

Adult Catechism September 19, 2016

My Family Home: A Place to Encounter the Living Christ

Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth. An Initiative of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon

Scripture Verses:

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Proverbs 1:8-9: Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.

Proverbs 22:6: Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Ephesians 6:4: Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Colossians 3:21: Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Introduction: Strong, faith-filled families are the foundation of our parishes, our Church and society. The Eparchy of Saskatoon is committed to helping parents and grandparents pass on the faith to our children and youth. This is a lifelong process. It is a great responsibility, but an even greater joy.

Passing on the Faith... A great challenge...a great responsibility... When facing this question of passing on the faith, many parents feel powerless. Ukrainian Catholic parents are well aware of the great challenge we face today, in this regard. The purpose of this initiative is to give the parents of the Eparchy hope—to empower and encourage—that parents can make a difference in the lives of their children. Parents Matter!

Some bad news and some good news... Much research has been done on the question of family faith. The bad news of this research is that Catholics in North America today are ranked 5th in passing on the faith to their children... and are at the bottom of the list of Christian denominations. The good news is that the current generation (often referred to as Millennials) differ from previous

generations and generally are generally receptive to wisdom received from their parents. According to Reginald Bibby, sociologist and leading researcher on youth trends in Canada: 89% of teens maintain that their moms have a high level of influence on their lives, while 82% say the same thing about their dads – up 10 percentage points since the 1980s. Everything we say and everything we do, as a parent is significant!

Why plan how you will pass on faith to your children? Winston Churchill said, “Plans are of little importance, but planning is essential.” In planning we engage in a process of reflection about where we are and where we want to be. It is true that we may not follow through with our plans exactly as we would like but the process is always useful. The My Family Home: A Place to Encounter the Living Christ are a series of pamphlets offering you a planning tool that can be revisited as often as necessary and will enable you to track changes as well as be encouraged as you reach your goals. This is not about perfection. It is about doing the best we can as parents to give the greatest gift we can give our children: The Gift of Faith. We all have high hopes for our kids. We want them to be happy. We want them to be healthy—body, soul and spirit. We want them to make a positive contribution in the world and to find truth and contentment. If we were to distill these goals into one essential we want our kids to find God and follow Him with all their hearts.

By completing these self-evaluations you take the “drivers-seat” in the education and formation of your children. You still may cooperate with others such as Catholic School or your parish—these relationships are very good—but ultimately you are taking primary responsibility for your kids. This is also right and good. Is this going to mean adding more to our already overloaded family schedule? Possibly, but hopefully with the help of Eparchial resources and working with your local Pastor and other families in your Parish, you will be able to achieve a healthy balance in your “Domestic Church”. By learning and integrating faith into every day life, and making it a priority, you will hopefully accomplish this very important goal of inspiring, educating and forming your children to be the disciples of Christ, parishioners, faithful Ukrainian Catholics and Christian citizens they are called to be.

Catechesis Within the Family (From <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/who-we-teach/children/>) While the catechesis offered within the family is ordinarily informal, unstructured, and spontaneous, it is no less crucial for the development of the child's faith. In a certain sense nothing replaces family catechesis, especially for its positive and receptive environment, for the example of adults, and for its first explicit experience and practice of the faith. The

catechesis of infants and young children nourishes the beginnings of the life of faith.

Parents have shared the gift of human life with their children and, through Baptism, have enriched them with a share in God's own life. They have the duty to nourish it. Their faith, their attitude toward other human beings, and their trust in a loving God strongly influence the development of the child's faith. Parents are catechists precisely because they are parents. Their role in the formation of Christian values in their children is irreplaceable. They should speak naturally and simply about God and their faith, as they do about other matters they want their children to understand and appreciate.

Parents are also the most effective catechists of prayer for their young children. They know what their children are capable of understanding and can easily teach their children basic prayers and the fundamental attitude of prayer. By praying frequently with their children at special moments during the day and especially by praying with them at the Sunday Eucharist, parents introduce children into the prayer life of the Church. By incorporating prayer into everyday family experiences, parents teach their children by example. Their witness encourages their children to call upon God as their Father who loves and protects them; to look to Jesus, their Savior and brother, who leads them to the Father; and to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within their hearts.

