

Cultivating Prayer in the Family

Greetings!

We know prayer is important. We gather on Sunday to pray together at Mass. We thank God at mealtimes. We might start the day with the Rosary and end it asking God to watch over the ones we love. Yet teaching prayer can be difficult. Because of self-consciousness about our prayer, we do not feel able to cultivate prayer in others. Fortunately, like prayer itself, we learn to teach prayer through practice. The following will help families cultivate prayer:

- Take your children to Mass from an early age. Children learn full and active participation in the liturgy through fully and actively participating. Young children, developmentally primed for acquiring language, also find the language that will become their personal prayer from the Mass.

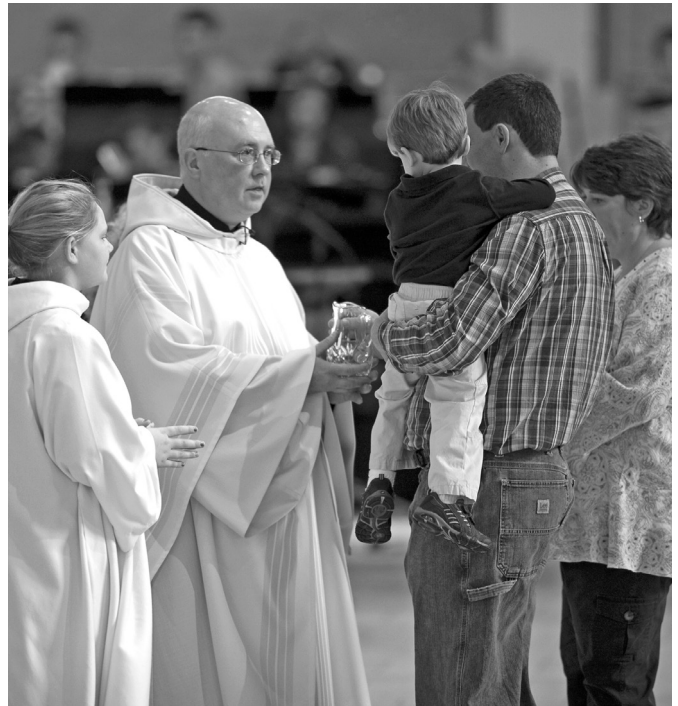
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- Pray at mealtimes. Our family prays the classic Grace before Meals. Keeping this prayer as a constant—while adding to it for particular feasts, seasons, and family occasions, like the celebration of a baptismal anniversary—guarantees that we are, even on our busiest day, thanking God for our many blessings.

- Set aside time for family prayer, even if it is just once a week. Don't be too concerned with outward expressions of reverence. Children need to move their bodies. Include rote prayers. Memorized prayers are acquired more easily when they are prayed together.

- Allow children to take leadership roles in family prayer. They might choose a song to sing together, and an older child might like to read from the Bible or write intentions.

- Model prayer. My friend begins her day with the Rosary, and occasionally one of her children joins her, often just sitting near his mom while she prays. I pray the Rosary before I fall asleep, as my grandmother did every day. I feel



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my prayer connect to hers, though she is gone from this world. This was a model for me, and it is a model for my children.

- Designate a particular time of day for individual prayer to emphasize its importance.
- Encourage thanksgiving. A child whose natural prayer of thanksgiving is honored and cultivated will maintain this prayer long after other prayers have been learned and incorporated.

Perhaps we might feel more satisfied with our prayer life if we took our cues from “these little ones,” thanking God abundantly for the many gifts we have received each day.