

10 THINGS That Make for a — GREAT — CATHOLIC MOM

8. Admit Imperfections (James 5:16).

None of us is perfect, and nowhere is this more evident than in motherhood. Even the best moms lose their tempers, make mistakes, and run out of patience. And we all feel guilty for doing so! Yet if we allow ourselves to be fully human rather than trying to live up to some unrealistic standard of perfection, we are able to parent with a greater sense of understanding, forgiveness, and compassion. Acknowledging our mistakes and imperfections — to our children, our spouse, even our neighbors or coworkers — helps us remember that we're all in need of Christ's redemption. We are all sinners. We are all just trying to do the best we can.

? *Have I made a mothering mistake recently?
Can I forgive myself for being an
"imperfect" mom?*

9. Share and Share Alike (Luke 3:10-14).

When our kids are little, one of the first lessons we try to instill in them is sharing. By preschool, many kids are pretty good at sharing, and we switch our focus to teaching other skills. But the truth is that even for adults, sharing is not easy. We moms can be great models of sharing by including our kids in clean-out and donation efforts. It is important to cultivate a spirit of giving that encourages sharing our material goods, money, and time with people who are struggling or less fortunate. Some ideas: When a new toy comes in, choose an old one to give away. Donate old school clothes to a homeless shelter before buying new clothes in the fall. Talk about how much is "enough." Do we need ten pairs of jeans — or would we be okay with five?



? *How might I help to "cultivate a spirit of giving" in my family?
Is generosity a value in our home?*

10. Laugh! (Proverbs 17:22).

In the Old Testament, when Sarah gives birth to Isaac at a very advanced age, she says, "God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me" (Gen 21:6). Even the ancients knew that motherhood would be filled with laughter. There is no greater joy than laughing with our children. Laughter is also a great stress reliever. My own mother says that on days when she can either laugh or cry, she always chooses to laugh. So the next time the whole Cheerios box has been dumped out onto the kitchen floor or the school outfit they put together themselves is plaid on top and stripes on the bottom — say a little prayer, and then have a good laugh. Motherhood isn't easy, but it sure can be fun.



? *When was the last time I had a good laugh?
Do I appreciate the joy in the day-to-day reality of motherhood?*

A Mother's Prayer

Thank you, dear Lord, for the miraculous vocation of motherhood You have blessed me with. At times, I may not be able to fathom the intensity of the miracles that are worked in human hearts throughout the seasons of my vocation as mother. By Your grace and love for me, I trust that I act as Your instrument in this world — first to my own family, and then, reaching out to others. Please continue to work through me as I work out my own salvation and that of my family. Help me to lead others to You by my life and love.

— From *Catholic Prayer Book for Mothers*



For Further Reading

Cooper O'Boyle, Donna-Marie. *Catholic Prayer Book for Mothers* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2005).
Lindsey, Jacquelyn (ed.). *Catholic Family Prayer Book* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2001).
Popcak, Gregory, and Lisa Popcak. *Parenting with Grace* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2010).
Wells, Laura Marie. *A Marian Bible Study: Bringing Scripture to Life for Moms* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2006).
Also see www.catholicmom.com.

