

GROWING UP CATHOLIC MASS TRANSIT CARDS

Lectionary-based conversation starters for families

The Challenge Today

Eucharist is Who We Are

The Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life” (*Lumen Gentium* #11). Sunday Mass is a time when we physically come together as a Catholic community each week. It is a time when we tell our story. It is a time for rest and renewal, for prayer and quiet reflection, and a chance to be reminded of God’s care and love for us. It is a time when we receive the Body of Christ so that we can more fully *become* the Body of Christ. It is an experience that prepares us, yet again, to be sent forth to help transform the world into the Kingdom of God.

Missing in Action

Somewhere along the way, however, we have not been able to convince Catholic parents of the value and necessity of the Eucharist in helping their children grow into faith-filled, well-adjusted adults. We don’t need to take a survey to see that many families simply do not attend Mass. Even if their children faithfully attend the formation sessions provided by the parish, do the home assignments, and receive the sacraments, many do not see Mass as the principal component of their faith life.

Why is This Happening?

Other things take precedence. Sports, work schedules, lack of interest, sleeping in, lack of understanding, resistant kids.... and the list goes on. We know that parents want their children to have the tools they need to meet the world head-on and not only survive but make a contribution for the good of society. Many parents just don’t see the role of the Mass in that process. So they pour a whole lot of effort and money into sports, education, manners, appearance, etc. These goals are important, but without the spiritual component and grace of the Eucharist, they can often leave children missing what they need most.

A Tool that Can Help

What Are Mass Transit Cards?

The *Growing Up Catholic Mass Transit Cards* resource helps parents and their children reflect on each week’s Mass readings and help them see the way these scripture passages relate to their own family life. We created this resource for the busy family on the run. It’s short, easy to use, and portable enough to take along in the car. Just as sports and academic challenges require preparation, so does Mass. Children (and parents!) need to ready their hearts and minds to be active participants in the Eucharist. In the process of helping their children understand the message and apply it to their lives, parents will also come to a greater awareness of all the Mass has to offer *them* in their daily journey, with all its joys and struggles.

How Do The Mass Cards Work?

The resource includes a card for each Sunday in the academic year. The front of each card notes the day, the lectionary readings, a key quotation from one of the readings, a family-friendly reflection, a one or two-sentence prayer, and a reflection question. The back of each card provides some simple questions to answer on the card, including what Mass they attended, the color of the priest’s vestments, one insight from the homily, and something special they noticed at Mass that day.

Using the Cards

Motivating Families to Use Them

We highly recommend that you give families some extra incentive to use these cards each week. We have found that an effective way to do this is to ask families to bring their completed cards to faith formation classes each week (be sure to have them fill in their name). Decorate a box with a removable lid, cutting a slit in the top so the families can deposit their cards. At some point in the session draw three cards and read them aloud, which shares their insights and reminds other families of the resource. Then award a small prize to each of the families whose cards were chosen.

Choose prizes that will reinforce their Catholic identity and help bring faith into their home. For example:

- Story books for kids (see <http://pastoral.center/child-story-books>)
- Books and booklets for parents (see <http://pastoral.center/parents>)
- Seasonal items, especially for Advent-Christmas and Lent-Easter.
- Kids crafts, booklets, and activities (see <http://catholic.creativecommunications.com>)
- Saint cards, statues, and other sacramentals.

Introducing the Cards

At the beginning of the faith formation year, in August or September, make double-sided copies of the cards. You may wish to use a heavier card stock rather than plain paper.

Families could prepare the cards right at the parish (which overcomes one barrier to using them). They should cut the cards on the dotted lines, and can make an envelope out of the instruction page. The cards should then be put in their car's glove compartment so they can read them on the way to and from Mass.

Although directions are provided so parents will know how to use the cards, it won't hurt to go over the directions with them. You can remind them of these points:

- On the way to Mass, one of the children (or a parent, if the children are too young to read) should read the front of the card that has the explanation of one of the scripture readings they'll hear at that Mass, a short prayer, and a question to discuss.
- Parents should challenge the children to listen carefully so they will notice when they hear that reading during the Mass. Perhaps the children can give their parents a wink or a nudge when they hear it.
- On the way home from Mass, someone should read the back of the card and lead the discussion of what they noticed. They can take turns writing the answers to the questions.

It may take a little while for families to develop the habit of using the cards. But we have found that once they get started, parents are happy to have this simple resource to help form themselves and their children in the faith.

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