



# Parent Letters from your parish

Dear Parent,

Congratulations from your parish family! God has blessed you with this wonderful gift of life, a new baby. We want your family to feel especially welcome in our Catholic Faith community. As new parents, you have our support through our prayers, our parish life, and this gift to you, *Parent Letters*.

Every six months for three years you will receive a *Parent Letters* package. Containing a letter and gift (such as the music CD enclosed in this package), the *Parent Letters* series will help you introduce your child to the Catholic Faith. Family interaction and traditions are the focus, as they are perfect opportunities for sharing the riches of our faith.



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Parenting provides so many opportunities to deepen faith. *Parent Letters* equips you to grasp those opportunities with joy and confidence, reminding you often of God's constant presence. Smile and breathe deeply — as "mom," as "dad," you walk hand in hand with Almighty God!



Hemera

## Express Your Love

As a parent you are the first image of God your child will have. Express your love by spending plenty of time each day giving your child the gift of yourself. Talk and sing, hold her close, smile often so that he can see the joy you find in him. Through these loving actions, you are forming your child's understanding of love and his understanding of God.



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## Parent Prayerfully

Right now you are very busy washing clothes, changing diapers, and feeding a growing infant. These times are perfect opportunities to recognize the presence of God. St. Paul tells us to "pray always" (1Thessalonians 5:17). Every single act of the day can become a prayer if we lift our actions up to God. In this way, no task is insignificant, as all you do moves you and your child closer to the heart of God.

**THINK OF THE LOVE THAT GOD HAS LAVISHED ON US, BY LETTING US BE CALLED GOD'S CHILDREN; AND THAT IS WHAT WE ARE.**

— 1 JOHN 3:1

**A NEWBORN CAN SENSE GOD'S LOVE IN A PARENT'S GENTLE TOUCH.**



# Parent Letters

## from your parish



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### Dear Parent,

What a joy it is to be a mom or a dad. Already you have observed dramatic changes and growth in your baby. Although your baby can't pronounce words, you know what causes a smile and what is comforting. Your baby responds to smiles, laughter, and your voice tones with coos, babbles, and smiles.

As parents, we are called by God to share our love, lives, and faith with our children. You are preparing the soil for the seeds of faith to emerge and grow through your love, reliability, patience, and trustworthiness. Experiencing consistent parental love, care, and concern prepares your child for experiencing God's love and God's gift of faith. So hug and cuddle your baby often.

Families are the natural place for nurturing God's gift of faith. As children and parents grow together in faith, life is enriched and strengthened. A mother and father's smile will tell a baby more about what Christ looks like than any picture or painting.

### Parenthood: A Call to Faith

Parenthood is the experience of acting as God's instruments, giving life to your child in many ways. It is also the experience of being formed by God through your child. While your child grows and develops, so must you. Faith is an openness to change. Although God will never ask you to take larger steps than you are capable of, God will always be calling you to stretch in sometimes painful ways!

Through parenthood you become disciples of Jesus in a new way. Jesus is talking to you as parents and disciples when He calls you salt of the earth and light of the world. Let your love and care be

good seasoning; let the light of your vocation as mothers and fathers shine in praise of God.

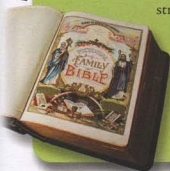
### **God's Love is Revealed... EVERY DAY in your Family.**

Through the ups and downs of your new adventure, never lose sight of the fact that family life is sacred. The concept may seem more mysterious than real — especially the everyday kind of real. But, God is the one constant that permeates our every day.

### Reflect God's Love

Practicing your Catholic faith is the most important way to impart your religious beliefs. The loving relationship between you and your child is the most powerful influence in his life. It will be your values,

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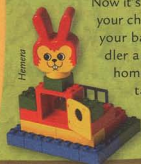




# Parent Letters from your parish

Dear Parent,

It's time to celebrate! Your child is one year old. Can you believe it? Not too long ago, you were just getting to know your new baby. Now it's hard to imagine life without your child. During the last year, your baby has grown into a toddler and has filled your family's home with love. Both are important reasons to take the time to celebrate your toddler's first year.



