



Saint Leo the Great Catholic Church

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Thoughts on bringing kids to Mass...

The family life is a great earthly and spiritual blessing and we love seeing St. Leo's pews full of kids. It can feel intimidating to take your less-than-angelic munchkins to Mass so here is my "learned the hard way" guide.

- Don't worry if things don't go perfectly. Life with children is unpredictable. Sometime things happen, like if your three-year-old is visiting a new church and while reaching for the Holy Water he can't quite reach, pulls it all over and breaks the vessel it was in. Most families have stories like this, and it is better to have these embarrassing anecdotes to look back on than none at all!
- Set age appropriate goals. Our first goal when taking toddlers to Mass is simply to keep them in the pew. Then we move onto tricky things like whispering. Eventually we start encouraging them to start participating in the Mass by doing things like giving the Sign of Peace and learning the Our Father.
- Be clear with your kids about how you expect them to act in church. Praise them afterward when they do well or challenge them to do better the following week.
- Help your kids to understand what is going on at Mass. It can be helpful to talk about the readings before church and get them a children's missal they can use to follow along.
- Share Jesus with them in a way they can relate to. During the school year we offer the Children's Liturgy of the Word during the Sunday morning Mass which is aimed at ages 3-8. This is a chance for the kids to hear the Gospel message in a way that is meaningful to them.
- Try to keep the focus on Jesus. If your children require some books or coloring pages to help them get through Mass, consider bringing religious items. My

kids like to draw a picture for Jesus during church then they give it to Him by placing it in the collection basket.

- Help each other out. On the days where it seems like the kids have been fighting and fussing the whole time, a kind word from someone who's been there before can encourage a family to try again next week.
- Be consistent in coming to Mass. As kids grow, we encourage them to join us deeper and deeper into the Liturgy with us and this growth takes time. Going to Mass regularly helps reinforces to the kids how to behave in a church and deepens their relationship with Christ.
- Don't worry if it feels like you haven't gotten anything out of Mass. It seems like most weeks I leave the church in a daze wondering what just happened. But the good news is that God understands what we're going through in this season of our life and I know that it brings Him joy to see us trying to raise a family faithful to Him.
- Be a model to your children. We do not have a "cry room" at St. Leo's, but this helps to encourage even our smallest parish members to celebrate the liturgy with us. If you need to take your child from the church to calm them down, feel free to do so, but please do not worry about a few squawks. If we can't hear the priest over the general rustle of children in the church, that is a good problem to have! If we're not crying, we're dying! Oh, and there is a room downstairs by the bathrooms with a changing table and chairs for parents to take advantage of if they need it.

I hope you find these suggestions helpful. Please feel free to contact me if you would like some resources or if you'd like to discuss this more. I would also love to hear what your family does together to draw closer to Christ!

God Bless,

Shawna Sandau, DRE