

Holy Name Religious Education Guidelines



A Message to All Parents:

Welcome! Thank you for choosing the Holy Name Religious Education Program!

We fully understand that you are your child's most important teacher; we will endeavor to partner with you to help in your child's religious formation.

At the time of Baptism, your child was welcomed into your faith - the Catholic faith. As parents, you answered for your child – accepting the obligation of teaching and sharing the faith. It is on the holy ground of our homes and through the interactions of our families that our children first learn about themselves and encounter our living and loving God.

Our program has been developed to assist you in nurturing and forming your children in Christ-centered lives. It is in that sense that it is "preparation for life". The life-long process of growing in love and knowledge of God begins with you in your homes but is sustained within the faith community.

Parents, it is through these formative years of childhood and young adolescence, that you, by word and example, nourish your child's spiritual growth. We appreciate the tremendous effort it takes to raise children these days. We believe that you are the primary educators of your children. Our role is not to take your place, rather to assist you in your efforts to share the faith with your children.

The philosophy of the Holy Name Religious Education Program is rooted in a profound conviction that the Word of God is central in our lives. The goal of the program is to bring every student closer to Jesus, to guide them in the formation of values, and to pass along the rich tradition of our Catholic faith. The context for our teaching is one of appreciation for different learning styles and needs of the students. Our volunteer catechists are ready to work with you to provide a comfortable learning environment for your children.

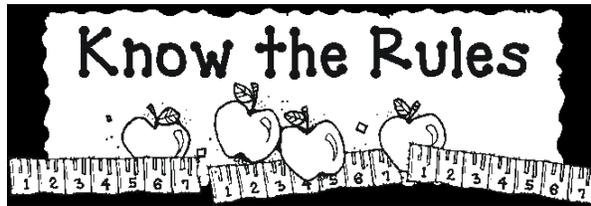
Our program is effective only when fully supported by you and cannot work unless you are involved. We encourage you to attend Mass with your little ones or encourage your teens to attend Mass. We invite you to enroll your youngsters to participate in the 9:00am Family Liturgy.

Our prayer for the children is that they will always know the unconditional love of God. And when the time comes for them to go off on their own, faith will be the context in which they live their lives—a faith that is the source of consolation in bad times, strength in difficult times and joy and thankfulness in good times.

Never hesitate to call or be in touch with us with questions, concerns, suggestions.

May God bless you and your family.

Fran Hauck ,the Pastoral Staff, and the Religious Education Teachers
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GUIDELINES

DATE AND TIME OF CLASSES (*refer to calendar which is subject to change*),

Grades K-6: Students meet on Sunday morning 10:00–11:00am. Students gather in Finn Hall and move to instruction in individual classrooms in the school. They are dismissed from the front door of the parish school. *For the safety of the children, please follow dismissal drop-off notice.*

We invite all parents to accompany their children to the 9:00am Family Mass immediately preceding class. Attendance at Mass is part of the program.

Grades 7, 8: Classes meet every Sunday evening 5:30-6:40pm. Students gather in Finn Hall and move to instruction in individual classrooms. Grade 7, 8, and Confirmation I students are dismissed from Finn Hall; Confirmation II is dismissed from Parish Hall. Participation in class, attendance at scheduled liturgical services, completion of service projects and attendance at weekly Mass is expected.

Confirmation I & Confirmation II meet Sunday evening 5:30-6:40pm in Finn Hall. Confirmation generally takes place in Grade 10—attendance at Confirmation I is a pre-requisite to Confirmation II. All students, whether they are in public, Catholic, or private schools are required to attend both years of religious education, participate in all liturgical services, attend their retreat, and complete service projects—10 hours of service. Attendance at weekly Mass is expected. *Parents are always welcome.*

REGISTRATION

All students are expected to register in the Holy Name Religious Education Program each year—those who already attend and incoming students.

Who attends Religious Ed?

- Any student in Grades K-8 who attends public school.
- Any student attending a Catholic school other than Holy Name who wishes to receive First Penance and Communion in Holy Name Parish. *Weekly attendance is not expected; however attendance at all sacramental preparation sessions and liturgies is required.*
- Any high school student—in public, private or Catholic school—who plans to be confirmed at Holy Name

BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE

At the time of *initial* registration, children baptized in a church other than Holy Name must provide a copy of their baptismal certificate.

