

Dear [insert names],

We've all heard the second year in a child's life referred to as "the terrible twos." What's a parent to do to survive and thrive in the second year? When the days seem long and the volume of life high, when every moment seems filled to the brim, take a few moments to pause, remember that God holds you, your child, and all in love and mercy. Add to the noise of life a "joyful noise to the Lord!" Take the "terrible" out of the twos by finding perspective and peace in Christ, and remember that your parish is a place where you and your child are valued and for whom there is much love and care.

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

*Pray, alone and with your child.* Keeping God first and all else in perspective will help your family to grow in holiness. Take your child's hand and help him or her make the sign of the cross as you begin your prayer; bless your child before bedtime; if you do not already do so, include grace before meals.

*Make a prayer center at home.* Include a crucifix, image of Mary, or statue of a favorite saint. Have a Bible at the center as well as a child's picture Bible or Gospel story book. Place a small holy water font in the center and bring blessed water home from church to fill your font. Teach your child to bless him or herself with the holy water as you pass by the font each day.

*Tell your child sacred stories.* Use a children's Bible or Gospel story book for bedtime stories at least a few times each week. Reading and studying the Bible yourself will help you to tell the stories as though they are your family's stories, and they are! Our family of faith has many wonderful stories of the ways God acts for and with us; now is a great time to begin or continue a pattern of prayerfully reading the Bible and a perfect time to begin to share our stories of faith with your child.

*Go to church a few minutes prior to, or linger for a few minutes after, Mass* and walk your child around the church, pointing out the pictures or statues. Ask your child to point to Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the candles, the water, etc.

*Make sharing the norm.* As your child becomes more aware of the people around him or herself, teach sharing, cooperation, and respect for others. It is early in your child's life; patterns set now will reap great rewards later, or will bear negative habits that will take time to undo.

*Keep a journal.* Many people find a prayer journal helps them to talk to God in a natural way, and having your thoughts recorded in writing will also help you see your relationship with God in the perspective of time. Include in your prayer journal your joys and challenges as a parent and the milestones of your child's development so you will remember them in the future.

May God continue to bless and keep you,

[Signature]