

Why (And How) to Bring Your Kids to Adoration

Family / Parenting

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I can almost feel the disapproving glares of the parishioners behind me burning holes in the back of my head, but I don't dare turn and look.

I am sitting on the floor at the front of the adoration chapel with my three energetic children, making a desperate attempt at meditation, peppered with mad dashes after my children as they sprint towards the exit, stick their fingers in the electrical socket, and prepare to climb the votive candle display.

My concentration bounces back and forth between my prayers, little voices giggling and singing, and big voices shouting to hear themselves echo across the cathedral ceiling.

At least we're here with You, Jesus. We're trying our best. Bless us that during our time here we may come to know You better.

Let the Children Come

Jesus, You said, "Let the little children come to Me." You did not come for the perfect – not only for the mature in faith, or the advanced in intellect. You did not come only for those who already know You.

You came for everyone who is on their journey. Everyone who needs to know You better, love You more deeply, grow in virtue and sacrifice.

Children are a perfect example of this. Their only job is to learn and grow. They have a vast capacity for love. You want children to come to You, to be with You, to open their minds and hearts to You. In these tender formative years, it is important that they have a relationship – a friendship – with You.

It is my job, as their mother, to bring these children to You. I can bring them to You at home, in prayer, yes. But I can also bring them to You in Your house, the Church: to Sunday Mass, daily Mass, Adoration, and for small visits any time. I work hard to make sure my kids have frequent visits and playdates scheduled with their friends. I want to be just as intentional about scheduling time for them to visit You.

Help my children know and love You, my Jesus! I resolve to schedule a time to bring my children to visit You in church outside of Sunday Mass, even if only for a few minutes. I will put it on my calendar, and treat it as I would any playdate or important appointment. It may not be easy, but as their Savior and best friend, it is important that my children get this time with You. Give me the perseverance to make it happen.

Be Childlike

Not only do You encourage little children to come to You, but You also encourage me to come to You like a child: "Unless you accept the Kingdom of Heaven like a child, you shall not enter into it."

I think of how my kids enter the Church for Mass. They are eager to bless themselves with holy water. They run up the aisle toward You, Jesus. They genuflect with flair. Their enthusiasm is heartwarming!

At adoration, they settle in comfortably on their blankets. They get absorbed in their special religious themed toys, coloring books and activities. When it is time to leave, they run right up to the steps in front of the altar. They kneel and say not-so-quietly: "Goodbye Jesus! I love You Jesus!" and throw their hands out in an emphatic wave.

Children approach You in many beautiful, energetic, genuine ways. But they do not approach You superficially – they are still themselves. They get bored; they get wiggly; they get noisy and rowdy. They think nothing of laughing hysterically during the quietest part of Mass, or shouting into the silence to hear their voices bounce off the walls.

They are themselves. In all their beauty and adorableness and silliness and craziness, they love You.

You want me to come to You and love You like this. You want my enthusiasm and zeal to be like that of a child. But You also want me to be open and transparent in my faults and failings.

My Jesus, I want to love You like a child! I resolve to watch my children in their interactions with You at home and at church, and reflect on how to love You like they do. Give me the humility to learn from them.

No Need to Apologize

Our time with You is done, Jesus. I gather all our notebooks, crayons and toys and cram them into my bag. One child bolts down the aisle ahead of me and one trails behind, while I gather another in my arms.

As I turn around to go, I put on my best apologetic smile, prepared to whisper, "Sorry we were so distracting."

I cautiously meet the eyes of the older lady sitting behind us. She returns, not a glare – but a smile. Before I can say anything, she whispers, "Thank you so much for bringing them." The college girl a few rows back tells me, "They're so precious!" The visiting priest beams a smile and a thumbs-up. The regular adorer steps out into the aisle, and hands each of my kids a Thinking of You card she had picked up during the week.

I felt insecure and worried about bringing the kids, but our rejection was only imagined. My heart is melted by the acceptance and support of the other adorers. And if they look forward to seeing the kids there, how much more do You, my Jesus, wait in joyful anticipation of their visit! Give me the strength and courage to let my children come to You. Amen!

Dear Parent,

I know that, unfortunately, not everyone experiences this same kind of overwhelming support. If you have been on the receiving end of dirty looks, discouragement, and the "children don't belong in church" attitude, my heart goes out to you. But don't give up! Even if others don't appreciate your adorable, squirming (sometimes screaming) babies and toddlers, or your distractable older children, Jesus wants them there! He looks forward to them coming! He waits eagerly for them in the tabernacle! Persevere, dear Parent. Bring the children unto Him.

Here are some tips to try when bringing kids to Adoration:

Plan ahead: pick a day, pick a time, pack your bags with toys, snacks and coloring books, take a deep breath

Start small: try five minutes, ten, fifteen, back to five... work your way up to a reasonable goal

Be confident: sit up front, whisper to them about Jesus, smile at the other adorers, know that you're doing the right thing

Remember: Jesus is waiting for them! Tell them how excited He is to see them!