

Teaching Your Child to Pray

<https://www.growingupcatholic.com/teaching-your-child-to-pray.html>

We form friendships and relationships with one another by getting to know each other through spending time together and conversing.

- **We develop a relationship with God in the SAME WAY.**
 - **Prayer is a conversation with God.**
 - While FORMAL prayer (the prayers we memorize and recite) helps give kids a sense of belonging to God's family, the Church, **CONVERSATIONAL prayer** helps kids realize that God is interested in having a more personal relationship with them as well.

To help your children learn to develop a relationship and CONVERSE with God:

- Model conversational prayer
 - Let your children hear you conversing with God throughout the day
 - Thanking God for little blessings
 - Asking God for his help
 - Praying out loud about your big and small decisions
 - Inviting God to be a part of your everyday life.
 - Support your children in doing the same
 - When they tell you about something good that happens in their day, tell them how proud or happy you are first, but then say, "Let's thank Jesus for that together."
 - Then help them find the words to thank God, out loud, for that blessing.
 - If your kids are struggling or hurting physically or emotionally, attend to their needs and follow up with: "Let's ask God for his help with this."
 - Then help them talk to God about their struggles the exact same way they would talk to anyone else they needed help from.

1. There is no wrong way to pray

The focus isn't so much "saying our prayers" as it is " ***talking with Jesus.*** " So beyond memorizing prayers, ***let your child know that they can speak to Jesus as a friend*** . Let them know that they can tell him anything: silly things that happened that day, things they are scared of, what they hope for, people they are worried about, etc. Jesus is interested in all of them. (Just as he is interested in anything you want to tell him.)

Invite your child to pray with you , but ***let them know he or she can pray whenever they want to by themselves*** . You might suggest they pray quietly in their minds after you tuck them in bed at night, after they wake up in the morning, while they are walking to or from school alone, or riding to soccer practice, etc.

2. Don't ask your child to do something which you aren't doing yourself

You don't have to make a big show of it, but even occasionally mentioning something you have prayed for is a great way to witness to them. For example, when they have finished telling you about something good that happened to them at school you might be able to say “Wonderful! I prayed last night that you would have a good school day today!”

If you know they are worried or scared about something, you can offer to pray for them or with them about it. Saying something as simple as “Jesus, help Jane to be brave at the dentist tomorrow even though she is scared about getting her tooth pulled out” can be consoling for her.

3. Regular household prayer is a great model

Try praying before meals, in times of crisis, at bedtime, in the car, with the Bible, or after a good thing happens. Let them see that praying can be natural and informal, it doesn't have to be intimidating and they don't have to worry about doing it “the right way.”

“Resting in prayer is especially important for families. It is in the family that we first learn how to pray. And don't forget when the family prays together, it remains together. This is important. There we come to know God, to grow into men and women of faith, to see ourselves as members of God's greater family, the Church. In the family we learn how to love, to forgive, to be generous and open, not closed and selfish. We learn to move beyond our own needs, to encounter others and share our lives with them. That is why it is so important to pray as a family! That is why families are so important in God's plan for the Church!” Pope Francis, [1/16/2015](#)

Jesus knows the good intentions in our heart and hears us regardless of how sophisticated our words are.

***Weave prayer into your daily life,
AND
actively model this for your children,
AND
help your children converse with God.***