

The Catholic Parent™ GUIDE



AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE | CATHOLIC SPROUTS

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Episode 1

Our Sunday Obligation

In this episode, we explore our obligation as Catholics to attend Sunday Mass and why participating as a family is so important.

Questions for group discussion or personal reflection

- What in this episode resonated with you as a Catholic parent?
- What was your experience attending Mass as a child?
- What is the typical Mass experience for your family? What struggles have you encountered taking your family to Mass?
- How would you explain to your own children why we need to go to Mass each Sunday?

Take to Prayer

- Our weekly celebration of the Mass is “the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice” (CCC 2181).
- Blessed Charles of Austria and Servant of God Zita: “Now we must help each other get to heaven!”
- “But Jesus called for them and said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.’” (Luke 18:16)

Ideas for living it in your home

For every family

- Our Sunday Mass experience has an even deeper impact on our lives when we celebrate Mass with a parish community we know and love. Evaluate your participation in your parish. Do you know other families? Do you attend social events? Could you become more involved?

For families with young children

- Taking kids to Mass is tough, but they need to be there! Tell your children that the hour you spend together in Mass each week is the most important hour of your whole week, and make sure your words and behavior show them you believe that too..

For families with older children

- Make a habit of speaking with your older children about the Mass afterward. Don't quiz them on the readings and homily, instead, review what you heard together and ask them what stood out to them.

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Episode 2

Confession

In this episode, we explore the consequences of sin—a reality that impacts all families—and God’s desire to welcome us back into right relationship through the Sacrament of Confession.

Questions for group discussion or personal reflection

- What in this episode resonated with you as a Catholic parent?
- What is your first memory of confession?
- Do you like going to confession? Do you hate it? Why?
- Have you spoken to your children about your own struggles with sin? Are you willing to do this? Why or why not?
- How would you explain to your own children why we need to go to confession?

Take to Prayer

- Regularly confessing our sins helps us to form our conscience, resist temptation, and grow in the spiritual life. It also helps us to become more merciful. (see CCC1458)
- St. Augustine: “But my sin was this, that I looked for pleasure, beauty, and truth not in Him but in myself and His other creatures, and the search led me instead to pain, confusion, and error.”
- Pray with the parable of the prodigal son. “And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him” (Luke 15:20)

Ideas for living it in your home

For every family

- Privately reflect on your own relationship with confession. When did you last receive this sacrament? If it has been some time since you confessed your sins to a priest, make a point of going soon.

For families with young children

- Teach your children the Jesus Prayer! This short prayer is a powerful way to reflect on our sins and turn to Jesus for forgiveness: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

For families with older children

- Emphasize to your older child that confession is an encounter with a loving, good Father. It is an opportunity to receive His gift of mercy and love, and not to fear it like a penalty box. St. Therese explained, upon receiving her first Reconciliation, “I came out of the Confessional more joyful and lighthearted than I had ever felt before.”

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Episode 3

Family Prayer

In this episode, we explore the fundamental importance of prayer as a family and offer simple ideas for getting started.

Questions for group discussion or personal reflection

- What in this episode resonated with you as a Catholic parent?
- What was your experience of family prayer as a child?
- What does family prayer look like in your home? When does it happen? Where in your home do you pray? What prayers do you say?
- What challenges does your family face in praying together?
- What would you like family prayer to look like in your home?
- What can you say to encourage your children when family prayer is challenging or when they don't feel like praying?

Take to Prayer

- "The Christian family is the first place of education in prayer" (CCC 2685).
- Sts. Louis and Zelie Martin: "It is necessary that the heroic becomes daily and that the daily becomes heroic."
- "But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'" (Luke 10:41-42)

Ideas for living it in your home

For every family

- Family prayer has to start with you. This week, challenge yourself to find five minutes each day for silent prayer.

For families with young children

- Praying with little ones is never going to be easy, but it is possible. We challenge you to just start! Simply praying an 'Our Father' together and sharing some petitions is a great way to start praying as a family.

For families with older children

- Older children need to be taught how to develop their own prayer life. One of the best ways to do that is to invite children into your own prayer life. Purchase two copies of a Lenten devotional and do it with your child. Ask them to join in as you pray the Rosary in the car. Share your prayer life with them and encourage them to form their own relationship with Jesus.

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Episode 4

Sacrifice

In this episode, we explore the practice of making sacrifices, fasting, and the connection to our love for God and our children.

