



LOYOLAPRESS.

A JESUIT MINISTRY

Encouraging Parents to Be Leaders of Family Prayer

Ideas to Connect with Preschool Families



As children enter the preschool years, parents are often eager to connect with the parish community in new ways. By signing up for preschool religious education, parents are expressing the desire to incorporate their child more fully in the life of the parish community. Preschool religious education provides a unique opportunity to encourage parents to be leaders in their family's practice of the faith.

Those involved in ministry should take this opportunity to acknowledge parents' follow-through on the promise they made at their children's [Baptism](#). At the same time, encourage parents to persevere in attending to their own spiritual needs by finding time for [personal prayer](#) each day, especially when things are busy. Parents may welcome simple suggestions for daily prayer, such as a morning prayer, daily Bible verses, or the daily examen.

Many parents want to know how to connect more fully with the life of the parish community. For many, Sunday liturgy is already an integral part of their week. Some may not be attending Sunday Mass but may be open to the invitation. Encourage parents to bring their preschool child with them to Mass and be sure to greet both parent and child when you see them.

Make it a point to provide parents information about other opportunities to be involved with the parish community. Send home the parish bulletin with the preschool children and perhaps extend special invitations to parents about parish events. Consider making child care available and in the bulletin, note activities at which children's participation is especially welcome.

As you encourage parents to nurture their own faith life, invite them to consider their role as leaders in their family's practice of the faith. Preschool children are eager to please their parents and wish to participate in family activities. Catechists, DREs, and parish ministers can propose practices and encourage parents to establish them as part of their daily life. Suggest a variety of opportunities for [family prayer](#), such as the following:

- Grace Before and After Meals
- Bedtime Prayer
- Prayers of Blessing
- Devotion to the Saints
- [Seasonal prayers and activities](#)
- Family Rosary

Be sure to highlight prayers and practices from a variety of cultures and pay particular attention to devotions and practices that reflect the cultural backgrounds of the families in your parish. Provide resources that include a thorough explanation of the practice, including prayer suggestions and a

guide for leading family prayer. Ideally, these resources should be designed to encourage young children's participation.

Finally, help parents to learn to be intentional about their practice of the faith. It takes effort to establish new habits, and it takes time for habits to become a natural part of our life. Encourage parents to anticipate the years ahead when it may be their child who returns the gift to them by recalling these daily rituals and insisting on their importance to family life.

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