

# GROWING FAITH

## NURTURING PRAYER



# FORWARD

As your child journeys through life and grows and develops in many ways, this booklet offers you some opportunities through which you can journey with your child as the first educators and nurturers of the faith.

We hope that

- your child will grow in God's love and will always desire to turn to God throughout their life
- your child's spirituality will grow and be well-integrated with their life at every stage in times of joy, longings, questionings and that they will continue to discover the God of love and compassion as their source of hope, life and love
- your child's faith will grow into adulthood and have meaning for their life and family.

May the content on the following pages offer you and your family a graced time and special encounter with the God of love as you grow in faith together.

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## WHAT IS FAMILY CATECHESIS?

Family Catechesis is the gathering of a family to nurture and develop its faith life together.

Parents, as the first educators and nurturers in the faith of their children, continue to journey with their child throughout their life in various ways age-appropriate ways.

### What Can Family Catechesis Look Like?

Parents and extended family (e.g. grandparents/sponsors)

- Sharing stories of one's childhood faith
- Sharing how faith is a part of one's life
- Watching DVDs together and talking about the Bible story or values they contain
- Reading bible story or values' books to children and discussing them
- Praying together: spontaneous prayers, formal prayers, prayer before/after meals, writing prayers together, sharing own prayers, etc.
- Singing songs together and putting actions to them.
- Listening to children share what they learnt from school
- Discussing the scripture from the Sunday liturgy
- Encouraging and affirming the child in their efforts with the take-home-sheets from Church or school and assisting them as required.



## NURTURING MY LIFE AS A PARENT

As a parent and with responsibility for the growth of a child, it is important to nurture one's own life so that one can give to the child from what one has to give.

One of the ways to nurture oneself is to take time and space. 'This is impossible with a family' many would say. Consider the moments which may be possible, only you will know which ones and how to be creative about it. You may like to consider the following:

## Grounding

Find the opportunity to close your eyes, feel the floor under your feet, and focus on your breathing for one or two minutes when

- getting out of bed
- arriving home after taking the children to school or arriving at work,
- before you drive off to pick up the children
- leave work to come home, on arriving home
- anytime you get in or before you get out of the car
- anytime you change to another activity

*Choose one option at least, make a start and commit daily.*

**'Grounding'** will give you a tool to attain inner stillness and opportunity to gather oneself and grow in calmness and peace within your household. In this way, you can have an effect on your child. We can all so easily lose touch with the need for silence, especially in this age of technology and immediate contact via phones and email.

We need moments of inner stillness to nurture silence and opportunities for inner awareness, prayer and reflection.

## Stillness

It is important to develop times of stillness and silence. The grounding process enables us to do so in a few minutes and we will come to it more easily the more often we engage in it. In time, we may feel the need to engage in stillness for longer.

During times of stillness and silence, we can listen to the inner stirrings of our heart. Thoughts about what we have to do may come up. That's fine, hold these needs in your heart and hands as you listen to your breathing and ground yourself again. Sometimes, stirrings of difficult times may come up and that is fine too.

Don't run away from these. Gently be with them, hold them in your heart and share them with a God who cares for you. It may also be helpful to share this with another adult who may be able to guide us through these findings.



## Prayer

The moments of grounding, stillness and silence bring us to sharing our life with a God who cares. God wants to be involved in our life and the life of our family. This may be for an extended period of time or simply for a few minutes or as we go about our daily work.

Sometimes it may be helpful to journal before or after prayer, or at any time during the week.

## Journaling

A process where we take a notebook and write our thoughts, reflections, awareness, dislikes, likes, prayer. It can take any form at all. We can use it as we like and when we like. It can be of assistance to clarify, to assist in the process of making decisions, or to see patterns emerging in us which may be helpful to our personal and spiritual growth. It can be a place where we can highlight our joys or release our hurts or fears. Journaling can take the form of writing prose or poem, jotting down points or thoughts, reflection, drawing or conversing with God or with one's written prayer at the end of some quiet time.



