

SMALL CHILDREN

One child psychologist has said that, if you could creep into your children's minds while they are saying their night prayers and see the visual image of the God they are praying to, you would find your own face there. You are the only way your children can relate to God in their early years.

When you tell your children that they are very special creations of God, they will only be able to know what that means if they are thought of as very special persons in your family – loved for what they are. If they feel that they somehow do not live up to your expectations of them, they will also feel that God is disappointed with them. If your children are assured of their own worth, their uniqueness, their specialness in your eyes, they will grow up with the convictions that they are special persons, unique in the eyes of God.

This lesson is reinforced every time your child sees you show kindness to anyone else. They learn from you that all are to be respected because each person is special to God.

Children will believe that God is forgiving to the extent that parents are forgiving of each other and them. This is the way children's consciences are formed. They accept as their own the values they see their parents live.

As a parent, one of your tasks is to bring God's presence into the life experiences of your child. But who is the God you want your child to learn about? What kind of God is your God? Is your God a loving other? Is God a judge ... a punisher ... a creator?

Whatever your answer, that is the God you will share with your child.



The most important image of God is one we frequently encounter in Scripture. In the first letter of John (4:8) we read, "The man without love has known nothing of God, for God is love."

It does not say "God loves us enough to bring us to being." It does not say "God loves us if we are good." It does not say "God is loving." It says: "God is love." Therefore it is love that best teaches children about God. St John's words. "The man without love has known nothing of God" tell us that experiencing love is absolutely essential to a child's faith. By feeling and seeing and being touched by your love – a love that is constant, forgiving, unconditional and lasting – your child will understand God.

Love is shown in more ways than by hugs and kisses. It is communicated through playing games of peekaboo, reading bedtime stories, waiting out a dozen attempts to "do it myself", admiring a picture, sharing a snack, taking an evening walk. The image of God comes through in every experience a child has with a loving parent. Learning about God is so closely woven with love in the family that they are a single process.

Parish of Our Lady of Dover, Buckland and St Francis, St Margaret's Bay



BRINGING YOUR CHILD TO MASS
A Guide to our Church for Newcomers

Bringing Your Child To Mass

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OUR CHURCH

- ✔ HAS a special seating area near the Altar, the small person's Grandstand, for a good view.
 - ✔ HAS toilets in the Sacristy.
 - ✔ HAS a sound-proof room very near to the front (entrance by the Lady Altar).
 - ✔ HAS a porch which is effectively sound-proofed.
 - ✔ HAS a carpet so youngsters can sit on the floor, and walk around without disturbing anyone.
 - ✔ HAS pictures and crayons, leaflets and books to help children concentrate.
 - ✔ HAS a priest who doesn't even notice.
 - ✔ HAS parishioners who sympathise.
 - ✔ HAS a sound system which is more powerful than your child's lungs (*this takes some believing we know*).
- BUT has benches which can sometimes leap out, and bang into a small person's head.



Spend Your Time Wisely

1. Do some things with your child just for him or her.
2. Do some things with your child for both of you.
3. Reserve some time to do your own thing

Guerilla Tactics for Mothers [and Fathers]

1. Keep in the best possible physical shape. Cut down nicotine and caffeine. Walk.
2. Keep in the best possible spiritual shape. Make space for prayer.
3. Keep cool. Think "in a hundred years what difference will it make?".
4. Have a good friend with whom you can talk honestly on a regular basis.
5. Simplify your life. Stop doing three things at a time. Get out of the house at least once a day.
6. Seek information from others. Always be ready for a new idea.
7. Take some time just for yourself.
8. Go to bed – if it is late. Things always look bleakest at midnight.
9. Meet your husband (or wife) for lunch.
10. Have a good cry. It might make you feel better.
11. Set priorities.
12. Take a hot bath. Ahh...
13. Don't feel bad about saying no. Consistent loving discipline includes both the words yes and no.
14. Like yourself. Then the above list will make a lot of sense.

Bringing Your Child To Mass

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GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

- ☞ Do bring their colouring books, etc.
- ☞ DO sit with the youngsters near the front.
- ☞ DO remember that the Priest likes to catch the children's attention, and wave at them.
- ☞ DO feel free to go with the children at any time: e.g.: take them to the toilet, special quiet room, gather them up, (but gently! i.e.: let them see you coming) or just walk up and down at the back with them.
- ☞ DO take them out if they are really upset.
- ☞ DO take their shoes off, if they intend to run up and down the bench, but try to dissuade them from this if possible.
- ☞ DO try to anticipate the special periods of the Mass and encourage the children to join in; e.g.: Gloria, Holy Consecration, Great Amen, Our Father, Silent Prayer during the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, and after Communion.
- ☞ DO encourage them to join in, in appropriate ways; e.g.: singing (even in different words, such as Baa Baa black sheep, etc.), waving at the Priest's arrival and departure, and at the acclamations, shaking hands at the sign of peace, the children's Liturgical reading, colouring in their picture, imitating the actions of the Priest.
- ☞ DO encourage them to come with you to Communion and collect their sheet at the end.
- ☞ DO remember Nanny Smith's advice: i.e.: train your child in private, not in public; (e.g.: teaching him/her to say thank you).

WANTED: Responsible persons, male and female, to undertake a 20+ year project. Candidates should be totally committed, willing to work up to 24 hours daily including weekend and bank holidays. No holidays, although occasional breaks may be arranged from time to time. Knowledge of health care, nutrition, child development, psychology and Catholic education. Necessary qualities: energy, tolerance, patience, sense of humour. Ability to drive and to undertake creative sewing and general household maintenance an advantage.