



2013-2014

Syllabus Handouts

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Live for a Bigger Purpose – It should exist for God

Summary

Do you have a bigger purpose for your life? Life is better when you have a purpose that goes beyond your own material needs. Living for a higher purpose goes beyond a relationship or a career. It is a reason to be passionate about life, a reason to get up in the morning. It is something to contribute to the world and something that gives you immense satisfaction. It is the kind of thing you want to be remembered for when you die. This does not have to be something massive or earth changing or even particularly charitable. It just has to be something that you are living for beyond your immediate circumstances.

Objective

Anybody can live for a greater cause. We are all great in our own way. It makes you passionate and inspiring. It makes you interesting. Most of all it makes life more fun and worth living. Living a purpose driven and goal driven life is more exciting than sleep walking through life. You can shape the direction and shape the purpose rather than living on someone else's whim.

How do you discover your real purpose? I'm not talking about your job, your daily responsibilities, or even your long-term goals. I mean the real reason why you're here at all — the very reason you exist. If you want to discover your true purpose in life, you must first empty your mind of all the false purposes you've been taught (including the idea that you may have no purpose at all).

So how to discover your purpose in life?

While there are many ways to do this, some of them fairly involved, here is one of the simplest that anyone can do. The more open you are to this process and the more you expect it to work, the faster it will work for you. But not being open to it or having doubts about it or thinking it's an entirely idiotic and meaningless waste of time won't prevent it from working as long as you stick with it — again, it will just take longer to converge.

Here's what to do:

1. Take out a blank sheet of paper or open up a word processor where you can type.
2. Write at the top, "What is my true purpose in life?"
3. Write an answer (any answer) that pops into your head. It doesn't have to be a complete sentence. A short phrase is fine.
4. Repeat step 3 until you write the answer that makes you cry. This is your purpose.

For those who are very entrenched in low-awareness living, it will take a lot longer to get all the false answers out, possibly more than an hour. But if you persist, after 100 or 200 or maybe even 500 answers, you'll be struck by the answer that causes you to surge with emotion, the answer that breaks you. If you've never done this, it may very well sound silly to you. So let it seem silly, and do it anyway.

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At some point during the process (typically after about 50-100 answers), you may want to quit and just can't see it converging. You may feel the urge to get up and make an excuse to do something else. That's normal. Push past this resistance, and just keep writing. The feeling of resistance will eventually pass.

When the author did this exercise, it took about 25 minutes; and reached his final answer at step 106. Partial pieces of the answer (mini-surges) appeared at steps 17, 39, and 53, and then the bulk of it fell into place and was refined through steps 100-106. I felt the feeling of resistance (wanting to get up and do something else, expecting the process to fail, feeling very impatient and even irritated) around steps 55-60. At step 80 I took a 2-minute break to close my eyes, relax, clear my mind, and to focus on the intention for the answer to come to me — this was helpful as the answers I received after this break began to have greater clarity. *Here was the author's final answer: to live consciously and courageously, to resonate with love and compassion, to awaken the great spirits within others, and to leave this world in peace.*

One alternative thought associated with purpose was even simpler:

In response to the question, *What should I do with my life?* There might be only one thing you *can* do with it, since you came into this life with nothing and you'll leave with nothing: *You can give it away.* You'll feel most on purpose when you're giving your life away by serving others. When you're giving to others, to your planet, and to your God, you're being purposeful. Whatever it is that you choose to do, if you're motivated to be of service to others while being authentically detached from the outcome, you'll feel on purpose, regardless of how much abundance flows back to you.

Bible Readings

1. 1 Corinthians 10:31

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

2. Matthew 6:25-33

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 303

The witness of Scripture is unanimous that the solicitude of divine providence is *concrete* and *immediate*; God cares for all, from the least things to the great events of the world and its history. The sacred books powerfully affirm God's absolute sovereignty over the course of events: "Our God is in the

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heavens; he does whatever he pleases.”¹⁶² And so it is with Christ, “who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens.”¹⁶³ As the book of Proverbs states: “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established.”¹⁶⁴

Small Group Questions

1. Have you thought about your ‘Bigger Purpose’ in life?
2. Where does God and the Church fit into your Purpose?
3. Have you talked about this with your wife?
4. How are you being ‘of service’ to others?

Recommended Resources

1. How to Discover Your Life Purpose in About 20 Minutes
<http://www.stevepavlina.com/blog/2005/01/how-to-discover-your-life-purpose-in-about-20-minutes/>
2. Live For A Purpose Bigger Than Yourself
<http://www.thechangeblog.com/live-for-a-purpose-bigger-than-yourself/>
3. 5 Steps That Reveal Your Life's Purpose
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/douglas-labier/life-purpose_b_1830154.html
4. How to find your life’s purpose
<http://www.wikihow.com/Find-Your-Life's-Purpose>

Accountability

1. Can you consider doing this purpose exercise this week?
2. Can you partner up with a member of your small group to share the results of the exercise?

Author

Rich DelCore Aug - 2013

Shared Dreams

Summary

You might have dreams. Your wife might have dreams. But do they align? More importantly, do you have some common dreams?

Objective

We got married, bought a house, got a job, had children, etc. and started to do what we had to do every day. We became doers instead of dreamers. Perhaps we need to make time to dream again. Perhaps we need to take time to go beyond our daily routine. A relationship without goals (dreams) or a common vision is subject entirely to external influences, regardless of whether they are desirable or not. Developing dreams as a couple ensures that you always have something common to work towards.

Assess the state of the dreams we have (if any) with our wives. Share a process to help explore, develop, and pursue our shared dreams.

Bible Readings

1. 1 Kings 3:5-15

5 In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. God said: Whatever you ask I shall give you. 6 Solomon answered: "You have shown great kindness to your servant, David my father, because he walked before you with fidelity, justice, and an upright heart; and you have continued this great kindness toward him today, giving him a son to sit upon his throne. 7 Now, LORD, my God, you have made me, your servant, king to succeed David my father; but I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act— 8 I, your servant, among the people you have chosen, a people so vast that it cannot be numbered or counted. 9 Give your servant, therefore, a listening heart to judge your people and to distinguish between good and evil. For who is able to give judgment for this vast people of yours?" 10 The Lord was pleased by Solomon's request. 11 So God said to him: Because you asked for this—you did not ask for a long life for yourself, nor for riches, nor for the life of your enemies—but you asked for discernment to know what is right— 12 I now do as you request. I give you a heart so wise and discerning that there has never been anyone like you until now, nor after you will there be anyone to equal you. 13 In addition, I give you what you have not asked for: I give you such riches and glory that among kings there will be no one like you all your days. 14 And if you walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and commandments, as David your father did, I will give you a long life. 15 Solomon awoke; it was a dream! He went to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, sacrificed burnt offerings and communion offerings, and gave a feast for all his servants.

2. Luke 14:28-33

28 Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? 29 Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers should laugh at him 30 and say, 'This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.' 31 Or what king marching into battle would not first sit down and decide whether with ten thousand troops he can successfully oppose another king advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops? 32 But if not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms. 33 In the same way, everyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.

3. Philippians 3:12-16

12 It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ [Jesus]. 13 Brothers, I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us, then, who are "perfectly mature" adopt this attitude. And if you have a different attitude, this too God will reveal to you. 16 Only, with regard to what we have attained, continue on the same course.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1605

Holy Scripture affirms that man and woman were created for one another: "It is not good that the man should be alone." The woman, "flesh of his flesh," his equal, his nearest in all things, is given to him by God as a "helpmate"; she thus represents God from whom comes our help. "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." The Lord himself shows that this signifies an unbreakable union of their two lives by recalling what the plan of the Creator had been "in the beginning": "So they are no longer two, but one flesh."

Small Group Questions

1. Do you have individual dreams? Does your wife have dreams?
2. Do you have shared dreams? If so, how did you develop them?
3. How do you review and update your dreams?

Recommended Resources

1. The Dream Manager by Matthew Kelly
2. <http://www.simplemarriage.net/dream-together.html>
3. http://www.goalsettingstrategies.com/goals_for_marriages.html
4. <http://marriageisacommitment.wordpress.com/2013/02/09/goals-in-marriage-why-bother/>
5. <http://www.maritalmediation.com/2011/10/tips-for-setting-goals-with-your-spouse/>

Accountability

1. Set aside some time this week to plan a "dream sharing" meeting with your wife.

Author(s)

Steve Frazer (updated from material from Walt Moll, Tony Heekin, & Sean Mullarkey)

Included Resources

Why are Dreams important to me and my wife?

What are your dreams? What are your wife's dreams? If you don't know the answer to these questions you have a great opportunity to know yourself and your wife better. Dreams are invisible but powerful. You cannot see them but they keep everything going. Your life may not be easier when you are actively dreaming, but it will be more exciting when you include your dreams in your daily routines.

The heart of every marriage is rooted in communications. When you and your wife have open communications your marriage has the fabric to be strong, happy, and exciting.

To paraphrase Matthew Kelly's terminology, to be the best version of yourself, and to have the best version of your marriage, get beyond your daily routine. A great way to get beyond your daily routine is to tap into your individual and shared dreams.

So if we are looking for a great way to open additional doors for communications with our wives it seems sharing our dreams is made to order to do just that.

How do I share my dreams?

The first step to initiate sharing dreams with your wife is to get a Dream Book. This is a notebook dedicated to recording and following up on your individual and shared dreams.

Now that you have your Dream Book take some time to write your dreams in the book. You might find it easier to write individually at first and then discuss your individual dreams. When it comes to your shared

Shared Dreams

dreams, you will probably want to meet together to talk about your dreams as you record them. Organize your Dream Book to meet your needs as a couple.