For any of the ideas listed above, time may be a factor that many of us may not have.

But before we disregard the ideas above, please consider that we can start with the grounding practice and let the rest have a life of its own as you feel the need.

Consider that we all make time to eat, sleep, shower and give time to our families. Therefore, as you shop or prepare a meal, give thanks to the Creator who made such variety of the 'fruits of the earth' for us to enjoy; to the one who enables us to walk – take a moment to slow your pace periodically and feel the earth which has been made, listen to the birds or the breeze in the trees as you walk; have your early morning cuppa listening to the birds before everyone else gets up or have your last cuppa outside at night as you look

at the stars; as you lay in your bed at night, think of the one who says to you '*Come to me, all who labour and are overburdened, for I will give you rest*' – allow the mattress to hold you in comfort or allow your partner to hold you tenderly as a God who 'holds the infant close to his cheek'.

In whatever way you find stillness and the God of love, remember, it is also important for your family to give time to you. Make the most of it.

Having nurtured yourself as parent, equips you to give of the well which is within you. The well needs to have the water of life welling within so that it can give to the child some of the life that it has.



# NURTURING MY CHILD'S PRAYER LIFE

Nurturing your child's prayer life is an aspect of family catechesis outlined above in *'What does Family Catechesis look like?'* In fact, all the activities outlined there contribute to nurturing the child's personal life with God. But let us look at Prayer as its own topic.

## **Creating an Environment for Prayer**

- Setting up a picture of Jesus which the child chooses beside his/her bed
- In the bath or shower – a blessing of water and a sign of the cross on the forehead
- Going to bed – thanking God for what has been that day, what the child would have liked to be different and closing with a sign of the cross and a hug and a kiss
- A candle or lamp on the dinner table
- A child's book of prayers in his/her room for each child in the family
- A child's bible
- A Special Book for the child to write their own prayers or favourite prayers with colours or stickers etc. to decorate
- Parents modeling prayer both formal and spontaneous
- Encouraging prayer with no right or wrong way to pray
- Having different coloured cloths, candle, ribbons or symbols to set up as a focus point for different liturgical times of the year in a shared area in the home. For example, Lent (purple),

Easter (gold or white), Pentecost (red), Advent (purple), Christmas (white or gold), Ordinary Time (green).

- Child can make their own symbol or picture to place on the setting

## Spontaneous Prayer

Praying is about listening and speaking to God. It is a way of relating to God.

A child can pray aloud spontaneously as they speak.

They can be encouraged to pray for needs they have (teaching them the difference between needs and wants), for needs of the family, school friends and for things they hear on the news.

Bible stories can also inspire them to pray for a particular need such as courage, forgiveness, healing or peace and this can be related to what they see happening around them. Spontaneous morning or bedtime prayers, prayers before and after meals can be encouraged too as everyday ways to pray.

Writing prayers together as a family builds relationship amongst the family and with God. Having a book of prayers which others have written is helpful too as is collating one's prayers over time and creating one's own book of prayers.

## Family Prayer and Sharing

One nurtures the other. One gives life to the other. Family prayer and sharing creates and builds family connection, building of trust and relationship, sharing of faith and sharing of life.



## Formal Prayer and Practice

Prayers to teach your child include:

- The Sign of the Cross
- The Our Father
- The Hail Mary
- The Apostles Creed
- The Mysteries of the Rosary
- The Angelus

Other formal communal prayers are the parts of the Mass:

- Gloria
- Lamb of God
- Holy Holy and the Mass/Liturgy responses

These can be found in the Sunday Missal or through your parish or school.

