

Why is church important to your child?

Why isn't it enough to pray at home?

Why not just read bible stories together at home?

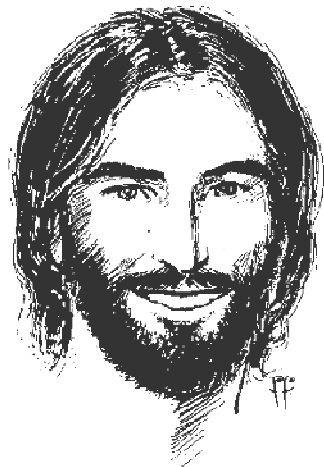
Certainly, prayers at home are pleasing to God, but celebrating Mass with the local community of believers is too valuable to miss. Why would we want to stay away from Jesus when He manifests His presence physically in the Eucharist?

We are strengthened in our parental responsibilities and in our faith when we make regular contact with other Christian parents, and by worshipping with and praying with the rest of the faith community.

We can also strengthen them in like manner. Attending Mass is a visible witness that we belong to Christ and to His Church. It is a joining of our prayers with others.

St. John Chrysostom said, "You cannot pray in your home as in the Church, where many are gathered, [and] where the cry of all rises to God as from one heart. There is in her [the Church] something more: the union of spirits, the harmony of souls, the bond of charity, the prayers of the priests."

When we choose to sleep late or entertain ourselves with activities outside of church, instead of meeting Jesus in the Mass, we are turning our backs on the One who suffered greatly and died for us.



Do you ever feel lonely? Does it seem that while you're trying hard to do your best as a parent, other forces are working against you? Is something missing from your life? The full amount of joy, perhaps? The full amount of love you need?

God designed us to need each other. He wants us to be joined as a Church that depends on togetherness. Only this way can we find support in the midst of our problems. Only this way can we remain standing strong against the onslaught of the world's evil.

How to Give Your Children a Strong Faith

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Your family is a little church. It's the first church your children experience. You are their first image of God. You are the hands of Jesus helping them, the arms of Jesus hugging them, and the voice of Jesus teaching them.

When both parents go to Mass regularly, 79% of the children develop strong faith and values — so strong, in fact, that when they leave home as young adults, they remain faithful and faith-filled.



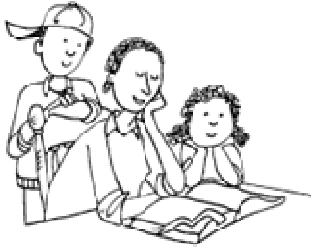
If only the dad goes to church, only 50% of the children remain active in their faith.

If only the mother goes, the number of children who remain strong in faith drops all the way down to 15%.

If children are sent to religious education classes without also being taken to church, because neither parent attends Mass, only 6% grow up with a faith that's meaningful and relevant and helpful.

And yet, as a parent, you want your children to have a good life here on earth and receive eternal life in heaven. So how do you fulfill the challenge of giving them Jesus in such a significant way that they develop a truly powerful and reliable faith life?

14 ways to give your children a strong faith:



1. Speak openly about your relationship with God. If you don't talk about it, your kids won't know that God is important. If you don't know how to talk about it, do whatever it takes to become strong in your faith. Attend adult faith programs at church.

2. Don't be afraid to mention doubts and struggles, because your growing faith will be more believable. However, couple it with hope and an openness about the lessons you've learned. You don't want to give the impression that it's okay to stop trusting God. Besides, too much focus on the negative might frighten them.

3. Share your conversion experiences, but leave out details of your sins. If you tell children that you had premarital sex or an abortion, when temptation comes to them, they might think, "If Mom or Dad did it, I can too." During temptation, the message of your regret may get pushed aside.

4. Show by example that you believe what you profess. Live the Gospel message of love, forgiveness and trust. This is far more valuable than any parental sermon.

5. Use daily conversation to bring God into the spotlight. For example, a child's frustration over a friend wrongly calling him a liar is an opportunity to help him feel closer to Jesus by teaching him that Jesus too was called a liar. Teach him how Jesus handled it. If you don't feel ready to do this, learn more about it yourself by reading the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and by attending bible studies at church.

6. Take advantage of programs and events at church that will build up your child's faith. In addition to Mass and religious education classes and youth groups, there are retreats, prayer groups, youth tracks at adult conferences, Christian videos, Christian rock bands, and lots more.

7. Pray with your kids. Before they leave the house, say a quick blessing over them or ask their guardian angels to provide protection. When your child has a problem, pray together. When you have a problem, ask him to pray for you. This makes God seem more real and shows that He cares and is involved in our lives.



8. When you pray with your children, talk to God in your own words, like speaking to a visible friend. Tell God how much you appreciate all that He has done and is doing. Add something about his love and his supernatural nature. This not only builds up the faith of everyone listening, it also sneaks in a little bit of teaching without sounding like you're lecturing.

9. When a child has a birthday or other important event, write her a letter about how proud you are of her, what this milestone means to God, and anything else about your faith that fits the occasion.

10. Tell stories about your faith experiences. How did a Christian friend help you when you were ill? What funny or challenging story did a priest say that gave you a new insight?

11. Be actively involved in the Church. Don't spend too much time away from the kids, but let them know how important it is to have faith by doing whatever will nurture it and by serving others in a parish ministry.

12. Teach altruism and unselfishness by getting involved in volunteer work that the whole family can do together. This will also help the child gain a sense of purpose and a better understanding of his or her talents and personal importance.

13. Give your kids lots of positive attention when they share an insight about God or put into practice a moral principle, even if the insight shows their naïveté or if the good deed is done imperfectly.

14. Help them define their own feelings about God, their own ideas about the faith, and their questions. Faith remains vague and intangible until they taken ownership of its various dimensions. Once they express a belief out loud, it becomes easier to live. And the more you get them talking about it, the stronger their belief will become.