The most important step is to write your dreams. The process of writing and sharing your dreams helps to make them real, and achievable. To help a new dreamer get started Matthew Kelly suggested these categories.

Physical	5. Psychological	9. Creative
Emotional	6. Material	10. Adventure
Intellectual	7. Professional	11. Legacy
Spiritual	8. Financial	12. Character

Remember, nothing is too wild or wonderful. There are no limitations.

Now that you are meeting with your wife, sharing your dreams; you'll need to do some prioritization to help you focus on the dreams you agree are most important now. Be sure and schedule your next dreaming meeting as a part of each session.

The process of writing, discussing, and prioritizing your dreams will provide the additional communications SHARED DREAMS promised.

Our Dreams help make us great!

"Never underestimate the power of your dreams and the power of the human spirit.

The potential for greatness lives within each of us."

- Wilma Rudolph (Olympic Gold Medalist)

"To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream, not only plan, but also believe."

- Anatole France

"A person is not old until their regrets take the place of their dreams."

- John Barrymore

"When you write things down, they sometimes take you places you hadn't planned."

- Melanie Benjamin

"Believe you can and you're halfway there."

-Theodore Roosevelt

"I once had a dream, or should I say, my dream once had me." -

- Beatles

Here is a form that might help bring dreams to reality. Once you have a dream prioritized as important, you and your wife might take the time to complete this detailed plan.

Dream Detail

What do you want to accomplish? Be specific.

What is the schedule? Set a deadline.

What is the estimated cost?

What action steps do you need to take?

1-

2-

3-

4-

5-

To keep yourself on track remember, why is this relevant?

Talking and Listening to God

Summary

Any relationship – needs interaction. Do you have a shallow relationship with God? When do you talk to Him? When you're in a bind or need something? Talking to God is important, and we should engage Him when times are tough. However, for a closer relationship with God, we have to talk with him on a regular basis, and then listening to God is imperative. Do we only know how to talk to God and ask or tell Him what to do or are we trying equally as hard to listen to what God wants from us?

Objective

The really sad thing about not talking and listening to God, is that you miss a golden opportunity to draw closer to God, to get to know him better, and to let him know that you realize that you want and need his help. When you fail to talk and listen to God, you greatly limit God's ability to accomplish the things that he wants to do in your life. When you don't communicate with God you miss the Godly advice given at James 4:8, "Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you". Instead, when you don't talk or listen to God you pretty much tell him that you don't need him, that you can do things on your own, that his advice and his concern are not needed, that you are very capable of going through your life under your own power and doing it your own way.

Taken from reading resources below:

And talking to God should be the same as if you were talking to your best friend. You should tell him your thoughts, desires, hurts, and problems, as well as giving him your thanks and praise. Talking to God not only tells God that you have knowledge of him but that you also have faith in him. Talking to God also tells him that you have a desire for his presence in your life and that you need him and are dependent on him.

The bottom line is, we have to make an effort to put ourselves into situations where God can talk to us. The more we truly listen, the more likely we are to act in a manner that is pleasing to God and more joyful for ourselves. How do we talk to God now, and how do we improve our talking and listening skills with God?

Bible Readings

1. 1 Samuel 3:9

'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'

2. Genesis 18:16-32

With Abraham walking with them to see them on their way, the men set out from there and looked down toward Sodom. The LORD considered: Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, now that he is to become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth are to find blessing in him? Indeed, I have singled him out that he may direct his children and his household in the future to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD may put into effect for Abraham the promises he made about him. So the LORD said: The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and their sin so grave, that I must go down to see whether or not their actions are as bad as the cry against them that comes to me. I mean to find out.

As the men turned and walked on toward Sodom, Abraham remained standing before the LORD. Then Abraham drew near and said: "Will you really sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there were fifty righteous people in the city; would you really sweep away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people within it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to kill the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike! Far be it from you! Should not the judge of all the world do what is just?" The LORD replied: If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake. Abraham spoke up again: "See how I am presuming to speak to my Lord, though I am only dust and ashes! What if there are five less than fifty righteous people? Will you destroy the whole city because of those five?" I will not destroy it, he answered, if I find forty-five there. But Abraham persisted, saying, "What if only forty are found there?" He replied: I will refrain from doing it for the sake of the forty. Then he said, "Do not let my Lord be angry if I go on. What if only thirty are found there?" He replied: I will refrain from doing it if I can find thirty there. Abraham went on, "Since I have thus presumed to speak to my Lord, what if there are no more than twenty?" I will not destroy it, he answered, for the sake of the twenty. But he persisted: "Please, do not let my Lord be angry if I speak up this last time. What if ten are found there?" For the sake of the ten, he replied, I will not destroy it.

3. Proverbs 12:15

The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.

4. James 1:19-20

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1088

"To accomplish so great a work" - the dispensation or communication of his work of salvation - "Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of his minister, 'the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,' but especially in the Eucharistic species. By his power he is present in the sacraments so that when anybody baptizes, it is really Christ himself who baptizes. He is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church. Lastly, he is present when the Church prays and sings, for he has promised 'where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them.'"

2. Paragraph 2839

With bold confidence, we began praying to our Father. In begging him that his name be hallowed, we were in fact asking him that we ourselves might be always made more holy. But though we are clothed with the baptismal garment, we do not cease to sin, to turn away from God. Now, in this new petition, we return to him like the prodigal son and, like the tax collector, recognize that we are sinners before him. Our petition begins with a "confession" of our wretchedness and his mercy. Our hope is firm because, in his Son, "we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." We find the efficacious and undoubted sign of his forgiveness in the sacraments of his Church.

Small Group Questions

1. Have you experienced God talking to you in deep prayer or even just quiet time? Share how that happens, how you get there, how it changes you.
2. Do you talk to God on an everyday basis? Is it formal or informal?
3. Do you talk to God like a friend, are you praying but not listening, are you talking to him like you would talk to your Dad?
4. Think about a situation you have been in lately and note if you have stopped to listen for God or if you are simply choosing what you think is best to do?
5. After the discussion above share your thoughts on the possibility you may not like what God wants you to do.

Author

Updated from 2012-13 by R.DelCore (8/2/13)

Servant Leadership

Summary

Servant leadership is a leadership style that puts others first. Jesus was the greatest example of a servant leader. You do not have to be an official leader to be a servant leader. Learn more about this way of leading through service and how it can affect your professional and personal life.

Objective

The term “servant leadership” was first coined by Robert Greenleaf in the 1970s. There are many versions of what this term means, but in general it is the idea that one can inspire people to do their best by deeply caring about them. If a leader serves others, then a relationship of trust and collaboration develops where the individuals of the group are looking out for each other, where they are empowered to exercise their skills and creativity to their potential, and where the leader’s greatest success is not personal achievement but the growth and advancement of the individuals in the group.

For Christians, Jesus is the ultimate example of the servant leader. He showed compassion to sinners while still instructing them in the truth. He was not intimidated by powerful people, and he sought out the weak and marginalized. The early Christian community saw Jesus as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s “Suffering Servant” (Isaiah 42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12), indicating that this kind of leadership involves a willingness to suffer for others, but knowing that such suffering can obtain a higher goal. However, servant leadership is not reserved only for Jesus or even people in management roles in the business world. Servant leadership is a way of interacting with others, regardless of official titles, and seeking the good of others for their own sake and for God’s.

Bible Readings

1. Matthew 20:28

But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

2. John 13:5-10, 12-15

Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. He came to Simon Peter; and Peter said him, “Lord, do wash my feet?” Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand.” Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part in me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”

When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 580

In Jesus, the Law no longer appears engraved on tables of stone but “upon the heart” of the Servant who becomes “a covenant to the people,” because he will “faithfully bring forth justice.”

2. Paragraph 608

Christ's whole life expresses his mission: "to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Small Group Questions

1. Think of a story about Jesus where you think that he is shown as a servant leader. What quality of servant leadership stands out for you? How did others feel about the approach Jesus took?
2. Do you consider yourself a leader, regardless of whatever official roles you may have? How can you apply some principles of servant leadership at work or at home?
3. Sometimes people think that servant leadership is a weak way to lead. St. Paul said that "the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). Later he told the Corinthians that the Lord told him in prayer that "my power is made perfect in weakness," causing Paul to conclude: "when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10). What does Paul mean, and how can it apply to our lives?

Recommended Resources

1. Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership:
<http://www.slideshare.net/sevenpillarsofservantleadership/seven-pillars-of-servant-leadership-leaderserve-model>
2. Dateline NBC on Servant Leadership (video): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDVDXPo0ytM>
3. Servant Leadership at all levels: <http://www.peterson.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123288594>
4. Servant Leadership Liturgy of the Word:
http://www.ourlanguageourstory.org/staff_development/prayer_services/ServantLeadership.pdf

Accountability

1. This week focus on one aspect of servant leadership and apply it in your professional or personal life.
2. Spiritual leadership in the family is an important role for a parent. One day this week consciously be a spiritual leader to your family. Some possible things you could do are: lead your family in prayer, lead them in a discussion of a spiritual matter, teach your children something about the Catholic faith, or read the Gospel for the coming Sunday prior to going to mass and/or discuss it after mass.
3. In the coming week take some time to think about who you have known in your life whom you would describe as a servant leader. Identify what was most appealing about that person's approach, and take to prayer how you can apply that aspect to your life and your interaction with others.

Author(s)

Pete Caccavari

Included Resources

“The Servant as Leader” by Robert K. Greenleaf, p. 2

The idea of *The Servant as Leader* came out of reading Hermann Hesse’s *Journey to the East*. In this story we see a band of men on a mythical journey, probably also Hesse’s own journey. The central figure of the story is Leo who accompanies the party as the *servant* who does their menial chores, but who also sustains them with his spirit and his song. He is a person of extraordinary presence. All goes well until Leo disappears. Then the group falls into disarray and the journey is abandoned. They cannot make it without the servant Leo. The narrator, one of the party, after some years of wandering finds Leo and is taken into the Order that had sponsored the journey. There he discovers that Leo, whom he had known first as *servant*, was in fact the titular head of the Order, its guiding spirit, a great and noble *leader*.

