



Introducing Family Time A Guide for Catechists

Encouraging family practice of the faith and enriching family spirituality are goals of all children's catechesis. Preschool children are eager to please their parents and want to be part of family activities. These natural inclinations make now an ideal time to introduce and establish these important rituals. Steps taken now to help parents foster these rituals of family life will pave the way for families to grow in their faith together.

The *Family Time* feature—in the Child's Book of the *God Made Me* and *God Made the World* preschool program from Loyola Press—will help you and your parish nurture family faith through your preschool program. This page, which summarizes the lesson, is sent home with the children each week. In addition, *Family Time* includes notes about children's faith development, a Scripture passage and prayer, and a list of suggested activities to help parents connect the faith themes taught in the preschool program with their child's everyday experiences. Sharing these activities together can be opportunities for parents to enrich their own faith even as they help their child grow in his or her faith.

Each *Family Time* page also includes a special opportunity to help parents make faith connections, using a common family activity: reading books together, which might already be part of the child's bedtime routine. For many children and parents, the bedtime routine is one of the most treasured aspects of family life. It is an opportunity to share special time together as the family quiets down from the many activities of a long, busy day. A familiar family bedtime routine includes a bedtime story, followed by bedtime prayers; many families have already established this or a similar bedtime routine for their children. The storybook prayer suggestion found on the *Family Time* page is a way to bring all of these activities together and connect them with the faith themes taught in the preschool program.

The model is simple and easy to use. The final item listed under the heading *Do* on each *Family Time* page of the Child's Book lists a suggested storybook, a discussion starter, and a prayer suggestion, such as this one found in Chapter 1 of *God Made Me*:

Read to your child *The Listening Walk* by Paul Showers. After a moment of quiet, encourage your child to identify sounds he or she heard. Thank God for giving us ears and good things to hear.

Parents prepare in advance by obtaining a copy of the suggested book. If the storybook suggested is unavailable, they can visit www.loyolapress.com/preschool for additional storybook suggestions, chosen to connect with the themes taught in the preschool lesson. Parents can also use another storybook that is available. The information provided on the *Family Time* page can serve as a guide for parents to choose a book that connects with the faith theme of the preschool lesson.

Parents choose a time during the day that best suits their family schedule, perhaps at bedtime, but any other time can work as well. Finding a quiet, comfortable place, they read the suggested storybook with their child.

After reading the storybook together, they take a few minutes to talk about the story, using the discussion starter provided on the *Family Time* page. This gives parents an opportunity to connect the story with the faith theme their child learned in preschool.

Finally, parent and child share a moment of prayer together. Parents begin by inviting their child to share a moment of quiet. Developing the practice and habit of quiet is a wonderful gift to share with young children and is a gift that parents can also give themselves. When ready, parent and child continue to pray using the prayer starter suggested on the *Family Time* page. Parents can choose to pray in their own words and invite their child to pray spontaneously as well. Parent might conclude the prayer by tracing the Sign of the Cross on their child's forehead in blessing or by helping their child to pray the Sign of the Cross.

Once parents are familiar with the pattern, they can use the prayer model with other books they read with their child by creating their own discussion and prayer.