
Tips for Raising Faith Filled Children

Raising happy, healthy and holy children is the ultimate goal of parents and guardians. In addition to love, the most important gift adults can offer children is the gift of faith. A relationship with God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit - offers support and strength with wise decision-making, during times of pain and sorrow and when celebrating life's joys.

Faith is caught, not taught and it is also a lifelong journey. Growing up in a home where families eat and pray together, engage in meaningful conversations that include faith messages and participate in acts of service lead to young adults who will pass on their religious heritage to the next generation. Children need to see that how we live reflects what we believe.

Here are some suggestions to help you in this process:

- Tell your children every day that you love them and that God loves them too.
- Listen attentively and respectfully to what your child says.
- Forgive frequently. Ask forgiveness when you have done wrong. Look for the humor in stressful situations and hug often.
- Ask children to consider “what if...” when dealing with challenging situations. Help them find creative, peaceful and moral responses.
- Tell your child that you pray for them everyday and DO it. Thank God for the gifts they are.
- Share your faith beliefs so your child can understand your hopes. Also share your doubts, so they understand that doubts do not overwhelm faith.
- Bless your child before bedtime by making the Sign of the Cross on their foreheads and saying: “God love you and keep you safe” or some other blessing. Teach your child to respond. “Amen.”
- Encourage your child to value others for who they are – not what they have. Help them develop Christian virtues and treat others kindly and with respect.
- Once a week have a family night when you “unplug” to play board games, do crafts, read stories or take time to talk together.
- Honor family dinner. The benefits are amazing and establish a sacred time to share the joys and trials of life with each other.
- Pray before meals, before bed, during holidays and family celebrations and any time when one needs guidance or comfort.
- Have a family Bible and read the Gospel passages before Church.
- Decorate your house for the liturgical seasons with an Advent wreath, purple during Lent and a prominently placed crucifix.
- Take time to ponder the beauty of creation with your child. Easter is a wonderful time to appreciate the new life of springtime.
- During the fall and spring help your child sort through their clothes and toys to donate

to a shelter. Bring the child with you when you drop off your donations.

- Select a patron saint to watch over your children when they become involved in a sporting activity. Pray to that Saint every time they are at a practice or event.
- Participate in the Catholic Relief Services Rice Bowl program. Read the prayers during Lent, look up the countries featured in the materials and donate coins in the box provided.
- Introduce your child to older people or those with disabilities in your neighborhood. Find out if they need assistance with chores or shopping.
- When you can't physically help someone, pray for them.
- Choose sporting events that do not conflict with your Sunday Mass attendance.
- Encourage "secret" good deeds.
- Contribute to a food bank. Ask your child to help you with the collection and delivery.
- Watch TV with your child and explain during commercials or afterward what you found to be good, wholesome and valuable. If you find a program objectionable, explain why before changing the channel.
- Encourage your child to use their God given talents to serve others.
- Help your child find ways to participate in the life of the parish, such as being an altar server, choir member, greeter or reader.
- Invite the pastor to dinner.
- Volunteer in your child's religious education program or Catholic school.
- Have the sporting equipment that your child uses blessed.
- Read stories from the Bible and biographies of saints to your child. Several great videos can also be found online.
- Ask grandparents, godparents and extended family to share stories about the family and their faith lives.
- On the anniversary of your child's Baptism, light their Baptismal candle and tell them stories about that special day.
- Display religious items in your home, such as a cross, artwork or a picture of your child's patron saint. Talk to your child about them.
- Let your child know that the way you live that life is good – that your values and faith guide your decisions and the way you interact with others, that the happiness you experience is a direct result of your personal relationship with God.

Adapted from *Raising Your Child With Faith*, Regan