The Daily Examen assists us to reflect upon our lives and is good to introduce at a young age and especially as the children prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

<https://traininghappyhearts.blogspot.com/2015/07/the-5-finger-daily-examen.html>

<https://www.cam1.org.au/evangelisation/News/Article/23331/The-hand-examen-a-prayer-for-all>

There are other prayers which have been formulated over history which the children may feel drawn to such as

- The Prayer of St Francis
- The Prayer for Generosity



<https://traininghappyhearts.blogspot.com/2015/07/the-5-finger-daily-examen.html>



## Blessings

Some blessings can take the form of:

- Placing a sign of the cross on the child's forehead before he/she goes to bed
- Writing and decorating 'the sign of the cross' at the front of his/her prayer journal
- Blessing from the Book of Numbers ch.6:  
*May the Lord bless you;*  
*May the Lord keep you;*  
*May the Lord give you his peace.'*

## Music

Music can be used as a form of prayer for both adult and child.

Music can be used during reflective listening, while singing, as background music to quiet and stillness and as prayer in action-to-song. This is especially helpful to children and can be used as liturgical prayer for children and adults alike.



# INSPIRATION FOR PRAYER & FAITH

## Scripture Stories

As a family, encourage your child to:

- read or search YouTube for children's gospel stories such as Zacchaeus, the Good Samaritan, the Good Shepherd or the Lost Sheep, the Prodigal Son, the First Eucharist or the Last Supper, or Pentecost or the Coming of the Holy Spirit from the Acts of the Apostles.
- share and discuss with you. Then, your child can write a prayer or a reflection on the message of Jesus' story for your life at home or at school.
- search for activity sheets on the Scripture stories.

## Inspiring People

As a family, encourage your child to:

- reflect on people you know among your family, friends or school and write why they inspire you
- write about or draw the wonderful gifts God has given to you
- use the internet or books from the school library and explore saints who may inspire you and write why in your prayer journal.
- search YouTube for video clips on the *Gifts of the Holy Spirit* and reflect which gift you would like the most in your life and why. Write your reflection in your prayer journal.
- search YouTube for clip on the *Fruits of the Holy Spirit* and write in your journal who you know who show these gifts in their lives. Discuss with your family what fruits of the spirit you see in your own lives and which fruits of the Spirit you would like to grow in.

# SOME RESOURCES

There are many resources available from CRIS for all areas of faith formation for all ages of children and adults. Some resources are inspirational, formational, gospel-based, and suitable for higher learning. Come and explore!

Photo by Pavel Danilyuk from Pexels



## **The Catholic Resource Information Service (CRIS)**

112 Kintore St Thebarton SA 5031

08 8301 6869 [cris@cesa.catholic.edu.au](mailto:cris@cesa.catholic.edu.au)

<https://adelaide.catholic.org.au/our-faith/resources-and-information/cris-catalogue>

Free borrowing service of books, DVDs, and other resources for both children and adults

There are many resources available from:

**Pauline Book and Media** whose stores are in Melbourne and Sydney.

For online catalogue, orders and contact details go to: <https://www.paulinebooks.com.au/product/media>

Other Christian stores in Adelaide are:

**Christian Supplies Adelaide** 191 Findon Rd, Findon SA 5023 (08) 8244 1811

**Koorong Adelaide**

38 Waymouth St Adelaide

<https://www.koorong.com/stores/adelaide>

Books, cards, bibles, missals, journals, music and much more can be purchased from these stores for gifts which nurture faith.

# SOME USEFUL WEBSITE LINKS

- Catholic Education South Australia: Prayer Resources  
<https://www.cesa.catholic.edu.au/learning-online/learning-resources/prayer>
- An Australian website created by Jacinta Astachnowicz from Catholic Education SA (CESA) and Joanne Villis from St Aloysius College, Adelaide.  
Apps are given and to be used under your discretion and fit-for-purpose to enhance the faith life of the child in mind.  
<http://digitalprayer.weebly.com/index.html>
- An American website created as part of the Jesuit ministry  
<http://www.loyolapress.com/childrens-prayers.htm> and further resources on this site eg saints stories for kids, prayer activity for kids, 10 top family movies, adaptive confirmation preparation kit for children on the autism spectrum and those with special needs.