

How Mass Can Make Your Week Better

By Lorene Hanley Duquin

It's September and everything is gearing up again — school, sports, lessons and lots of other activities. Perhaps you've included Sunday Mass on your list as another thing your family has to fit into an already overloaded schedule. But what if you started to think of it as the one time in the week when you can connect with God in a special way?

Research studies show that children who go to church every week:

- Have an increased average life expectancy of eight years.
- Develop a solid sense of right and wrong.
- Improve their attitudes and increase participation at school.
- Have a reduced tendency toward rebelliousness.
- Have a reduced likelihood of using alcohol, tobacco or drugs.



Mass also gives your family the opportunity to:

- Seek forgiveness.
- Learn how God's word impacts your life.
- Offer yourself to the Lord.
- Experience the miracle of bread and wine changing into the Body and Blood of Christ.
- Reach out to others with the Peace of Christ.
- Forgive others during the Lord's Prayer.
- Come forward to receive the body, blood, soul and divinity of the Risen Christ.
- Bow your head for the blessing and go forth to make the world a better place.

The best part is that you can do all of this in just one hour a week! So the next time you might wonder why you should go through the trouble of getting everyone ready for Mass, remember that strong families are based on a strong foundation.

Taking Little Kids to Mass

Here are some simple strategies for making Mass more pleasant with young children:



- Decide ahead of time what Mass to attend.
- Set out everyone's clothes so that getting ready is not a hassle.
- Plan a simple snack an hour before leaving for a vigil Mass or an easy breakfast an hour before Sunday Mass.
- Bring along a picture book about the Mass.
- Sit in front so children can see what's happening.
- Bring children into the Communion line even if they are too young to receive.
- Celebrate good behavior by doing something special after Mass.

Tips for Parents of Tweens

Talk to your tween (ages 10-13) about Mass. If he or she loves to go to Mass, use this opportunity for faith sharing that strengthens your tween's relationship with you and with God.

If your tween is indifferent or 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 feel like doing those things or not. Mass is not about feelings. It is about giving ourselves to God. It is about discovering what purpose God has for our lives.

The best way to help kids of all ages is by the witness of your own faith. If they see that the Mass gives meaning to your life, they will begin to search for that meaning in their own lives.



Called to Love and Serve

At the end of Mass, the priest sends us out to "love and serve the Lord." Strengthened by receiving the Body of Christ, we then go forth to BE the Body of Christ in the world.

The Church teaches that to truly love and serve the Lord we are each called to love and serve one another:

• Help your kids learn patience by modeling patience.

• Stand up for a co-worker that has been unfairly treated.

• Listen to a friend even though you may have too much on your to-do list.

• Write, call or e-mail a local politician to share your views on an important issue.

• Get involved in your parish's sister parish ministry.

In these and many other ways, we live what we celebrate. This is our Faith in Action!

The Church calls us to both worship and just living. She calls us to moral living in a special way through what we call Catholic social teaching. This body of teaching flows from the fundamental belief in the human dignity of all people. You might be surprised to learn how the Church is calling you to love and serve.