



After Your Baby's Baptism

Raising Your Young Child in the Catholic Christian Faith

Congratulations on having your child baptized in the Catholic Church!

In Baptism, you have given your child the gift of faith. But your child's Baptism is just the beginning of that gift. In the years to come, your child will grow in the Catholic Christian faith **primarily by watching what you do and listening to what you say**. In that way, you will continue to give the gift of faith to your child that began with his or her Baptism. Indeed, even before your child grows beyond infancy and begins to be aware of the world around him or her, you as a parent are continuing to give your child the gift of faith by living the faith yourself.

There are many ways that you raise your child in the Catholic Christian faith day-by-day. Different sections of this pamphlet discuss some of the essentials, including –

1. Take your child to Mass every Sunday,
2. Pray with your child using daily prayers and devotions,
3. Teach core Catholic beliefs and practices to your child, and
4. Live a good Catholic Christian life yourself (so that your child sees you living the Gospel of Jesus Christ in every aspect of your life).

Your child will come to know the love of God through the way that **you** love him or her. Let your child's first memory be of parents who are spiritually rooted in their Catholic Christian faith and living their faith day-by-day. Let your family life be thoroughly immersed in our Catholic Christian spirituality and practices. In this way, your child will come to know God's presence in his or her life and the joy of Christian life.

Take Your Child to Sunday Mass

Jesus said, "Let the children come to me" (Mark 10:14). So does your infant or young child belong at our celebrations of the Eucharist, in the assembly of the faithful? Yes!

Taking an infant or young child to Mass on Sunday can be difficult, and rarely do parents with young children experience the Eucharist in the same way as before they had children. Parents of small children often have to give significant time and attention during Mass to keeping their children occupied in a reasonably quiet manner that allows the surrounding faithful to pray and participate in the liturgy. Nevertheless, it is essential to your child's upbringing

People were bringing children to [Jesus] that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

Mark 10:13-16

in the Catholic Christian faith that you bring him or her to Sunday Mass as often as reasonably possible (except when there is illness in the family or for some other good reason).

While your child is very young, we suggest that you bring quiet toys and books for him or her to play with (for example, cloth toys and books are great for church, toy drums are not!). Bringing a children's book or coloring page specifically about the Mass or the Scripture readings for that day is a great way for young children to grow in their understanding of the Mass. Even if your child is just playing quietly while you are praying and participating in the Mass, he or she is experiencing the Mass and watching how you participate in the Mass. In that way, your child is learning from the very beginning how to make Sunday Eucharist an indispensable part of his or her life.

Young children typically will get restless at some point during the Mass. We recommend that you not immediately take your child out of the church



The family is ... the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children.

Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) 11

when he or she gets restless or starts to cry. Try first to calm him or her down. Stretching out the time that your child is able to stay with the assembly during Sunday Mass is part of raising him or her in the faith. However, at the point when your child's restlessness or crying becomes a notable distraction for others, we ask that you take him or her out of the church into the vestibule, the "cry room" or outside. (Note that we discourage parents automatically taking their children to the "cry room" from the beginning of Mass – your child needs to learn how to participate in the assembly.)

As your child gets older and is learning to read, we suggest that you show him or her how to find prayers and songs in the missalette and hymnal so that he or she starts to learn how to respond to the prayers and to participate in the singing. Your child should be moving at this point

from playing with toys during Mass to participating as a member of the assembly.

You may also want to subscribe to *MagnifiKid!*, a weekly magazine for children published by *Magnificat* (us.magnificat.net/home/magnifikid). *MagnifiKid!* includes all the readings and the prayers of the Sunday

Mass, explanations of rituals and difficult words, games, comics and activities.

After Mass, perhaps on the way home, you may want to discuss with your child what happened at the Mass. For example, you may want to ask your child: Did you notice what color of vestments the priest was wearing? How was the church decorated? What songs did we sing? What did the readings say? What did the priest or deacon talk about in his homily? Were there particular prayers that caught your attention? Why?

You may want to try different Masses at different times on Saturday evening and Sunday to find the Sunday Mass that is best for you and your family. For example, some Mass times may be better than others for your children's eating and sleeping patterns. You and your family

may prefer the style and music of some Masses over others.

We hope that as you are helping your child to grow in appreciation of the Eucharist, you too will grow in appreciation of this great gift from our Lord. You might reflect more deeply on the Eucharist, for example, asking yourself: What does the Eucharist mean to me? Is the Eucharist an important part of my life, especially the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist? Does my life reflect the spiritual nourishment that Jesus gives me through his Body and Blood?

Pray with Your Child

At home, you should be praying with your child on a daily basis (for example, before meals and at bedtime) so that he or she learns to make prayer a part of his or her daily life. In particular, we recommend that parents pray with their young children the Sign of the Cross, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be and other common Catholic prayers (printed elsewhere in this pamphlet) so that these prayers become a part of their spiritual vocabulary. As your child

grows, giving him or her a Rosary and praying the Rosary with him or her on a regular basis is a good way to teach some of these prayers to your child. In addition to these and other rote prayers, you should be praying spontaneously with your child so that he or she learns that form of prayer – in other words, praying just by having a conversation with God (for example, thanking God for the good things that are happening, asking God's help with the things that aren't going so well, asking God to bless various people and activities, etc.)

Teach Your Child the Faith

In addition to praying with your child, over time you should teach your child some of the core beliefs of our Catholic Christian faith. Some suggestions:

90% of a Child's Brain Develops in the First 5 Years of Life

A number of factors influence early brain development. These important factors include: daily experiences, parent responsiveness, nutrition, physical activity, genetics, and love.

