

# Catholic Parenting Newsletter

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## Bits and Pieces from Here and There

Pray for your children's teachers at the beginning of this school year. Archbishop Pietro Sambini said,

*"...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."*

*"We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop."* Blessed Mother Teresa

*"There never was any heart truly great and generous that was not also tender and compassionate."* Robert South

*"If I had to advise parents, I should tell them to take great care about the people with whom their children associate . . . Much harm may result from bad company, and we are inclined by nature to follow what is worse than what is better."*

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

## The Power of Angels

September 29 is the feast day of three important angels, whom we call "archangels" —

- **St. Michael** is the angel who forced the devil out of heaven. We pray to him to help overcome temptations.



- **St. Gabriel** is the angel who appeared to Our Lady and asked if she would be the mother of Jesus. We pray to him to help us do God's will in our lives.



- **St. Raphael** is the angel who accompanied a blind man named Tobit on a journey. We pray to him to protect us in our travels.



It's fun to celebrate angels. Remind your children that they each have a guardian angel who was sent by God to watch over them.

*Help us, O Lord, to realize more fully the reality of the archangels and their desire to serve us.*

*Holy angels, pray for us. Amen.*

Adapted from "Family Faith on the Go"

## Recommended Reading: **Lessons from Pope Francis for Children**

by Angela Burrin (Author), Maria Cristina Lo Cascio (Illustrator)

Pope Francis has lessons for all of us, young and old alike. In this beautifully illustrated book, the Holy Father talks about God's love, our friendship with Jesus, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the importance of prayer and taking care of the poor, how to get along in our families, and more. Each lesson is paired with a story from the Bible from the parable of the Good Samaritan to the wedding feast at Cana. This is a wonderful way for children to understand the Holy Father's teachings as they grow in their Catholic faith.



# Teaching Children an Attitude of Service



Service is giving to others and wanting to make a difference in the lives of others. Helping other people is one of the best ways to serve God.

We can teach our children to do things for other people just to be helpful, not because we hope they will pay us or reward us. We do things just because we care. We do our work with heart, and we give it our best. When serving others, our children learn generosity, selflessness, empathy, courage and faith.

Having an attitude of service means looking for ways to be of help rather than waiting to be asked. The needs of others are as important to you as your own. When we are service-oriented, we anticipate people's needs and then think of ways to help them.

With an attitude of service, we create love and happiness around us. Others feel cared for. They can depend on us to be responsive when something needs to be taken care of. Teach your children how God wants us to take care of one another.

*Adapted from The Family Virtues Guide*

## September 25 is Family Day

Family Day is a day to remind parents to connect with your children at various times throughout the day. This can be while driving your kids to school or to soccer practice, tucking little ones into bed or having frequent family dinners. These activities have a lasting effect on your children. Each of these moments offers an opportunity to communicate with your kids and to really listen to what's on their mind.

As children age, it is vital to keep those lines of communication open, especially during adolescence when they are at risk of engaging in risky behavior including smoking, drinking or using other drugs. *Get Active....Every day can be Family Day!* Always set a good example, actions are more persuasive than words. Incorporate religious and spiritual practices into your family life.



*Adapted from CASA Family Day*

## Beyond Grace and Bedtime...Praying at Home with Children

### □ **What's wrong with saying grace before meals and praying with our kids at bedtime?**

Nothing! In fact it's fundamental. It's where most Christian families start, but prayer and spirituality don't have to stop there.

### □ **Well, before you get into the "beyond" I could use some help with the basics. How do I get my kids to say grace. We're always so rushed.**

Before we talk about "grace" let's talk about the family meal.

Many families are finding it harder and harder to honor a nightly meal together. Some have just given up. Don't! The meal is sacred in itself and deserves whatever hassle it might take to make it happen – at least more often than not. Work around sports schedules, work schedules, etc. Whatever it takes. For some families you might even have to take the drastic measure of cutting out an activity if it regularly interferes with the family meal. This applies to parents too.

### □ **Why is the meal so important?**

Besides nutrition, eating together feeds the soul. It's the time when all ages are united and doing something in common. Sure there might be squabbles and distractions, but it's a time to catch up on each other's day, share joys and unload burdens. Even if conversation cannot be sustained (as with babies and toddlers) it's a special time set aside to share our lives. It is the groundwork for understanding Eucharist at Mass.

### □ **So what's the best way to 'say grace'?**

Of course there are many best ways. Some families prefer the traditional "Bless us O Lord and these Thy gifts..." because of its simplicity. Others find that memorized prayer gets too routine after awhile and want to be more creative. The leader may invite spontaneous prayers of thanks or petitions. Most families rotate who leads and perhaps let the leader decide the form of grace for that night. Some families sing a song like *Simple Gifts* or have a short reading. Holding hands during the prayer is a universal sign of unity and can keep little hands from going after the food.

### □ **Don't forget bedtime!**

Some of the same principles apply as for grace before meals. "Angel of God..." is a traditional bedtime prayer along with using this time to learn the basics such as the Our Father and Hail Mary for young children. As children get older, more creative forms are usually desired. Using this time to reflect on the ups and downs of one's day is like a mini examination of conscience. Many parents use the simple gesture of making the Sign of the Cross on their child's head to bless them as an ending. The neat thing about bedtime prayer is that it can be a special private moment with each child during which things that are on his or her mind can be said in a safe and calm setting. No matter how tired you are as parent, it's worth getting into this routine. Consider the effort it takes as part of your prayer as a parent.

### □ **What else can we do?**

There are many seasonal and special occasion rituals in the Catholic faith that remind us of our faith and roots. Consider praying at "times of transition" such as the birth of a new baby, birthdays, blessing your children as they start a new school year. Nurturing faith at home is bigger than just times of prayer. Take the time to talk together...prayer is "talking to God."



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**Prayer of Thanksgiving for Family and Friends**

Blessed are You, loving Father,  
For all your gifts to us.  
Blessed are You for giving us family and friends  
To be with us in times of joy and sorrow,  
To help us in days of need,  
And to rejoice with us in moments of celebration.

Father,  
We praise You for Your Son Jesus,  
Who knew the happiness of family and friends.  
And in the love of Your Holy Spirit  
Blessed are you for ever and ever.

Amen.