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## THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

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*Daily Devotion at Zion + Sept. 20, 2020 AD + **Pentecost Season***

## **This Week: Children and Devotion**

Mature believers are more child than adult.

God shows a particular affection for children throughout His history. Whether it's the "children of Israel" (1 Kings 6:13, Psalm 149:2) or "children of God" (John 1:12, Philippians 2:15), He seems to prefer that name as a title for His people. Our Lord Jesus promised that the kingdom of heaven belongs to children (Luke 18:16) and eagerly blessed the children and infants. His first command to mankind was to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28), a command ultimately fulfilled in the coming of the Child, His own Son, Jesus.

Any way of devotion that doesn't have something for children is no Christian devotion at all!

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). The path of devotion shared in the pages of *The Shepherd's Voice* is a path to share with children, too. Just as children eat without first understanding the food they eat, but take it trustingly from their parents, so may we nourish our children on the way of praying, evening, morning, and mealtime, remembering our Baptism and the Supper with hymns, psalms, and joyful repentance. The following pages reflect on this task of bringing the Good Shepherd's youngest lambs into the warm fold of devotion to Him.

### **About the Cover Art**

*The title of this painting is "Did You Think to Pray?" by Jon McNaughton. A boy kneels to pray, either before or after playing some baseball. How would the timing of it change our thoughts about his prayer? What might he pray before a game, and what might he pray after one? Does his slightly downturned mouth reflect some dubiousness about prayer, or does it hint at some sorrow or conflict prompted by the big game? Whatever the case, this painting serves as a good reminder that teaching children to pray may mean connecting prayer to the things that matter most to them.*

## What Difference Do Parents (and Others!) Make?

Psychologists have observed that mothers play a critical role in forming children's values, and fathers play an equally critical role in forming their habits.

One study (Bruce, 1996) found that 72% of children grew up to attend worship when they saw both their parents doing so; 55% became adult worshipers when they saw only their father doing so; 15% when they saw only their mother doing so; and 6% became adult worshipers when neither parent did so. We might expect the practice of devotion to have similar outcomes.

At the same time, we know that God works through all kinds ways to confirm children in the faith. Children are often inspired by their grandparents (as much if not more than by their parents!), and godparents and the Church at large all have the Spirit working in them and through them to do God's will.

### Daily Readings for the Week of Sept. 27 (Pentecost 17)

<b>S</b>	Job 25:1-6; 27:1-6 Revelation 14:1-7, 13 Matthew 5:13-20	<b>Th</b>	Job 29:1; 31:1-23 Acts 15:1-11 John 11:17-29
<b>M</b>	Job 32:1-10, 19—33:1, 19-28 Acts 13:44-52 John 10:19-30	<b>F</b>	Job 29:1; 31:24-40 Acts 15:12-21 John 11:30-44
<b>T</b>	Job 29:1-20 Acts 14:1-18 John 10:31-42	<b>Sa</b>	Job 38:1-17 Acts 15:22-35 John 11:45-54
<b>W</b>	Job 29:1; 30:1-2, 16-31 Acts 14:19-28 John 11:1-16		

*These readings correspond to pages 327-358 in Volume IV of For All the Saints. To acquire For All the Saints or other devotionals, please contact the church office.*

## **A Simple Approach to Raising Children on the Way of Devotion**

Every family will have its own way of doing this good work, but here is one helpful outline for introducing children to a life of prayer:

1. **Before Birth:** Pray for your child and either begin or continue a robust practice of devotion in your home. *Continue to pray for your child at every age, asking for the Holy Spirit and faith.*
2. **Birth-2 Years Old:** Bring your child to the font of Holy Baptism. Then (being sure to nourish your faith in the Word, too), sing Christian songs for your child; read simple Bible stories and rhymes; and both evening and morning trace the sign of the holy Cross over your child while repeating the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Introduce the child to worship at church and talk about it.
3. **2-3 Years Old:** Start teaching the child to join you in devotion: folding or raising hands, closing eyes or looking to heaven, making the sign of the cross, and giving thanks before meals. Talk about God, that He 1) created everything, 2) loves us deeply, and 3) has visited us, and is still with us, in Jesus, His Son.
4. **3-5 Years Old:** Continue leading your child in the simple practices of home devotion. Also, start reading Bible story books, and start talking about Jesus being our Savior, who forgives our sin (He doesn't hold it against us!), gives us gifts in His Church, and has prepared a place to be with God forever.
5. **5-7 Years Old:** Start the memorization of devotional texts (he or she may already have them memorized!). Have your child lead family prayers on occasion.
6. **8-12 Years Old:** Solidify the "grand narrative" of Holy Scripture in the child's mind and heart, carefully showing his or her own place in that narrative. Memorize hymns, and teach the child to speak to God with original prayers as well as memorized ones.
7. **12-18 Years Old:** Stick to the path of devotion despite other activities. Connect prayer and faith to current events and prepare the child for praying on his or her own.