First 5 California

The first three years of a child's life are the most critical for speech and language development because the brain is best able to absorb language during this period. That's why it's important to talk, listen, read, sing, and play games with young children and help teach important language skills that will last a lifetime.

First 5 California

Parents ... have the first responsibility for the education of their children and they are the first heralds of the faith for them ... In particular they have the mission of educating their children in the Christian faith ... Parents do this mainly by example, prayer, family catechesis and participation in the life of the Church.

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church 460-461

- Read to your child from children's Bibles and religious books. There are many children's Bibles, religious books and religious coloring books available in our parish gift shop, bookstores and on the internet.
- Have crucifixes and other religious pictures and statues (of Jesus, Mary, etc.) displayed in your home, and talk about them with your child.
- Talk to your child about Jesus. For example, tell your child about who Jesus is, what he did for us when he came to earth two thousand years ago and what he continues to do for us now, that he loves us, that he wants us to love and care for one another, etc.
- Also talk to your child about Mary, Mother of God and our mother in the faith. In this part of the world, we have a particular devotion to Mary under the title Our Lady of Guadalupe, remembering Mary's appearances in December 1531 to St. Juan Diego near modern-day Mexico City, Mexico. Our Lady of Guadalupe is the patroness of the Americas, patroness of our own Diocese of Orange and patroness of our parish. Talk to your child about this appearance of Mary in our own hemisphere. Show your child on a globe where Mexico City is and how close we are in Southern California to where Mary appeared to St. Juan Diego.
- During Advent, have an Advent wreath in your home and have simple family prayer services around it (for example, when you light a new candle each week).
- During the Christmas season, have a creche (nativity scene) in your home and talk to your child about it. Tell your child about the religious origins of our Christmas celebration that are not immediately apparent (for example, that Santa Claus is St. Nicolas).
- During Lent, have a rice bowl for collecting money for the poor on your table, and at each meal at which you fast or abstain from meat, say a special family prayer for those who are poor or hungry.

- At Easter, when you celebrate with Easter baskets from the Easter Bunny and in other ways, talk to your child about how Easter is first and foremost about remembering and celebrating that Jesus rose and now lives forever.
- In addition to birthdays and wedding anniversaries, celebrate baptismal anniversary dates in your family (for example, by having a family member's lit baptismal candle in the middle of the dinner table on his or her baptismal anniversary date, or by offering a special prayer for him or her as part of the prayer before the meal).

Read from the Start, Read for Life

When should I start reading to my baby? ... It's never too early! ... Reading aloud is an important way for a parent to help a baby learn vocabulary and to stimulate a baby's brain cells to grow stronger and develop more fully. Studies show kids whose parents frequently read to them know more words by age 2 than children who have not been read to regularly.

First 5 California

If you would like to do further study about the Catholic Christian faith so that you are better able to teach the faith to your child, there are a number of good resources available. In particular, we recommend the Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church ("YOUCAT") (available in English, Spanish and other languages) and the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (available in English and Spanish). Also watch our parish website and bulletin for adult

faith formation opportunities (Bible studies, classes, seminars, etc.). Most importantly, though, attending Mass every Sunday and listening attentively to the readings and homily will help you to grow in the faith and in your ability to communicate the faith to your child.

As your child gets older, we recommend that you enroll him or her in some type of formal faith formation here at OLG (to supplement the faith formation you are giving him or her at home). We encourage you to enroll your child in transitional kindergarten at OLG School (TK-8)

when he or she will turn four years old by September 1 of that year. Children may be enrolled in our parish Faith Formation preschool program when they are three years old and potty-trained. Preparation for First Communion normally is a two-year process beginning in the fall of the first-grade year and continuing through the springtime of

A child's most intensive period for absorbing speech and language skills is during her first three years of life. These skills develop best in a world that is rich with sounds, sights, and consistent exposure to speech.

First 5 California

the second-grade year when the child receives First Communion. Your child's Christian initiation will be completed when he or she receives the Sacrament of Confirmation. The age of Confirmation in our Diocese normally is the second year of high school. Preparation for Confirmation normally is a two-year process in a teen's first and second years of high school. High school and junior high teens also are encouraged to participate in LifeTeen and EDGE. Bear in mind that faith formation is a life-long, on-going process that helps us grow in faith and better experience our faith community – not just something that happens in preparation for sacraments.

Live the Faith

Your child will learn the Catholic Christian faith most effectively by watching you and learning from you how to live the faith. You are reminded in the Rite of Baptism that as parents, you are “the first teachers” of your child “in the ways of faith,” and that you will be “the best of teachers” if you bear “witness to the faith by what [you] say and do, in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rite of Baptism for Children 70). Your child will learn the faith most effectively not by what you tell your child but what he or she sees in you and especially what he or she does with you.

In addition to bringing your family to Sunday Mass, get involved in the parish in other ways and bring your children along so that they, too, can participate. Show your children that the Church is more than just a venue for sacraments – it is a living and thriving community of which you and your children are members! Although not all parish activities are appropriate for young children (adult faith formation classes, for example), other parish activities provide excellent opportunities for both you and your children to be involved (working a booth at La Fiesta, for example). Watch our parish website and bulletin for information about events and activities geared toward families and children.

We should also always be looking at our lives and considering whether there are ways that we could be doing better to live the faith. In addition to Sunday Mass and the other sacraments, how is your prayer life? Do you treat others with love and care? If you are living as husband and wife, are you married in the Catholic Church?

Hopefully we all want to live good, Christian lives – perhaps in part because we know that God is watching. But for you parents, maybe even more importantly, your child is watching!

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary

Hail, Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father
and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Prayer Before Meals

Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts
which we are about to receive from thy bounty
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Church

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