

# Opening Children to God's Love

Greetings!

As we share our faith and tradition with children and grandchildren, we want to help them develop a relationship with God. We can learn how to talk to youngsters about God by considering what makes our human relationships work.

The relationships most worth having are grounded in love. Our relationship with God flows from the love God pours out to us. God so loved us that each of us is made in God's image. We know, too, that God loved us so much to send Jesus as a vulnerable baby.

In good relationships, we honor and live shared values and strive for peace. We teach our children the Ten Commandments and other guidelines for a Christian life to help them understand the difference between right and wrong. When we attend Mass and see that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves, our children begin to realize that God is God for us, not just me. Why is it important, we can ask, that we are on this human journey together?

## Do we invite children to pray about their concerns?

Healthy relationships have open, regular communication. When we teach our children to pray from their hearts, we empower them to be in the kind of ongoing conversation with God that can shape and guide their lives from moment to moment. Do we pray together? Do we invite children to pray about their concerns, small and large alike? Can we recognize the ways that God also moves in the silence? All this builds that relationship.

Healthy relationships involve trust. We trust that God is at work in our lives and in all of creation. Ultimately, we are not in charge. A saying attributed to St. Ignatius states this so well: "Pray as if everything depends on God, work as if everything depends on you." We do our best moment to moment, but ultimately we need to trust God's power and goodness. This can be a source of confidence in the midst of life's ups and downs. Do we model this for our children? What do we do with our fear and anxiety?



As children learn to express their thoughts to God, they develop a relationship with the Almighty.

Last but by no means least, good relationships are sources of joy and life. When we connect with God, we see that nothing is untouched by his fingerprints. We realize that all of life is a gift, a source of wonder that God gives us. As we help children develop intimacy with God, we will openly thank God for these gifts. In that way, we spread our joy that God loves us to those we love most.