REGISTRATION FEE

\$65 per child

\$90 for Sacrament years: *First Eucharist–Grade 2 & Confirmation–Grade Conf II)*

\$65 for children in Catholic schools other than Holy Name

Check made payable to Holy Name Religious Education

SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAM

Holy Name is blessed to have a special needs program directed by Mrs. Maureen Galvin, a Masters Level Specialist. If you or someone you know would like to enroll a child in the program, contact hnpre@holynameparish.com. Mrs. Galvin will meet to discuss a personalized plan. If you prefer instructing your child at home, we will assist you.

CHANGES IN FAMILY INFORMATION

Please inform the Rectory of any changes in family life, contact information (phone, address, email) or other pertinent information. It is imperative that we have up-to-date phone numbers and email addresses.

ATTENDANCE

Regular class attendance, participation in Sunday Eucharist and attendance at planned liturgical events are expected. If your child must miss class for a serious reason, call the Rectory (617-325-4865 x13) or his/her teacher. Help your child schedule sports and other activities to accommodate Religious Ed classes. Punctuality is a matter of personal discipline—all classes will begin and end on time. Classes do not usually meet on the first Sunday of seasonal vacations or on holiday weekends.

DISMISSAL K-6

Parents are asked to pick up their children promptly at 11:00am and use caution when entering and exiting the schoolyard. Parents in vehicles are asked to travel one way—enter the schoolyard at the main entrance across from Holy Name Rectory, and exit down the ramp across from Parish Hall.

DISMISSAL Grades 7, 8, Conf I & II

Students enter Parish Hall are dismissed from Finn Hall. Parents use caution when driving in the parking lot, and please be prompt. *We do not leave any child unattended.*

CANCELLATION OF CLASS OR LITURGICAL EVENTS

All cancellations, announcements and changes in schedule are made primarily through email, church announcement, notice in the parish bulletin, or in the case of inclement weather, through IRIS calls to your home. *In the event of a weather emergency, use your discretion for the benefit of your child's safety.*



BEHAVIOR CODE

Respect, courtesy, punctuality, ability to listen, participation and interest are appropriately expected from the Christian-young and old. All students must be respectful of each other and of their teachers. Respect of parish property is mandatory. On those rare occasions when one misbehaves or vandalizes parish property, appropriate action will be taken, i.e., the parent will be notified, a meeting arranged with the student, and remuneration arranged.

Hand-held electronic devices, including, but not limited to cell phones, Ipods, iPhones, etc., that are used without authorization during class will be confiscated and returned later to a parent.

There is zero tolerance for drug, alcohol or tobacco use, before or during class time. If a problem is noted, the parent(s) will be called immediately.

MEDICAL ISSUES Please let us know if your child has a medical issue or life-threatening allergy and provide us with an EpiPen at the beginning of the year. In case of a medical emergency, our first response will be to call 911 and then to notify parents. [IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE HAVE UP-TO-DATE CONTACT INFORMATION.]

BEHAVIORAL OR LEARNING ISSUES

Please share any information that might be helpful to us – if your child has an IEP—a recognized behavioral situation—anything that could help our teachers. Please know that we have the children for a very brief time each week—it is impossible for our teachers (who are not all trained in special education) to manage a particular child and still be present to the rest of the class. We rely on your help to best work with your child.

Catechetical Materials and Requirements

Grades K-8 currently uses Pflaum Lectionary-based materials; *Seeds, Promise & Vision*.

Grade 2 uses Reconciliation and Eucharist Preparation materials by RCL Benziger.

Confirmation I uses *The Spirit* by Good Ground Press; Lectionary-based materials for Confirmation preparation, and Confirmation II uses a program we developed using DECISION POINT and *Receiving the Gift of the Spirit*. (Parents are always welcome to serve as teachers or Table Leaders).

Attending weekly Mass and learning the traditional Catholic prayers and teachings of the Church are an essential part of the Religious Education program.

VIRTUS • TALK ABOUT TOUCH

The USCCB issued its Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. That Charter mandates that all dioceses in the U.S. establish "safe environment" programs both for adults and children. The Archdiocese of Boston selected the VIRTUS and *Talking About Touch* programs to address this requirement.

