

## **The Family and Parish Partnership**

Parents contribute to the spiritual growth of their children by nurturing the intellectual, emotional, and physical growth of their children. "Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discuss their vocation as children of God" (CCC, #2226).

The parish community, in its turn, assists parents in their role as catechists. The catechism states that "the parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for catechesis of children and parents" (CCC, #2226).

These two sources, families and parish, have appropriate roles and responsibilities in complementary ways; together they form a partnership in the responsibility for forming children in the four pillars of the Catholic faith: Creed, Sacraments, Christian Life, and Prayer. In this light, parents should be made aware of and asked to participate in teaching these standards, thereby enriching their own faith through the process of catechizing their children.

**The following pages provide suggestions for ways the family and parish can enhance each stage of their partnership throughout a child's involvement in the parish or school program. These recommendations are organized around the four pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church which is the foundation of the Archdiocese of Omaha's religion curriculum.**

# Preschool

## Young Children:

- Experience God's love mainly through parents/guardians and family members such as grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, and uncles.
- Enjoy discovering the wonders of their world.
- Accept what is taught about God.
- Learn through stories and physical activities: seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling.
- Require a variety of activities to maintain their attention.
- Need to learn in an atmosphere of trust and personal acceptance.
- Form their image of God from the important people in their lives.

## Practical Tips:

Establish consistent prayer times, for example, before meals and at bedtime.

Celebrate your child's baptismal anniversary with a special celebration.

Set aside a few minutes each evening to read an appropriate Bible story and ask your child what he or she thinks about the story.

When your child asks about a significant family event (birth of a child, wedding, Baptism), try to explain the ceremony and rituals in terms of God.

Read age-appropriate books to your child that speak of God and the importance of being good.

Let your child see you praying and going to Church on a regular basis.

Practice simple rituals such as the sign of the cross, peace exchange, folding hands, and genuflecting.

Practice simple acts of service.

# Primary Grades K-2

## Primary Children:

- Form an image of God from the important people in their lives.
- Need to have concepts and facts presented one at a time.
- Experience God's love through prayer and interaction with others.
- Enjoy song, ritual, and humor.
- Need to learn cooperation with peers.
- Require a variety of activities due to a short attention span.
- Need to learn in an atmosphere of trust and personal acceptance.

## Practical Tips:

Establish consistent prayer times, for example, before meals and at bedtime.

Celebrate your child's baptismal anniversary with a special celebration.

Help your child memorize the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, and Sign of the Cross.

Determine specific ways to say, "I am sorry" and to make up when things go wrong in the family.

Place a family Bible in a special location in the home.

Read stories to your child from a children's Bible.

Decorate your dinner table with simple symbols of the Church season: Advent wreath, cross during Lent, or a candle at Easter.

Plan a family meal to which you invite someone who may be lonely.

Take care of a garden or house plant as a way of showing respect for God's creation.

## Intermediate Grades 3-5

### Intermediate Children:

- Learn faith identity through community customs and traditions.
- See God as judge and lawgiver due to their sense of fair play.
- Tend to be conformists and identify strongly with their peer group.
- Experience the beginnings of sexual awareness.
- Begin to think abstractly and have longer attention spans.
- Are curious and independent.
- Have a wide range of interests.

### Practical Tips:

Say a prayer before family meals.

Plan a special day with your child where you celebrate the gifts he or she brings to the family.

Periodically watch your child's favorite TV shows and discuss the values presented in the light of our Catholic faith tradition.

Share with your child the story of a saint who is special to you.

As a family, celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. Attend Mass as a family on a regular basis.

Set aside a specific time each week to review with your child what is being taught in his or her Religion class.

Participate with your child in a parish-sponsored service project, such as the Lenten Rice Bowl, a clothing drive, or a parish potluck.

Identify one or more chores that your child could do that would be a real service to the family.

Invite your child to talk about how God is a part of his or her life.

## **Middle School Grades 6-8**

### **Young Adolescents:**

- Learn faith identity through experience of community customs and traditions.
- Are in a period of rapid growth: physical, mental, and emotional.
- May experience awkwardness, uncertainty, and self-consciousness.
- Change from a strong interest in the group to an interest in one or two "best" friends.
- Find peer acceptance more important than adult approval.
- Experience an increase in sexual awareness.
- Are capable of reflective thinking.

### **Practical Tips:**

Get to know your child's friends.

Talk with your child about the values he or she sees reflected in the media and in his or her daily surroundings.

Take every opportunity to affirm your child's gifts and talents.

Encourage your child to become involved in some Church activity, for example, youth group, altar server, lector, choir member, or altar server at school Masses.

Provide your child with books or videos about the lives of the saints.

Participate with your child in a program sponsored by the parish: food and clothing collection, parish festival, a political action, or a spiritual retreat.

Encourage your child to take some "private time" each day for personal prayer.

As often as possible, attend Mass as a family.

As a family, celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. Read your youngster's Religion textbook and talk about what the class is studying.

Give your child a Bible that is written specifically for his or her age and understanding.