Rebuilt: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost, Making Church Matter by Michael White and Tom Corcoran, p. 245.

We say someone is “full of himself” when we’re talking about pride. To explain the opposite of that, Paul says Jesus “emptied himself” and poured out his whole life. He took all his rights—the right to be worshiped, the right to rule, the right to the perfection of heaven—and gave it all up. He emptied himself to become not just a servant but a slave. Paul goes on to describe his life that way, too, “poured out as a libation” (Philippians 2:17).

That’s servant leadership. Pouring out selfishness and pride in order to have the capacity to receive the wisdom, knowledge, understanding, right judgment, and all the other gifts the Holy Spirit offers. And then, it is about emptying even these gifts into the lives of those you serve. Andy Stanley talks about mentoring his staff as emptying his cup into their cups.

The Servant: A Simple Story about the True Essence of Leadership by James C. Hunter, p. 65

“I’m sorry, Greg,” the teacher began, “I guess I have not made it very clear about what it means to be the servant. I said that leaders should identify and meet the *needs* of their people, *serve* them. I did not say that they should identify and meet the *wants* of their people, be *slaves* to them. Slaves do what others *want*, servants do what others *need*. There is a world of difference between meeting wants and meeting needs.”

Dads and Daughters

Summary

Between the day you hold her in your arms on her birth-day and the day you share a dance at her wedding reception, your experiences with your daughter are sure to offer emotional peaks and valleys. The unique relationships of dads and daughters are a gift to be sure. How are you handling this “gift?”

Objective

We all want to have beautiful young daughters that blossom into capable and confident young women. Studies have shown that females grow from winsome little girls into vulnerable adolescents and to competent adults most consistently when there is the stability that a father’s love provides. Fathers must understand that daughters test boundaries just like sons and dads need to keep emotions in balance and offer tough love at times. Fathers need to bring consistent behavior demonstrating love, faith, and fairness that a daughter can rely on. Though there will be times that you will find yourself “talking to the hand” or getting the “quiet treatment” know that daughters go through phases of development and you thankfully have your wife as an invaluable and influential teammate in this nurturing journey. So it is usually best to hold the volume in check when discussions get heated, understand that sometimes you just have to accept that you are “not cool,” and be the dad that is always there when she needs you, as ultimately she will. In all likelihood the other man that your daughter will be dancing with at her wedding will have many of the characteristics you possess....and will also be crazy about her!

Bible Readings

1. Ephesians 6 : 4

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord.

2. Timothy 1 Chapter 4 : 12

Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2199

The fourth commandment is addressed expressly to children in their relationship to their father and mother, because this relationship is the most universal. It likewise concerns the ties of kinship between members of the extended family. It requires honor, affection, and gratitude toward elders and ancestors. Finally, it extends to the duties of pupils to teachers, employees to employers, subordinates to leaders, citizens to their country, and to those who administer or govern it.

This commandment includes and presupposes the duties of parents, instructors, teachers, leaders, magistrates, those who govern, all who exercise authority over others or over a community of persons.

2. Paragraph 2200

Observing the fourth commandment brings its reward: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you." Respecting this commandment provides, along with spiritual fruits, temporal fruits of peace and prosperity. Conversely, failure to observe it brings great harm to communities and to individuals.

Small Group Questions

1. Where are you on the dad and daughter relationship journey?
2. What actions are you taking to nurture the relationship that you have with your daughter?
3. If you have a grown daughter, what do you wish you had done differently?

Accountability

1. What are you doing this week to spend time with your daughter?
2. Have you written your daughter a letter lately?
3. Tell your daughterwhat it felt like when you broke-up with a girlfriend.
.....what attracted you to your wife.
.....what your hopes are for her.

Recommended Resources

Dealing with ...

1. <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/activities/view.cfm?id=128>
2. <http://catholicmom.com/2011/06/11/a-fathers-joy/>
3. <http://www.catholicmatch.com/institute/2008/06/fathers-and-daughters-why-dads-need-to-be-heroes/>
4. <http://www.catholicdadsonline.org/posts/5446/strong-fathers-strong-daughters-meg-meeker/>
5. http://catholicism.about.com/u/sty/catholicliving/Returning_to_Catholicism/The-Most-Beautiful-Treasure-a-Father-Can-Bestow-Upon-His-Daughter.htm

Author(s)

David Connors / Reid Rooney

Are you a Good Friend?

Summary

Do you really extend yourself as a friend to others? How can you do a better job of being a friend and serving the men of the parish, your workplace, your neighborhood?

Objective

Jesus is the finest example of a true Christian friend. His love for us is sacrificial, never selfish. He demonstrated it not only through his miracles of healing, but more fully through the humble service of washing the disciples' feet, and then ultimately when he laid down his life on the cross.

If we choose our friends based only on what they have to offer, we'll rarely discover the blessings of a genuine friendship. Philippians 2:3 says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." By valuing your friend's needs above your own, you'll be on your way to loving like Jesus. In the process, you'll likely gain a true friend.

Bible Readings

1. Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12

Two are better than one: they get a good wage for their labor. If the one fails, the other will lift up his companion. Woe to the solitary man! For if he should fail, he has no one to lift him up. So also, if two sleep together, they keep each other warm. Where a lone man may be overcome, two together can resist. A three-ply cord is not easily broken.

2. John 15: 13-15

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2010

Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, *no one can merit the initial grace* of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, *we can then merit* for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life. Even temporal goods like health and friendship can be merited in accordance with God's wisdom. These graces and goods are the object of Christian prayer. Prayer attends to the grace we need for meritorious actions. (1998) "Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life."

Small Group Questions'

1. What is it that moves a connection from being a casual acquaintance to one of being a true friend? Is it time, shared experience, hard-times, "straight" talk?
2. Who do you believe represents a true friend in your life and why?
3. One-way friendships vs. two-way friendships.....mentor, mentee, or mutual.....can you see these friendships in your life, and are what are you doing to be a good friend?

Accountability

1. How can I utilize my friendships made in the Father's Team to become more Christ-like?
2. What can I apply this week to help me build up emotionally, spiritually and physically, my friendships and my friends?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://christianity.about.com/od/womensresources/a/christianfriends.htm>
2. <http://christianity.about.com/od/lossanddying/a/vernesfriend.htm>

Author(s)

Bob Considine, Reid Rooney

Included Resources

5 Traits of True Christian Friends

<http://christianity.about.com/od/womensresources/a/christianfriends.htm>

3 Types of Christian Friendships:

Mentor Friendship

The first form of Christian friendship Honeytree talked about was a mentor friendship. In a mentoring relationship we teach, counsel or disciple other Christian friends. This is a relationship based on ministry, similar to the kind Jesus had with his disciples.

Mentee Friendship

In a mentee friendship, we are the one being taught, counseled, or disciplined. We are on the receiving end of ministry, being served by a mentor. This is similar to the way the disciples received from Jesus.

Mutual Friendship

Mutual friendships are not based on mentoring. Rather, in these situations the two individuals are usually more closely aligned on a spiritual level, balancing the natural flow of giving and receiving between genuine Christian friends. We'll explore mutual friendships more closely, but first, it's important to have a clear understanding of mentoring relationships, so we don't get the two confused.

Mentoring friendships can easily become draining if both parties don't recognize the nature of the relationship and construct appropriate boundaries. The mentor may need to pull back and take time for spiritual renewal. He may even have to say no at times, setting limits on his commitment to the mentee.

Likewise, a mentee who expects too much from his mentor is probably seeking a mutual bond with the wrong person. Mentees must respect boundaries and look for close friendship with someone other than a mentor.

We can be both mentor and mentee, but not with the same friend. We may know a mature believer who mentors us in God's Word, while in turn, we take time to mentor a brand new follower of Christ.

Mutual friendships are quite different than mentoring friendships. These relationships don't usually happen overnight. Typically, they develop over time as both friends progress in wisdom and spiritual maturity. A strong Christian friendship blossoms naturally when two friends grow together in faith, goodness, knowledge, and other godly graces.

5 Traits of True Christian Friends

So, what does a true Christian friendship look like? Let's break it down into traits that are easy to identify.

Christian Friends Love Sacrificially

John 15:13

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. (NIV)

Are you a Good Friend?

Jesus is the finest example of a true Christian friend. His love for us is sacrificial, never selfish. He demonstrated it not only through his miracles of healing, but more fully through the humble service of washing the disciples' feet, and then ultimately, when he [laid down his life on the cross](#).

If we choose our friends based only on what they have to offer, we'll rarely discover the blessings of a genuine friendship. Philippians 2:3 says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." By valuing your friend's needs above your own, you'll be on your way to [loving like Jesus](#). In the process, you'll likely gain a true friend.

Christian Friends Accept Unconditionally

Proverbs 17:17

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. [\(NIV\)](#)

We discover the best of friendships with brothers and sisters who know and accept our weaknesses and imperfections.

If we're easily offended or hold on to [bitterness](#), we'll have a hard time making friends. No one is perfect. We all make mistakes now and then. If we take a truthful look at ourselves, we'll admit that we bear some of the blame when things go wrong in a friendship. A good friend is quick to ask [forgiveness](#) and ready to be forgiving.

Christian Friends Trust Completely

Proverbs 18:24

A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. [\(NIV\)](#)

This proverb reveals that a true Christian friend is trustworthy, indeed, but emphasizes a second important truth as well. We should only expect to share complete trust with a few loyal friends. Trusting too easily can lead to ruin, so be careful about putting your confidence in a mere companion. Over time our true Christian friends will prove their trustworthiness by sticking closer than a brother or sister.