The VIRTUS program is offered to all parents and adult volunteers over the age of 18. Its focus is to raise the consciousness of adults in how to identify and prevent child abuse. All staff and volunteers who work with children are required to attend a VIRTUS session and must complete a CORI (Criminal Offender Record Inquiry). (Refer to calendar or parish bulletin for dates.)

The *Talk About Touch* personal safety program is incorporated into the religious education program in Grades K–6 to provide an age-appropriate and straightforward way of communicating with children about personal safety and safe decision-making in a variety of situations, including those involving touch. The curriculum begins with the introduction of everyday safety issues, such as car and bike safety. The concept of "touching safety" is then introduced with an emphasis on the positive aspects of touch in children's lives. Later lessons focus on increasing the child's ability to assertively stand up for him or herself, to become aware of potentially dangerous situations and to learn to ask for help.

The *Created in Love* program is offered to all students in Grades 7 & 8 and underscores the

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importance of treating all persons with dignity.

SACRAMENTS

If your child has not been baptized, please notify us immediately. If your child is in Grade 3 or older and has not received First Penance or First Eucharist, please make that information known at the time of registration. We will help you make appropriate arrangements.

PRAYER



Parents: It is important to repeat prayers with young children; it is the only way they will learn. No child is too young to participate in blessing the table at mealtime (in fact, they usually love to take turns) and blessing loved ones at bedtime. This is an important part of their religious formation. (*Did you know that persons often remember the Sign of the Cross, prayers and hymns they learned in childhood long after they forget everything else?*)

Catechists will begin and end every class with a prayer.

Grade level Suggestions: repeat previous prayers as you add new prayers.

Mass responses: *Refer to Mass Booklet or response card in church.*

- Kindergarten: *The Sign of the Cross, *Guardian Angel Prayer
- Grade 1: *The Hail Mary, *Glory Be To The Father
- Grade 2: *The Lord's Prayer, Act of Contrition, Introduce Rosary
- Grade 3: *The Apostle's Creed, *Rosary
- Grade 4: *Hail Holy Queen, The Ten Commandments, Seven Sacraments
- Grade 5: *The Memorare, The Angelus,
- Grade 6, 7, 8: *Review all of the *above, The Beatitude
- Conf I & II: *Gifts and Fruits of the Spirit. Corporal & Spiritual Works of Mercy



Prayers

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Our Father

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Guardian Angel Prayer

Angel of God, my Guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here, ever this day (or night) be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hell. The third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Hail Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve: to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! Amen.

Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that any one who fled to thy protection, implored thy help or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, We fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins my Mother; to thee do we come, before thee we stand, sinful and sorrowful; O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not our petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer them. Amen.

The Angelus (said at 12:00pm and 6:00pm)

V- The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary. R- And she conceived by the Holy Spirit. (Hail Mary.) V- Behold the handmaid of the Lord. R- Be it done unto me according to thy word. (Hail Mary....) V- And the Word was made Flesh. R- And dwelt among us. (Hail Mary....) V- Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God. R- That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

LET US PRAY: Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that, we to whom the Incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an Angel, may by His Passion and Cross, be brought to the glory of His Resurrection through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Act of Contrition *Many versions*

O my God, I am heartfully sorry for having offended thee, and I detest all my sins because of Thy just punishment, but most of all because I have offended Thee my God, Who is all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to sin no more, and to avoid the near occasion of sin. Amen.

Morning and Evening Prayers - Share your childhood prayers and rituals.

Grace Before Meals - Share your childhood prayers and rituals.

Bless us, O Lord, and these your gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Grace After Meals

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We give You thanks for all of these gifts. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace, especially (remember your own loved ones who have died). Amen.

**SUNDAY MASS
THE 9:00AM FAMILY
MASS**



The celebration of Sunday Eucharist is our most important activity each week. It is a privileged moment for priests, religious and laity to gather as a parish family and faith community. We gather to praise the Lord and to be nourished with the Word, the Eucharist and with one another. If one person is absent from the sacrifice of praise, we all lose something. If new people join us or return to celebrate with us, we all benefit. Always remember that all are welcome!

Parents, we encourage you to accompany your children to Sunday Mass, particularly the 9:00am Family Mass. Readings are taken from the Children's Lectionary and the homily is geared to the children.

