts to be communicated [the "mind" part of the objectives]?)

Process: (With an eye to the "heart" and "will" parts of the objectives, what sequence of means will best convey the content, helping the audience engage with and experience it?)

Consider: Proclamation/teaching • humor • video clip • others sharing testimonials • discussion • reflective silence • panel • interaction with materials • visual/audio components

Prayer Experience: (What forms of prayer will give God the opportunity to enlighten their minds, touch their hearts, and move their wills—to meet his objectives with each person? Prayer should feel integral and organic, so decide where it best fits. See chapter 8.)

Resources: (What related resource[s] can we send with them to further enrich their faith?)

Evangelizing Young Families

Baptismal Ministry Evaluation: There is no ministry with more potential for evangelization and parish renewal than baptismal ministry. What does it look like and feel like in your parish? Find ways to see it from the perspective of participants. This ministry must be moved from hoop jumping to evangelizing. If you don't have direct oversight, encourage your pastor to begin the strategic work required. If the score below is above 30, revamping may suffice. If it is below 30, blow it up and start fresh. Bold action is required for this key ministry!

Ministries with Early Family Focus: See the baptismal ministry window lasting for five years. What can the early family-ministry matrix look like to attract, form, and retain young families?

Baptism Prep Evaluation

Element of the Program/Process	Rate: 1-5 (5 is <i>Excellent</i>)	Notes to Improve
Publicity Attractive language and look, online and brochures, easily accessible, clear		
Initial interface and enrollment Welcoming, personable, congratulatory, joyful		
Ministry team members Variety of parishioners with a diversity of gifts (welcoming, witnessing, teaching, facilitating, organization, baking, etc.) who present a joyful face of Jesus and the parish, including at least some young parents		
Hospitality at sessions Signage for those unfamiliar with campus, welcoming and comfortable space, refreshments, child friendly (if babies are present)		
Quantity of sessions "One and done" or multiple opportunities to build relationships with them and evangelize? Length of session(s) sufficient to allow for going a bit deeper?		
Quality of sessions A gathered experience that speaks to hearts, shares personal faith, provides insight into Catholic faith as relevant good news. Minimizes time spent on logistics and sacrament choreography. Includes prayer and stillness, humor, activities, sharing, and relationship building. Are sessions designed to foster conversion and draw families into the fabric of the parish community?		
Multiple tracks Options in place to meet needs of parents who have been through the initial process before		
Experience of Baptism Within Mass, hopefully? Baptism team members present to assist them? Rite celebrated with robust symbols, warmth, joy, an invitational tone, and helpful commentary for unchurched guests		
Resources Attractive, relevant resources in a variety of formats (beyond simply the rite, to foster family faith practices and adult spirituality and understanding)		
Follow-up Personal follow-up via calls/visits/mailings, family-to-family mentorship, personal invitation, intentional connecting to people and ministries. See the window as open for five years (See page 2).		

Ministries with Early Family Focus

Work with others to discern the 1–3 ministries your parish should most develop. Refer to the printable resource for chapter 2 and start the strategizing process.

- Moms Ministry and/or Moms and Tots Ministry
- Open gym and faith sharing for dads
- Children’s Liturgy of the Word
- Family Mass (with hospitality after)
- Marriage enrichment (with babysitting provided)
- Summer Vacation Bible School for young children
- Faith-formation activities for families with young children
- Strong link to parish preschool (if applicable)
- Consider the possibilities of parish staffing for this area
- *Other* possibilities for your parish?

Getting Something Out of Mass while Caring for a Little One

It is common for Mass-going parents, exhausted and distracted by keeping their children quiet, to leave feeling completely un-inspired or un-fed themselves! Don't worry, it's a phase. Here are some tips for being sure you meet your own spiritual needs:

Remember that just your being at Mass and caring for your little one is itself a prayer and a witness to others. Offer each Mass for a particular person/situation in need. Regardless of how you may feel, each time you receive Communion, you receive JESUS!

Read the Mass readings ahead of time, and reflect on them as you're driving—or folding laundry or mowing the grass. (Find them at www.usccb.org.)

Try to claim one word or phrase from any part of the Mass as your own “food for thought” for the week. Talk about it with your spouse or a close friend.

If possible, take turns caring for the baby with your spouse or family member through the Mass. Try to really focus during your “breaks,” so you each get a little quiet time.

During the week, follow a spiritual blog or join a moms' group for further enrichment in a more relaxed setting for you and baby.

One tough Sunday Mass with a little one doesn't mean you stop trying! We all have our days — adults and babies/toddlers alike! Next week will be a new start!

Some resources:

Online Articles:

“How to Take Young Children to Mass”
www.foryourmarriage.org

“Have Small Kids? 5 Tips to Helping You Make It Through Mass”
www.osv.com

“Taking Your Children to Mass: Why Bother?”
www.catholicmom.com

Sunday Readings:

www.usccb.org
Select “Daily Readings.” Read or listen to the readings.
Watch a 3 minute video reflection.

