

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 the 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!

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. Bl. Pope Paul VI wrote of the power and efficacy of a short period of prayer immediately 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.
5. My opinion is that it is best to leave the toys at home. If they need their blanket that's fine (and quiet). If they must have something else, maybe a colorful Bible book or book on a saint, or, better yet, on the Mass...just be careful they don't launch them as missiles at the back of some poor, unsuspecting soul's head. Bottles are ok and often necessary. Save the crackers and food until after you leave church.
6. Teach them about the parts of the Mass – especially what happens at the Consecration! The better we learn it and the more faithful we are, the better we will be able to teach our children. Start young and stay at it. Sometimes it might not seem like they are getting it at all, but they will probably get a lot more than we realize and surprise us from time to time. **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 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 Jesus. We should not expect children to learn this on their own, or by osmosis. We need to be intentional in teaching them....and we need to teach these things over, and over, and over again, exercising the virtue of patience.

8. Teach them about the parts of the Church, e.g. tabernacle, stories on stained glass windows, altar, crucifix, baptismal fonts, etc.
9. Don't let the Mass be the only time they pray or that they see you pray. Minimally, there should be family prayer together each day at meal times and before bed. Optimally, there should also be family prayer in the morning and at other times. Also, pray for your kids a lot, and ask our Blessed Mother and the Saints to intercede.
10. Children need to be taught (and learn) the "standard" prayers, e.g. Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Prayer to Guardian Angel, etc. Good to also have some brief extemporaneous prayers, (prayers of thanksgiving good here) and young children love singing. ***Lex orandi, lex credendi.*** – Translation: "The law of prayer is the law of belief."
11. Patience is crucial. Always a balance between an appropriate firmness so that the 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 it and practice it for the "long-haul" and vice versa.
12. Don't speak disrespectfully of the Mass, the homily, the music, 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. Try to make the entirety of the Lord's Day a day of prayer to, and worship of, God. Make Sundays a family time & as much as possible a peaceful, unhurried time.
16. Persevere, Persevere, Persevere, Persevere, Persevere, Persevere, Persevere!!!

BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN IN BRINGING THEM TO MASS

- * 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.
- * Behavior at Mass gets better earlier if they are taken from early age and get used to going.
- * 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.