

CREATING A FAITH-FILLED HOME

Sharing faith in the family begins with the challenge of sharpening our awareness that God already dwells with us and recognizing more fully his presence in our homes. Your children absorb the high value you place on faith and its practice because what they see you doing and hear you saying has a powerful influence on their faith growth. Your value of Jesus, not only as a friend but also as a model for living, becomes your child's value.

Kindergarteners have a natural spirituality, passing easily from the worlds of imagination into reality and back again. They have an innate sense of goodness and a great capacity for wonder and joy and spiritual expression as they experience their ever-expanding world.

You and your child can experience and grow in faith together, with some fun, simple activities that can be done right at home.

Enrich Family Relationships

- The most important spiritual skill your child can learn at this age is community.
- One of the simplest ways to nurture the relationships between family members is to eat and play together. Eating provides necessary energy and playing is still the most developmentally appropriate way for your child to learn.
- Religious games and rhymes are important for the development of spiritual skills in young children. Godly play helps to create a warm spiritual atmosphere.
- Involve your kindergartner in helping you with simple cooking tasks, and, as often as possible, sit down together as a family to share meals.

Share the Catholic Faith Story

- Incorporate stories into your daily routine with your child.
- Your child's spiritual skills are often built on the themes and outcomes from stories—biblical stories, saints' stories, and simple morality tales. Trust these stories to convey their spiritual meaning without explanation.
- Use the Catholic symbols around you to tell the stories of faith. For example, point out the symbols of faith around your home, or take a tour of the parish church with your child. Point out the statues of saints, stained glass images, and Stations of the Cross. Talk about the stories of faith connected to these symbols.

Celebrate Rituals Together

- Young children experience the world through their senses.
- Catholic rituals, i.e. the actions, music, gestures, smells, and tastes, all convey important spiritual lessons to your child through their senses.
- Symbols of faith (sacramentals) and pictures of Jesus, the saints, and angels, stoke the religious imagination.
- Sometimes the most simple rituals are the most meaningful—for example, make the Sign of the Cross on your child's forehead to bless him or her at the beginning of the day, and then again at bedtime.

Practice Prayer Together

- Young children love to pray. They love to shout "Amen" and "Alleluia!"
- Repeated, routine prayer.
- Incorporate prayer into the daily routine. Mealtime and bedtime are natural moments for prayer. A family prayer habit with profound meaning is to say a simple, "Thank you, Jesus, for this new day" every morning.

Model Service to the Community

- Look for ways to actively participate in the parish, both with other adults, and with your children.

- Look for ways to involve your family in opportunities to reach out to those in need.
- Participate in community service projects together and focus on making service towards others an important part of the routine and rhythm of your family's life.