
PRAYING WITH YOUR CHILD ~ Nurturing the Seed of Faith

Seeds are amazing things. Locked inside each seed lays the possibility for new life. Yet, until a seed is planted it remains dormant. At your child's baptism the seed of faith is planted and watered. After that it requires your love and care for it to grow.

The seed of faith will grow if it receives care. If it does not it will die. The most important gardener of this seed is you that parent. The care of your child's spiritual life begins now, not later. Perhaps you are excited about this new responsibility. Perhaps you wonder if you, yourself is prepared to nurture the spiritual life of your child.

Baptism offers you the chance to begin again in your own faith life. If needed, it invites us to reconnect with prayer and the Eucharist.

Children can know and experience God even before they have a language for God. This experience is found in your holding, feeding diapering and clothing them.

The first five year of formation are the most important in the life of your child. You as parent will communicate God's love, forgiveness and healing. At

age three the face of the parent is the face of God.

Remember, you cannot teach any beliefs, values or practices unless they are first a part of your own life. Your child won't believe unless you believe. They won't be honest if you are not honest. They won't know how to love until you love them. They won't pray unless you pray.

How to Pray ... with Your Child

Here are some simple suggestions that will help you bring prayer into your life and teach your child how to pray.

* Every morning and night trace the sign of the cross on your child's forehead. This is a way of extending God's blessing to your child. As your child grows older invite him or her to do the same to you.

* Rocking your child is one of the most intimate and nurturing times you will have together. This is a wonderful sign of the love God has for us. Use this time to let your child hear you praying

aloud. (*See Prayers to Teach a Child*).

* Children find great joy in movement. The Child's simple grace is a way of using movement in prayer.

* Children learn best when they use a number of different senses.

When praying, you might want them to use "praying hands." This simple gesture of folding the hands in prayer will help engage a child.

* At bedtime encourage your child to say his or her own prayer about anything or anybody. Prayer is a conversation with God. This is also a good time to start teaching some of the formal prayers provided to you.

* Mornings can be particularly rushed, so try this short simple way of starting your child's day with prayer. After waking, invite your child to simply say, "Thank you, Jesus, for this lovely day!"

