

Catholic

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HOW TO RAISE KIDS WITH FAITH

We all want our children to have faith. But sharing our faith requires both words and actions—and a living faith of our own. Build your child's foundation of faith while strengthening your own relationship with Christ. *by Tom Rinkoski*



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Raising children to have faith happens through relationships—within the family, with God, and with the faith community. Pope John Paul II affirmed this when he said the goal of faith formation is an *intimate* relationship with Jesus.

Building healthy and faith-filled relationships requires intention and effort. If we want our children to enjoy friendship with Jesus, we need to invest our time, energy, wishes, hopes, and dreams in this effort. Use the following keys to grow healthy and holy family relationships.

† USE YOUR IMAGINATION

Our imaginations are sometimes shackled by routines.

For example, our kisses and hugs become mechanical as we send family members out the door. Imagination wants to break free of shackles, yet that doesn't get the chores done! Preserving space for the gift of imagination is like keeping an empty chair at the table for an unexpected guest.

Imagination nurtures possibilities. By believing in “six impossible things before breakfast,” as the Red Queen in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* insists, we begin to embrace our awesome God with whole hearts, souls, and minds.

Develop imagination through storytelling, nature walks, and applauding questions and curiosity. Foster imagination by encouraging family members to share their wishes, hopes, and dreams on a regular basis. Imagination opens children's minds and hearts to a God who might whisper as well as shout, be a lamb as well as a lion, and enter their world as a baby. Let their imaginations lead you. Then help them make the faith connections.

† RETHINK HOLINESS

Dorothy Day spoke of practicing the presence of God wherever two or three are gathered. God is with us, she said, “in our kitchens, at our tables with our visitors, and on our farms.”

Too often we freeze holiness onto holy cards, painting it with chilly colors and stiff words. Holiness grows bit by bit, flowering incrementally like our daughters and sons, reaching into our real and messy lives.

Holiness can shine through our everyday interactions. Can we see and respond to God's presence in store clerks, teachers, and beggars on the street? Can we hear God's voice in the people who answer phones? Remember, Jesus walks with the feet of soldiers and reaches out with the hands of the homeless.

In family life, opportunities to practice virtue and die to self abound in the pains of growing up—fears in the night, being dumped by friends, or losing a job. Holiness isn't a video game in which we save the day; instead it's about doing dishes, studying for a test, and fighting and reconciling on the playgrounds of life.

Our task is to help each other be fully alive so as to make God's presence unmistakable. St. Paul says we're *all* called to be saints. We need to get over our fear of the title.

† TAKE BACK YOUR TIME

School, work, laundry, and those exercises we swore to do squeeze our schedules. Our time doesn't seem our own. It's difficult to fit it all in, much less act intentionally.

Name some imaginative and fun rituals that stop time for you. These can take as little as five minutes and be as simple as a blessing at bedtime, a glass of wine once the kids are in bed, or a weekly walk in a park. Rituals create meaningful boundaries in our lives. They make it easier to live in the present instead of always reminiscing about the past or longing for a changed future.



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