

Children during Lent: Ideas for Parents Archbishop Paul's Reflection

I remember my first ever Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha in the Orthodox Church. The reflection and anticipation of Lent, with its dogged mission to bring my sins and need for repentance to the forefront of my mind each day; the solemnity of Holy Week, with its invitation to completely enter into the cosmic events that changed humanity forever; and Pascha, oh Pascha, with its unabashed joy in the proclamation that "Christ has risen from the dead, trampling down death by death"—all of these confirmed to me that I had truly come Home. And this is the Home that I am raising my children in.

As parents we want to help our children understand and experience Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha; however, daily life can get in the way and make the task seem too large, the burden too heavy. We rationalize, "We go to Liturgy. They'll get it at Church School." Or, "My children are too young to really understand, anyway." And we, I mean I, miss an opportunity to share in the mysteries of Christ and the Church with our children.

Here, then, are a few ideas (gained from my limited experience, from the much more helpful advice of other parents, and from the wise counsel of various spiritual fathers) of simple, yet profound ways to involve our children during Lent:

Prayer

-If you are not already doing so, begin a time of family prayers in the evening, morning, or both.

-During evening prayers, pray the Prayer of St. Ephraim. Young children, especially, seem to intuitively understand that the entire body should be involved in prayer and enjoy the prostrations. I was surprised and amazed when my (then) three-year-old son was able to learn this beautiful prayer through nightly repetition.

-Conclude your time of prayer with a Lenten hymn. We have often sung "Having Suffered" together, which, again, has prostrations that appeal to children.

Almsgiving

-Bring your children along with you to the grocery store and invite them to pick out food or health

items to bring to Church on Sunday (if your church collects donations for the needy). Let them place the items in the donation basket.

-Set up a family change jar. Watch it grow throughout Lent and then decide as a family how best to donate it.

-Volunteer together at a local charity (be sure to ask in advance about the policies regarding children). Add that charity to your prayer list in your icon corner.

Fasting

-There are many different views about how and at what age fasting is appropriate for children. Speak to your spiritual father about this matter first.

-Children can fast from certain excesses such as ice cream, soda, etc.

-Speak to your children about why you are fasting. Read passages in the Scriptures and from the Church Fathers about the importance of fasting.

Repentance

-Bring your child with you to Forgiveness Sunday Vespers. This service is extremely powerful to children. The prostrations and the repetition of asking others to forgive them can make a deep and lasting impression on a young heart.

-Discuss confession as a family. You can even bring young children with you when you come to confess. One parent can remain in the fellowship hall with the child and answer questions while the other parent confesses.

Services

-Listen to or read Sunday's Gospel before coming to Church. Children are more likely to pay attention to and retain what they hear twice. Ancient Faith Radio has an excellent series called "The Gospel Told for Younger Children" that families can listen to.

-Sing hymns for the services beforehand so that the child is familiar with them and can participate more fully. There is nothing more beautiful than seeing a toddler belt out, "Christ is risen from the dead!"

And, finally, give yourself grace. No parent can do it all. We can, however, help our children to feel welcomed in and a part of this Home we share.

Kansas City Deanery Honors Archpriest Moses Berry

The Kansas City Deanery of the Diocese of the Midwest recently honored one of the most beloved clergymen in the Diocese, Archpriest Moses Berry by donating an icon of St. Moses the Black to the three main theological seminaries of the Orthodox Church in America; St. Herman's Seminary, St. Tikhon's Seminary, and St. Vladimir's.

"The deanery clergy wanted a tangible way to honor the sacrificial ministry of Fr Moses throughout the years in Ash Grove, the Kansas City Deanery, the Diocese of the Midwest, and all of Orthodoxy in America," stated Archpriest Timothy Sawchak, Dean of the Kansas City Deanery. "His humility has been a constant source of peace and calm in a tumultuous world to his brother clergy and his flock."

Fr Moses lives with his wife, Magdalena, in Ash Grove, Missouri, a small town in the Ozarks, on the farm his great-grandfather built in 1871. According to his biography, the Berrys, an African American family, are notable in Southwest Missouri for owning and living on the same property for over 135 years. This includes a family cemetery that was established in 1875 and dedicated to "Slaves, Indians and Paupers." This cemetery is now on the Greene County Register of Historic Sites and the National Register as well.

Fr Moses has also accomplished substantial work on Christianity in Africa. He is a contributor to *An Unbroken Circle: Linking Ancient African Christianity to the African American Experience*, considered a ground-breaking collection of essays. Fr Moses is also the co-founder of the annual Afro-American and Ancient Christianity Conference sponsored by the Brotherhood of St. Moses the Black. He travels regularly, giving lectures locally and nationally on African American history and on issues in African American spirituality and Orthodox Christian mission. In addition to being the subject of numerous articles, Fr Moses has appeared on "Good Morning America" and on the National Geographic channel.

Theotokos A dedicated priest and servant to God's people, Fr Moses established a community in honor of the Mother of God, "Unexpected Joy." It stands close to an enormous sycamore tree, the same tree that Fr Moses' ancestors used as a shelter for church picnics and other celebrations for over a

century.

Priest Joel Wilson, Priest-in-charge of Annunciation of the Virgin Mary Mission in St. James, MO reflected on the meaningful mentorship that Fr. Moses has had in the life of his family; "Our family has been able to go to confession with Fr. Moses for the last several years. One thing we've noticed is his rare ability to balance silence with speaking, providing just the right "space" for repentance. As a priest myself, it's difficult not to be too lenient or too strict, too quiet or too talkative when hearing confession. So to confess to a more experienced priest who is able to strike that balance so beautifully is a real gift."

Father Moses Berry: From Hippie Bad-Boy Cool-Cat to Humble... / OrthoChristian.Com When asked about a favorite memory of Fr Moses, Fr Timothy replied, "I can't say I have one particular memory that sticks out. But I am always amazed at how many people he knows throughout the world of Orthodoxy, whether it be a Patriarch, a Bishop, a priest, or a deacon. It's obvious that he has made a mark on the Orthodox Church locally and throughout the world."

4th Week Reflection Con't

Cross Monastery in West Virginia:

"When we are in church, it should be as though we dwell in the Kingdom of God. We have icons so that we might see the saints who praise God alongside us. We have music so that we might hear the angels sing too. We have incense so that we might smell the fragrance of Heaven around us. But the Kingdom of Heaven is more than that. At its heart it is a splendid city, the New Jerusalem, And the saints in Heaven worship God amidst gemstone walls, gates of pearl, and streets of gold. A proper temple is an icon of that heavenly city. It must be a place so beautiful that it is fitting to worship the creator of beauty there. Without a temple it is as though the church worships God in exile, as did the Jews of old; it is as though the Kingdom of Heaven were not already at hand."

How do these words reflect on the importance of building beautiful churches?

How might these words help you explain to a visitor to the Orthodox Church why it looks, sounds, smells and feels the way it does?