

Prayer Space

One of the best ways to help your children grow in faith is to teach them to pray. There are many ways to pray as a family and it is good to have both regular routines and variety.

Many families find it helpful to establish a 'prayer space' in their home. This can be a small table, a shelf in a bookcase, the mantelpiece over the fire, or even a moveable tray on the dinner table. Most families like to have a crucifix or image of Mary and Jesus, a candle and the bible. Some like to have different coloured cloths which they change to coincide with the liturgical season. Other items you might like to keep nearby to use on occasions are:

- rosary beads
- songs and hymns (words, music on CD)
- a vase for flowers
- a fire-proof bowl for burning petitions
- holy pictures, photos of loved ones
- mementos of the sacraments
- books of prayer and the saints



Suggested Prayer Space Format

Each Sunday has a symbol that relates to the theme of the Sunday reading and provides a tactile and visually stimulating element for your prayer. This is usually a simple object like a stone or a star. Use this symbol (or a picture of it) as a focus point.

1. Gather the family and light your candle.
2. Make the Sign of the Cross, then one person reads the Scripture passage.
3. Family Focus: discuss the scripture together and do the activity if appropriate.
4. Offer prayers and intentions then say the closing prayer in the 'Prayer Space'.
5. Say a Hail Mary, a Rosary or the Lord's Prayer as appropriate and make the Sign of the Cross.

Special Occasion Rituals

Deepen your family's faith by marking special occasions with some more elaborate rituals. For example:

- **Ash Wednesday.** Mark the beginning of Lent by making your own ashes
- **Stations of the Cross.** Kids love candles. Start with twelve lit candles and blow one out with each station
- **Passover.** Get in touch with the Jewish roots of the Mass
- **Saint Days.** We celebrate birthdays, but why not celebrate your child's Saint day? Look up the saint with a name that corresponds to one your child's names and mark it with a special prayers and celebrations
- **Sacrament Celebrations.** Don't leave the preparation of your child for the sacraments for the school to do all the work! There are many ways that you can contribute to their formation for these important events
- **Advent.** Don't let the frenzy of Christmas consumerism dominate your family. Make Advent a time of prayerful anticipation of Jesus' birthday.