

This year it will be a quarter of a century since my wife and I brought our first child to Mass for the first time. Every Sunday Mass since, with the exception of a business trip, retreat or getaway here and there, we have knelt, stood, and sat next to children of all ages. Nine of them to be exact.

We have developed a few family Mass rules to keep things orderly.

**First: We dress up.**

Dressing up is difficult with children, but we find it indispensable. It makes a big impact, driving home everyone's understanding that Mass is special.

*We tell the kids:* We wouldn't meet with the Queen of England wearing just anything; nor should we simply dress normally to meet with the King of heaven and earth.

**Second: We train the leader.**

Usually one child, often the oldest (or the oldest "little one" with teens and small children), sets the tone for the others. We make sure this one understands what we expect.

*We tell the kids:* "Your little brothers and sisters will act exactly like you do at Mass, so it's your job to show them how it's done."

**Third: We sit where you can see.**

Our logic is that kids can't pay attention to what they can't see, so we find the best angle possible. This

requires coming early - and it means being willing to sit in the often unused front pew, where children truly have a "ringside" view.

*We tell the kids:* Christ is truly present in the tabernacle, and He comes again at the consecration. That makes each Mass a miniature Christmas or Easter. We want to be as close to Christ as possible - in fact, we want to receive Him in communion.

**Fourth: We review behavior rules.**

We remind the kids what our expectations are each

time we go to Mass. We also give specific expectations for different ages. The 11-year-old has to remember the Gospel. The 7-year-old has to shake hands. The 5-year-old has to sit still. Everyone must keep their eyes on the priest during the consecration!

*We tell the kids:* "You have to sit still, kneel, or stand at all times. No crawling, no

changing seats." And the all-important: "Obey right away; especially in public; especially at Mass."

**Fifth: We always hold toddlers.**

We didn't always have this rule. We spent our Mass times with our first child chasing her along the aisle and running to stop her from joining the priest at the altar. We came to realize that giving toddlers even a taste of freedom at Mass is too big a temptation. We hold them until they are 3½ and can be reasonably still.



## Mass With Kids: Our 10 Rules

*Tell them why:* Mass is great family time. Everyone is going in different directions all week, but Mass gets everyone together, with a purpose.

**Sixth: We bring aids, not distractions.**

To teach kids that Mass is for God, we bring devotional books. We don't bring toys or food. We want everything we have to say "pray time," not "play time."

*Tell them why:* Mass gives us a weekly sampling of Scripture, which, along with the sacraments and the teachings of the Church, is God's primary way of speaking to us. Lessons from the Bible will change our lives if we let them.

**Seventh: We address problems right away.**

When one child is acting up, we remove the offender for a "chat" right then and there. Even when we are in the front pew and even when we have to take a "walk of shame" all the way to the church door to be alone and remind them of the rules.

**Eighth: We always go, and never make excuses.**

Parents have many excuses for skipping Sunday Mass: "We were up too late last night to go to Mass. We have to travel this weekend so we can't go to Mass. We're too late now anyway so we might as well not go."

But when kids hear these excuses, they often make them their lifetime motto: "It's OK to skip Mass when things aren't perfect."

*We tell the kids:* If a friend threw himself on a grenade for us saying, "Remember me each Sunday!" we would do it. Before He died for us, Christ said to remember Him with Mass (see Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

**Ninth: Sing, pray, listen.**

The most important, long-lasting and meaningful practice to instill a love for the Mass in your children is to love it yourself. If you sing the songs, pray the prayers, and listen to the readings, your children will notice, and imitate you.

*Tell them why:* The Third Commandment says to make every Sunday holy. That means Sunday Mass is a minimum requirement - but the more we do to make Sunday special, the better.

**Tenth: Invite someone to Mass.**

If you really want your children to see how important Mass is to you, make it a point to invite someone to Mass at least once a year. We have done this for non-Catholic friends, lapsed Catholic friends, single friends, and visiting families.

*Tell them why:* Mass helps people fight fears and worry. As St. John Paul II said, in world terror and war, Mass reminds us that the future is ultimately "safe in the hands of Christ."

## Chuyện Vui Xưng tội

Có một anh nọ tuổi khoảng trung niên vào tòa xưng tội với Cha, 30 phút sau anh mới xưng tội xong, sau khi Cha đã cho anh việc đền tội để làm thì:

Cha hỏi anh: "Vợ anh có đi xưng tội với anh hôm nay không?"

Anh trả lời: "Dạ có ạ, vợ con đang đứng xếp hàng sau con ạ"

Cha tiếp: "Anh ra nói với vợ anh là khỏi cần vào xưng tội nữa và việc đền tội của anh là gấp hai lần Cha đã cho".

Anh ngạc nhiên trở mắt hỏi lại Cha: "Thưa Cha tại sao vợ con không cần xưng tội mà con phải đền tội hai lần ạ?"

Cha chậm rãi trả lời: "Vì anh đã xưng hết tội của vợ anh cho Cha nghe rồi!!!!!!"

*Tina Lương sưu tầm*