

Your Family: The Church of the Home

Families come in all shapes and sizes. This statement has always been true, and today it is truer than ever. Think of all the beautiful and wonderful ways to describe your family: your family is unique, special, loving, supportive, and helpful to one another. And now there is one more way to think of your family. Think of your family as church. Yes, that's what you are—church!

You are church because you are a community of love. And, wherever there is love there is God. For God is love. That is probably no surprise to you. You are likely very aware that God is present in your family. The Catholic Church is also very aware that God is present in your family. We call the family the domestic Church, or “Church of the home.”

Indeed, God is present in every moment of family life. God is present in the little things like eating ice cream cones and telling stories at bedtime. And, of course, God is present in the big things, too; like the day your child was born. God was most definitely present the day your child came into this world.

Pause and remember some of those delightfully warm and wondrous moments when you felt God's love in your family life. Jot down some of those memories so we can come back to them later.

Those family moments that are full of love are important for another reason, too. Those moments when your child sees and experiences love are moments when she or he experiences God. Again, God is love. So, when your child feels love, your child feels God. Your child first learns of God in the family

because the child is first loved in the family. That means that your child first learns of God from you, the parent. Other than God, you were the first one to love your child. You are your child's first experience of God's love.



Those first experiences of love, indeed every experience of love, were experiences of God. Those experiences of love taught your child about God. You are the one who loves your child best. You are the one to best teach your child of God.

Let's take an example.

Look back at one of those family memories that you named earlier. For instance, let's say you identified your child's first birthday as a moment of God's love. On that day, you celebrated your child. You loved her or him beyond measure. You may have showered him or her with gifts. You may have thrown a birthday party. You undoubtedly felt that you were the luckiest person in the world. And, you probably felt blessed, blessed by God. Even if you did not explicitly praise and thank God on that day, in all likelihood you knew that God was source of this and all blessings.

Next, think about what the experience of a first birthday party taught your child. Even at the tender age of one, your child knew that she or he was loved.

Young Apprentices

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At that tender age, your child experienced happiness and goodness. The birthday party was part of the larger tapestry of your child's life that teaches her or him not only love but also joy, security, stability, and a sense of family. Your child learns these things from you. In the same way, your child learns of God from you because all goodness is rooted in God. God, the source of all life and love is at the heart of your family. And that is the reason we call your family church.

The larger community of the Catholic Church is here to help and support your family, the domestic Church. We recognize and affirm your role as the first teachers of your child. We recognize and affirm that your child first learned of God from you. We want to do whatever is possible to help you as you guide your child on her or his journey to a deeper understanding of who God is and what God desires for your child.

The process of initiation, called the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (or the OCIA) is one way the Church supports and guides your family on the journey to a deeper relationship with God. We rejoice that you have brought your child to the Church for initiation, and we pledge to help you along the way.

Here is what we will do!

- Help your family learn about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Catholic Church
- Welcome you to our Catholic Christian community
- Teach you to pray and to worship God with us
- Show you how to live a life of Christian service

Here is what you can do!

- Read Bible stories to your child or read with your older child. Talk with your child about what these stories tell us of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Church.
- Pray with your child. If you are not comfortable with this, we will help you.
- Share your faith with your child.
- Go to Mass.
- Come to the initiation sessions (OCIA).
- Find opportunities for you and your family to serve others as Jesus did.

Enjoy the process of Christian initiation. We pray that you will grow in faith along with your child. We are grateful to have you with us as we journey together toward a deep and lasting relationship with our Lord, Jesus Christ.