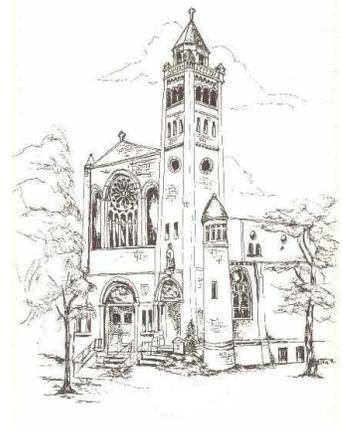


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## Top 10 Tips for Taking Kids to Mass

**10. Begin your preparations at home.** Pray as a family.

Teach your children some of the prayers they will hear at Mass so that they can join in. Show your children how we conduct ourselves when praying – heads bowed or hands folded. Use joy and reverence when talking about coming to Mass.

**9. Know your kids.** What's right for your six year-old is not going to work for your 18 month-old. Set realistic expectations based on age. For older kids, let them know what your expectations are beforehand. Think about what Mass time works best for your family. If your toddler naps at 11:30am, going to the 11am Mass will result in a meltdown. If your child is noise sensitive, try the Saturday evening Mass with no music. If doughnuts are an incentive for your kids, choose a morning Mass.

**8. Get to the church before Mass starts.** When you arrive early your children have time to get used to their surroundings. Show them how to bless themselves with holy water and genuflect. In addition to the religious significance of these actions, they are multi-sensory cues that the church is a special place and we are preparing for something special – Mass! Children and parents then have a few minutes to pray and quietly prepare for Mass. When Mass starts, kids get to see the change in everyone's behavior – everyone stands up together, begins singing, and the priest processes down the aisle.

**7. See the church from their perspective.** Imagine you are the height of a four year-old. If all you can see at Mass is the backs of everyone's knees, it is going to be boring and frustrating. Sit as close to the front as you can. The side pews are good for containment if you have a sprinting toddler.

**6. Stay after Mass to check out the church.** Our Catholic churches are visually rich environments. Statues, stained glass windows and candles are all great opportunities for teaching children about our faith. Take your kids for a close-up look after Mass. This is another opportunity to show our children how we act in the church. We don't play on the altar but a parent and child may come up for a closer look at the altar.

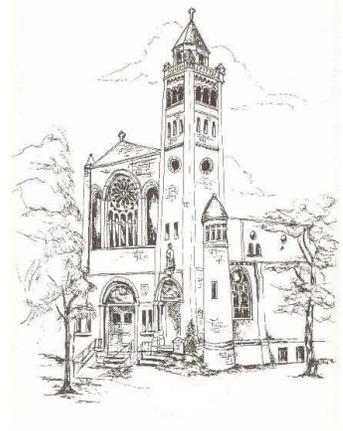
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**5. Fully participate.** Turn off your cell phone before entering the church. Pray and sing the responses. Quietly narrate the Mass for your younger children and explain what is happening. An age-appropriate missal or *Magnifikids* can help older kids follow along. If you're a little fuzzy on the details of what's happening at Mass, make an appointment to talk with one of the priests. He will be more than happy to help you understand the Mass.

**4. Bring appropriate distractions.** Some quiet, age-appropriate church items can really help a wiggly kid. For a very young child this may mean a stuffed animal or a Bible board book. For a preschooler try a few crayons and a coloring book depicting the Our Father. Young readers may enjoy an illustrated life of a saint. Check out the bookstore at the National Shrine for a wide variety of appropriate books.

**3. Take a few minutes to comfort a crying kid in the basement – but make sure to come back!** At some point, every child will be loud or disruptive at Mass. We've all been there. Once your child is calm bring her back to the church.

**2. Sing!** Singing sets a good example and it can cover up the noises of a loud toddler.

**1. Bring them! Bring them! Bring them!** Children belong at Mass.