

## Ritual Makers

You are lying on the bed with your child, reading the book you have read a hundred times—his favorite book. It has been a really long day and you are exhausted. As he begins to nod off to sleep, you turn two pages instead of one, trying to get to the end more quickly. Under the covers his voice declares, “You skipped a page!”

Our human hearts find comfort in repetition and routine. In the midst of constant change and uncertainty, routines comfort us and help us to feel secure. You may have noticed certain repetitive behaviors your child does before a turn at bat when playing baseball. Or you may have a morning or evening routine that starts or ends the day. Or perhaps you stop at the same rest area on each annual trip your family takes in order to be with extended family.

All human beings, especially children, crave routines and love rituals. Rituals communicate a reality beyond our everyday experience.

A ritual is a routine that has transformative value, no matter how often or seldom it is done. Families may have rituals surrounding Thanksgiving, including where people sit and who leads the family in prayer. Other rituals determine what version of “Happy Birthday” is sung and when or how a meal is shared after a funeral. Family rituals can revolve around common practices or situations very unique to your family. They foster a sense of belonging and identity. Children are often proud of these rituals, and sometimes they like to invite others to share in these experiences.

Developing and practicing rituals in your home helps your child to feel rooted in your family and prepares him or her to understand and celebrate the communal rituals of our Catholic family. While the ritual worship we celebrate as Catholics is the experience of God’s power and grace in our lives, it begins with the words, actions, and symbols that connect us to our world. In the Seven Sacraments, through word, symbol, and action, God shares his very life.