Called to Action

Two parts of the Mass that young children enjoy the most are the collection and the Sign of Peace. Why? Because they get to participate! They have an active role to play. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy is clear that full, conscious, and active participation of all the faithful is demanded by our Baptism and by the very nature of liturgy (14). The Constitution states that Christ’s faithful should not be strangers or silent spectators at the liturgy, but rather “they should take part in the sacred service conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full involvement” (48).

This is easier said than done, especially when it comes to children. Yet the expectation is clear. Setting explicit expectations for behavior and the reasons behind them are important for children, even when it comes to the Mass. These expectations not only have to be upheld, but also modeled for your child during Mass. Our children are drawn deeper into the liturgy by our own active participation in liturgy.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS
- What is expected of your child at home or at school? How are these expectations communicated and enforced?
- What attitudes or feelings about Mass do you pass on to your child by the way you act during Mass or the way you talk about it?

ACTIVITY
Make a point to talk about expectations for behavior during Mass. As a family, discuss the expectations that God might have for us when we are at church, as well as the expectations we have of each other. An important part of naming these expectations is explaining the reasons behind them. For example, we are expected to be quiet during Mass so we can pray and listen, and so others around us can do the same. Talk about how you will respond, as an individual or as a family, when these expectations aren’t met. To give your child more ownership, write these expectations down on a piece of paper and have everyone in the family sign it. If it is of help, review these expectations before you attend Mass.