

THE IMPORTANCE OF BRINGING CHILDREN TO MASS

JMJ

By Jim Gontis

Jesus said, *Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.* - Mt. 19: 14.

When we bring our children to Mass, we are bringing them (as well as ourselves) to Jesus, to His perfect Sacrifice offered to God the Father for the salvation of mankind. We are bringing them to Jesus – Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. We are bringing them to the fountain of grace flowing from His Paschal Mystery! Don't miss the grace! Here are a few tips and reminders for parents regarding the importance of bringing their children to Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation:

1. Bring them and keep bringing them – be consistent. Mass is the greatest gift and privilege this side of Heaven.
2. If possible, sit close to the front...it is almost always the easiest place to find a seat.
3. Try to get to Mass a little ahead of time and stay a few minutes after. Saint Pope Paul VI wrote of the power and importance of saying a short prayer of thanksgiving for a few minutes after Mass.
4. Use common sense in terms of noise – be not too quick to jump if there is some very “light” noise or murmuring, (they are children, not adults), but if the baby is wailing or the child is “throwing a fit,” take him/her to the cry room or vestibule until he/she is calmed down.
5. My opinion is that it is best to leave the toys at home. If your child needs his/her blanket that's fine, and quiet. If he/she must have something else, maybe a colorful Bible book or book on a saint, or on the Mass would be good. Just be careful he/she does not launch it like a missile at the back of some poor, unsuspecting soul's head. Bottles are ok and often necessary. Please save the crackers and food until after you leave church.
6. To the best of your ability, please teach your child about the basic parts of the Mass – especially what happens at the Consecration, when the Priest, by God's power, changes bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.
Note: The more prayerful and faithful that we as parents are, the more pre-disposed we will be to tap into the graces that are available to us in the Mass and the better able we will be to communicate the Faith effectively to our children. The better we do this, the more likely it is that we and our children will come to truly know and love God and get to Heaven.
7. When children enter the church, teach them to bless themselves with holy water. When you get to your pew, teach them to genuflect toward the tabernacle, since the tabernacle contains the Eucharist, which is Jesus. We should not expect children to learn or to believe this on their own without help from us, their parents. We need to teach these things over, and over, and over again. And we must keep striving to be patient.

8. From time to time, walk around the Church with your child(ren), e.g. tabernacle, stories on stained glass windows, altar, crucifix, baptismal fonts, Nativity scene at Christmas, etc.
9. Don't let the Mass be the only time your kids pray or that they see you pray. Minimally, there should be family prayer together each day in the morning, at meal times, and before bed. Also, pray for your kids every single day, and ask our Blessed Mother and the Saints to intercede for them and for you.
10. Children need to be taught and to learn the "old standards", e.g. Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Prayer to Guardian Angel, etc. It is also good to teach your children to talk to God naturally about what is on their hearts. It should not be an either/or between memorized prayers and extemporaneous prayers. We need both.
11. Patience is crucial. Try to strike a balance between an appropriate firmness so that your children learn boundaries and proper behavior, but also a certain and appropriate "light-heartedness" is important. Remember we want them to learn their Faith, but also to love it. If they love it, they are more likely to want to learn more and practice it for the "long-haul" and vice versa.
12. Don't speak disrespectfully of the Mass, the homily, the music, the Priest, etc. This sets a bad example for the children and can eventually, in later years, lead to them being cynical about the Faith.
13. Pray with your children every day.
14. Try to attend Mass at the time that is best for the children. This will also make things easier on you and everyone will be happier.
15. Make sure you are going to Confession frequently and getting your kids to Confession frequently. If it has been a long time, then there is no better time than the present. If you have forgotten how to go, the Priest will help you. The sacrament of Confession is like taking a spiritual bath. A good Confession gets rid of all our sins, no matter how many, no matter how serious! Going to Confession is one of the best things you can do to if you and your kids are going to be good, are going to successfully fight against the wiles of the devil, and if you want to get to Heaven...and if you want your kids to get there, too.
16. Try to make the Lord's Day (Sunday) a day of prayer to, and worship of, God. Going to Sunday Mass is the most important and greatest thing we can do the whole week. It is good to have wholesome fun on Sunday, too, especially if it involves your entire family. Let's just make sure to prioritize getting to Mass, both for your kids and for yourselves!
17. Persevere, Persevere, Persevere, Persevere, Persevere, Persevere, Persevere!!!

BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN IN PARENTS BRINGING THEM TO MASS EVERY SUNDAY

- * The grace being poured out.
- * Helps to develop a love and fascination for sacred things.
- * When brought to Mass frequently, children more quickly learn the language of the Faith.
- * Once our kids realize that going to Mass on Sundays and on Holy Days of Obligation is a “non-negotiable”, they probably won’t fight you on going nearly as much...that is, as long as we are going to Mass every Sunday, too.
- * Following up on the previous point, not one of us is close to being a perfect parent, but let’s not let our frequent failures keep us from persevering in trying to become a better and better parent. God desires of us that we keep persevering in this great privilege and responsibility that He has entrusted to us.
- * Behavior at Mass gets better earlier if the kids are taken from the time they are babies and get used to going. This is not easy. It is hard. It is also worth it.
- * The Faith becomes *interwoven into the “fabric” of their lives*.
- * A love for, and hungering after, the Real, Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.