

Catholic Parenting Newsletter

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The simple, little things you do with your kids make a big difference.

“Thanks are the highest form of thought, and gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder.” *G. K. Chesterton*

“Do one “little thing” to make the world better.”

St. Therese of Lisieux
Feast Day, October 1

“...teachers, you are the greatest artists of the world...because you sculpt the best of what you are, not in a piece of marble but in human beings who are the glory of God.”

Archbishop Pietro Sambi

A Family Prayer for Pope Francis—

Holy Spirit of God, fill the Holy Father with enthusiasm and hope. Give him the strength and courage to guide your Church with peace, love and joy.
Amen.

“A truly rich man is one whose children run into his arms when his hands are empty.”

Author Unknown

Shaping a Joyful Catholic Home



We have a sacred mission as parents to foster rich family faith and spiritual growth.

Love. Children need unconditional love in

order to thrive, but we can send them conflicting messages about how we feel about them. Our words, actions, and countenance can send them the message that they need to do the right thing or achieve the highest awards in order to earn our deepest-held love. Loving our children intentionally and unconditionally requires 1) emotional openness, 2) a recognition and affirmation of their unique, unrepeatable value, and 3) our willingness to be changed by our children.

Empathy. Get to know each child as a unique human being. Understand what’s behind your child’s eyes and in her heart at each developmental stage. Recognize any of your old wounds so that you can parent your child appropriately and with awareness, and not from a place of fear or

anger unrelated to your child.

Play. Play is one of the most important ways children connect to us, work through their fears and frustrations, and build their self-confidence. Enter a child’s play world on their terms. Be willing to be silly and goofy on occasion!

Balance. Balance work, play, and prayer in your home. Do all these things as a family. Each family member contributes to the upkeep of the home and meal preparations as is appropriate for their developmental age. Even very young children enjoy being included in the routine with small jobs, like helping unload the dishwasher, mopping, or dusting.

Every parent needs a little time alone to refuel. How much time you can spend alone and how frequently depends on various factors in your home, including the availability of your spouse or a babysitter, and how young your children are, but remember that you will be parenting for many years. Don’t run out of gas early on!

Adapted from Intentional Catholic Parenting

Recommended Reading: “Everyday Sacrament: The Messy Grace of Parenting” by Laura Kelly Fanucci

In *Everyday Sacrament: The Messy Grace of Parenting* Laura Kelly Fanucci sees the Catholic sacraments through the smudged and sticky lens of life with little ones. From dinnertime chaos to bath-time giggles to never-ending loads of laundry, Laura stumbles into the surprising truth of what the seven sacraments really mean: that God is present always, even in the messes of motherhood. A spiritual memoir of parenting’s early years and a sacramental theology rooted in family life, *Everyday Sacrament* offers an honest, humorous, and hopeful look at ordinary moments as full of grace.

Build Social Skills in Your Children

Many parents are asking the same question: What do we do about “screen time?” As varied and unique as families are these days, parents are increasingly facing the same dilemma. We worry about friendships and grades, self-esteem and Catholic values...and we wonder how to raise and teach kids to talk to one another. If you have to remind your children to take off their headphones at the kitchen table or that “talking to a friend” does not mean texting back and forth while in the same room, then these may help you.

Go out to dinner and have your kids order. When the waiter or waitress comes to the table, encourage your children to say their order loudly, with manners, and while making eye contact with the server. It is a great way to teach that human interaction, especially with people who are serving us, is important.

Create real-life experiences. Take media breaks in your home. Insist on a set amount of time and ask everyone to do something without a screen. Some parents ask that certain chores be completed before allowing screen time. Whatever works in your house—the goal is to raise children who have the skills to actively participate in real life.

Practice in the car. When you’re on the way to a family gathering such as a birthday party or a friend’s home for dinner, talk with the kids in the car about what is expected of them socially—even role playing. Say, “What do you say when your aunt asks what grade you’re going into in the fall?” and “What can you say to keep the conversation going?” Tell the children that “yes” and “no” are not full sentences. Conversation is a two-way street, and these skills are best learned through practice.

Walk the walk (or talk the talk). Know that kids pay attention to our behavior as much or more than they listen to our instructions. As parents, we need to put down our phones at the dinner table, turn off Netflix and model good conversation and social skills with one another.

Adapted from “Family Faith on the Go”

Family Day, Monday, September 24



Family Day is a “day to eat dinner with your children.” It is a national initiative to remind parents that what your children really want at the dinner table is YOU.

Research by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University consistently finds that the more often children eat dinner with their families, the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use drugs. The conversations that go hand-in-hand with dinner will help you learn more about your children’s lives and better understand the challenges they face. Catholic educators agree: whenever families get out of the habit of eating together, their larger sense of the Eucharist is diminished.

Family meals work their magic on a basic level. Parents and children share much more than food; they exchange stories, learn about each other’s lives, and hone social graces that serve them in school and beyond. Plus, there is something very soothing about sharing a meal. Just think about the phrase “having a place at the table.”

Adapted from www.casafamilyday.org

How to Help Kids Do the Right Thing

Every parent has the God-given privilege—and responsibility—to help their children form their consciences and learn to do what is right. Often, this involves correcting them when they have done wrong. Following the example of God, our loving Father, we are called to guide our children with love and mercy. Here are four keys to helping our kids make better choices.



Teach children the difference between sins and accidents. Young children are concrete thinkers and sometimes they may have difficulty understanding motives. This can lead to some confusion over exactly what is a sin and what isn't. To help keep the difference clear, try not to get overly upset or punitive about mistakes. The real question to focus on is, "Did we do it on purpose?"

Talk about the expected/appropriate behavior. Help your child understand that God has a dream—a plan for his or her life—and the way to be truly happy is to follow God's plan. Make sure rules are phrased in terms of what to do, not just what not to do. For example, we might speak about using an inside voice in the house instead of simply saying, "Don't yell."

Express confidence that your child is capable of doing the right thing. As Catholics, we believe that we are created by God to be good—made to love him and one another. Because of this, we can tell our children with confidence that deep down we know they are good people. Talk about God's grace, which helps us to do what is right. Let your children know that God wants to help them do good things, and remind them to ask him for help.

Provide a way to help repair the damage that was done. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we call this "penance," but we can practice this as a family as well. For example, a child who has been unkind to a sibling might be assigned to perform a special favor for him or her. This has the added value of making the consequence more logical and relevant to the situation, increasing the chance that your child will learn from it.

Adapted from Family Faith on the Go

Grandparents Day, Sunday, September 9



Do something special for grandparents in your family. Grandparents and grandchildren have a very special connection. Grandparents are powerful models for their grandchildren, and their actions and example often speak louder than their words. From grandparents, children learn both attitudes and values. They are witnesses to their faith. Grandparents are ideal memory-makers. By spending time and mentoring their grandchildren, they can build valuable memories that will last a lifetime.

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**Catholic Parent
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PRAYER FOR FAMILIES

**God, Our Father, loving and merciful, bring together and keep all families
in perfect unity of love and mutual support.**

Instill in each member the spirit of understanding and affection for each other.

**Keep quarrels and bitterness far from them, and for their occasional failures
instill forgiveness and peace.**

May the mutual love and affection of parents set a good example.

**Instill in children self-respect that they may respect others
and grow in mature independence.**

**May the mutual affection and respect of families be a sign of Christian life
here and hereafter, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen**