

Let the Children Come to Me

Reflections on bringing your children to church by Janine Verduci

Have you ever wondered how you could get your child/children to attend Mass because they *want* to go, as opposed to because they *have* to go? Keep these simple tips in mind when reminding your children (younger children, as well as, teens) on the importance of attending Mass.

Reasons why we are called to attend Mass:

- 1) It is one of the most important ways to praise the Lord, through singing, prayer and partaking in the Holy Eucharist.
- 2) God calls us to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days to fulfill His commandment and bring us closer to His Son.
- 3) Jesus is present in the Holy Eucharist, and receiving him in the form of this most sacred mystery, allows us to be true disciples of our Christian faith.

How can we help our young children at Mass:

- 1) Sit closer to the front of the church for fewer distractions.
- 2) Encourage your child/children to participate in the rituals, prayers and songs at Mass.
- 3) With younger children, bringing a stuffed animal, religious coloring book, prayer book, or any Christian children's book, may quietly allow them to focus on Christ on a level more fitting to their needs.
- 4) Don't be afraid to read the songs, prayers and readings aloud with your children and point to the words so they can easily follow along. Keep in mind children model their parents' behavior. Who knows, maybe they will someday do that same thing for a younger brother or sister!
- 5) Inspire family members and friends to attend as well, after all, the Mass is truly a celebration of our Christian faith. Besides, if they know family and friends are attending, they might realize the importance of serving Christ.
- 6) Let your children put the offering in the offertory basket. They need to realize the importance of giving from a young age.
- 7) When it is time for Holy Communion, bring all children up with you (for at least a blessing) if they are not old enough or prepared to receive Christ.
- 8) Lastly if you have really young children who cry or get "chatty", encourage them to come to Mass too. If they get too disruptive, simply take your child by the hand and escort them quietly to the gathering space, and remind them of the importance of keeping Mass time sacred. On a personal note, I remember attending Mass when my boys were toddlers and they got a little bit chatty right before the sign of peace. I was slightly embarrassed, of course, just like any young mom. And I quietly told them to quiet down quite a few times. Just then the sign of peace began. And an elderly woman with a disturbed look on her face turned to me to shake my hand. I was thinking to myself, *this woman must be so annoyed with the chatter*. Instead she simply grabbed my hand and said. "Honey, I want you to know that going to Mass is not always easy when your children are young, and some people may get annoyed, but don't worry God is your only judge, and right now he's looking down on you and is smiling." I'll never forget the welcome feeling and sense of relief that I got from hearing those words. It was as if God himself was speaking through her.

God reminds us, "Let the little children come to me", in Matthew 19:14. May we always take heed to this important message. May God be with you, and inspire you to attend weekly Mass on Sunday and Mass on Holy Days of Obligation with your children, so that they could be made into true disciples of Christ.

-Janine Verduci