Sign your children up to fully participate in the Liturgy in the following activities:

- **100 Singers**—ALL children in Grades 3, 4, 5 & 6 are invited to be one of the **100 Singers** on the First Sunday of the month. *Bring the children to the front of the Church around 8:55am.* Refreshments are served in the lower church after Mass.
- **Altar Server**—children in Grade 4 or higher are invited to serve at the altar of the Lord. Training will be offered.
- **Youth Choir**—children in Grade 3 or higher are invited to sing in the Youth Choir on the 2nd & 4th Sundays of the month. See Mr. Manguem for information.
- **Mass helpers: ALL children are invited to be Mass Helpers!** Each week a different class is invited to be primary participants – serving as greeters, helpers at the homily, collectors, etc. *If your child is in the 'designated' grade, please have them gather in the sacristy around 8:50am.*
 - **1st Sunday of the month: Grade 3**
 - **2nd Sunday of the month: Grade 4**
 - **3rd Sunday of the month: Grade 5**
 - **4th Sunday of the month: Grade 6**
 - **5th Sunday of the month: Everyone!**

Hospitality: fellowship, coffee, juice & munchkins are offered following the 9:00am **Mass on the first Sunday of each month** in the lower church. All are welcome! *See Bulletin for variant dates.*

We always welcome Hospitality Helpers!

People ask, "WHY DO WE NEED TO GO TO MASS? - I can be close to God without going to church." It is true that we can experience God in many ways. However, we do not receive the Eucharist by being apart from the community at Mass.



- God asks us to make one day holy
- we hear Bible stories which move us beyond ourselves
 - we need to be part of a community
 - we need to talk to God
 - we need to stand up for what we believe
 - we need to acknowledge that we make mistakes
- we need to pray for other people
- we experience the Presence of Jesus in a more total way
- we have the opportunity of giving good example to others
- we know that we are actively involved in our parish
- we feel the gratification from having kept the commandments
- we receive special graces when we receive the Eucharist worthily
- we keep updated on faith and morals
- we enjoy meeting and seeing neighbors, school friends and relatives.
- we can encourage others by our expression of faith
- we are continuing a tradition of our family of origin
- we need ritual in our lives
- we are giving ourselves a gift of a little quiet time
- we can feel more refreshed and renewed because we have done "something good"
- we need to experience something bigger than ourselves

TAKING YOUNG CHILDREN TO MASS

Some simple strategies:

- Decide ahead of time which Mass to attend – the 9am Family Mass is a great choice
- Have clothes, etc. ready ahead of time
- Bring along a Mass booklet or another item loved by the child
- Sit up front so the children can see
- Give each child something for the collection basket
- Bring the child into the Communion line even if they don't receive
- Praise children for good behavior
- Celebrate good behavior by doing something special after Mass.

WHAT ABOUT TEENS AND MASS?

Talk to your teens about faith – about their relationship with God – about Mass. Let them know that faith is important to you. If your teen doesn't like going to Mass, explain that there are some things in life that we do because they are good for us – whether we like it or not. Don't be deterred or worn down by their arguments. The best way to encourage your teen is by the witness of your own faith. If they see that Mass gives meaning to your life, they will begin to search for that meaning in their own lives. Remember, whether it feels that way or not, your children admire you.



PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS

It is through this partnership – parent and catechist, home and church, priest and parishioner – that we continue to foster the spiritual and moral growth of our children and help them on their faith journey to seek, to know and to follow Jesus. Parents are in all things, the first teachers of their children. We, of Holy Name Church, are here to support that role.

STUDENT COMMITMENT – K-6

- I will treat *all* persons with respect and gentleness.
- I will take care of all church property as if it was my own.
- I will try to attend Mass each week.
- I will participate in the 9am Family Mass as a choir member, altar server, lector or helper whenever possible.
- I will attend all religious education classes, retreats and/or all other liturgical services.
- I will pray each day and read stories about Jesus in the Bible.