Christian Friends Keep Healthy Boundaries

1 Corinthians 13:4

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy ... [\(NIV\)](#)

If you feel smothered in a friendship, something is wrong. Likewise, if you feel used or abused, something is amiss. Recognizing what's best for someone and giving that person space are signs of a healthy relationship. We should never let a friend come between us and our spouse. A true Christian friend will wisely avoid intruding and recognize your need to maintain other relationships.

Christian Friends Give Mutual Edification

Proverbs 27:6

Wounds from a friend can be trusted ... [\(NIV\)](#)

True Christian friends will build each other up emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Friends like to be together simply because it *feels good*. We receive strength, encouragement, and love. We talk, we cry, we listen. But at times we also have to say the difficult things our dearest friend needs to hear. Yet, because of the shared trust and acceptance, we are the one person who can impact our friend's heart, for we know how to deliver the hard message with truth and grace. I believe this is what Proverbs 27:17 means when it says, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

My hope is that these five traits will show you areas that may need a little work in your effort to build stronger friendships. But if you don't have lots of close friends, don't be too hard on yourself. Remember, true Christian friendships are rare treasures. They take time to nurture, but in the process we grow more Christlike.

Christian Friendships

[Tribute to Friendship Poem](#)

[Friendship Bible Verses](#)

[Jesus Our Friend Devotional](#)

Are you a Good Friend?

Catholicism Today - How Do We Respond to Attacks Against Our Faith?

Summary

It seems that Catholicism is being attacked in the secular world in an increasing amount. How do you respond to these challenges? Discuss how to articulate and defend the Catholic position on important issues facing us today. Use these opportunities to build the Kingdom of God and defend your faith.

Objective

We are constantly bombarded with the messages that Catholicism is old fashioned and out of touch with the “modern culture”. The Catholic Church is the leading voice in key issues such as sanctity of life, definition of marriage, contraception/natural family planning, religious freedom challenges and other important issues. Use this session to explore these and how we can effectively and courageously speak out on the Catholic perspective. Explore who among attending Fathers has recently experienced challenges to the Catholic view on key topics and how they responded. Do we have the knowledge and courage to as Pope Francis said at World Youth Day to “make a mess” or “shake it up”.

Bible Readings

1. 1 Peter 3:15-16

15 “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, 16 but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame.”

2. Romans 1:19-23

¹⁹For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

3. Philippians 1:7

7 “you who are all partners with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.”

4. Psalms 119

46 “I will speak openly of your decrees without fear even before kings.”

5. Mathew 10:16-20

16 “Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves. 17 But beware of people, for they will hand you over to courts and scourge you in their synagogues, 18 and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake as a witness before them and the pagans. 19 When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. 20 For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

6. Luke 12:8-9

8 "I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others the Son of Man will acknowledge before the angels of God. 9 But whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God."

7. John 6:67-69

67 Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?" 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

8. Mathew 16:18

18 "And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it."

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 849

The missionary mandate. "Having been divinely sent to the nations that she might be 'the universal sacrament of salvation,' the Church, in obedience to the command of her founder and because it is demanded by her own essential universality, strives to preach the Gospel to all men": "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and Lo, I am with you always, until the close of the age."

2. Paragraph 856

"The missionary task implies a respectful dialogue with those who do not yet accept the Gospel. Believers can profit from this dialogue by learning to appreciate better "those elements of truth and grace which are found among peoples, and which are, as it were, a secret presence of God." They proclaim the Good News to those who do not know it, in order to consolidate, complete, and raise up the truth and the goodness that God has distributed among men and nations, and to purify them from error and evil "for the glory of God, the confusion of the demon, and the happiness of man."

3. Paragraphs 905

Lay people also fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, "that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life." For lay people, "this evangelization . . . acquires a specific property and peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world. This witness of life, however, is not the sole element in apostolate; the true apostle in on the lookout for occasions of announcing Christ by word, either to unbelievers...or to the faithful."

Small Group Questions

1. Have you been engaged in discussions about the Catholic position on key social issues in the world today? How did you respond?
2. What is it about being Catholic faith that inspires you to defend your faith?
3. Are there any ways that your team might be able to improve your knowledge of the Catholic faith and teaching on critical issues in the world today so you could defend it?

Recommended Resources

1. How to Defend the Faith Without Raising Your Voice: Civil Responses to Catholic Hot Button Issues By Ivereigh Austen

Catholicism Today - How Do We Respond to Attacks Against Our Faith?

How to Defend the Faith without Raising Your Voice is a new sort of apologetics. It is for those moments when you are thrust into the spotlight as the token Catholic whether the spotlight is simply at the office water cooler or whether it is front and center at the in-laws Thanksgiving celebration. **How to Defend the Faith without Raising Your Voice** gives Catholics a fresh way of explaining the Church's teaching on contentious issues humanly, compellingly, and succinctly.

Ten Principles of Civil Communication

Here are the ten principles which helped Catholic Voices develop the mind-set needed for this work:

Look for the positive intention behind the criticism.

Shed light, not heat.

People won't remember what you said as much as how you made them feel.

Show, don't tell.

Think in triangles.

Be positive.

Be compassionate.

Check your facts, but avoid robotics.

It's not about you.

Witnessing, not winning.

2. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf>
3. <http://www.catholic.com/magazine/articles/seven-principles-of-catholic-social-teaching>
4. <http://www.catholic.com//>
5. Catholic Answers is great resource to for all things Catholic

Accountability

1. Take an action to increase your knowledge of this faith this week and church teaching on social issues.
2. Read *How to Defend the Faith Without Raising Your Voice: Civil Responses to Catholic Hot Button Issues*
3. Listen to "Catholic Answers Live" on Sacred Heart Radio from 6:00-8:00pm M-Fr and/or All Kresta from 4-6 PM

Author(s)

Mike Suter utilizing some previous material from Dan Lape and Michael Copfer

Prayer Life

Summary

How do we develop a strong prayer life and does it really make a difference? What are the different prayer forms?

Objective:

“Every one of us needs half an hour of prayer each day, except when we are busy, then we need an hour.”...St Francis de Sales. At Mass when the reading of the Gospel begins, we place the sign of the cross on our foreheads, lips, and hearts and pray, “May the Lord be in our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts.” Lips, minds and hearts—these symbolize 3 kinds of prayer: vocal, meditative, and contemplative. These modes of prayer include formal and informal paths, personal and communal expressions, popular piety, and the liturgical prayer of the Church.

Vocal prayer, founded on the union of body and soul in human nature, associates the body with the interior prayer of the heart, following Christ’s example of praying to His Father and teaching the Our Father to His disciples.

In meditative prayer, we use our minds to ponder the will of God in His plan for our lives. What does God ask of us---aids for this are in Scripture, the holy Gospels, holy icons, liturgical texts of the day, and writings of the Spiritual Fathers and Mothers. Varied methods include Lectio Divina of St Benedict, the radical simplicity of Franciscan spirituality and the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire.

Contemplative prayer involves hearing and obeying God’s Word. It is a time of silent listening and love. Emptying oneself not for its own sake, but for the sake of being filled with God and entering into a deeper relationship with Him.

Bible Readings

1. Eph 6:18.

With all prayer and supplication, pray at every opportunity in the Spirit. To that end, be watchful with all perseverance and supplication for all the holy ones.

2. Phil 4:6.

Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with Thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.

3. 1Thes 5:17-18.

Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thank, for all is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

4. 1Jn 5:14.

And we have this confidence in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

5. Mt 7:7

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he

asks for a fish. If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask Him.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2707

There are as many and varied methods of meditation as there are spiritual masters. Christians owe it to themselves to develop the desire to meditate regularly, lest they come to resemble the three first kinds of soil in the parable of the sower.⁵ But a method is only a guide; the important thing is to advance, with the Holy Spirit, along the one way of prayer: Christ Jesus.

2. Paragraph 2724

Contemplative prayer is the simple expression of the mystery of prayer. It is a gaze of faith fixed on Jesus, an attentiveness to the Word of God, a silent love. It achieves real union with the prayer of Christ to the extent that it makes us share in his mystery.

3. Paragraph 2561

"You would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."⁹ Paradoxically our prayer of petition is a response to the plea of the living God: "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water!"¹⁰ Prayer is the response of faith to the free promise of salvation and also a response of love to the thirst of the only Son of God.¹¹

Small Group Questions

1. Where do you pray? Are there any limits?
2. Is prayer just about asking God for something?
3. Are our prayers answered? How would we know? Do we recognize that is God's will be done and not ours?
4. Do we incorporate in our prayers gratitude and thankfulness to God?
5. How have you maintained a bond between prayer and an active Christian mission to others?

Included Resources

1. "I Shall Keep the Silence of My Heart" Mother Teresa I don't think there is anyone who needs God's help and grace as much as I do. Sometimes I feel so helpless and so weak I think this is why God uses me. Because I cannot depend on my own strength. I rely on Him 24 hours a day. All of us must cling to God through prayer. My secret is simple. I pray. Through prayer I become one in love with Christ. I realize that praying to Him is loving Him we cannot find God in noise or agitation. Nature, trees, flowers and grass grow in silence. The stars, the moon, and the sun move in silence. He speaks to our souls. In silence we are granted the privilege of listening to His voice....Silence of our eyes. Silence of our ears. Silence of our minds.....in the silence of the heart God will speak.
2. Mother Teresa.....And when times come when we can't pray, it is very simple; if Jesus is in my heart, let Him pray, let me allow Him to pray in me, to talk to His Father in the silence of my heart. Since I cannot speak—He will speak; since I cannot pray—He will pray.
3. Gandhi.....I believe that prayer is the very soul and essence of religion, and therefore prayer must be the very core of this life of humanity, for no one can live without religion.
4. Gandhi.....There is really only one prayer that we may offer, "Thy will be done."
5. Madeleine Delbrel.....Silence is the place where the Word of God dwells. We, the ordinary people of the streets, do not see solitude as the absence of the world, but as the presence of God.

