

THE MASS

A Gift From Jesus

Jesus loved his Apostles so much that he promised them he would never leave them alone. Because he was going to be with God, he wanted to leave the Apostles and us a sign that he would always be with us.

And so, on the night before he died on the Cross, Jesus gathered his Apostles together for a very special meal. This meal was special for two reasons.

The first reason was that he was celebrating a Passover meal with them. Passover was a feast that the Jewish people celebrated every year to remember how the Lord led Israel out of Egypt and how he freed them from slavery.

The second reason why this meal was so special was that Jesus was changing it. During the meal he took the bread and the wine and told the Apostles that they were now his Body and Blood. Then, he told the Apostles to continue to do what he was doing in this meal.

This is why we celebrate Mass. We want to continue to do what Jesus told us to do. This is how we will know that he is always with us until he comes back in all his glory.

Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." - Matthew 19:14

Adapted from *The Mass for Children*
from the Catholic Book Publishing Corp.

PRESENCE

We are filled with joy at the presence of our children and hope that there is a deep awareness of that truth. As our children learn to become part of our parish community, we hope that they have a positive experience in the midst of others at Mass.

Bringing young children to Mass can be a daunting experience for parents who are aware of their child's every movement and noise. Part of our hope in providing this guide is to encourage our parents and allow them to be at peace with the presence of their children at Mass.

For more tips, suggestions, or information for your children, please consider the following resources:

THE MASS FOR CHILDREN

From the Catholic Book Publishing Corp.
Written by Rev. Jude Winkler, OFM, Conv.

MAGNIFICAT—MAGNIFIKID!

A weekly packet for children that includes weekly readings, puzzles, and prayers.

WWW.FORMED.ORG

Use our parish code "nr3737" to create a free account and watch videos and movies about the Catholic Faith. There are many children's videos, including "Brother Francis: The Mass," which is rich in instruction and inspiration for young children as they prepare to attend Mass.

HELPING CHILDREN LEARN TO WORSHIP

A guide to preparing your children to attend Catholic Mass.



TRANSITIONS

Remaining patient is an important part of helping children transition from the parish nursery into attending Mass.

HELPFUL IDEAS

Allow time for children to stop at the restroom and get a drink prior to entering the main church. Encourage children to remain silent and still during the readings. This is a time to listen and be attentive to God's Word, and it is especially important to avoid creating distractions for others. Model appropriate actions—such as praying, kneeling, and genuflecting—to encourage your children to participate fully in the Mass.

Be reasonable about your expectations. Begin with small goals, such as remaining seated and quiet through the readings and then take a break by walking quietly out to the baptistery. Work your way up to the full Mass.

For younger children, a “quiet book” or other children’s literature about the Mass would be appropriate ways to keep them engaged. Share what you are reading in the bulletin with your children so they, too, know what’s going on in the community.



EXPECTATIONS

Setting reasonable expectations is important for our children as they learn, grow, and find appropriate times to take care of their needs while participating in Mass.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Movement is necessary for growing muscles. Children need to wiggle and move around at regular intervals. They are learning how to do this and not be a distraction, so please be patient with them and set reasonable expectations.

Children are learning to listen and understand what is going on, but they may need an explanation before or after Mass. Help them to learn about the Mass and allow them to ask questions often.

It is not uncommon for children to need an extra bathroom break. Please discuss proper etiquette when leaving or entering the main church space or the restrooms, being very, very quiet while walking in or out.

Children like to know that their presence is valued. Acknowledge others and let them acknowledge you. Ask children their opinions and thoughts about the Mass to help them feel like an important part of the parish community.



PREPARATION

Growing up has many challenges, and making the grown up transition from the parish nursery into the Mass is one of them. Catholics are encouraged to attend Mass regularly, with their hearts and minds prepared to meet Jesus at the altar. This preparation is especially important for our youngest parishioners and their families. Spiritual practices and conversations should be a part of our everyday lives, so that when we do attend Mass, the importance of that time will feel more natural.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Does our family have conversations about God during the week?

Is there family time set aside for silence, reading the Bible, or prayer?

Do we teach our family that nurturing the spirit is important every day, not just on Sundays?

Have we explained the different aspects of Mass, including the prayers, the music, the readings, and the Eucharist?

Do we speak positively about our experiences at Mass?

Does our family get enough sleep on Saturday night so that we are rested and attentive on Sunday?

Do we get up early enough so that we are not rushed on our way to Mass?

Do we try to make travel time to Mass an enjoyable time together?

Do we tell our children that we are glad they are with us at Mass?