STUDENT COMMITMENT : 7.8. CONF I

- I will treat ALL persons - clergy, teachers, parents and other students-with respect and gentleness.
- I will respect all church property.
- I will attend Mass each week. *Masses at Holy Name are 4:00pm on Saturday, 7:00am, 9:00am Family Liturgy and 11:00am on Sunday and will participate in Mass as fully as possible.*
- I will attend all religious education classes, the retreat and/or all other liturgical services. I understand if I do not attend classes regularly, I may not advance to the next level.
- I will willingly participate in the service projects which involve Holy Name Church and the community.
- I will pray each day and read the Bible. I will pray for my family and especially remember all those who do not have an easy life or someone to love them.
- I will pray for Holy Name parishioners-as they will pray for me-especially the elderly, homebound or those in hospitals, nursing homes or prison.
- I will try to put my faith into good actions, so all who encounter me will know I am a Christian.
- I will work continually to make the world a better place.

STUDENT COMMITMENT – CONFIRMATION II

- I will treat ALL persons - clergy, teachers, parents and other students-with respect and gentleness.
- I will respect all church property.
- I will attend Mass each week. *Masses at Holy Name are 4:00pm on Saturday, 7:00am, 9:00am Family Liturgy and 11:00am on Sunday and will participate in Mass as fully as possible.*

- I will attend all religious education classes, the retreat and/or all other liturgical services. I understand if I do not attend classes regularly, I may not advance to the next level.
- I will willingly participate in the service projects which involve Holy Name Church and the community.
I agree to do a minimum of 4 service hours to the parish, 3 service hours to the community, and 3 service hours to my family.

I will complete my Confirmation II Information Prayer Packet and confirmation interview by the time designated.

- I will pray each and read the Bible. I will pray for my family and especially remember all those who do not have an easy life or someone to love them.
- I will pray for Holy Name parishioners-as they will pray for me-especially the elderly, homebound or those in hospitals, nursing homes or prison.
- I will try to put my faith into good actions, so all who encounter me will know I am a committed Christian.
- As I grow spiritually, I will be more responsible to my family, my parish, my community and consciously work toward the betterment of humanity.

Parent Commitment

Parents and catechists share a mutual goal to strengthen and stimulate the spiritual and moral growth of children. Parents are their children's primary religious educators and role models. Parents commit to:

- Regularly attend weekly Mass with your children (Holy Name's Family Mass is at 9:00am), remind teens to go to Mass if they choose to go with friends
- Recognize and accept that attendance at Mass is an integral part of our religious education program
- Actively support the parish by contributing through weekly envelopes
- Be examples of prayer and Christian living in your home – it is your witness the children follow
- Attend all parent meetings and sacramental preparation sessions scheduled during the year
- Ensure that your child attends each class - even if that requires re-arranging sports or other activities
- Reinforce classroom lessons and activities with home discussion
- Set aside time to give each other full attention. Turn off all phones & devices. Mealtimes are a great time to touch base. For teens it is a time-and one of the few ways-for them “to connect” in a world often devoid of intimacy and connection. It is well documented that if youngsters don't find strong connections at home, they will seek out support in peer groups, cults or gangs.

CATECHIST COMMITMENT

Catechists supplement the knowledge, direction and example provided by parents. The catechist commits to:

- Properly prepare for each class
- Treat each child fairly and respect their individual faith journeys
- Integrate the Liturgy into each class by reviewing Sunday's readings & prayers
- Foster a classroom environment where questions, discussion and suggestions are welcomed and where concerns are addressed
- Invite parental participation and maintain open communication
- Teach consistent Catholic faith and traditions as expressed in our rituals, practices and Christian living
- Continue their own personal religious education and actively give expression of faith in daily life

Take Time

Balancing home and work responsibilities is difficult, but spending time together builds intimacy, increases understanding and creates memories among family members. We know that little ones view their parents as their heroes, but do you know that teenagers regard their parents as the most important persons in their lives? Most people remember their childhood time spent together with their families among their most important memories. Spending time together makes families strong and makes children secure.



It is so important for families to eat together, especially evening meals. Mealtime is an opportunity to learn about each other – sharing stories and significant events of the day. Pray and worship, make it a tradition to attend Sunday Mass together – or remind your teens to do so. Do chores together – experts are saying kids do better in school when they've been given chores from an early age – their sense of competence and confidence helps their achievement. Working together is a great way to chat about things - without having to look at each other. Play together: take a walk, read or watch TV together, play an indoor or outdoor game. The quantity of time together IS as important as quality of time spent together!

Let your children know what you expect from them. Always know your teenager's whereabouts and who their friends are. Use your "chauffeur" time to chat – or to listen to back seat conversations. Your kids may gripe and protest about your interest in them, but they cherish knowing you care about them.

