

# SUPPORTING faith AND FUN IN THE family

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Spring is a time of renewal and a perfect time to renew efforts to support faith formation at home. Spring also signals the beginning of the end for the school year and faith formation programs. Providing tools to support faith formation at home now can begin to build bridges for the coming summer months.

Keeping faith central to family life has been a source of strength and hope for many families. You can support and nurture faith in homes by sharing the “Faith and Fun in the Family” handout with families of the children with whom you minister. Consider hosting a gathering (virtual or in-person) of parents or entire families to facilitate a conversation, introduce the ideas found in the handout, and invite parents to share their own experiences and ideas.

Choose one or two of the suggestions to implement with your group as you gather with them for the remainder of the year. Communicate those practices to families, and invite them to begin the same practices at home to further support families in the living of faith.



## Faith and Fun in the Family

1. **Stick to the basics.** Never underestimate the power of repetition in forming faith. Pray the Prayer before Meals ("Bless us, O Lord . . .") before every meal, wherever you are (even in the car). And pray the Our Father and the Hail Mary as part of night prayers.
2. **Honor meals as family time.** Talk about things important to each family member. Share stories, memories, values, and upcoming plans or events. Make sure there are no electronics around that could cause distractions.
3. **Talk about Jesus.** Children should hear about Jesus at home as well as in church, school, or religious education. Include conversations about what Jesus would do in different circumstances, ask Jesus to be with various people you encounter together, and remind one another how Jesus might feel when you do something good for others.
4. **Pray aloud.** Children should hear their parents praying. Share happenings of everyday life by requesting prayers from one another. For example, "Mom has a big presentation at work today. Let's pray now that the Holy Spirit will be with her." Or "Josh's spelling test is today. He really studied hard, so let's pray that he will remember what he knows." Also remember family members and others who are ill or in special need of prayer.
5. **Pray for safety and fair play in sports.** Emphasize that we pray for safety and fair play in our games, and that God does not favor one team over another. He loves the members of every team equally.
6. **Create a prayer space in your home.** A prayer space might be a small table placed in a corner of a room. Include a Bible, a candle (real or electric), a rosary, some favorite holy cards, and some Catholic children's books. Gather here at various times for family or individual prayer.



7. **Keep a rosary in the car.** Keep a rosary in the car, and pray it on short and long trips. Brush up on the list of the mysteries or keep a guide with you in the car, and announce one for each decade. When your child is ready, invite them to lead.
8. **Plan vacations with Mass in mind.** Every parish in the world is unique. When you are vacationing on weekends, research nearby parish churches and plan to participate in the Eucharist on the Sundays you are vacationing. After Mass, introduce yourselves to the celebrating priest. Ask him for tips on local restaurants or other places to see in the area.
9. **Get out in the real world.** Enjoy God's gift of creation with your family. Visit a local park or nature preserve, and wonder aloud at the beauty of God's handiwork. At every site, pray a litany: "Thank you, God, for . . ." with each family member naming one thing she or he sees in nature. Go around as many times as you like!
10. **Bless your child.** A parent's blessing is a powerful sign of God's love. With your hand on your child's head, make the sign of the cross with your thumb on your child's forehead, while saying, "God bless you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Any other appropriate words can be added. Blessings can be done before any occasion, special or routine, such as leaving for school, preparing for a test or sports competition, or going to bed.
11. **Talk about your values.** Use TV, social media, video games, or other influences as "teachable moments" to express your Christian values. Be sure to accentuate the positive if you see it illustrated in a particular character or situation.
12. **Prepare for Mass together.** Mass should be anticipated with preparation. Saturday night might be a good time to read the Sunday Gospel at the evening meal. Discuss as a family what Jesus might be telling or showing your family in the Gospel. After Mass, incorporate the homily into your conversation on the way home.
13. **Celebrate feast days.** Keep track of annual feasts by using your parish calendar and bulletin reminders. Though the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter are key, various feasts during the year merit attention and offer an opportunity to celebrate faith and make the day special. You may want to add family name days to your feast-day calendar, as well as baptismal anniversaries. There are many sources, in books and online, for celebrating feast days on the Catholic calendar. Feast days give us a respite from everyday routine and root us more firmly in the life of Christ as mirrored in each individual feast or saint.



This handout is taken from the Online Director's Manual of the *Discover! Finding Faith in Life* program.