

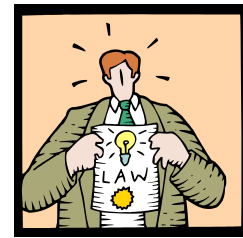
## *Passing on the Faith*

What is the greatest gift I can give my child? To me, it is eternal life with our God. I wanted God to be alive for my children, but how? I have learned that faith is lived. Use these ideas to develop your own sacred moments of faith.



**Time** – Children spell love T-I-M-E. They grow all too quickly. Take the time to be with your child. If you have more than one, set aside a special time to be alone with each child. We often go to McDonald's for a sundae. Start the habit when they're small so the lines of communication can be open when they are older.

**Set Rules and Boundaries** – this creates a safe place. Mom and Dad need to agree first. Don't be afraid to enforce the rules. Our backyard is always filled with children. Standards and morals are upheld here and they know and respect it. We also try to point out the consequences others are experiencing.



**Family** – it is so important to do things as a family, especially when it comes to our faith practices. It's not good enough to tell them to do something and then you do it differently. Attend Mass each week as a family. After Sunday Mass we try to share with each other what we learned from the Scripture and homily that day. It's amazing how often this can be related to what we experienced this past week. Go to Confession regularly as a family. Even before our girls were old enough to go to Confession they went with us. They stayed in the pew. They couldn't wait to go to do the same.

**Prayer** – bedtime and meal times are great times to pray with your child. Remember to keep the prayers at their level. Go around the table saying what you are thankful for. Pray for those who are sick. Pray with your children when they are sick. They learn the power and importance of prayer. Once when I was sick my five year old came over to me and prayed for me. Bless your children each night with holy water. They will come to cherish this rite.





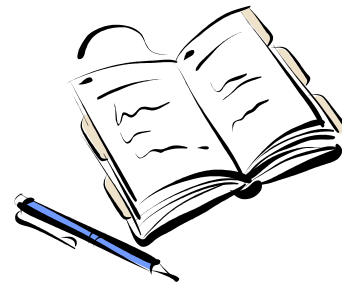
**Bible** – We started with a children’s picture story Bible. One short reading, a couple of paragraphs, for each day of the year. Bright pictures accompanied each reading. Now that our girls are older we read each night from the regular Bible. We found after supper is a good time. Each family member reads so many verses (we divide one chapter up each night). Each of us has our own Bible, a paperback and we encourage underlining. They begin to take ownership of the Word.

**Visits To Church** – make visits to Church and bring the children. Even toddlers understand that this is Jesus’ home and it is special. This is the time the children can talk about what they see. During Mass they are told to be quiet and questions go unanswered. Stained glass windows tell a story. Point out what you see. Let them ask questions. When children ask they are open to learning. Again, keep the answers appropriate to their age level.



**Sacramentals** – in the home, crucifixes, pictures, statues, etc., are a constant reminder of who we are, Catholic Christians, and whose we are, God’s. Little ones love to pick flowers to place in front of Jesus or Mary. All the neighborhood children know how to bless themselves with holy water by our door!

**Grateful Journal** – for us this is a simple loose-leaf notebook. We enter into it how we saw God in our lives that day. Little ones can draw pictures while the older children write a few sentences. It made us more aware of God’s unending presence with us. Don’t forget to verbally share too: whether beautiful sunset or a double rainbow.



**Network** – talk with other parents for ideas on how to deal with children! We are all in this together and together we possess the wisdom.

Above all else, love them! Let them know in words and actions. Write them a short note. Put it in their lunch box, leave it under their pillows. Start somewhere, anywhere. Keep looking for new ways of reflecting God’s love.