

God, give us the grace to recognize the gifts and talents we have and to use them for the good of the world. Amen

Your Child's Spiritual Development: RECOGNIZING OUR GIFTS

When very young children begin to realize that they are individuals apart from their mothers and fathers, they look for clues as to who they are. The feedback they get from those around them shapes their understanding of who they are, what they are like, and what they have to give to the world. We all discover our talents through the feedback we receive from family, classmates, and friends. If we hear "You're smart" or "You're stupid," it hardly matters what our real IQ is. Until we discover otherwise, we will play to the perceptions we take in from trusted people around us.

That's why it's important for parents to help their children discover and recognize their true talents and gifts, whether those might be the ability to solve math problems, a knack for fixing mechanical things, or the gift of helping others feel welcome. All good gifts come from God and are intended for the good of all and the healing of the world. Here are some steps you can take:

- When you see your child demonstrating a particular gift or talent, take time to talk one-on-one, eye-to-eye and tell your child what you see; for example, "God has given you a real knack for numbers. You will have lots of opportunities to use that talent in your life to do good work and help others."
- Encourage your child to explore a wide array of interests and experiences, including experiences that nurture her or his spiritual life.
- Welcome your child's interests, even though you might not understand or even appreciate them. Receive and celebrate the gift of who your child is rather than forcing your plans or expectations of who your child should be.

Surprise Gifts

Sometimes we have talents and gifts we've never even discovered. It can be exciting to learn a new skill and perhaps even share it with the world. Trying new things also offers you the chance to learn about yourself and your child.

Together, write down two things each of you would like to try or learn to do in the next six months. Add to that list two things your family could try or learn to do as a group. Ideas might include a new language, a new recipe, a sport, a concert...start wherever your interests lie. Most important, take the steps necessary to actually attempt something new, and keep learning, and growing. Keep in mind that failure is an acceptable outcome—the point is to be open to discovering .