

## Five Ways to Enjoy Church with Your Children

### First – Be a Positive Role Model.

Show your children that you think church is a priority by attending regularly, being on time, participating in the Liturgy through prayerful attention and congregational singing and speaking positively about going.

### Second – Discuss Expectations Ahead of Time

Start talking about how people behave in church a few days ahead (especially if attendance is not regular). Then the morning of or the night before, ask your children what the expectations are so they can internalize them. Some ideas are:

People show respect to God and the church community when they are quiet, when they participate and pay attention to what the priests are doing. You might also discuss any consequences for inappropriate behavior.

### Third – Make Church a Special Time

If you feel your children need to have “something to do” in church, bring a small bag that only has religious picture books in it. Leave the toys at home, as they create an unwanted distraction for people around you, and they do not teach your children to participate in the Liturgy. Use this church bag only when your children come to church. That’s what makes it special.

### Fourth – Help Your Children Participate in the Divine Liturgy

Explain to your children why we stand and sit and kneel and expect them to participate as best they can according to their age. For toddlers, hold them when standing and whisper what is happening. For older children, help them follow along in the Liturgy book and read the prayers to them or with them. If you feel you need a refresher course on the Liturgy for yourself, read [Living the Liturgy](#) by Stanley Harakas.

### Fifth – Know When Your Child Needs a Break

All children will have good days and bad days in church. As parents, it is our responsibility to show our children when certain behaviors are inappropriate in church. For babies to toddlers, when they make very loud noises for more than a few minutes it is time to remove them from the pews. For older children, it is appropriate to give them 2 chances to change their behavior, and if they can’t (or won’t!) then it is appropriate to remove them from church for a short time. Do not make break time entertaining by going to the playroom. All children should be brought back into the church as soon as possible in order to show them the importance of being in church.

Bringing children of any age to church takes time and patience. Sometimes it seems as though we as parents don’t “get anything out of it”! But we do when our children grow up understanding and living our Orthodox Faith! So hang in there and be consistent!

