

Take your child on a date to Mass

Taking my son on a date to Mass wasn't exactly planned. Instead, it began as a juggling act to make sure that all the healthy people in the house made it to Mass during a weekday holy day while the sick ones kept their germs contained. What admittedly began as another task to knock off the to-do list ended up becoming a reverent, meaningful and fun experience.

Why a Mass date is special

Mass is special: It is the celebration of the Eucharist and the Incarnation, it is listening to God's word, it is giving praise and thanksgiving in song and in harmony with a community of the faithful. It is being part of the universal Church. It is also an obligation and can also be shamefully too routine and even frustrating for many of us with small children. Perhaps even more so with several small children ... and all the junk they "require" to get through an hour or so of attempted quiet stillness.

But I discovered that when there is just one child, Mass is a totally different experience for both of us. Mass becomes special in a renewed way. Without the distraction of siblings, my handsome Mass date – my 7-year-old son – and I were able to talk on the ride to Mass about Mass. We talked about its importance, why Catholics go to Mass on holy days and each Sunday, and why each Mass is a celebration and a sacrifice.

Talking points for your Mass date

We all might remember from our (awkward?) dating days that it's much easier to keep a conversation going with a few

talking points tucked in the ole' back pocket. Here are some ways to talk about Mass with your child:

1. Why is Mass like a mini Easter? (The Mass celebrates the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ; Jesus taught us about this at the Last Supper; We remember at Mass that Jesus rose from the dead to save us from our sins.)
2. How is Mass like Christmas? (The Mass reminds us that Jesus is both fully human and divine. Christmas is sometimes called the feast of the Incarnation to celebrate this part of our faith.)
3. What is your favorite song to sing at Mass?
4. What is your favorite part about Mass?
5. Would you like to serve at Mass one day as a lector, cantor, altar server?
6. Why is our church different from the assembly room at school or other churches?
7. Why do we kneel, genuflect and bow during certain parts of the Mass?

A lasting impression

Rather than distractedly shushing elbowing siblings, we respectfully whispered about the different things we were witnessing and celebrating. It was peaceful and meaningful.

The experience also made my son feel special, grown-up and important. He is getting older now, more independent and is starting to become aware of the different way people choose to or choose not to celebrate their faith. He will be receiving his First Holy Communion this year and having this opportunity to explain the magnitude of the sacrament was a blessing.

We had the chance to attend Mass at night, making the experience feel even more unique. And of course, like most good dates, we decided to extend the occasion with a special

dessert treat before calling it a night.