

How can we parishioners help young families?

The family is the basic unit of Church and society. We cannot have a strong parish without strong families. What's more, we cannot have a strong nation without strong families even if some think we can. But let's talk first about families and parishes. Let's examine some basic questions.

What is our parish situation and where would we like to steer it? To what degree are young Catholic families in our community involved in parish life? Do they understand, or even care about stewardship in time and talents? Does too much parish service rest on older parishioners? What would be the result of that?

Certainly we do have some remarkably active young families, but just as certainly there are a whole lot of others that need to be drawn into Church. These other young families need to be encouraged not only for the future of our parish but for the very souls of generations to come. Let's briefly look at **seven suggestions:**

1. **PRAYER:** Everything good begins with prayer; intercession, thanksgiving, listening prayer and follow through. We need individual as well as parish prayer, backed by self denials and sacrifices offered for our young families.
2. **HOLY PARISH:** We need to provide a holy parish for young families to be part of. We are more than a spiritual filling station. We are God's Holy family.
3. **EVANGELIZE & CATECHIZE:** We need to find better ways to lead them to Jesus alive in His Church. To do this effectively we need to listen to them too.
4. **INVITE THEM:** Actively call young families to full gospel family and parish life. Welcome them and make them feel at home in a Catholic setting.
5. **CELEBRATE FAMILY LIFE:** Value children. Sponsor prayerful family and young adult fellowship and speaker events. Love and honor them.
6. **SHOW THEM:** Point out Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Let our good example model God's plan for marriage and family. Help them discover the blessings of a Catholic lifestyle.
7. **EMPOWER THEM:** Show them how to use the grace of the sacraments, especially Marriage and Eucharist. Offer them parish responsibilities, creative opportunities, and lay ministries according to their individual talents. Help them become all God created them to be, with the power of the Holy Spirit.