6. Catherine de Hueck Doherty.....God has given this day into our hands. This is the day in which we pray, but we pray by action and sweat, just as Christ did. He said He “came not to be served but to serve.” (Mt 20:28) He also said “Pray continually (Lk 18:1). Pray while you work and work while you pray.
7. Howard Thurman.....First, we must learn to be quiet, to settle down in one spot for a spell. Sometime during each day, everything should stop and the art of being still must be practiced.
8. Cardinal Newman’s Prayer to Christ..... Lord Jesus, conceal Thyself not within me thus! Look, thou through my eyes, hear by my ears, speak by my mouth, walk with my feet! Lord may my poor human presence recall, at least distantly, thy divine presence.
9. Henri Nouwen..... Prayer is entering into communion with the one who molded our being in our mother’s womb with love and only love. There in that first love lies our true self, a self not made up of rejections and acceptances of those with whom we live, but solidly rooted in the one who called us into existence. In the house of God we were created. To that house we are called to return. Prayer is the act of returning...the act of prayer is the basis and source of all actions.

Accountability

1. Do some spiritual reading, it can invest your prayers with new meanings.
2. Find that quiet time in your day, anywhere and pray. Find that space in your home, your workplace, in Nature, where you can “be still” and practice.
3. Silence is prayer.
4. Don’t expect visions or voices in response to prayer, God works in many ways. The vision could simply be the sunset.
5. DARE to pray
6. Do it every day
7. Ask where you need to be changed
8. Respond to what God is asking you
9. Expect great things

Author

Humbly with the support and readings of many spiritual fathers and mothers before me, Charles Pfizenmayer

Pornography

Summary

A repeat subject and we will take a harsher stand this time.

Objective

What is porn and what are its effects? How do we resist the temptations and/or break the habit?

Pornography, long ago was found in the “dirty book store” or the “red light district” or the bad part of town. Today it is right in your living room, your bedroom, in living color and HD. It’s the age of technology, freedom of expression is king, morality is not cool. If Al Gore invented the Internet then his copilot was a guy named Beelzebub! The 21st Century scourge, the global, multi-billion dollar enterprise that entices, titillates, excites some, at the same time demeaning, enslaving and addicting. The Lion of Lust, the devil itself is winning the Game of Souls. Like an alcoholic, it starts with a sip and inevitably leads to a binge; it draws us in to a web of ever grosser debauchery. It knows no boundaries, it can sink its claws into man, woman, or child, atheist, Christian, layperson, religious, father, son, sister, husband. It tempts us, entraps us, excites us, provides temporary relief , but then it slams us with compulsion, guilt, shame, self-hatred, remorse, emptiness and pain. Worse it can destroy relationships, families, and turns us away from God. For how could anyone, let alone God, forgive us for such depravity?

Gentleman, plain and simple, just as we have a War on Terror, a war is being waged against our spirit and it is called Lust and we are losing...one glimpse at a time.

Catechism Readings:

1. Paragraph 2396

Among the practices gravely contrary to chastity are masturbation, fornication, and pornography.

2. Paragraph 2341

The virtue of chastity comes under the cardinal virtue of temperance, which seeks to permeate the passions and appetites of the senses with reason.

3. Paragraph 2337

Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being.

4. Paragraph 2351

Lust is disordered desire for or inordinate enjoyment of sexual pleasure. Sexual pleasure is morally disordered when sought for itself, isolated from the procreative and unitive purposes. Masturbation is sinful because it misuses the gift of sexuality in an inherently selfish act, devoid of love. It is a behavior problem whose causes are often habitual or in response to emotional stress or unexamined underlying attitudes. Pornography (sexually explicit material) has become even more available through the Internet. This presents real difficulties for both individuals and society, as viewing pornography is not only sinful in itself but can become an addiction and lead to dangerous exploitation of children as sex objects.

5. Paragraph 2354

Pornography consists in removing real or simulated sexual acts from the intimacy of the partners, in order to display them deliberately to third parties. It offends against chastity because it perverts the conjugal act, the intimate giving of spouses to each other. It does grave injury to the dignity of its participants (actors, vendors, the public) since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profits for others. It immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world. It is a grave offense. Civil authorities should prevent the production and distribution of pornographic materials.

Bible Readings

1. Numbers 15:39

And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the Lord, to do them, not to follow your own heart and your eyes, which you are inclined to do.

2. Gal 5:16

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

3. 1Cor 6:18-20

Avoid immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the immoral person sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body.

4. Rom 12:1-2

I urge you therefore, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

5. 1Thes 4:7-8

For God did not call us to impurity but to holiness. Therefore, whoever disregards this, disregards not a human being but God, who gives his holy Spirit to you.

6. Gal 5:19-21

Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury,, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts,, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Small Group Questions

1. How do you avoid the temptations of lust?
2. How do you prepare your children to deal with the temptations of pornography?
3. What do you do if caught in this cycle of lust?
4. How do you pray to God for help?

Accountability

1. Pray in the morning when you wake and in the evening when you rest for God's help in resisting temptation for that period. Do it every day, if you must.
2. Confession is crucial.
3. Surrender the problem to God, seek his help, you do not have to battle alone.

Recommended Resources

1. tobinstitute.org (Theology of the Body)
2. theravive.com (Christian Therapists)
3. sa.org (Seaholics Anonymous—12 Step Program, built off AA)
4. Sexaholics Anonymous Manual (The 12 Step Program)
5. pornnomore.com (Serenellians—An Apostolate of Hope for the Sexually Addicted)
6. virtusonline.com
7. sexualrecovery.org
8. sca-recovery.org
9. saa-recovery.org
10. slaafws.org
11. zachhunter.me (his book “Be the Change”)
12. saragroves.com (Musician)
13. ijm.org
14. itemp.org
15. truthminers.com
16. abolitioninternational.org
17. settingcaptivesfree.com

Included Resources

There is help whether you have the problem, are part of the problem or want to work on the recovery/solution.

Twenty Questions (sa.org)

1. Have you ever thought you needed help for your sexual thinking or behavior?
2. That you’d be better off if you didn’t keep “giving in”?
3. That sex or stimuli are controlling you?
4. Have you ever tried to stop or limit doing what you felt was wrong in your sexual behavior?
5. Do you resort to sex to escape, relieve anxiety, or because you can’t cope?
6. Do you feel guilt, remorse, or depression afterward?
7. Has your pursuit of sex become more compulsive?
8. Does it interfere with your relations with your spouse?
9. Do you have to resort to images or memories during sex?
10. Does an irresistible impulse arise when the other party makes the overtures or sex is offered?
11. Do you keep going from one relationship or lover to another?
12. Do you feel the right relationship would help you stop lust, masturbating, or being so promiscuous?
13. Do you have a destructive need—a desperate sexual or emotional need for someone?
14. Does pursuit of sex make you careless for yourself or the welfare of your family or others?
15. Has your effectiveness or concentration decreased as sex has become more compulsive?
16. Do you lose time from work?

Pornography

17. Do you turn to a lower environment when pursuing sex?
18. Do you want to get away from the sex partner as soon as possible after the act?
19. Although your spouse is sexually compatible, do you still masturbate or have sex with others?
20. Have you ever been arrested for a sex related offense?

The cure can be spiritual.

The Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous

We admitted we were powerless over lust—that our lives had become unmanageable.
Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him.
Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry the message to sexaholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Author

Humbly, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in hope that the message will touch a chord with at least some, Charles Pfizenmayer

Man and His Wife-What Kind of Marriage Do You Have?

Summary

If a stranger were to ask you, “What kind of marriage do you have?” would the question catch you off guard? How would you respond on such short notice? Would it sound like any of the following?

- “We are doing great because everything is 50/50”
- “We’re living the dream. I make all the decisions and plans and my wife likes it that way”
- “I think we have a good marriage because we have a shared vision and we check in with each other to make sure we remain on the same page”

St. John Chrysostom suggests that we say to our wives, “I have taken you in my arms, and I love you, and I prefer you to my life itself. For the present life is nothing, and my most ardent dream is to spend it with you in such a way that we may be assured of not being separated in the life reserved for us.... I place your love above all things, and nothing would be more bitter or painful to me than to be of a different mind than you”

Objective

Engage the large group in a discussion to explore different types of marriage styles. The intention is not to judge one better than the other but rather gain insight into why certain styles work for varying couples. Keeping in mind that God’s call for our marriages is to move toward agape love.

- Top down
 - You or your wife commands the ship and the other may just be living in the others reality
 - Is this healthy and sustainable?
 - What makes it work?
 - Have you or she checked in with each other to see if you are happy living in this style?
- The “Equal” marriage
 - Tasks and effort are divided equally and scores are kept
 - Divide and conquer
 - Is this a business arrangement?
 - What happens when perception of who is carrying the load is other than 50/50?
- Coexist
 - Living day to day
 - Just keeping it together
 - Lack of intention in the relationship
 - Is the marriage at risk?
- Side by Side
 - Shared vision and shared goals
 - Intentional about how you both want the relationship to grow
 - Mutual respect
- Agape
 - St. John Chrysostom’s quote

- I live for you and you live for me
- Definition of Catholic marriage
 - My role is to get my wife into heaven and her role is to get me into heaven
 - Are you and your wife intentional about this?

