

THE HEARTBEAT OF FAITH

Fifty-Nine Poems, Fingerplays, and Prayers
Preschool-Early Primary

Mary Kathleen Glavich, SND



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INTRODUCTION

Children may turn up their noses at broccoli, but what about poetry? Both are good for them, but thankfully they **love** poetry. As little children hear or, better still, recite poems, they develop a sense of language. The rhymes introduce them to phonics, and the words and phrases increase their vocabulary. Children seem to be born with an appetite for rhyme, rhythm, and repetition. Perhaps the steady rhythm of poetry reminds them of their mother's heartbeat.

Poetry makes an excellent vehicle not only for conveying concepts, but for forming values and virtues. **The Heartbeat of Faith** offers poems that have an extra benefit: They nurture faith.

Some of the poems in this collection give children an understanding of God as their maker, who loves and cares about them. Others introduce them to the importance of loving others; teach them how to pray; and lay the foundation for a relationship with Jesus, Mary, and the angels and an appreciation of the Bible and Christian feast days. A "We Talk" for each poem includes questions for discussion.

I know firsthand the effectiveness of poems and fingerplays. As a first grade teacher, I was amazed how quickly the children memorized a verse, while I had to rely on a written copy. They never tired of poems and songs that were accompanied by gestures and movements, but two performances of "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" was all I could bear.

Chances are that you can still recite nursery rhymes and sing camp songs that you learned as a tot. Maybe even now you sing the little song or recite the verse that helps us remember the number of days in each month.

Parents, grandparents, and teachers will find this book a delightful source of entertainment, instruction, and faith formation for the children in their care. Someday, the children may wish to read the poems for themselves. But then again, they might already know them all by heart!

Mary Kathleen Glavich, SND

ME AND MY FAMILY

I AM SPECIAL

To the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
[Open and close fists raised high.]
God has made us what we are.

Though a million stars I see,
[Sweep arms from left to right.]
You are special just like me.
[Point thumb at self.]

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
[Open and close fists raised high.]
God has made us what we are.

WE TALK

No two people are alike, not even identical twins.

- How are you different from other children?
- What special things can you do?

GROWING UP

When I was a baby,

I was very, very small.

[Stoop and be as small as possible.]

Today I am just this size.

[Stand and place hand on top of head.]

And someday I'll be tall.

[Stretch hands high.]

WE TALK

Eating good food helps us grow and be healthy.

- How tall are you?
- How much do you weigh?
- How can you tell that you are growing?
- What can you do now that you couldn't do when you were a baby?

MY NOSE

With my nose I smell things like these:
Bacon, popcorn, and Christmas trees,
Babies, roses, and apple pie.
And this is probably the reason why
My nose has such an important place —
Right in the middle of my face.



WE TALK

Noses help us taste food. When you have a cold and can't smell, you can't taste your food. Noses also protect us. They tell us when something is burning. They let us know when food is spoiled.

- What are your favorite things to smell?
- What smell do you dislike the most?
- What do we do to smell nice?

OUR EYES

With our eyes we see the world.
They are colored brown or blue,
Hazel, green, or even black.
All of us are blessed with two.

Eyes can smile, blink, and wink,
Show we're sad, for then they weep.
All day long eyes work for us
And only close when we're asleep.

"Apple of my eye" God calls us.
Don't know just what that is?
It means God likes us lots and lots.
Aren't we lucky we are his?

WE TALK

Our eyes are precious.

- What beautiful things have you seen?
- What do people who can't see well need?
- How can you take care of your eyes?

SUNSHINE

Daddy calls me sunshine.
He says he likes my smile.
It brightens up his day
And cheers him up a while.

Mommy calls me sunshine
When I am extra good
And help her with the baby
Or do just what I should.

Brother (sister) calls me sunshine
On days I'm not a pest
And leave his (her) things alone
And don't disturb his (her) rest.

Jesus calls me sunshine.
His love shines out through me.
When I make people happy,
He loves me 'specially.

WE TALK

We give one another special names or nicknames.

- What is your nickname?
- What are the nicknames for others in your family?
- What can you do to be sunshine in your family?

TAKING CARE OF ME

A splendid gift God gave to me.
Can you guess what it could be?
All have one including you.
Here are things that it can do:

Hop and skip and run a race,
Fly a kite and make a face,
Sing a song and tell a joke,
Dance a jig and smile at folk,
Hear a story and bake a cake,
Build a fort, swim in a lake,
Paint a picture, throw a ball,
Give a hug, and that's not all.
Eat dessert and play all day,
Watch TV and kneel to pray.

Now you know without a doubt.
My body's what this poem's about:
Skin and hands and heart and nose.
Eyes and ears and head and toes!
Caring for this gift's a way
To thank God for it every day.
Here are caring things I do.
Hope you always do them too.

TO MARY

Mary, my mother in heaven above,
This day I thank you and show you my love.
Help me to grow up to be like your Son,
Kind and loving to everyone.

Have you ever considered that the steady rhythm of poetry can remind children of their mother's heartbeat? Sister Kathleen Glavich knows it's true. Children seem to be born with an appetite for rhyme, rhythm, and repetition.

In her many years in the classroom, Sister Kathleen has used popular and original songs and poems to teach her youngest students how to pray, share, respect one another, and discover they are lovable—concepts that build a strong foundation for knowing, loving, and serving God. Poetry is a way to introduce preschoolers to the wonders of the natural world and the treasures of our Catholic faith.

Share a poem each day and take a few minutes to engage your children in discussion using the “We Talk” questions. You'll be surprised by their ability to remember and by how much your family life will be animated by “the heartbeat of faith.”

MARY KATHLEEN GLAVICH, a Sister of Notre Dame and noted religious educator, is the author of more than seventy books on faith formation, including the award-winning books *The Catholic Companion to Jesus* and *The Confirmed Catholic's Companion*. She has also written *Why Is Jesus in the Microwave? Funny Stories from Catholic Classrooms; Totally Catholic: A Catechism for Kids and Their Parents and Teachers*; and her first novel, *The Fisherman's Wife: The Gospel According to St. Peter's Spouse*. Mary Kathleen blogs at www.kathleenglavich.org.



Children/Prayer



ISBN 978-087946-579-7



9 780879 465797

www.actapublications.com

\$12.95