

Dear [Insert names],

Your child's third year is a wonderful time of discovery, increased independence (with its challenges and delights), and ever-increasing activity and physical, mental, emotional and spiritual growth. As the parent of a three-year-old, you may find yourself running to keep up at times. You may wish for the days when your child was an infant whose mobility depended upon you to carry or stroll; you may revel in the times of play and deepening sense of self of your child; you may already experience that feeling known to parents throughout the ages of "Where is the time going? They grow so quickly!" As your child's world expands through exploration and learning, allow yourself to see the world and all who dwell in it as the magnificent creations of God they are, and allow that vision to fill your heart with gratitude.

We here at [insert parish name] are ready to support you during this year and always! Within our community, you have a family of faith in which you and your child truly belong.

Here are some things to think about and to do in your child's third year:

*Look at the world through the eyes of your child.* Discover with him or her the blessings of earth and sky, stars and water, animals, and especially other people. Talk with your child about how everything he or she sees, hears, touches and experiences is a gift from God. Include the things your child has discovered in your nighttime prayers of thanksgiving, such as "Thank you, God, for the water we played in today."

*Pray with your child and on your own.* If your prayers aloud with your child until now have been mostly spontaneous expressions of gratitude and praise, wonderful! Now is a good time to add some of our traditional prayers such as the Lord's Prayer or the Hail Mary. It will be a while, but before long your child will be able to speak the prayer with you, learning "by heart."

*Create plays that tell the stories of Sacred Scripture.* Act as the narrator, and invite your child to use finger puppets or simple costumes to "make-believe" with a familiar story from the Bible.

*Help your child learn to say "I'm sorry" when it is appropriate, and accept your child's expression of sorrow with forgiveness.* We learn about Christ's love, forgiveness, and mercy by experiencing these qualities from each other. As a parent, you help your child learn about God's forgiving love through the love you show him or her.

*Teach your child that God is always present.* While at this age your child will readily focus on things that can be directly experienced, use stories and examples to show your child that God is with us always, even though we cannot see or feel God's presence in the ways we can the things of this world.

[signature]