



PRESCHOOL PARENT PAGE

Parents have the unique responsibility for the education of their children; they are the first educators or catechists. They teach by their witness of the faith, through their values and attitudes, by their Christian example of love for Christ and his church. When children are baptized, parents accept the responsibility to raise their children in the practice of the faith...(National Directory for Catechesis 234-235)

Dear Parents,

In a special document entitled *Letter to Families*, Pope John Paul II wrote: “Parents are the first and most important educators of their own children, and they also possess a fundamental competence in this area; they are educators because they are parents” (16). You are the first and best role model for your child in these growing years. Your role as parent to love, teach, and lead your child to Jesus is a remarkable and noble vocation. Congratulations and Thank You for accepting and honoring this God-given role.

At this particular stage of development, children need a strong parental influence and freedom to achieve a measure of independence (“I can do it myself”). Four-year-olds are nearly self-dependent in a routine; however, they may vacillate between dependence and independence. Preschoolers need to be valued for who they are and appreciate having their individuality recognized. They need to feel welcomed and wanted by family and friends, like making choices and may begin to see the wisdom of rules.

Your Child's Faith Development

Like other stages of development, your preschooler's faith development is important. Although children at every developmental level have many characteristics in common, each child is unique and will not fit entirely into any model developed. Keep in mind then that your child will come to know and understand the faith at his or her own rate of development. However here are some general points to remember. Children at this age:

- † **Need parents and family life as a ground for their faith.**
- † **View size, power, and position as reasons for responding to God, parents, and rules.**
- † **Need to share in common language and rituals of faith.**
- † **Can begin to develop a personal relationship with God, especially through prayer.**
- † **Form dispositions toward the world and attitudes toward worship that will last a lifetime.**
- † **Need continuity and routine to provide order to their world.**
- † **Focus on images rather than reality.**
- † **Need help to distinguish imagination from reality.**
- † **Need assurance that scary wishes do not make bad things come true.**
- † **View events in isolation.**

How You Can Help Your Child Grow in Faith

Here are several points that will aid you in helping your child grow in his/her faith.

- Attend and participate in Sunday Mass as a family.
- Participate in special events with the parish such as the patron saint's feast, holiday customs and blessings.
- Help your child develop an appreciation for the simple ordinary things in life.
- Nurture a sense of reverence through informal prayers of praise and thanksgiving such as: Jesus, I Love You; Thank You, God; Sign of the Cross; Prayer before meals.
- Create an atmosphere where routine and acceptance are taken for granted.
- Allow your child to experience your love and care for them as a way to know a loving God – faith is more “caught” than “taught.”
- Help your child to discover positive attributes of God through a caring environment at home and Church.
- Allow opportunities for making choices as a basis for moral development—children need to make decisions.
- Provide the stable environment your child needs for emotional security by providing freedom within limits.
- Help your child discover his/her powers and capabilities as a way to appreciate him/herself as unique and special.
- Affirm your child's friendliness and kindness as good. Encourage your child to be thoughtful of others.
- Read Scripture stories together, some good suggestions are:

Creation – Genesis 1:1-24, 31	I Am Always With You – Matthew 28:20	Always Be Thankful – Colossians 3:16b, 17
Jesus' Birth and the Visit of the Shepherds – Luke 2:4-20	Let the Children Come to Me – Mark 10:13-16	Easter Story – John 20:1-8, 11-16

- Help your child to become familiar with the following terms:

Bible	celebrate	Christmas	Church	Creation	Creator	Crib	Crucifix
Easter	forgive	God	Jesus	Joseph	Mary	praise	prayer
priest	saint	shepherd	statue	thanksgiving			

Our diocese provides many resources and materials that will help you better understand the faith and work with your child at home. Among the resources is the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, an adaptation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. For more information contact the Department for Educational Media at (412) 456-3120 or e-mail jhirst@diopitt.org.