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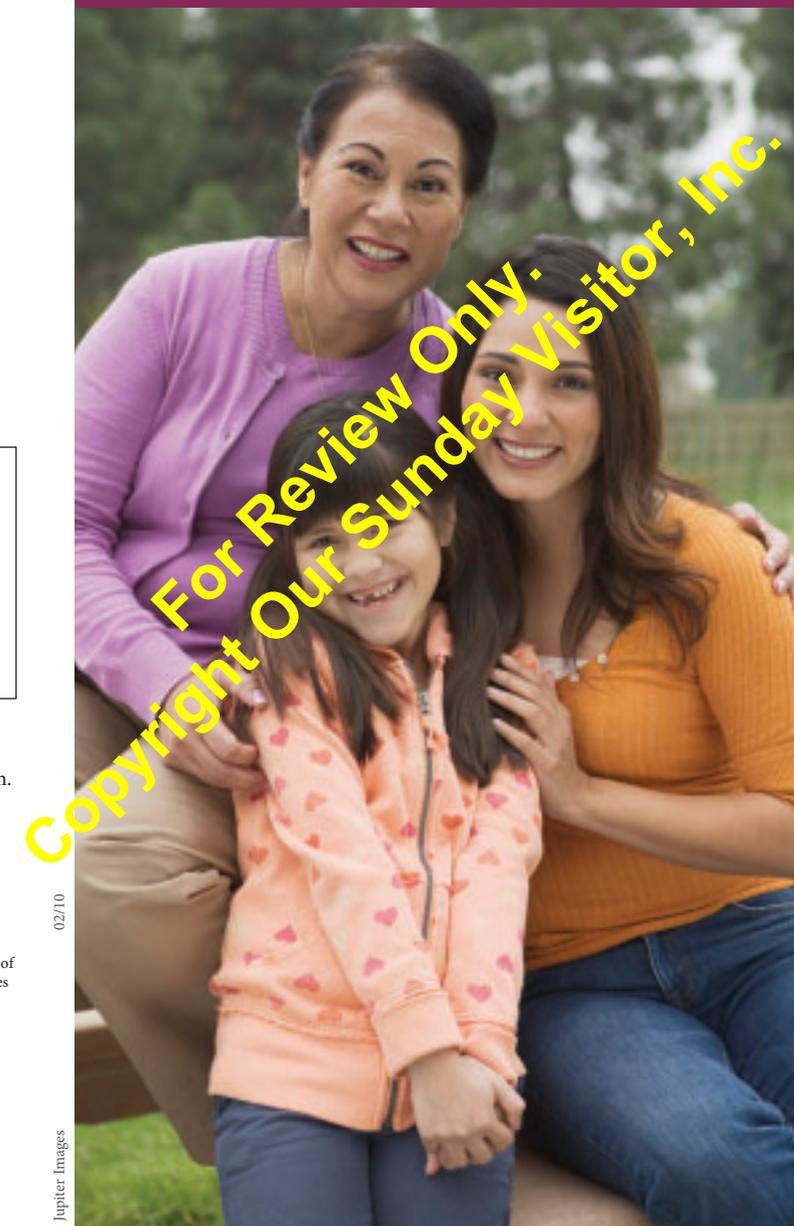
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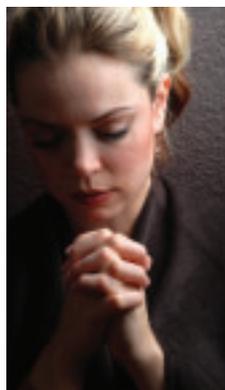
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There is perhaps no greater gift in a woman's life than becoming a mom. And beyond the miracle of birth itself lies the opportunity to participate in an even greater miracle: fully embracing the immense responsibility to nurture and care for the littlest of God's creation, without really knowing what lies ahead. Every day brings a new surprise, every age brings a new challenge, and every moment brings new growth. And let's face it, sometimes being a good mom isn't easy! But the following ideas can help nourish and support us in our efforts to be great Catholic moms — today, tomorrow, and always.

1. Trust in God (Matthew 6:34).

One of the eternal truths about motherhood (from one who knows) is that moms worry. A lot. Before we have the baby, we worry about the pregnancy. Once the baby is born, we worry about every little thing that could go wrong. Then the big-kid years arrive with a whole new set of worries. A mother's worry doesn't stop through the teenage years and continues right into adulthood. A mother's work (and worry) is literally never done. But as Catholic moms, we believe that God is with us every step of the way. It is a great comfort to know that we can bring our worries to God in prayer and place our children in God's hands when needed. God does not promise to make parenthood easy, but he does promise to "be with us always, until the end of time" (Mt 28:20)



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? Do I share my worries with God?
Do I believe God is with me in my day-to-day activities?