Bible Readings

1. Ephesians 5:31

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2364

The married couple forms "the intimate partnership of life and love established by the Creator and governed by his laws; it is rooted in the conjugal covenant, that is, in their irrevocable personal consent." Both give themselves definitively and totally to one another. They are no longer two; from now on they form one flesh. The covenant they freely contracted imposes on the spouses the obligation to preserve it as unique and indissoluble.

Small Group Questions

1. Has your marriage morphed in or out of any of the types discussed this morning?
2. Have you had the guts to check in with your wife lately to ask her what she likes about your marriage and what she doesn't?
3. If your marriage is in trouble are you willing to seek counseling?
4. What role does God play in your marriage?

Recommended Resources

1. Catechism of the Catholic Church

Accountability:

1. Give thought to and report back as to what your marriage looks like
2. Discuss with your wife her vision for the marriage

Author(s)

Mitch West

How do you go from being a parent to a mentor with your adult children?

Summary

As our children get older, our interaction with them changes. No longer can our values and ideas be imprinted on them by virtue of being the parent. Can you remember when you left home? When you spread your wings? How did your parents react to you? As children age, they bring their own mindsets to the family relationship, life in general and beyond. This can be especially difficult if their values, ideas and mores tend to be different, sometimes substantially different than yours. It may be something as simple as moving out and leaving the area or as significant as having members of the opposite sex other moving in with the now adult child, to variation in life styles.

Objective

Typically, as a child moves into adulthood, their ideas and ways of doing things can and usually are substantially different than yours. As our children age, like we age, they change, like we change. It seems that a parent often moves more from the guiding hand on the shoulder to the dispenser of wisdom and information as to how the world really works. All too often, in trying to understand the adult child's mentality and life, there can be alienation between the parent and the offspring. It is almost as if there is resentment for bringing up your values.

The challenge is how to still be a parent, with all of our values, and still be a mentor, parent and sometimes even a friend to your child when their values are different, sometimes dramatically different than yours. As parents, we have developed our value system over a period of time, and our now grown children, especially those out of college are starting to develop theirs.

There is an old joke about a young man talking about his father and remarking to a friend that when he was in high school, he thought his father might have been dumber than a box of rocks, but when the young man graduated from college, he was amazed at how much his father had learned. There may be a lot of truth in that old "saw". From the sometimes rebellious years of high school, to the realization that a child has a vast amount of unlearned information, this seems like a good time to focus on what your values are. The most important thing is to let your adult child know that you are there for them and although you may disagree with some of the things they do, you are always the parent.

Bible Readings

1. Tobit 4: 5-6

Through all the days my son, keep the LORD in mind, and suppress every desire to sin or to break his commandments. Perform good works all the days of your life, and do not tread the paths of wrong doing. For if you are steadfast in your service, your good works will bring success, not only to you, but also to those who live uprightly.

2. Ephesians 6: 1- 4

Children, obey your parents [in the Lord], for this is right.^a "Honor your father and mother."^b This is the first commandment with a promise, "that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life on earth."

How do you go from being a parent to a mentor with your adult children?

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord.⁶

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2199

The fourth commandment is addressed expressly to children in their relationship to their father and mother, because this relationship is the most universal. It likewise concerns the ties of kinship between members of the extended family. It requires honor, affection, and gratitude toward elders and ancestors. Finally, it extends to the duties of pupils to teachers, employees to employers, subordinates to leaders, citizens to their country, and to those who administer or govern it.

This commandment includes and presupposes the duties of parents, instructors, teachers, leaders, magistrates, those who govern, all who exercise authority over others or over a community of persons.

2. Paragraph 2208

The family should live in such a way that its members learn to care and take responsibility for the young, the old, the sick, the handicapped, and the poor. There are many families who are at times incapable of providing this help. It devolves then on other persons, other families, and, in a subsidiary way, society to provide for their needs: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world."¹²

Small Group Questions

1. Think back to a mentor that was helpful to you? Did he/she tell you what to do or listen and let you talk?
2. Do you model the type of behavior that you would like your children to have as they become older?
3. Do you have any family members that mentored you as you aged?
4. If your father is alive, how is your relation with him?
5. Could you talk to your father when you were young? How about now?
6. What do you wish you knew when you were younger that you know now? Can you give your children that information?

Recommended Resources

1. Life's Little Instruction Book, H. Jackson Brown, 500+ suggestions, observations and reminders on how to live a happy and rewarding life.

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start to talk to your child about life and responsibilities

Author(s)

Original: Jack Gauche/Bob Considine; Updated: Rich DelCore

How do you go from being a parent to a mentor with your adult children?

Mentor – Do you have one? Do you need one?

Summary

Mentor – are they only for new employees? Have you ever wondered if you need a mentor? Or how you would go about getting one? Have you considered having a Board of Directors for you?

Objective

- Have you ever wondered how some people seem to have it all together – or anticipate things well? Do you ever wish for a person or persons that you can bounce ideas off, to get advice, or be someone who can listen to you?
- **Mentorship** is a personal developmental relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. However, true mentoring is more than just answering occasional questions or providing ad hoc help. It is about an ongoing relationship of learning, dialog, and challenge.
- "Mentoring" is a process that always involves communication and is relationship based, but its precise definition is elusive. One definition of the many that have been proposed, is: Mentoring is a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and the psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development; mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and during a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience and a person who is perceived to have less. Mentoring in Europe has existed since at least Ancient Greek times. Since the 1970s it has spread in the United States of America mainly in training context and it has been described as "an innovation in American management".
- Companies have mission statements and a Board of Directors. Your life is pretty important. Why not create a **Life Board of Directors** to help you through it? Pick 2 to 5 of your friends. Not necessarily your closest friends, but friends that are close enough where you can really confide but not so close that they can't see the big picture. Email them one a month, once a quarter or "once a crisis."
- Assemble "Team You" and use **your** team to brainstorm directions and implementations of big decisions like moving to New York, or changing your business's direction, starting a new venture, or getting fit.
- Use your personal Board of Directors as one of the compasses in your life. You've got family, friends, perhaps faith, hobbies, values, etc. Add your Team to this list of personal compasses.
- In this discussion we encourage individuals who have had experience as a mentor – or if you've had a mentor to talk about the benefits you have received from the experience.
- We also want to discuss how to go about getting a mentor or being a mentor for those who are interested.

Some ideas:

Pick the right mentor.

Mentor – Do you have one? Do you need one?

First step is identifying someone who can be a good mentor for you. A mentor should be someone you respect and someone who's respected by others.

Remember that mentoring can take many forms.

That relationship certainly can take the form of an ongoing one-on-one connection, but you can also have what she calls "mentoring episodes" — briefer interactions where you still learn something valuable.

Ask for advice.

Asking someone to be your mentor is tough. Instead, if there's someone whose brain you really want to pick, or whom you'd like to develop a closer working relationship with, think of some specific things you want their advice on. Then ask them to get lunch or coffee with you to talk about them.

Set some guidelines beforehand.

When you're entering into a mentoring relationship with someone, you should have a talk with them — not just about what you want to learn, but about how you want the relationship to go. Talk about confidentiality — will what you say to your mentor stay between the two of you, or will she or he be sharing it with other people? Discuss how you'll handle any disagreements or problems that might come up. And make an agreement that if at any point the mentoring relationship ends, you'll make sure to have a "good closure conversation" that allows you both to express appreciation, talk about what you learned, and move on.

Check in frequently.

Schedule regular check-ins to make sure everything in the relationship is going smoothly. Touch base with each other about whether you're both getting your needs met — are you getting the advice you need? Are you being respectful enough of your mentee's time?

With personal conversations, let the mentor set the tone.

Especially if you're friendly with your mentor, you may be tempted to talk about your personal life with him or her, and even to ask advice about personal matters. Depending on your relationship, this could be totally fine — after all, Ragins points out, a mentor can also be a friend. But she advocates that you "let the mentor lead the way with respect to disclosure."

Keep in touch if you switch jobs.

Remember that even if you leave your job, "no one's going to make you give your mentor back." If your mentor was a coworker, you might not see each other or talk as much as you once did. But you can still keep in touch by email and at networking events in your field, and you can still benefit from

your mentor's expertise. Consider than having one mentor at any given time, you should seek out multiple mentors, a "constellation of relationships" that give you the work wisdom you need.

Bible Readings

1. Ephesians - Chapter 6

And parents, never drive your [children](#) to resentment but bring them up with correction and advice inspired by the Lord.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2230

When they become adults, children have the right and duty to choose their profession and state of life. They should assume their new responsibilities within a trusting relationship with their parents, willingly asking and receiving their advice and counsel. Parents should be careful not to exert pressure on their children either in the choice of a profession or in that of a spouse. This necessary restraint does not prevent them—quite the contrary—from giving their children judicious advice, particularly when they are planning to start a family. (1625)

Small Group Questions

1. Is there someone in your small group that has experienced a good mentoring relationship?
2. Can they talk about it?
3. Do you have a mentor?
4. Do you want one?
5. Father's team members can be great potential mentors? Ask someone !

Recommended Resources

1. Your BOD - <http://www.hanselman.com/blog/WholsOnYourLifesBoardOfDirectors.aspx>
2. Mentor – how to get and maintain - <http://jezebel.com/5864193/how-to-get-and-keep-a-mentor>

Accountability

1. Considering being a mentor or getting one!

Author(s)

Rich DelCore

Do We Really Know Enough About Our Faith?

Summary

We are Catholic Christians, but do we really know what that means? Can we explain what that means to others, or even ourselves? Can we defend our faith?

Objective

Explore what the Bible and Church say about defending the faith. It is the responsibility of each of us as practicing Catholics to be properly Catechized. Understand some techniques to increase your knowledge of your faith. Discuss the question of why be catholic. Be prepared to defend the faith, and answer our friends and family of other faiths with respect and humility.