“Church Books” for Infants/Toddlers:

A Missal for Toddlers (Magnificat/Ignatius Press)

I Know Jesus (By Matthew Kelly, Beacon Publishing)

Baby, Come to Church (By Virginia Esquinaldo, Pauline Kids)

Let There Be Light (By Archbishop Tutu, Zonderkidz)



Bringing Infants & Toddlers to Mass



Is it Worth the Bother?

There's a chance going to church with your little one seems a stress you'd just as soon not add to your list. Whether or not weekly Sunday Mass has been part of your life before, it may be something you want to consider as you start (or expand) your family. . . for these reasons:

- Giving your child the gift of a connection to God is something that will anchor and support him/her for life! And believe it or not, it's never too early to start building this solid foundation.
- Being a parent requires all the inner strength you can muster. Deepening your own connection with God will ensure you get the supernatural help you'll need.
- Plugging into a parish community can provide a network of support and like-minded friends.



A Few Basic Pointers

Make the conscious decision to make Mass part of your Sunday (no weekly debate) and then plan accordingly.

If you're not already registered at a parish, find a Catholic community and Mass time that feels right for you and register! (You can switch up the Mass time to fit your weekend's scheduling needs. Keep in mind the Saturday night option or even a different parish schedule when necessary.)



Most people love seeing little ones at church. If there are those who don't, consider it their problem, not yours! Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me." (Mt. 19:14)

Remember that the end goal of bringing your child to Mass is to teach them to actively participate in it, not simply be quiet. This training begins even in infancy!

Little One How-To

Each child is different, and you will need to adapt as each grows and changes. But children learn repeated routines surprisingly early, so don't be afraid to bring your baby to Mass. You'll find a church routine that works for your family. Here are some ideas from other parents who have "been there and tried that":

- As a general rule, be sure your child is well-rested before Mass. However, you may find (if your child is able) a nap during Mass is convenient!
- Be sure your child is well-fed before Mass. However, again, you may find a bottle for an infant or a few Cheerios for a toddler help keep them busy. You can phase out the snack as your pre-schooler's attention expands.

"How-To's" Continued

- Sitting near the back may make you more comfortable with a baby. Give the front a try with your toddler. It may seem risky, but there will be lots for them to see. Don't feel compelled to sit in the "cry-room." They are often not conducive to teaching children how to participate at Mass.
- Dress your little one in their "Sunday best." Those around you can't stay mad at an irresistibly cute, if fussy, baby.
- Bring quiet toys (think soft and no squeaks/rattles etc.) and church books (why not make it an opportunity to learn Bible stories or the objects found in a church, etc.) You may find it helpful to designate a "church bag" that is always packed and ready with special books/toys.
- Especially for toddlers, be consistent with your expectations each week and communicate these with your spouse (or Grandma, whoever is helping) so there are clear rules.
- Some families adopt the "you must sit on my lap" rule until the child graduates to sitting on their own in a well-behaved manner. Shrieking toddlers may need to be taken to the back for correcting behavior, but always try to bring them back to the pew so they don't misbehave to *achieve* the greater "freedom" of the back or cry-room.
- Involve your little one as their abilities develop —sway with the music, make the sign of cross on them, bring them forward at Communion for a blessing, hold their hand at the Our Father, give them a sign of peace and encourage them to do the same to others, let them put the money in the collection basket, etc. Teach by your example of praying/singing/sitting/standing at the appropriate times.
- After Mass, allow accompanied, respectful exploration: climb to the altar, kneel by the Tabernacle, pray at a statue of Mary, dip into the Holy Water Font, etc. Help them feel at home and let them participate in the environment which itself teaches!
- Talk about church stuff at home too: make the sign of the cross at meals, read Bible books at story-time, etc.
- Make a point of attending social events at the parish so both you and your child will look forward to seeing befriended members of the community at Sunday Mass as well.





The

Path of Joy for Your Child . . . and You!

Fostering Faith in Children Ages 0-5 Years

God creates each child to live in relationship with him. . . even as a child! Naturally disposed to believe, trust, and receive/give love joyfully, they're born ready for this relationship. If only someone will introduce them to God. As Catholic parents, we are privileged to make this introduction. With *intentionality*, our home environments and family life can organically invite them into our own lived faith, and gradually guide them to **the path of joy: their own unique connection with God.**

Perhaps this raises questions for you. Do I have my own unique relationship with God? Is my faith *lived*? And especially, *how* is a parent to introduce their child to God? First, **this path of joy is meant for you, too.** With the help of others, seek to encounter God and grow your own faith. Modeling ongoing growth (not perfection) is perhaps the most powerful witness of faith you can give your child. Secondly, **faith is not meant to be an external "add on," but integrated into the sacred foundations you're already laying.** Think about it. Your love lets your child know God's love. A sense of belonging in your family makes belonging to God's family natural. Caring for family members is easily extended to caring for anyone in need. Family rituals make church (or liturgical) rituals understandable. Enjoying a good story readies them to hear our own true story of salvation, God's Word.

You can do this! You have more influence on your young child than anyone else. **You're not alone.** Count on God's nearness and help. Include your parish in your own support network. Take your child's hand and walk with them on this path of joy: life lived in friendship with our loving God.