Children ordinarily enjoy listening to their parents read to them and tell them stories. Reading stories from Sacred Scripture combines both these simple activities. Just as children learn their family histories through stories told by their parents, they learn about the Catholic faith as their parents introduce them to the person of Jesus and the beauty of the word of God and tell them the story of Mary, the Mother of God, as well as of the lives of the saints.

Catechetical programs for children in daycare and preschool seek to foster their growth in a wider faith community. They should always be suited to the age, circumstances, and learning capacity of young children and be designed to reinforce the primary human and Christian values present in the family. They should provide opportunities to participate in simple celebrations that deepen the child's sense of wonder. These opportunities provide a natural human foundation for the supernatural life of faith where children can develop a sense of trust, freedom, selflessness, and joyful participation. Catechetical programs can be employed to predispose young children to experiences of spontaneous and formal prayer, prayerful silence, and simple acts of worship. Children can learn to pray with and for fellow Christians and their churches. Ordinarily, parents and other adults who have received appropriate training in Sacred Scripture,

theology, early childhood development, and catechetical methodology should, under the direction of the pastor, organize and present catechetical programs for young children. Catechesis that involves the whole family is a particularly effective method of catechesis for young children because it helps parents to become more confident in sharing their faith with their children and encouraging their children's emerging faith.

When children begin school, they enter a world wider than the family. The school environment provides greater opportunities for children's intellectual, affective, and behavioral development. This means that parents, pastors, catechists, and teachers need to cooperate closely to ensure that the catechesis offered children is truly an ecclesial catechesis that is consistent with Christian values lived in the family. Pastors have a serious obligation to assist parents and educators in their mission to hand on the faith to future generations.

School-age children should receive formal and systematic catechesis in a parish-based catechetical program, a Catholic school, or a program of home-based catechesis in which the content of the faith and the experience of Christian life is presented authentically and completely.

Having introduced them to the person of Jesus Christ within the family, catechesis for school-age children presents his teachings, his ministry, and the major events of his life. Children can begin to appreciate the parables of Jesus and capture glimpses of the Kingdom of God; they can learn more formal prayers; and they can commit brief passages of Sacred Scripture to memory. Catechesis for the Sacraments of Penance and Reconciliation and of the Eucharist is ordinarily provided in these early years of schooling.

The most important task of the catechesis of children is to provide, through the witness of adults, an environment in which young people can grow in faith. Several pastoral directives should guide the catechists of children:

- Be able to understand children, communicate with them, listen to them with respect, be sensitive to their circumstances, and be aware of their current values.
- Recognize that children have a dignity of their own and that they are important not only for what they will do in the future, but for who they are now.
- Encourage them to know and respect other cultural, religious, racial, and ethnic groups, and use catechetical materials that are adapted to accommodate cultural, racial, and ethnic pluralism; the concerns of particular groups; and persons with special needs.

- Understand that the child's comprehension and other powers develop gradually, and present religious truths in greater depth and propose more mature challenges as the capacity for understanding and growth in faith increases.
- Provide experiences in which they can live faith and apply the message of salvation to real-life situations; encourage the use of imagination, as well as intelligence and memory.
- Provide experiences that link Liturgy and catechesis and promote appreciation for the community celebration of the Eucharist.
- Stimulate not only exterior but interior activity—a prayerful response from the heart. "Foster a sense of community that is an important part of education for social life.

8 keys to keeping kids Catholic (From

http://www.catholicdigest.com/articles/family/children_faith/2010/06-07/8-keys-to-keeping-kids-catholic) By Carol Cimino, SSJ, Ed.D.

AA "I can't understand it!" she wailed. "I sent her to Catholic school for 12 years and she doesn't even go to church!" If I had a nickel for every time a parent said those words (substitute "religious education" for "Catholic school") I would be gainfully unemployed. While some parents couldn't care less or, worse, don't even notice, most parents and even grandparents are appalled that their children, especially their 16- to 22-year-olds, seem to have forsaken their heritage, their Catholic faith. While I have over 40 years of experience as a teacher and catechist, it's what I have learned from young people that fortifies me to hand out some advice to teachers, catechists, and, yes, parents and grandparents. While nothing will guarantee that our kids will stay close to their Catholic faith, there are some great ways to cultivate their faith — and some important truths to keep in mind:

1. Remember that questioning is normal. It's time that we adults try to understand (and remember, perhaps), that questioning previously held beliefs is part of growing up.