Questions for group discussion or personal reflection

- What in this episode resonated with you as a Catholic parent?
- When you were new in your faith, what did you think about fasting and abstaining? Was it something you were exposed to when you were a child?
- How has your own journey as a parent helped you understand the link between love and sacrifice?
- In what ways does your family practice fasting? How would you like to practice fasting in the future?
- How would you explain to your own children the value of suffering and why we sometimes choose suffering out of love?

Take to Prayer

- By uniting Himself to us, Jesus makes it possible for us to unite our crosses to His. (see CCC 618)
- St. Gianna Beretta Molla: “Love and sacrifice are closely linked, like the sun and the light. We cannot love without suffering and we cannot suffer without love.”
- “When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.” (Mark 10:22)

Ideas for living it in your home

For every family

- Jesus on the cross is the perfect example of sacrificial love. Live out your own call to sacrificial love this week by taking on one small form of suffering for your family. You can abstain from a favorite food, fast from technology, or do something you don't enjoy (but your kids love!) without complaining.

For families with young children

- Introduce fasting to children by making your Friday meals different. You can avoid meat on Fridays or simply forgo dessert. Whatever you do, speak to your children on Fridays about why you are eating differently.

For families with older children

- Freedom is required before we can lovingly choose to fast for love of Christ. Evaluate the boundaries you have in place for your older children around technology, friends, and out-of-the-house commitments. Do you need to set better boundaries to ensure that your child is free from unhealthy attachments and able to take on small sacrifices out of love?

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Episode 5

Generosity

In this episode, we explore tithing: our obligation to provide for the material needs of the Church. We also examine how generosity bears fruit in our lives.

Questions for group discussion or personal reflection

- What in this episode resonated with you as a Catholic parent?
- Did your parents tithe? What “lessons” about money did you inherit from them?
- What emotional struggles do you face as you tithe? How do you feel? What sort of things keep you from tithing or make it really difficult?
- Do you and your spouse agree on the amount you tithe and who you give your money to? How do you resolve these differences when they come up?
- How are you teaching your children about tithing? How would you explain to your own children why we give generously?

Take to Prayer

- The Church needs what we have so that it can offer the sacraments, maintain places for worship, and care for the spiritual and temporal needs of all. (See Code of Canon Law, Book II, #222)
- St. Thomas More: “I die the king’s faithful servant, but God’s first.”
- “So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.” (John 6:13)

Ideas for living it in your home

For every family

- Take a look around your parish: the church building, the gathering space, and the grounds. All of this was paid for through gifts of past parishioners. You have a duty to provide for the future of your parish. Spend time learning about the needs of your parish and diocese and reflect prayerfully on how you can be more generous.

For families with young children

- From a very young age, children can learn to tithe. When they receive a dollar for their birthday, teach them to place a dime in the collection basket.

For families with older children

- We continue to teach our children to tithe when they begin to work. Remind your children that they are also called to be good stewards and that a portion of their money belongs to the Church and the poor.



Episode 6

Handing on the Faith

In this episode, we explore the call for parents to be “first heralds of the Gospel” and the importance of embracing this mission even when we feel inadequate.

Questions for group discussion or personal reflection

- What in this episode resonated with you as a Catholic parent?
- How did your parents teach you the faith?
- How capable do you feel to teach your children the faith? What makes you feel inadequate as a teacher?
- Have you tried to teach your children some part of the faith? How did it go?
- What tools do you use in your home to teach the faith?
- What did you find most inspiring or encouraging in these six episodes that you'll carry with you as you raise your kids in the faith?

Take to Prayer

- The Church calls the family “‘the domestic church,’ a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity.” (CCC 1666)
- St. Elizabeth Ann Seton: “The first end I propose in our daily work is to do the will of God; secondly, to do it in the manner He wills it; and thirdly to do it because it is His will.”
- “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Ideas for living it in your home

For every family

- You need support as you lead and teach your children. The best support will come in the form of other parents also engaged in raising Catholic kids. Do you have friends who are also Catholic parents with whom you can share these struggles? If not, make a plan for meeting other Catholic parents at your parish.

For families with young children

- The best (and easiest) way to teach your young children the faith is through stories. Invest in a book of saint stories and read the stories aloud to your children so they can be inspired to holiness and to build a relationship with Jesus Christ, just like the saints.

For families with older children

- The best (and easiest) way to teach your older children the faith is to learn with them. Select a Bible study or specific topic or question about the faith and journey through it with your child. Your child will love your willingness to sit beside them as a student, and together you will grow in your faith.

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