How Do We Participate?

Even though the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy does not speak explicitly about the participation of children, its general remarks on participation still apply and give us a useful starting point for leading kids to greater participation. The document tells us, “To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bearing. And at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence” (30).

Three of these areas that especially lend themselves to the participation of children are bodily movements, spoken responses, and songs. Helping your child learn the actions and words of the Mass, what they mean, and when they take place is crucial to their participation. There are numerous ways this can be done: make time to practice the prayers and gestures at home, incorporate them into bedtime or meal prayers, create vocabulary words or trivia games, or sing songs from Mass in the car. If you don’t know how to teach your child these things yourself, you can always contact your parish priest or the director of religious education at your parish to ask for some good ideas.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

▶ How well do you know the meaning behind the words and gestures of the Mass?
▶ Knowing what your child enjoys and how he or she learns, what do you think would help him or her to learn about and become more engaged in the Mass?

ACTIVITY

As a family, choose one word, prayer, or movement from Mass that you will learn about and practice each week. Depending on the age of your child, you can have him or her help you research its meaning. Talk about this particular part, why it is important, and when it takes place in the Mass. Think about how you could practice it and connect it to other areas of your life during the week. For example, a family might try to use the phrase, “Thanks be to God” in response to good news or blessings they encounter during that week. Then, when you attend Mass on Sunday, make a point to say or do the part you chose with gusto! Write the word, prayer, or movement on one side of an index card, and its meaning on the other, so your child can go back later and review it.