Facets of Growing in Faith

- 1. Knowledge of the faith**
- 2. Prayer** (personal and liturgical)
- 3. Formation to live love** (morality and service to the community)



Knowledge of the faith

- **It starts as simply as** pointing a crucifix out to an infant and whispering "Jesus"!
- **Talk simply about God/elements of faith as life presents the opportunities:** God's beautiful creation and taking care of it, loving others the way Jesus did, God's joy in our growing/learning to be our best, loved ones passing on to be with Jesus, God's care when we're afraid, the Child Jesus learning to be a good listener to Mary and Joseph etc.
- **Work some Bible and saint stories** into your regular story-time routines.



Faith Concepts to Explain to this Age Group (in simple ways, over time)

- ◆ God made all creation & people (you, too!). He knows, loves & takes care of us like a good shepherd.
- ◆ God is Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit as named in the *Sign of the Cross*.
- ◆ We are part of God's family by Baptism. The people at Church are part of the family, too. . . as are those who have gone to heaven. Saints are friends of God who are really good at loving. Mary is Jesus' - God's - mother, and a mom to us, too.
- ◆ The Bible is God's Word. (Become familiar with Old Testament Bible stories, but especially the life of Jesus and his parables.)
- ◆ God calls us by name to follow him: to try to be like Jesus. He wants us to love & help *everybody*, especially those in need.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is Montessori-based faith formation for young children. [Find a program near you.](#)



Prayer

- **Find moments—planned and spontaneous — to talk to God together from the heart.** This makes relating to God natural. *Thanksgiving* and *praise* are prayer forms natural to this age. Prayers of *petition* for others help teach empathy. *Quietly* contemplate a holy image or *ask pondering questions without answering them* (I wonder what God thought when he first looked at the world he'd made. . . Who do you think are the sheep in the story of the Good Shepherd?) Planned moments: on a morning car-ride, at meals, before bed. Spontaneous: when awed by creation, grateful for a treat, have a bad dream, hear a loved one is sick.

Holy images

in your home (some at toddler level) help plant seeds of faith & invite prayer.

- **Begin teaching a few traditional prayers** (they learn surprisingly quickly, but don't make it a stressor): the *Sign of the Cross*, the *Our Father*, *Hail Mary*, *Glory-Be*, and *Grace before Meals*. Hearing a prayer repeatedly during a family prayer time can be enough. . . musical or pictorial aids can also help.
- **Create family rituals:** greet family members affectionately when they return home, have family mealtimes together, trace the cross on their forehead before bed or when they go out to play, pray the *Angel of God* prayer whenever you get in the car, name what you want to thank God for or who to pray for at Sunday Mass on the car-ride there, habituate ways of reconciling after having hurt one another, make time for family fun, establish seasonal rituals (like the Advent wreath and crèche at Christmas-time, etc.)
- **Bring your child to Sunday Mass from infancy on.** The sights, sounds, and people help small children experience Mass as a special way to be with God and God's family.

Tips for taking little ones to

Sunday Mass

- ◆ Don't let one tough Sunday discourage you. It'll improve!
- ◆ Involve little ones as able (sway to music, sign them with cross, let them put \$ in basket)
- ◆ Bring quiet toys or holy books
- ◆ Communicate clear, consistent expectations
- ◆ Make Mass part of some family *fun* (time at park after?)
- ◆ Allow accompanied exploration of the church space after

Formation to live love

- **Emphasize caring for and serving others** within the family: listening with interest, concern when another's upset, being helpful, please/thank-you's. Extend this care to the community and involve your kids. We each have important work to do for others: open the door for someone, cook for a sick friend, visit an elderly neighbor, invite a new family for a play-date, give outgrown clothes/toys to a shelter, etc.
- **Moral formation starts as simply as** redirecting an infant from harm, teaching a toddler not to hit, or a pre-schooler to take turns with a sibling. The "stuff" of parenting! Ask God the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom, compassion, and consistency. Eventually, teach little ones they can ask the Holy Spirit to help *them* make good choices. Be discerning in media use.
- **Teach right & wrong and apologizing to those hurt**, but prayers of forgiveness are more appropriate near age 7. Small children are **incapable of sin** per se, and the concept of their actions offending God is too abstract.



Some Resources

Just a start. . . by no means a comprehensive list!

For Parents:

Podcast: [Gentle Catholic Parenting](#). Blogs & more: [Montessori Parenting](#), [Love and Logic](#). More specifically Catholic: [Teaching Catholic Kids](#), [Loyola Press](#) articles & prayers, [Catholic Icing](#) traditions & crafts, Diocese of Des Moines [Family Faith Resources](#).

Grandparents & godparents will love these gift ideas!

For little kids:

Monthly magazine for pre-schoolers: [OSV Kids](#). Glory Stories (saint stories on audio) and lots more: [Holy Heroes](#). Animated videos: [Brother Francis](#). "Holy books": [Bible stories](#) in rhyme, [I Know Jesus](#) board-book, [My First Interactive Mass Book](#), [A Missal for Toddlers](#) board-book, [Our Father](#) board-book. Faith-filled play: [Fisher Price Nativity](#), cloth [Mass kit](#).