

Prayer on the Run!

"I can easily race through the whole day doing volunteer work without giving a second thought to God. So I programmed my mobile phone alarm to go off at midday every day. It reminds me to stop for a few minutes and remember the reason for all my busyness. Now my six year old likes to turn the alarm off and pray the Angelus with me."

In an interview, a famous sports star said he grew up in a home where they were always short of cash. However, his father would always make a point of putting money in the poor box at Mass on Sundays. He went on to say that now that he had a fabulous income it seemed only natural that he should make major donations to charities.

© Australian Bishops Committee for the Family & for Life (BCFL), July 2006.



Text and design: Family Working Group

Youth

My teenagers were involved in the parish youth group. One night, I watched a video of their activities with them. I was so inspired by their openness and enthusiasm that in the space of two hours I changed from a supportive Catholic to an enthusiastic and involved member of the parish!

"The parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but from their children they can themselves receive the same Gospel as deeply lived by them." (Pope Paul VI)

World Youth Day Sydney will be held in 2008. Let's learn from our youth as we all prepare for this major world event being held in our own country.

Learning to Care for Others

Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity and ... service are the rule.

Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 2223

Grandparents

Grandparents very often play a key role in passing on the faith. Their love and presence and their lifetime commitment can speak volumes. Sometimes they take on the major role in nurturing a child's faith. Nearly always they bring a sense of continuity.

World Meeting of Families

Sunday 9th July 2006 is the 5th World Meeting of Families with Pope Benedict XVI, held in Valencia, Spain. The theme of this celebration is *The Transmission of the Faith in the Family*. To mark this event and to unite in solidarity with the Universal Church, parishes throughout Australia are invited to reflect on and affirm the irreplaceable role of the family in passing on the faith.

For further resources:

Previous Parish Kits of BCFL: www.catholic.org.au
'10 Ways to Build Faith in the Home', storysource@ozemail.com.au

Passing on the Faith



'Today it is necessary to proclaim with renewed enthusiasm the Gospel of the family' (Benedict XVI)

Faith is Caught, not Taught

"Worry not that your children don't listen to you. Worry that they watch you."

Perhaps the most effective way to ensure that your children develop a healthy faith life is to let them experience your own living faith. When we neglect our own spiritual development, our 'lamp on the stand' can easily become a little tarnished. For the light of our faith to shine for our children, we need to trim the wick, and polish up.

Your Faith: A Hobby or A Lifestyle?

When parents were asked what helped them pass on the faith to their children, a recurring theme was the necessity of making their faith commitment more than just a hobby for one hour on a Sunday. To give our children a life-long love for Jesus and his Church, we need to integrate the practice of our faith into our daily lives.

This leaflet presents a collection of suggestions from families for passing on the faith.

"...and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you" (Mt 6:6)

"Four kids and not one of them practicing!" The pain in her voice seemed to come straight from the heart as she went on "We took them to Mass, we sacrificed to send them to Catholic schools. We did the best we could." She paused for a moment and then said, "But you know, we just keep praying for them and we're always there for them. You never give up on your kids."

The home remains the major place where core values for life are formed. And we can judge ourselves very hard! Only the Lord knows the good produced by the witness of a life of faith and of patient prayer.

"We don't generally make enough time for prayer, but we always say Grace before meals. It's a chance to remember God's blessings."

"The future of humanity passes by way of the family"

John Paul II (FC 86)

Keep the Sabbath

"My husband is not a Catholic, and I find it difficult to get the kids up to Mass each Sunday. So I committed to help with the Children's Liturgy once a month. It's connected me with community more, and it gives me the extra motivation to get us there."

"...parents are the first educators of the faith for their children in order for them to reach full human and spiritual maturity"
(Benedict XVI)

Prayer can be *Simple*

Trinity Prayer

This is a simple way to engage children of all ages in family prayer. Start with 'Thank You Prayers' to the Father. Let everyone say 'thank you God' for something good in their life. Then offer 'Sorry Prayers' to Jesus. Parents will need to lead this by 'saying sorry to Jesus' for something they did, said or failed to do. Finally, say the 'Helping Prayers' to the Holy Spirit. There are always plenty of these! Close the prayer with the Glory Be.

Celebrate Feast Days

A great way to connect with the Communion of Saints is to celebrate their Feast Days. Identify a saint for each family member - it may be their confirmation name, or one of their Christian names. Find out about who your saints were and what they did. Mark their Feast Day by retelling the story of their life, and making a fuss of their namesake in your family. For more information: www.catholic.org/saints

Rosary Key Chain

If your kids complain that the Rosary is boring, try getting them to make their own beads. A simple version is the Rosary Key Chain, consisting of only one decade. For more tips see: www.celebratelove.com.au/family

Bedtime Blessing

When children snuggle into bed, give them a hug and a blessing such as: "Sleep well and may God bless you" or "Father, bless this precious child of yours, who you love so much. Help him to grow to know and love your son Jesus. Send your spirit of peace upon him, so that he will sleep peacefully and awake refreshed in the morning."

Faith & the *Family*

Sacred Space: A Place for Prayer

Create a small altar in a corner of your family room. Place on it a crucifix, bible, candle, and an image of Mary. Change the colour of the altar cloth to match the liturgical season: purple for Advent & Lent, Red for Good Friday & Pentecost, White for Christmas & Easter, Green for ordinary time.

Choose Friends Carefully

As in sport or in work, it helps to actively seek friends with common values about marriage and family. It provides children with relatable and significant role models of your values. When we meet such families at Mass or join them at a BBQ, they can become like extended family and bring healthy fun into our lives.

Be confident!

Our values are forged in us by the daily witness of caring and commitment in the home – 'warts and all'. In fact, it is the fact that we are not perfect but always trying to be other-centred in our families that we become examples of the 'extraordinary in the ordinary'. That is more than we can learn in any university course or book. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree!

Meal Times: Family Memories, Faith Memories

We eat not just to nourish our bodies but also our relationships. We 'feed' each other spending time together, listening to each other's stories, saying a prayer of thanksgiving, sharing mealtime tasks. It is a major liturgy of the 'domestic church'.

Criticism Kills!

"When we would come home from Mass of a Sunday, we would often criticise the singing, the homily, or an annoying parishioner. We were shocked when our kids complained about having to go to Mass: "it's boring! All you do is complain about it. So why should we go?" We'd known for a long time how deadly criticism is for a person's self-esteem - we didn't realise how it could also damage our children's faith. Moreover, we were also undermining our own faith. We make a point now, never to bad mouth the Church or a member of our parish family."

"My father was in the fast lane in business but no matter how busy he was, he always made a priority of having dinner together. And he made sure that it was time without distractions like TV and phone calls – just time for us to listen to each other and enjoy."