



## *THE CATHOLIC HOME*

*Holiness in the ordinary*

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Catholic homes are ‘Church’ brought into the nooks and crannies of our daily lives, often referred to as the ‘Domestic Church.’ Catholic customs and traditions practiced within the family support the faith. They can soften the experience of the Liturgy, making it more accessible to children through familiarity. Thus, our home practices can serve as a bridge between home and Church liturgical functions.

Catholic traditions, customs and practices experienced in the home do not work by magic. A child’s heart must connect with the heart of Jesus for these experiences to have meaningful and long-lasting impact in their lives. “According to Scripture, it is the heart that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain.” (CCC 2562). As children experience quiet and peace through sacred space, time, and music they are able to relax into Jesus and can find safety and security in times of trial and stress. They are establishing a solid foundation of personal relationship with God that can support them throughout the rest of their lives.

Establishing a sacred prayer space for all in the family to use is foundational in family prayer. It is a place where Jesus is particularly present, where one can go to regroup and calm. It is a place where one breathes in long and slowly, “Jesus loves me,” and breathes out the anxiety of the day’s trials. It is a valuable ‘classroom of faith’ where parental modeling and guidance play an essential role in developing the *heart to heart* connection of children with God and proclaiming the gospel message and teachings of the Catholic Church.

When looking at your home in light of establishing a nurturing place for hearts to connect with Jesus and with the Catholic way of life, perhaps the following questions might be helpful:

- Does my home décor reflect the Catholic faith?
- Is there sacred time and sacred space to celebrate the faith? Activities that help to create a sense of rhythm and ritual and a sense of the sacred provide continuity, security, and comfort.
- What would I have to add, remove, or change so that my home strengthens the presence of Jesus Christ in our lives? It is the awareness of the presence of Jesus and ability to bring Him into oneself that anchors us in truth, peace, and security.

Following are some basic ideas for developing the Domestic Church. Numerous other resources are available. Start simple. Don't become overwhelmed by trying to implement several new practices at once. Concentrate on a few small things with consistency. Modelling is one of the greatest of all teachers. Children learn by example.

- Prayer space with crucifix, Holy Bible with stand or pillow to support it, candle, candle snuffer, prayer cloth (use liturgical colors), Gregorian chant or soft Christian music, holy pictures...Model visiting the prayer space to sit and reflect and pray. Engage in quiet conversations with children after prayer. Let this become a place of safety and security that they freely choose to frequent. A low table enables children to easily kneel. A bookcase or shelf nearby helps to store extra items. A personal prayer space in the child's bedroom can serve as an additional sacred oasis.
- Always light a candle when reading from the Holy Bible or praying. The flame signifies the presence of God and imparts a sense of special and sacred. (Children enjoy using a candle snuffer. Allow them to participate in extinguishing the flame after prayer whenever possible.)
- Use vocabulary words: Jesus, Holy Bible, Holy Scriptures, Eucharistic Jesus, Blessed Trinity, Alleluia, Hosanna, Messiah...Make word cards and display them in a beautiful box or basket.
- Follow the liturgical calendar. Use a big one so that children can easily see feast days, saints, and special liturgical times and help to prepare for them. Plan special foods or activities to celebrate holy days. Establish traditions and speak of the traditions of the Early Church that have been handed down to us. This can help to promote familiarity and comfort with the validity of the sacred Traditions of the Church.
- Daily devotions: Scripture readings, saint of the day, morning / evening/ night prayer (even if brief). The 'Magnifi- Kid' contains the Mass and prayers.
- Rosary, even one decade each day, emphasizing 'meditation' on the particular mystery. Alternate days between rosary and Divine Mercy chaplet.
- Read from different translations of the Bible. Read small sections at a time for younger children, but read directly from the Holy Bible, not a children's Bible. Have children look up verses and talk about how it relates to their lives.
- Keep a regular but realistic prayer schedule- "...regularity and continuity promote prayerfulness..." and the practice of being faithful to prayer regardless of circumstances. [Catholic Home](#), p 134 Rhythm and order normalize religious practices and promote security and a reference point, or yardstick, from which a child can make future choices. Rhythm and faithfulness, in spite of circumstances, is essential to living consecrated life as a religious.
- Scripture cards with a Bible verse to memorize or 'take to heart.'
- Use supporting texts with stories and related information, such as Seton texts or Catechism for young children. Tell stories of the Bible heroes and of Jesus.
- Adoration- stop in with the kids regularly to visit Jesus. Keep it short at first. Have something for them to pray or read in addition to a few minutes of simply 'being' with Jesus. No toys or water bottles.
- Light a candle. Say the Our Father. Short prayer times are great!

- Establish a tradition of simple prayer together in the morning. Tape it up on the wall or on the stand at the prayer table and gather to pray it- “O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day. Amen.”
- Establish a tradition of night prayer: a simple examination of the day, prayer of protection for the night, kneeling by the bed or at the prayer space. “Protect us, Lord, as we stay awake, watch over us as we sleep...” The Guardian Angel prayer is often prayed at night. Give your child a blessing before he/she goes to sleep. Make a cross on their forehead: “You are my beloved son/daughter. In you I take great delight.”
- Thanksgiving-- at meals, for the day with all its trials and joys, and for specific things that come up. Both the Old and New Testaments are filled with thanksgiving examples that would help to acquaint children with Scripture as well as the prayer of thanksgiving. Model simple words such as, “Thank you, Jesus,” throughout the day. As we thank God, we refocus from ourselves toward God. During trials, “Thank you for being with us, Lord, during this difficult time. We ask for your continued grace of faith and courage...”
- The Sign of the cross models reverence and strengthens us in temptations and difficulties according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church 2157.
- Sacred images give a sense of comfort, safety, and ease of transition to the Church setting. Children gravitate toward beauty and are drawn into it, into the transcendent, as when entering a truly beautiful cathedral. Let the children change the prayer space according to the liturgical calendar or a special idea they have. Use the prayer space to celebrate both personal and Church milestones.
- Each child could have his/her own Holy Bible, a very nice one, not a children’s Bible. They will have regard for a book that speaks to that regard through its quality and beauty. Help children to seek advice or prayers from certain passages and talk about them. A short verse to memorize and use each week is helpful.
- Start a box of prayer intentions for the family. Pray over the box each night.
- Have a Grand Silence on certain nights when there would be no television, electronic devices, talking or texting, etc. If there is a need to speak it is a whisper. It could start shortly before bedtime.
- Sacred Music such as Gregorian Chant is very calming and allows one to more easily enter into an openness to the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- Ask kids: What shall we pray for?
- Hang rosaries on hooks near the prayer area.
- Hang a crucifix in each bedroom.
- Model careful genuflection and Sign of the Cross.
- Bow head at the name of Jesus.
- Holy water fonts by main doors and in bedrooms. Teach children to use the holy water and to ask for God’s protection against evil.
- Internet has many prayers and suggestions for prayer activities.
- Watch movies about saints.

Some ideas were taken from the book, [The Catholic Home](#), by Meredith Gould.