



But Church Bores Me

or

Making Faith Come Alive With Our Children

By Susan Vogt

Some complaints that children and teens give about going to church (Mass) are valid and some are just excuses. Following are some tips on dealing with both.

For Children:

1. Mass is not geared to the developmental needs of many young children. Make use of baby-sitting and alternative programs for young children.
2. Involve children whenever possible
 - They can assist in bringing Offertory Gifts up
 - The priest or Eucharistic minister can bless them if they approach at communion time
3. Lively music helps
4. Occasionally provide special liturgies and homilies geared especially to children.
5. Encourage children to sit close so they can see. (Some priests invite them around the altar.)
Caution: have a convenient escape route for when this backfires with a cranky child.
6. Nurture times of prayer and ritual at home. You know your own kids needs, interests, and attention spans and can tailor something to fit them.
7. Associate Mass with a positive reinforcement, i.e. donuts as ministry aid

For Teens:

1. Agree with them. "Yes, church can be boring. What can we do?"
2. Involve teens as much as possible. (lector, Eucharistic ministers, petitions, etc.)
3. Lively music!
4. If necessary, coach your priest to use some examples in the homily that are relevant to teens.
5. Negotiate the non-essentials. Save your insistence for the bottom line.
 - Clothes, where we sit, if we sit together which Mass, how long we stay after, etc.
6. Stand respectfully firm on the bottom line
 - "As parents we have the responsibility to share our faith with you and teach you its ways. When you are living on your own you may make a different choice."
7. Although family unity is good, if there is a youth friendly Mass at a convenient parish, let them go.
8. Occasionally expose them to other forms of worship
 - other denominations
 - other faiths
 - vacations
9. Support youth ministry in your parish. Sometimes church and faith seems more enticing if you're doing it with your friends.
10. Although public prayer is important, service may be the route to your teen's heart. Take advantage of parish or diocesan service opportunities.
11. Search your own soul. Why do I go? As I deepen my own faith, it may impact my teen. This is not a guarantee, but even if it doesn't change the teen, it will change you.
12. Initiate interesting moral dilemma discussions at family meals or in the car. Use current events, advice columnists, conflicts at work, etc. as prompts.