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## Celebrate the First Year of Life

What a great time to remember and celebrate: the first anniversary of your child's Baptism! Invite the godparents and grandparents to celebrate with you. Light the baptismal candle as you share a prayer of thanksgiving for your child.

Say or sing a blessing such as this one to the same melody as the traditional "Happy Birthday" song:

*May God bless you today.*

*May God bless you today.*

*May God bless you, dear  
(child's name).*

*May God bless you today.*

As you sing, gently put your hand on your toddler's shoulder or head. End with a great big hug. Through the years your child will be reminded how very precious he is to you and to God.



Recall and talk about memorable and humorous events of the first year. Write some of these down in a note to your child that can be saved and added to every year. What is most important is that your child feels loved and appreciated from a very young age.

Use the enclosed growth chart to measure and record your child's height at six-month intervals. Both you and your toddler will enjoy watching the growth. Review photos and videos you and/or others have taken over the past year. Appreciate and talk about your toddler's growth in height, mental awareness, language development, and socialization. Be generous with your hugs and kisses.



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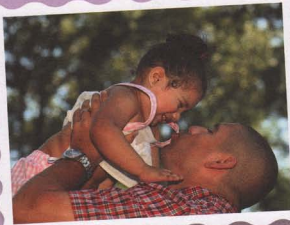
**THROUGH THE YEARS YOUR CHILD WILL BE REMINDED HOW VERY PRECIOUS HE IS TO YOU AND TO GOD.**





# Parent Letters

## from your parish



Design Pix

### Dear Parent,

Do you find yourself watching in amazement, as your child becomes a unique person? It's great fun to watch a child's personality and social skills develop. Your toddler is also beginning to accomplish many new things such as talking. Do you remember your child's first word? It's very exciting to hear a child use new words and identify people and familiar items.

You may be feeling very busy as a parent of a one-and-a-half-year-old, and rightly so. With their abundant energy, toddlers are continually walking, running, and climbing. They are learning about language, and developing social skills, curiosity, and independence. God has blessed your child with a blend of gifts and talents. As your toddler changes, matures, and learns, know that these qualities are divine gifts, coming to life in this child of God.

### Growing as a Child of God

In a Catholic home and atmosphere, your child develops positive attitudes about self and others from your example. Remember, you are sharing your faith and values through what you say and do. Here are some tips for supporting and helping your child experience God's goodness:

**Be Positive.** Give positive verbal reinforcement as your toddler develops and explores. Here are several ways to say *very good!*

Good for you!

Terrific!

IT'S FUN  
TO BE WITH YOU.

Wow! I'm  
proud of you.

Good going!

I like that.

Add your own expressions and post them where you will see them often, such as on the refrigerator. This way you will be reminded to use them daily. Don't forget the

hugs and laughter that go along.

**Model Prayer.** Pray constantly. Scripture tells us to; therefore, it is possible — and so very profitable! (see 1 Thessalonians 5:17). Use every opportunity: waking up, going outside, mealtime, snack time, straightening up the house, getting dressed (taking care of the body in all ways). Pray your prayers aloud so your child can hear. Urge her to pray, too.



Design Pix

Touch a photo of Grandma on the wall and pray: "Thank you God for Grandma. Bless her and help her with..."

"Thank you, God, for my eyes, my ears, my nose, my toes!"

"Dear God, please be with those who most need You today."



# Parent Letters from your parish

Dear Parent,

We celebrate your child's second birthday with you! Take time to look back and acknowledge the growth of not only your child, but also the growth of your parenting skills. With God's grace, you are providing love, safety, guidance, and discipline in your home. As you steer your child in the right direction, God steers you in the right direction, too!

We've all heard of the "terrible twos." Such a misnomer does an injustice to your child. This is the age when your child will assert her independence even more. Though challenging, this period is necessary and your firm parameters vital as your child takes further steps toward autonomy.

Allow yourself to be fascinated by this period in your child's life. Stand beside God and watch your child marvel at His wonderful world.

*We love you, and God loves you too!*



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## Celebrate Growing in God's Love

Family rituals that include celebrating birthdays and baptismal anniversaries will add to your child's sense of belonging both to your family and to God's family. Here are some ideas to celebrate your child's baptismal anniversary:

- ✦ Decorate your child's bedroom door. On a large cutout heart write GOD LOVES (CHILD'S NAME). Then surround the heart with streamers, bows, and the words *Happy Baptismal Day*. You might display several recent snapshots on the door as well.
- ✦ Gently put your hand on your child's shoulder and sing a blessing to the same melody as the traditional *Happy Birthday* song:

God Loves  
Ben!