Bible Readings

1. 1 Peter 3:15-16

15 "Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, 16 but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame."

2. Matthew 10:16-20

16 "Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves. 17 But beware of people, for they will hand you over to courts and scourge you in their synagogues, 18 and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake as a witness before them and the pagans. 19 When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. 20 For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

3. Luke 12:8-9

8 "I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others the Son of Man will acknowledge before the angels of God. 9 But whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God."

4. Matthew 28:18-20

18 Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age. "

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 186

From the beginning, the apostolic Church expressed and handed on her faith in brief formula normative for all. But already very early on, the Church also wanted to gather the essential elements of her faith into organic and articulated summaries, intended especially for candidates for Baptism: This synthesis of faith was not made to accord with human opinions, but rather what was of the greatest importance was gathered from all the Scriptures, to present the one teaching of the faith in its entirety. And just as the mustard seed contains a great number of branches in a tiny grain, so too this summary of faith encompassed in a few words the whole knowledge of the true religion contained in the Old and the New Testaments.

2. Paragraph 95

"It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the

others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls."

3. Paragraph 856

"The missionary task implies a respectful dialogue with those who do not yet accept the Gospel. Believers can profit from this dialogue by learning to appreciate better "those elements of truth and grace which are found among peoples, and which are, as it were, a secret presence of God." They proclaim the Good News to those who do not know it, in order to consolidate, complete, and raise up the truth and the goodness that God has distributed among men and nations, and to purify them from error and evil "for the glory of God, the confusion of the demon, and the happiness of man."

Small Group Questions

1. How did you learn about your faith? How do you keep learning?
2. If you are Catholic, why? If not, why not?
3. What are some reasons to be Catholic?
4. Have you had to defend or shared your faith? If so, please explain.

Recommended Resources

1. <https://www.ewtn.com/faith/teachings/index.htm> (Teachings of the Catholic faith)
2. <http://www.catholiccomehome.org/> (For Catholics and non-Catholics)
3. <http://www.catholic.com/> (Catholic Answers website)
4. "A Pocket Guide to Catholic Apologetics" By Patrick Madrid, published by Our Sunday Visitor

Accountability

1. Spend some quiet time this week following up on the resources shared here.
2. Do at least one thing to increase you knowledge of the faith and what the church teaches such as listen to "Catholic Answers" from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM on Sacred Heart Radio (EWTN Radio), or spend some time reading from the Catechism of the Catholic Church.
3. Pray for opportunities and the gifts of the Holy Spirit to share and defend the faith.

Author(s)

Steve Frazer (updated from material from Michael Copfer and Tony Heekin)

Included Resources

1. "CHRISTIAN, YES... BUT WHY CATHOLIC?" By Rev. JOSEPH M. ESPER, This Rock Magazine October 1999 and at <http://archive.catholic.com/thisrock/1999/9910fea1.asp>

Summary of his 10 Reasons of Why to be Catholic (Description of each item is available at the link above):

- (1) Only the Catholic Church can trace its roots back to Christ Himself.
- (2) The Eucharist—the Real Presence of Christ—is not found in Protestant churches.
- (3) Unlike other Christians, Catholics have a fully sacramental understanding of God's saving activity.
- (4) Because of the Church's magisterium, Catholics have the assurance that their beliefs are divinely revealed truths, not human interpretations and opinions.
- (5) The Catholic Church, more than any other, gives fitting honor to the Mother of God.
- (6) More than any other Christian religion, Catholicism takes Scripture seriously.
- (7) The Church has survived and even thrived for almost two thousand years, in spite of every form of persecution, opposition, and difficulty.

Do We Really Know Enough About Our Faith?

(8) Of all Christian religions, Catholicism has the most accurate and complete understanding of human nature.

(9) Catholicism reflects the nature of heaven more accurately than any other religion.

(10) Because it is rooted in, but also transcends, time and history, the Church is able to help its members discover and live by God's unchanging truth.

2. **Eight Good Reasons for Being Catholic** by Richard Rohr, O.F.M., and Joseph Martos

<http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CU/ac0888.asp>

Many of us who are older and who grew up in the Church before the Second Vatican Council never seriously faced the question, "Why be Catholic?" Not being Catholic was almost unthinkable for us, as unthinkable as not being American.

Yet today, many people are in fact asking the question, "Why be Catholic?" They ask that question when their parish liturgy becomes intolerably boring, when they disagree with the pope or bishops on social issues, when they divorce and remarry and are told that they can't receive Communion. Often the question is, "Why *remain* Catholic?"

Following Vatican II, Catholics rightly rethought the narrow approach they had taken with the belief that outside the Church there is no salvation. They broadened the idea of salvation so that it could embrace God's love for all Christians, and indeed all persons of good faith.

If good people of other religious persuasions can be saved, then why be—or remain—Catholic?

The answer is Catholicism's rich 2,000-year tradition of living the gospel. And this tradition is a "wisdom tradition." Unlike some of the younger Churches which sprang up after the Protestant Reformation and often splintered into further divisions, Catholicism has maintained unity and diversity over the course of 20 centuries. It embraces the wisdom of the ancient world, the Middle Ages and modern times.

We can summarize the wisdom of the Catholic tradition under eight headings. Each of these values represents not only a challenge but also a good reason for being Catholic.

1. An optimistic view of creation

There is an old poem that reads: "Wherever the Catholic sun does shine, There's music, laughter and good red wine. At least, I've always found it so: *Benedicamus Domino!*"

The last line is Latin for "Let us bless the Lord!" And this poem captures a very basic Catholic sensibility: that creation is good. It represents God's wisdom as God looked out on the world just after its creation and pronounced it "very good" (Genesis 1:31).

From time to time some Christians have not believed in the full goodness of creation. Early Gnostics and other "super-spiritual" groups felt that the material world was bad—but they were regarded as heretics by the majority of the Christians. In the Middle Ages some monks thought that sex was sinful—but the Church replied by affirming the sacramentality of marriage. A few centuries ago Catholic puritans (called Jansenists) condemned all worldliness and sensuality—but the Church officially rejected their teaching.

Many of us who come from northern European backgrounds (especially Irish and German) inherited this Jansenistic negativity anyway. Priests, nuns and others who shaped attitudes often portrayed sexual misconduct as the worst possible sin. As Americans we also adopted a good deal of puritanism from our Protestant neighbors. Our immigrant grandparents didn't want to appear less moral than the people around them!

The older and larger Catholic tradition, however, has Mediterranean roots. Palestinians and Greeks, Italians and French, Spanish and Portuguese have generally been more comfortable with their bodies than northern Europeans. Peasants and poor people—most "Catholic countries" even today are poor—have always been among those who best appreciate the good things that nature has to offer. Food and drink, sex and children are the simple but most basic pleasures that life can give us. They are, after all, gifts from God intended for our enjoyment when wisely used.

This is why Catholicism is fundamentally sacramental. A sacrament is a sign of God's goodness to us. Catholic wisdom says that the world and everything in it is a gift from God and a sign of God. The seven sacraments we celebrate in church use water and oil, bread and wine, and human touch as signs of God's

graciousness. Catholics see God shining through all of creation, and so they use the gifts of creation in their most important rituals. Thus Catholics are very comfortable bringing sculpture, painting, stained-glass windows, music, drama and other elements of the created world into their worship.

2. A universal vision

The original meaning of the word *catholic* is "universal." The Church was first called catholic in ancient times after the entire Roman Empire had been converted to Christianity. The first universal Church council met in Nicaea in the year 325, and in similar councils the world's bishops formulated the Church's catholic faith. The summary of that worldwide faith is the Nicene Creed, which we say at Mass every Sunday.

The Catholic Church still has a worldwide faith, and the Church's vision is still universal. Pope John Paul II travels every year to meet Catholics around the world. The Pope's vision and the Church's vision stretch beyond national boundaries. Wherever the pope goes he is greeted by Catholics—our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

The Catholic Church is not a national Church. It is one of the few truly international institutions in the world today. The Catholic Church is also a multicultural Church. It is not just European and American but also Latino and African and Asian. People of every race and culture embrace the Catholic faith and are embraced by the universal Church.

Because the Church is universal, it calls us to a universal vision. As the world gets smaller every year, we need to regard everyone in it as our neighbor. Our faith is already larger than most of us realize, challenging our narrowness and preparing us for global citizenship. The pastoral letters of the U.S. bishops on peacemaking and on economic justice seek to promote this global outlook.

If we are truly Catholic, we must look at the world and all people in it from God's perspective, and not from a nationalistic or ethnocentric point of view. The Catholic vision, when fully lived, reflects God's concern for the entire human family.

3. A holistic outlook

The Church has always been concerned with holiness. At times in the past people have equated holiness with becoming a plaster saint, aloof from others and abstracted from life. Today we realize that holiness is wholeness. And if we look at the Catholic past, we see that this wholeness has always been the ideal.

Catholicism has never said you need to be a secluded monk or a cloistered nun to be holy. When we look at the Church's calendar of saints, we see fishermen and farmers, husbands and wives, rich and poor, soldiers and scholars, even kings and queens honored there. Everyone is called to achieve his/her fullest potential, to be a truly whole and holy person.

This holistic spirituality is very rewarding, but it is also very demanding. Catholic holiness is not a Jesus-and-me attitude. It's not enough to go to Church on Sunday and leave the rest of your life unchanged. True holiness requires a conversion of the whole person, a transformation of the total personality, a concern for bodily as well as spiritual health, and a balance between prayer and action. This may require a conversion of our lifestyle, no matter where we live or what we do for a living.