Build family traditions and rituals. Celebrate holidays, graduations, First Communion, Confirmation, birthdays, dance recitals and playoff games. Herald the mini-victories: moving to the next grade, getting a license, getting into college, winning a ball game or losing one, getting engaged. These ARE the important times in their lives – and in your life. *"The seasons they go round and round – we're captive on a carousel of time – we can't return – we can only look behind from where we came....."* These are your best days, dear parents, difficult as they may be.

In a heartbeat, your children will be grown and off on their own. They will carry these memories of you with them - forever - and some day create in their own families what they learned from you. And that will be a shining moment for you!

YOU TEACH YOUR ABOUT GOD'S LOVE...

A family is our first community and the most basic way in which the Lord gathers us, forms us and acts in the world. The early Church referred to the Christian family as the Domestic Church. As families, you teach your children about God and God's love whenever you:

- believe in God and that God cares about you, in good times & bad.
- love and value others.
Children form a picture of God from the love they experience from their family.
- foster intimacy. To share oneself and be accepted within a family is indispensable to forming a closer relationship with God.
- evangelize by professing faith in God, acting in accord with gospel values and setting an example of Christian living for your children and for others.
- educate, especially by example.
Sometimes children listen and learn; sometimes they teach you.
- pray together, thanking God for blessings, reaching for strength, asking for guidance in crisis and doubt. This will be an invaluable resource in their difficult times.
- serve one another, sacrificing your own wants for the other's good.
- forgive and seek reconciliation. When you do so, family members come to believe that, no matter what, they are loved by their family and by God.
- celebrate life, whether for birthdays, weddings, births, deaths, first day of school or graduation, new jobs, old friends, family reunions, surprise visits, holy days and holidays, sacramental celebrations.
- come together when tragedy strikes or in joyful celebration of the sacraments.
- gather for a meal: each time you share your day or tell share your story, you continue to become a community of Christ's love.
- send a card to a bereaved, help out in a shelter, bring food to the food drive, help a neighbor.
- act justly in your community and when you treat all people with respect, never disparaging anyone because of their race, culture or religion.



Two recent articles that may be of interest to you:

Just thinking...

Last Sunday, I sneaked into one of the back pews of the upper church. I'm not sure if it was the location, the lack of having a particular 'job' at the Mass, the time of year, or who knows what – but watching our families from a back view offered me a trip down memory lane. And those thoughts and images keep swirling through my mind.

First, I can't help but commend and admire the parents (and grandparents) who were there with their children – some kids were self-sufficient age, many others were toddlers and babies. My own kids are grown and have children so I am becoming aware - ever so slowly - of the many pressures facing young families today. So it is quadruply inspiring that our parents take time out for Mass. I was thinking back to the days when our kids were little and moderately interested in Mass – probably as much for the donuts and juice afterward (*donuts were not considered lethal to your health 25 years ago*) as for the entire experience. So on Sunday, as I watched the families come in, I remembered the chaotic scenes that were preliminary to getting there - *lost socks, hogging the bathroom, threats, bad mood (maybe Mom's), thoughts of "is this worth it?"* and was again inspired and grateful that you were there.

I commend you for making "Church Day" an important part of your children's week. Placing God at the core of our lives grounds us in ways we can't count and places a God-centered focus on the rest of the week. Attending Mass is a way for us to remember and be thankful for the many gifts God has heaped upon us. Attending Mass regularly exposes our children to our most central themes of our Church – seeing and receiving Jesus in the Eucharist. Participation in the Eucharist is life-giving – spiritually, physically, mentally and even psychologically. But maybe we learn that more deeply as we get older.

It was heartwarming for me to recognize so many people – but equally gratifying to see families nod, greet, smile or just wink at each other in acknowledgement. The kids were more effusive in their recognition of each other - how great that they see each other at Mass. And look forward to that opportunity.

At our parent meetings, we remind parents that you are your child's foremost teacher – in all things, especially faith. Your children learn by watching you. Children learn by repetition, through consistency and from example. Isn't that what Mass is? With so much to learn in a busy childhood, you are giving your child the opportunity to learn that Sunday Mass, as part of a regular routine, is a lasting and significant way of learning how to be Catholic. They are learning who their God is and that God is indeed present - no matter what – all the time. They are also learning through repetition how to maintain the habit of weekly attendance at Mass, even when it's difficult or there's something we'd rather do.

