

Getting Started Creating a Faith-Filled Home

Faith: Having the ability to say “Yes!” to God’s loving presence

You are the first and best teachers of your children in the ways of faith because they love you. That love opens the door to learning in a way not possible for anyone else.

That means that the first way children are going to learn that faith is important is by what they see and hear you do.

1. Have symbols of faith in some parts of your house: a crucifix in their rooms, a scripture verse on a sign, a picture from their baptism or first communion in a frame. Each can become a trigger for a conversation at some point or another.

2. Have your own spiritual books, music and practices.

a. Here’s one- the prayer of the teacup. It comes from Joyce Rupp and is this simple practice: as the steam rises from a fresh cup of tea (or coffee), she prays for all those who come to mind as she waits for the drink to cool. She does it twice or three times a day most days. The steam is her sign of her prayers rising to heaven. Eventually your child may well ask why you are always so silent when you hold that cup and you can tell them: you are praying.

b. Share your favorite creative activity with them. Creation is a part of the image of God in which we are made. Cook, sew, paint, draw, write, build something, design something, change around a room, fix something, problem-solve *with your children*. All of these are signs of God within us.

c. Introduce quiet. Spiritual practitioners tell us that if we do not learn how to be quiet, we will struggle to hear God speak from deep within. One method: YOU have a time-out chair where you go to be still and quiet, to rest.

3. Share with your children that a love song can be heard as a dialogue between Jesus and us or vice versa. Love song lyrics are often as poetic as the Song of Songs in the Bible, and remind us that human love is an echo of divine love.

4. Talk back to the media. When the messages are violent, mean, demean men or women, speak of love without responsibility or glamorize something like abuse, talk back. Your silence is heard by children as approval/assent. Talk back—change the channels, turn the dials, turn it off.

5. Use naturally occurring together time, like in the car, to do things like read through the first sacrament book. Have your child read and fill in the blanks, and tell you about it when you are driving. Read through the take home from religious education or the parish bulletin while in the car. They read to you. You ask questions of them. This can work while you are doing chores, or waiting somewhere also.

6. Find a faith-friend for yourself: Someone who will talk with you about what matters through the lens of Catholic Christianity. It will encourage your children to do the same!

Internet sources

1. For activities tied to the seasons of the Church year like Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter go to www.catholicmom.com . Click "Faith" to find these but cruise the site for lots of resources.
2. For help encountering the Sunday Scriptures go to The Center for Liturgy Sunday Website run by the St. Louis Jesuits: <http://liturgy.slu.edu/> . Here you'll find commentaries to help you understand the texts better.
3. Not comfortable getting around the Bible, read "Choosing and Using a Bible-What Catholics Should Know" <http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CU/ac0704.asp>
4. Having trouble with keeping the Sabbath? Maybe this will inspire you: "Sabbath Moments in a Busy World." <http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CU/preview.aspx?id=256>

Books to have at home:

A Bible. Read the article above before choosing one or more versions. If you are interested in some academic assistance with the Scriptures, *The Catholic Study Bible* will be helpful. If you want to have help discussing the Bible's content with your children, *The Catholic Family Connections Bible* or *The Catholic Faith and Family Bible* may help.

To help with those questions you probably should know the answer to, or *think* you know but want to check: Fr. John Dietzen's book *Catholic Q&A: Answers to the Most Common Questions about Catholicism* can help.

A Coffee Table book with beautiful pictures: Cathedrals, Creation, The Holy Land or?

Looking for rituals to accompany family rhythms?

Family Prayer for Family Times by Kathleen Chesto. Prayers and rituals for going to school, and off to college, and other ordinary family occurrences. You can really do these!

Learning By Heart

How to Help Kids Memorize their Prayers: <http://voices.yahoo.com/how-help-kids-memorize-catholic-prayers-6878014.html>

Top 10 Prayers Every Catholic Child Should Know:

<http://www.sacredheartprescott.com/Assets/PDFs/Baptism/Top10Prayers.pdf>