

# Catholic Parenting Newsletter

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*“Jesus always prepares us for our trials and he never leaves us alone. Never.”*

Pope Francis

*“Gratitude is popular as a meal or night time prayer. That’s good—but feeling grateful is not the end of the story. Act on it! Each of your family members could think of a person that did something you were grateful for and then promise to tell that person.”* Susan Vogt

*“Love begins at home, and it is not how much we do...but how much love we put in that action.”*

Saint Teresa of Calcutta

*“Everything in creation—be it a star or a flower—is a sign that, if followed, leads to God.”* Christopher West

*“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”*

Dr. Maya Angelou

## May 20—Pentecost Sunday



Pentecost is one of our greatest feasts. We reflect on the power of the Holy Spirit

filling the hearts of disciples throughout the ages. At Baptism, we received the Holy Spirit, who sends us forth to share the Gospel.

Preschoolers may have difficulty understanding the meaning of this scripture story because the concept of the Holy Spirit is quite abstract. However, they can develop an understanding on an intuitive level. The story is filled with sensory experiences and action, which is exactly how young children learn. Introduce them to this important scripture by telling them that before Jesus went back to heaven, he told his friends that the Holy Spirit would come to them and then they would become great teachers. Tell

them that a few days later, when Jesus was gone from them, it was the time of Pentecost. It was a celebration—Jesus’ friends and his mother were all together in the room. Suddenly there came a noise. It seemed to come from the sky. It sounded like a strong, driving wind and it filled the whole house. Explain to the children that they saw something amazing! Little bits of fire appeared in the air above their heads! These bits of fire came to rest on each of them, but these fires did not burn them at all! All of this wind and fire meant that Jesus’ friends and his mother, Mary, were filled with the Holy Spirit. It was Jesus’ promise to them! They felt full of joy and they were joyful because of Jesus! They wanted to tell everyone they saw that Jesus loves us and he wants us to love each other and help each other.

***Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love***

**Recommended Reading:** *Dear Pope Francis: The Pope Answers Letters from Children Around the World* by Pope Francis

*Now a New York Times best seller!*

If you could ask Pope Francis one question, what would it be?

Children have questions and struggles just like adults, but rarely are they given the chance to voice their concerns and ask the big questions resting deep in their hearts. In “Dear Pope Francis,” Pope Francis gives them that chance and celebrates their spiritual depth by directly answering questions from children around the world. Some are fun. Some are serious. And some will quietly break your heart. But all of them are from children who deserve to know and feel God’s unconditional love.

Also available in Spanish as Querido Papa Francisco.

# How to Take Your Children to Mass by Josh & Stacy Noem

In taking our children to Mass we operate on the principle that we need to teach our children how to be in church as long as it does not distract others around us from their prayer. Some days are better than others, but the gift of passing on how we pray as Catholics is worth all of the challenges.



## Before Church

### For toddlers or older children

- You might read the readings in the car on the way to church. This could even be the job of an older child. Then everyone hears them at least once in case someone has to step out during a portion of the Mass.
- Before going into the church take a moment to remind children what you are about to do. Make sure they know what their job is at Mass. For us, we say that their job is to be quiet/still, to participate by sharing their voices and to pray. Their job is also not to distract those around them from praying.

## At Church

- Sit up front. Yes, sit even in the first pew if it is appropriate at your parish. It can feel scary and even a little out of control the first few times, but it makes a world of difference for little ones to be able to see the action. Over time it also helps them to understand what is most essential about Mass without the distraction of rows and rows of people's backs between them and the altar.
- We physically hold our children in our arms during Mass. In fact, we adopted the position that our children's feet do not touch the ground during Mass until they are three years old. This helps in many ways. The children get a better view; as they grow and mature we can talk them through the stories and the actions; and we have a bit more control over their behavior. If an infant or toddler gets squirmy, often switching who is holding them is enough to calm them down. Otherwise we might play a quiet game of "point to the...candles, priest, altar, cross, etc."
- During their two-year-old year, we begin to let our children stand for a portion of Mass or try sitting next to us quietly, instead of on our laps. Then when they turn three it is a special milestone to be big enough to stand, sit and kneel all on their own (although if they can't see over the pew we have them stand during the kneeling portions of the Eucharistic Prayer).
- If an infant or toddler makes a little noise during Mass and settles down right away, try not to feel self-conscious. Most folks except for those closest to you do not even notice. And even if they do notice, give your fellow parishioners credit for being adults who can focus through a small distraction.

## After Mass

- Praise your children abundantly for their good behavior.
- If they need some improvement, mention briefly how they might do better next week and explain why. Let them know that you will help them by trying to remind them before the next Mass.
- Answer questions children have about Mass and encourage them to understand the liturgy and its place in our lives.
- For older children consider taking time to discuss the readings and the homily.

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## This summer — plan time outside and enjoy nature!



Hundreds of studies have been released showing the correlation between nature and our well-being. It is no surprise that seeking a connection with nature can help us recharge our relationship with God. In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis writes, “*The creation accounts in the book of Genesis contain, in their own symbolic and narrative language, profound teachings about human existence and its historical reality. They suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself.*”

There is a special word just for the smell that comes after rain. The word, petrichor, isn’t exactly easy to remember, but most people recognize that earthy smell that rises up from the ground after a much-needed rain shower. And isn’t there something magical about catching the glimpse of a rainbow just as the rain is finishing and the sun begins to break out from behind the clouds? Even now, as grownups we marvel at the sight of a rainbow.

God’s creation has been a source of wonder, joy and peace for us. As children, we would wonder, “Why is the sky blue?” “Where is heaven?” We would look at the stars and reflect on how big the world is. As adults, we find our life is filled with “musts” and “shoulds” and we forget to take the time to enjoy the world around us.

Try closing down those laptops and cell phones and take a long walk. Feel your mind clear out, making space for a dialogue with God. Give Him your worries and silently tell Him how grateful you are. Take inspiration from St. Francis of Assisi, who spent much of his life praying in nature. He felt that the quiet of a natural setting helped him hear God better. When we set aside our distractions and choose to go out and experience the beautiful creation around us, we honor God and nourish ourselves. Your children will love being outdoors with you.

### 3 Things to Do with the Kids Outdoors

- Take a walk
- Dig in the dirt
- Watch the clouds move across the sky

### Celebrate the Gift of Mothers (Mother’s Day, May 13)

- Invite Mom to share her favorite time that she had with her Mom.
- Have everyone in the family write a thank-you note to Mom and grandma—say a prayer of blessing for all they do.



### Celebrate the Gift of Fathers (Father’s Day, June 17)

- Have kids draw pictures or make cards showing the ways they feel loved by their dad and granddad.
- Remember to say a special prayer for fathers.

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## Catholic Parent Newsletter

Place your parish logo,  
and/or contact person  
information here!

### For All Those Who Work

Loving God, continue your work of creation in us.

In the work of our hands,  
may beauty be shaped,  
spirits restored,  
feasts be shared.

In the work of our minds,  
may stories be created,  
ideas developed,  
memories retold.

In the hours of the day,  
may our efforts bring gladness to our hearts  
and hope to others.

Holy God,  
continue your work of creation in us  
and through us.

Amen+

**W** *hatever you do,  
do from the heart,  
as for the Lord,  
and not for others...  
Colossians 3:23*