Thank you, good parents, for doing such a good job. The presence and voices of your children at Mass are a testimony and a reminder to all of us that our church has a future! When you think of the hassle of bringing kids to church and wonder whether it is worth it or not, look back to your grandparents who were your role models and look forward to the powerful witness you are giving as a faith-filled family – and know that your children forever will live what they learn. *Fran Hauck*
I was thinking...

I had the opportunity recently to visit a young family who had just welcomed Emma Michelle. They
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were in awe of their little girl - joyful, thankful, feeling blessed to have this beautiful addition to their family; Emma has a 2year old sister. We pray for Emma's family - and for all our young families each day.

That visit and other occurrences these past weeks, got me thinking about what makes a family strong and successful. While nowadays there may be many ways to define a family, all families have one common idea: caring. Have you ever seen a little child fiercely protecting a not much younger sibling? I recently heard from a woman who was burying her brother: "Early mother loss has made life exceedingly different for us and many others who experience the same loss. Life is precious. Embrace the opportunity for peace and joy in every moment."

What are some ways to embrace "the opportunity for peace and joy in every moment?" in a family? In studies conducted in the United States and around the world, several characteristics of strong families were repeatedly found.

*Commitment. Members of strong families are devoted to the well-being and happiness of the other members. They value family unity and strong family relationships. This means that: family comes first; work responsibilities come second; each family member is precious; bad times do not destroy relationships; *forgiveness is available when there are bad times*; priorities are established and some sacrifices are made; traditions are established and cherished. A young person with whom I spoke commented that a family he knows "drops everything" to be with each other when the occasion calls for it.

*Appreciation. Members of strong families show and talk about their appreciation for one another. We all need to be loved and appreciated. Some of why we work so hard in life is not so much motivated by money, power, or position; it is the desire to feel appreciated.

*Communication. Members of strong families talk with each other - about the small and trivial things as well as the deep and important issues of life. We've all seen sitcoms where a parent hardly knows anything about their teen-aged child. It's not so funny. Teenagers will not come to a parent if communication channels were not created during their early years. Smartphones sometimes make us *not so smart* about communicating on a person-to-person level. Think of the times you've been annoyed because persons in the same room as you are working their phones rather than speaking eye-to-eye with you. Now imagine how a young child must feel who has no previous experience with one-to-one communication. Being open and honest, avoiding constantly criticizing (even if you think it's in your genes); and listening carefully are trademarks of effective communication.

*Spend time together. 'Quality rather than quantity' does not work in family life: both good quality and good quantity time are necessary for forming and maintaining good family relationships. Over the years the older folks I've worked with have shared that their fondest and most sustaining family memories are built around time spent together as family - both in their childhood and raising their own children. No-one's memory is ever that they spent *too much* time together. Eat together, go to church together, play games together; anything you can share together forges strong family ties.

*Coping ability and flexibility. Members of strong families are able to view stress or crisis as an opportunity to grow and learn. A history of good problem-solving in people of all ages increases our confidence that we can deal with most things that come our way. Today many articles are written for and about parents, 'regular' parents, 'helicopter' parents, 'snowplow' parents, who try to solve all their children's problems or eliminate them totally. Caution parents: although those strategies might

save a tear for the moment, they do not create the resiliency necessary to have a productive life. Fostering flexibility is an important strategy to help get through crisis situations. Strong families bend, change, and adapt, and when the storm is over, they are still intact. And proud.

*A belief in God. Strong families have a belief in God – the Power who is greater than themselves. That belief gives strength and purpose to life, provides guidelines for living, a sense of freedom and peace and helps families cope during times of trouble. Attending Church together offers support from people who share in a common belief system. In our Catholic faith, the Eucharist – the food of life – provides us with spiritual strength in an immeasurable way. Faith is gift that we can pass along to our children. Faith will be the contest in which they live their lives – a faith that is a source of consolation in bad times, strength in difficult times, and joy and thankfulness in good times.

Every family has the capacity to be strong. It is up to us, together as individual families, and as a greater Holy Name Community of families to “embrace the opportunity for peace and joy in every moment.”

Fran Hauck