

# What Makes for an Ideal Catholic Mom

Becoming a mom is possibly the greatest gift bestowed on a woman. Birth itself is a miracle. And then the mom is given an even bigger gift – nurturing and caring for the littlest of God’s children without really knowing how it will all turn out. Being a good mom isn’t easy. New surprises appear just about every day. Every age brings new challenges. New growth is constantly coming forth. The following few points should help support and nourish moms in their goal of being great Catholic moms.

## Trust God gives you what it takes - Matthew 6:34



All moms worry. They worry before the baby is born. They worry about every little thing that could go wrong after the baby is born. They worry about the “big-kid years” at school, with friends, with outside- of-school activities, etc. They worry about the teen years and its new set of challenges. And worries continue right into adulthood. A mom’s job is really never done.

But as Catholics we believe God is with us every step of the way. It should be a great comfort to moms that they can take their worries to God in prayer and place their children in God’s hands. God never promised to make parenthood easy but He does promise to “be with us always, until the end of time” (Matthew 28:20)

## Every day can be a Holy Day



Every new day gives us the opportunity to celebrate God’s presence in the most ordinary and seemingly insignificant events. Getting together at the family table and sharing a meal together **as a family** can be a very sacred time. If we can keep the TV off then it easily can be a time of bonding and love. Even the brief hug and kiss goodbye when you drop your children off at school can be a blessed moment. Praying, not just at meal time but especially at bed time, or on the way to Church or school is a simple way of instilling God’s constant presence in our children’s minds. Tracing a simple cross on the child’s forehead last thing at night or before they go to school can help to give the child confidence. Noticing nice things about God’s world and other special moments of the day develops a sense of wonder and reverence that will sustain their faith for years to come.

## Celebrate



Of course the very best way to celebrate our Catholic faith and love of God is to participate in the Holy Mass each Sunday (Sat.) together as a family. The Church calls us to celebrate Sundays and Holy Days with our parish family, the Body of Christ. Help each member of the family to prepare a gift for the offering each week – a gift that comes from them and represents them. After Mass intentionally set aside Sunday as a family day by events such as sharing donuts in the Parish Hall, a special breakfast at home, a trip to the beach or a park, a family round-table chat at evening meal which might include what we learned from the message at Mass, naming some of the blessings and challenges of the past week and thoughts on the upcoming week. Take time to be together to grow in faith as a family.

### **Grow in Faith - Peter 2:2-5**



Nourishing one's own faith growth is one of the best ways for Catholic moms to model discipleship for our children. It might be time to take a new look – a refresher course in the Catholic faith. Or join one of the parish Scripture courses! Or join the “Why Catholic” small group faith-sharing that will be offered beginning this fall and continue over the next four years. Check out a good spiritual book from our parish library. Maybe you would consider volunteering as a catechist or assisting a catechist in one of our parish catechetical programs. One of the very best ways to deepen our relationship with God is through prayer. Our adoration chapel is always open, inviting you in for a holy hour or whatever time you can spend with Jesus. Personal quiet time each day to pray and reflect is a real gift to body, mind and spirit.

### **Support from other moms**



A very important aspect of motherhood is having the support and encouragement from other mothers. True sharing can be very inspirational. Our faith is communal. We are all connected in the one Body of Christ. Whether it be a moms' group, a PTO group, a Bible study group, etc. it is very important to cultivate relationships with other moms and to remember that we are not alone. Sharing the ups and downs of motherhood with other moms who are at the same stage of parenting or seeking advice from moms who have older kids can help us through the day-to-day stresses and worries of raising kids.

### **When to say “NO!”**



Moms should never find themselves in a popularity contest. There are many times when you must definitely say “NO” when everyday culture says “yes!” Just because other kids have “it”, or just because something is popular, or the “latest” doesn't mean it is right or good for your child's growth. Movies with graphic violence contribute to a culture of violence. Song lyrics that demean women, other races, or with vulgar language contradict the message of Christ. Our children are going to participate in the culture around them. Our job, as parents, is to help them discern the meaning and value of that culture in the context of our Catholic faith.

### **It's OK to admit weakness**

None of us are perfect. Even the best moms lose their tempers, make mistakes and run out of patience. We all feel guilty for those faults and weaknesses. Acknowledging our mistakes and imperfections to our children or spouse allows us to be more fully human rather than trying to live up to an unrealistic standard of perfection. It shows that as moms we too are in need of Christ's redemption. We are all sinners. Our goal is to try to do the best we can.

### Develop the art of sharing - Luke 3:10-14



God made us in His image. That means our true human nature is to reach out, to share. When we share we are imitating God. All moms know that the littlest child naturally wants to share. The challenge is how we keep that natural human instinct in the child alive and growing as the child grows. It takes planning. Moms can be great models of sharing by including each child, from the earliest age (even before they are physically developed enough to really be of any help) in cleaning, vacuuming, picking up stuff, making beds, painting (yes – painting!), setting the table, pulling weeds, putting away garbage, etc. It is most important to keep on cultivating a spirit of giving that encourages sharing our blessings of material goods, time, talents, and money with the Church or those who have real needs. Donate used toys, clothes, shoes, uniforms, canned goods, etc. to Brother’s Keeper or where ever needed. Talk to your children about how much is “enough” and what the family might do to help those who do not have “enough”. Help the children to see that material goods are not an end in themselves but a means to help us with the journey back to God.

### Enjoy being a mom

When Sarah, in her old age, gave birth to Isaac she said *“God has brought laughter for me, everyone who hears will laugh with me” (Gen 21:6).*

There is no greater joy than laughing with our children. Laughter is also a great stress reliever. So the next time your child knocks over the whole Cheerios box, dumps a glass of milk on your lap or dresses up in mismatched clothes ----- say a little prayer and then have a good laugh. Motherhood isn’t easy, but it can be fun.