"Woman in virtue of her special experience of motherhood seems to have a specific sensitivity toward the human person and all that constitutes the individual's true welfare, beginning with the fundamental value of life."
— Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*



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2. Celebrate! (Hebrews 10:25).

The best way to celebrate our Catholic faith and love of God is to attend Mass together as a family. Just as we celebrate holidays and birthdays with family and friends, the Church calls us to celebrate holy days with our parish family, the Body of Christ. After Mass, intentionally set aside Sunday as a family day. Keep the celebration going by sharing donuts in your parish or making a special breakfast together at home. Make a "no-technology until noon" rule which limits computer, television, and music time. Talk with one another about the Scripture readings of the day and any take-away messages that made an impact. Talk about school and work and real-life challenges. Take time to be together to grow in faith as a family.



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? Do we, as a family, keep holy the Lord's Day?
How might we more intentionally designate Sunday as a family day?

3. Cultivate Support (Luke 1:39-45).

One of the most important aspects of motherhood is seeking out support and encouragement from other mothers. The Catholic faith is communal; we believe that we are all connected in the one Body of Christ. Whether it is a moms' group at your parish or a neighborhood get-together, it is essential to remember that we are not alone. Sharing the ups and downs of motherhood with women who are at the same stage of parenting or asking advice from moms who have older kids can help us through the day-to-day stresses and strains of raising kids.

? Who are some women who support my vocation to motherhood?
Is it time to connect with them again?

4. Make Every Day Holy (Psalm 118:4).

Every new day gives us the opportunity to celebrate the divine presence of God in the smallest and most ordinary events. Gathering around the table and sharing a meal together as a family can be a sacred time of connection and love. The brief hug and kiss goodbye before school each day can be a blessed moment of sending forth. Tracing a cross on our children's foreheads before they head out the door for school or before they go to bed is a simple way to acknowledge the presence of God every day. The habit of bedtime prayers can help ensure a good night's sleep. Noticing the holy moments in everyday life helps kids develop a sense of wonder and reverence that will sustain their faith for years to come.



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? What "holy moments" have occurred today?
How might I notice or create more sacred spaces each day?

5. Grow in Faith (1 Peter 2:2-5).

Nourishing our own faith growth is one of the best ways for Catholic moms to model discipleship for our kids. From attending adult formation classes to volunteering as a catechist, from reading the Bible to participating in the parish book club, developing our own faith life as an adult teaches our kids that faith formation is a lifelong journey. One of the best ways to deepen our relationship with God is through prayer. Praying with Scripture (the Psalms are a great choice), traditional meditative prayers such as the Rosary, or even free-form conversation with God — carving out personal quiet time each day to pray and reflect is a gift to the body, mind, and spirit.

? What have I done to nourish my own faith life lately?
What might I do in the future?

6. Go Against the Grain (Joshua 24:15).

As unpopular as it may be, great Catholic moms know that sometimes we need to say "no" when everyday culture says "yes." Just because something is popular doesn't make it right or good for the growth of our children. Movies with graphic violence contribute to a culture of violence. Song lyrics that demean women or other races contradict the message of Christ to "love one another." Of course, our kids are going to participate in the culture around them, but it is our job as parents to help mediate the meaning and value of that culture in the context of our Catholic Christian faith.



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? Do I have the courage to say "no" to something that I believe is not age-appropriate or good for my kids?
How might I seek out support and help with these decisions?

7. Let Go (Proverbs 22:6).

The hardest and most heart-wrenching task of motherhood is letting our children go. The bond of motherhood is so deep that it is tempting to hold on to our babies long after they have grown. And yet we believe that our children are a gift from God who will one day be sent into the world to be a gift to others. It is helpful to remember that the goal of motherhood is not to smother our children with attention; rather it is to prepare them to be happy, healthy, faith-filled individuals. At times this may mean stepping back and allowing our kids to face the consequences of their actions or encouraging them to sort out a school homework assignment on their own. Sometimes letting go is the best love we can give.

? How might I help my kids to learn to "stand on their own two feet"?