

Tips for Taking Young Children to Mass

by Josh and Stacey Noem



As parents, and leaders of our domestic church, we are responsible for forming our children in our Catholic faith. There is no more important experience to Catholics than the Mass, so it is crucial to help children understand and participate in liturgy as much as they are able.

Christopher Booty, and his wife, Kristin, who attend Mass at Blessed Sacrament Church in Oakland Park, Fla., are shown with their babies. The family, who are Muslims, converted to Catholicism during the 2019 Easter Vigil. (CNS photo/Linda Reeves, Florida Catholic)

BEFORE CHURCH

- **Make sure children** are well-fed right before Mass. They do not need to fast, nor will fasting help them to be on their best behavior during Mass.
- **Dress them in some special** clothing that they wear only for church or other special events. It helps them to identify that what we do at Mass as different from everyday activity.
- **Check your diaper bag** to make sure it is stocked for any possible needs. Consider including a small toy or book that your child sees only on Sunday at Mass.

FOR TODDLERS OR OLDER CHILDREN

- **Read the readings in the car** on the way to church. This could be the job of an older child. Then

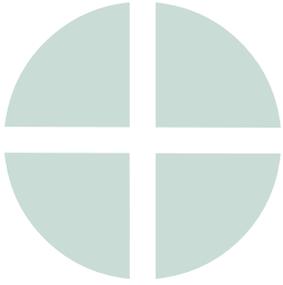
everyone hears them at least once in case someone has to step out during a portion of the Mass.

- **Before going into the church** take a moment to remind children what you are about to do. Make sure they know what their job is at Mass. For us, we say that their job is to be quiet/still, to participate by sharing their voices and to pray.

AT CHURCH

- Sit up front. It can feel scary and even a little out of control the first few times, but it makes a world of difference for little ones to be able to see the action.
- We physically hold our young children in our arms during Mass. The children get a get a better view; as they grow and





mature we can talk them through the stories and the actions; and we have a bit more control over their behavior. If an infant or toddler gets squirmy, often switching who is holding them is enough to calm them down. Otherwise we might play a quiet game of “point to the... candles, priest, altar, cross, etc.”

- **If an infant or toddler** makes a little noise during Mass and settles down right away, try not to feel self-conscious. Most folks except for those closest to you do not even notice.
- **If a child cries** or makes continual noise, it is best to calmly step out of the pew and take the child out of the main assembly until they have calmed down or are quiet. Our experience is that stepping out and returning even a few times is not nearly as disruptive as a crying baby and parishioners appreciate your consideration of their attempt to pray. Those that are parents understand.

AFTER MASS

- **Praise your children** abundantly for their good behavior.
- **If they need some improvement,** mention briefly how they might do better next week and explain why. Let them know that you will help

them by trying to remind them before the next Mass.

- **Answer questions** children have about Mass and encourage them to understand the liturgy.
- **For older children** consider taking time to discuss the readings and the homily.