*May the dear Lord bless you,  
May the dear Lord bless you,  
May the dear Lord bless (child's name),  
May the dear Lord bless you.*



Be sure to tell your child how precious he is to you and to God. Be sure that hugs and kisses are plentiful.

- ✦ Show snapshots taken at your child's Baptism along with other pictures taken throughout the past year. Remember special times, humorous events, increased language abilities, new accomplishments, and growth in height.



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Design Plus

### Dear Parent,

You have discovered that your two-and-a-half-year-old is filled with warmth, affection, and a natural zest for life. Day by day, your child is learning by watching you, imitating you, and repeating happy, successful experiences over and over. Play is serious business now — yes, play is the primary way your child learns about everything, including you!

Your child's personality is developing into the unique and special person God is calling him or her to be. How privileged we are to watch this unfolding. How privileged you are as you encourage, appreciate, enjoy, and contribute to the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual growth of your child.

### Strengthen the Bond of Love

As children grow, finding ways to bond with them must grow, too. Here are some ways to strengthen that bond and keep the bundle of activity heading in the right direction!

- Never minimize the positive effects of reading. Take your child to the library. Help her pick out books. Sit down and read them over and over. Look into books about her Catholic faith. There are stories about saints, about church, about Mass, about Jesus, about God all on her level. Show her that you enjoy reading, too. Make reading a part of every day.
- Teach saying you're sorry. When you do something that hurts another's feelings, say you're sorry. Don't be afraid to say this in front of your child. He needs to see apologies practiced and forgiveness granted. Learning this by example is best. When he does something wrong, encourage him to say he is sorry. Be sure that he experiences forgiveness right away, too.

- Continue to foster feelings of belonging and security by taking time to listen and talk with your child and generously using phrases such as:

- I like to be with you.
- You are fun to be with!
- I like spending time with you.
- God loves you.
- I love you!



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**THE FAMILY IS DEFINED AS A "DOMESTIC CHURCH," THAT IS, IN EVERY CHRISTIAN FAMILY THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE LIFE OF THE ENTIRE CHURCH MAY BE REFLECTED: MISSION, CATECHESIS, WITNESS, PRAYER, ETC.**

— THE GENERAL DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS, U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS





# Parent Letters

## from your parish

Dear Parent,

Just imagine! Your tiny infant grew to be a toddler and now has reached the age of three! Think about the growth that has taken place! Celebrate all the love and joy your child has brought you! We celebrate with you.

Celebrating is such an important part of our Catholic faith. As we celebrate, we strengthen love and friendship. We acknowledge the bond that makes us one. Celebrating birthdays, Baptisms, and other important family events helps our children better understand and appreciate parish worship — when we, as members of God's family, come to pray, to sing, and to celebrate the fact that God has called us to be together in this very time and place.



Blond Images

### Celebrate Being Three

This is the third anniversary of your child's Baptism. Through this sacrament your child has become a member of God's family. On occasion, it is meaningful to recall the words of St. Paul: your child is "God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus" (see Ephesians 2:10).

Sing all three verses of the "Blessing Song" to the traditional "Happy Birthday" melody while folding your child's hands in yours to make this blessing a prayerful moment. Complete the blessing by tracing the Sign of the Cross on your child's forehead.

*May the dear Lord bless you,  
May the dear Lord bless you,  
May the dear Lord bless (child's name),  
May the dear Lord bless you.*

(Verse 2, substitute love for bless)

PARENTS SHOULD INITIATE THEIR CHILDREN AT AN EARLY AGE INTO THE MYSTERIES OF THE FAITH OF WHICH THEY ARE THE "FIRST HERALDS" FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2225*

### Encourage Positive Actions

The blessing of your child, your marriage, our community as a parish are gifts from God. The fact that God gives us such gifts should be the ultimate source of our self-esteem — and should also call us to action. As adults we must pass this appreciation of self — and others — as gifts from God on to our children. We begin to do this in simple, everyday ways.

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