2. We all learn by experience. Kids label many experiences "awesome." As parents and grandparents, we can build on some of these moments to urge our kids to pay attention to true awesomeness, to go deeper, to find a sense of the sacred in everyday life, whether it's the seasons, a perfect forward pass, technology, a new baby brother, or whatever strikes them. Catholic spirituality thrives on awe and wonder, and everyday awe and wonder lead us almost naturally into Catholic sacramentality.

3. Recognize that wariness of the Church is partially a response to how often our young people have been exposed to betrayal by their heroes. Given the frequent betrayals of people of seemingly good character they hear about in the media, it's understandable that our children may not automatically trust in and respect the heroes — the saints and holy people — we place before them. The recent scandals in the Church have also made young people — and adults — look askance at clergy and others who work in Church ministries. No wonder they are suspicious when we tell them, "Just trust me; this is true." We need to avoid saying, "Because the Church says so," or "Because I say so," and instead help our children understand why we believe what we do, and why we love our Church despite its imperfections.

4. Recognize that parents are the most influential adults in a child's life. The example that parents set is the most potent tool we have to help keep God and religion in our children's lives. I believe that discussions on matters of faith, the place of church, of worship and prayer, the place of God in the questions of morality, ethics, and relationships ought to be in the context of the family experience. I always felt closest to my own students when we shared our faith stories, those times when the only solace was knowing that God loves us, or that we are always given the gift of peace and hope by a God who desires only the best for us. No parent should want to give that experience up to a teacher; it is the privilege of parenthood. Parents can feel free to tell their own stories because they indicate for the child the importance of having a personal relationship with God. During hard times, a mother's or father's spoken trust in the providence of God goes a long way toward comforting the child and helping the child understand that to be an adult means keeping God visible and reachable.

5. Don't be afraid to ask catechists and teachers for tools to answer religious and spiritual questions. The relationship between parents and the parish religious education program or the Catholic school should be a partnership. Parents should feel free to tap into this resource when those "teachable moments" come along. Teachers are trained in the stages of religious development of children, and ought to help parents anticipate questions, concerns, and issues even before they are evident.

6. Encourage grandparents' role in the life of a young person. There is magic in the skipping of a generation, I am convinced. Grandparents have the perspective of having raised the parent of a teen and of knowing the angst that that parent both caused and experienced. For many youngsters, these are the people who may be more available and have more time to listen to the young person's anxieties about God and life. Let's encourage grandparents to be involved.

Grandparents have the gift of perspective when it comes to faith. The older person can contribute stories and experiences that they now see as builders of the wisdom of senior citizen-hood. While parents are often stressed by work and home obligations, grandparents have been there, done that.

7. Nurture the understanding of what it means to belong to the Catholic Church among our young people, especially our teens. The National Study of Youth and Religion noted that religion and God are indeed important in the lives of youngsters, but that the central problem is “whatever-ism” when religion and the Church leave them cold.

I can remember Easter Sunday in Rome about 20 years ago. I had a group of teens with me and we were attending Easter Mass in St. Peter’s Square. From behind me, I heard one of the teens whisper: “Sister, Sister!” This was repeated as Stephen made his way through the crowd to stand next to me. “What?” I asked. “The Mass,” he said. “It’s the same!” He had made the connection that, even here, on another continent, the Mass was the Mass, and the Church was the Church.

I’ve had the experience of attending LifeTeen Masses in Arizona, where the teens were all in T-shirts with “Catholic and Proud of It” on the front. I wasn’t all that thrilled with this seeming xenophobia, but I had to admit that this was preferable to gang colors by a long shot. It brought home to me that there is this eternal quest of the adolescent for relationship, belonging.

8. Don’t panic if your teen seems uninterested in religion. We all need to get down to the work of animating and marinating young people, of showing them, by example, that the Church is a home where they are always welcome, where they can work out their doubts and fears, where the message is always the message of Jesus, and where they may, one day, bring their own children. Even if they never reconnect with the Church of their childhood, we never know how they may be close to God in their own hearts. We can only keep the door open, keep praying, and put our children in God’s hands.

Questions for Discussion: What are the challenges of teaching the Catholic Faith to your children? What tools or resources can you use to help you in this process?