4. Personal growth

The Catholic vision of human potential begins with conversion—a conversion that is ongoing. It sees life as a process of continuous conversion and growth. There is no one moment when a Catholic claims to be "saved," as fundamentalists do. The stories of the saints show that they continuously strove for holiness. Even the Catholic devotion known as the Stations of the Cross suggests that the Christian life is a process, a journey that goes through stages, introducing us to different challenges, pitfalls and personalities along the way. Those who persevere in fidelity and trust enter more deeply into God's life.

Fortunately, our salvation and our happiness do not depend on us alone. God is with us and lovingly takes the initiative in offering us salvation and calling us to holiness. This is the meaning of grace. Grace is God's invitation and power reaching into us. But we have to open ourselves to God in order to be filled with the Spirit. We have to cooperate with grace.

Curiously, our cooperation is not so much a "doing" as a "not doing." The wisdom of the saints is that they stopped long enough to listen to God in their hearts and let God tell them how to be truly happy. Growth in the Spirit, growth in spiritual perfection (as we used to call it), is the same as growing in Christ. It means

surrendering our own shortsightedness about what we can be and entering into the process of becoming like Christ.

Paradoxically, personal fulfillment means abandoning ourselves and putting others first. In the Catholic tradition, ultimate satisfaction is promised to those who give up their desire for self-satisfaction. This is part of the meaning of crucifixion. The cross leads to resurrection, to new life. When we let go of ourselves, our lives become filled with grace. The lives of St. Francis of Assisi, Pope John XXIII and Mother Teresa of Calcutta radiate a grace that people of all religious traditions admire.

5. Social transformation

Society has been transformed again and again by Christianity. Jesus proclaimed the coming of God's Kingdom, and the Church has tried again and again to make the Kingdom real. The Church has always been concerned for human betterment.

In ancient Rome the Church protested against gladiator fights and other forms of killing for sport. In the Middle Ages, prophetic voices in the Church were raised to defend the peasants against the tyranny of the nobles. Monasteries were the first hospitals for the sick and the first hotels for weary pilgrims. The Church has always cared for widows and orphans. It has fought against slavery, against the dehumanization of factory workers and against the exploitation of migrant laborers. In the 1960's Catholics marched for civil rights, and today they march for the right to life in its many forms as well as for many other social causes.

This concern for the poor and the underprivileged springs directly from the Catholic understanding of holistic growth and universal salvation. God wants everyone to reach full potential as a human being created in God's image. This means first having basic human needs met and then growing to full maturity in Christ through meeting the needs of others. The gospel is a message to be shared at every level of human life, and the good news is that God's power is available to redeem the world.

Accepting the Catholic vision means never accepting things the way they are. People are always hurting and suffering oppression. People are always needing to be healed and set free. But to stop much of the pain and hurt, society itself has to be transformed. Being Catholic means standing with those social reformers who have always wanted to change the world, making it more like God's Kingdom.

6. A communal spirit

To a great extent, we in America have lost the Catholic sense of community. Our large parishes are often very impersonal; at Sunday Mass most people feel more like an anonymous audience than a faith community.

The reason for this is that we Catholics have bought into the American myths of rugged individualism and middle-class success. We believe that we have to make it on our own and that, if we are successful, we should have our own separate houses, our own private cars, and all the appliances to live comfortably by ourselves.

This individualism and self-centeredness is disastrous for community. It is not the ideal taught us by our Catholic tradition. The Christian way of living is communitarian. Early Christians were so connected to one another that St. Paul called each community a "body of Christ." When the Church grew larger, some Spirit-led Christians left the cities to live together in the countryside. They worked and prayed together in what were then called monasteries. Today we might call them Christian communes.

Monasteries were centers of Christian living all around Europe in the Middle Ages. In time, community-minded Christians discovered other ways of joining their lives together even in cities. Usually these communities focused on some apostolic work such as caring for the sick, the homeless or the uneducated. That's the origin of today's religious orders.

The peculiarly Catholic gift to the Church is community. Protestantism broke away from the tradition of monasteries and religious orders. This is not to say religious orders are the only way of achieving a communal spirit within the Catholic and Protestant traditions. Indeed, in many cases, Catholics can learn much from the degree of "fellowship" achieved in numerous Protestant communions. However, Catholic theology—if not always our practice—challenges us to see the Church as community.

Today, when many of our traditional orders have grown to institutional proportions, Catholics are searching for new forms of communal life. Many in religious orders are moving into smaller, more personal living arrangements. Prayer groups, spiritual movements and base communities are all attempts to revive this

Catholic charism in a modern setting. In our individualistic society, there is a felt need for this gift of community.

7. A profound sense of history

The Catholic Church has been around for a long time—nearly 20 centuries. That's four or five times the age of the oldest Protestant denominations, and 10 times as old as the United States. Belonging to a Church with that sort of history gives us a unique historical perspective. At least, it should!

Too often we as Americans live in the immediacy of the present. We forget that most of the problems we face today as individuals and as a society have been addressed by the Church for centuries and centuries. How quickly we forget that the English once were our enemies, as were the Germans and the Japanese even more recently. How quickly we forget the conversion of Russia some 1,000 years ago, and that the majority of people who live under communism are Christians. When we forget that most people who would be killed by our nuclear attack are our sisters and brothers in Christ, it is easy to picture them as our enemies. Yet our history shows that those who were once considered enemies can become friends.

In its 2,000 years, the Church has lived under kings and emperors, in democracies and dictatorships, under capitalism and communism. The Catholic perspective on history shows that we do not have to fear any political or economic system. The gospel can be lived in any place, at any time, under any conditions. Our strong sense of roots and continuity with a rich Catholic past is certainly a value to be cherished.

8. A respect for human knowledge

After philosophy (which dates back to pre-Christian times) the oldest intellectual discipline in the world is theology. Catholicism has never been a matter of blind faith. One of the earliest definitions of theology is "faith seeking understanding." The Catholic ideal is to respect reason and promote understanding.

When barbarian tribes swept across Europe and caused the fall of the Roman Empire, monks carefully copied fragile manuscripts so that ancient science would not be lost. Even in the "Dark Ages" that bred the anti-intellectualism of the Inquisition, Christian scholars were founding schools which eventually became the great universities of Europe. Despite the obtuseness of the Church officials who condemned Galileo, modern science grew out of the efforts of Christians to understand the universe that God created.

St. Augustine tried to understand all of history from the perspective of Catholic faith. St. Thomas Aquinas studied all medieval science before writing his great *Summa Theologica*, a four-volume "summary" of theology. Other Catholic scholars advanced medicine, law, astronomy and biology. Catholics believe that if they are firmly grounded in their faith, they do not have to feel threatened by any scientific knowledge. Teilhard de Chardin integrated evolution into his Christian understanding of the cosmos.

This openness to human knowledge is not true of all Christians today. Some fundamentalists close their eyes against the evidence for evolution. Others insist so strongly on the truth of the Bible that they have little respect for what psychology and sociology can teach us. Some Catholics fall into this same trap regarding Church dogmas. But the broader Catholic wisdom is that all truth comes from God, whether it is revealed or discovered.

Our heritage points to Christ

To be truly Catholic therefore means to enter into the Catholic wisdom tradition. It means appreciating all of creation and looking at the world from a universal perspective. It means adopting a holistic outlook that encourages personal growth and social transformation. It means building community and learning from history. It means not being afraid to ask questions about faith, about the Church, or about the world in which we live.

Yet all this heritage is pointless unless it also points us to Christ, and to living the gospel. The reason for accepting the Catholic tradition is to learn better from our rich past how to live our faith more deeply today.

How to Read The Bible?

Summary

Reading the Bible can be intimidating and confusing.” What did the writers intend?” “Does my interpretation count?” “Is it literal or contextual?” Discover answers to these questions and get introduced to practical ways that you can incorporate the Bestseller of all time into your faith practice.

Objective

Since there is no single or right way to read the Bible, today’s presentation should focus on helping the men discover:

- Practical ways that they can begin incorporating scripture into their faith practice
- Steps and context to understanding what the writers intended. (see Included Resources #2)
- What reading plan fits their particular journey or comfort level.(see Included Resources #1)
- How to read the Bible in a year. (see Chronological Bible)

Bible Readings

1. Matthew 7:7

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you”.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 129

Christians therefore read the Old Testament in the light of Christ crucified and risen. Such typological reading discloses the inexhaustible content of the Old Testament; but it must not make us forget that the Old Testament retains its own intrinsic value as Revelation reaffirmed by our Lord himself. Besides, the New Testament has to be read in the light of the Old. Early Christian catechesis made constant use of the Old Testament. As an old saying put it, the New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New.

2. Paragraphs 2654

The spiritual writers, paraphrasing *Matthew 7:7*, summarize in this way the dispositions of the heart nourished by the word of God in prayer "Seek in reading and you will find in meditating; knock in mental prayer and it will be opened to you by contemplation."

Small Group Questions

1. What has worked for you? Not worked?
2. What has kept you from reading the Bible?
3. How can scripture enrich your understanding of God’s will for you? Humanity?
4. Do you consider the act of reading it to be a prayer?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.catholicbible101.com/howtoreadthebible.htm>
2. <http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Reading-Bible.htm>
3. The One Year Chronological Bible

Accountability

1. Find an accountability partner and agree to read the Bible in 1 year
2. This week in mass pay specific attention to the readings and listen to how the homily ties them together
3. Intimidated? Pick a book and commit to start

Author(s)

Mitch West

Included Resources:

1. <http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Reading-Bible.htm>

Since the Bible is not like most other books, simply starting at the beginning and trying to read all the way to the end (from Genesis to Revelation) is probably **not** the best way to proceed for most people. If you attempt this, you might find the books of Genesis and Exodus rather familiar and/or interesting, but you'll probably get confused by Leviticus, may get bored plowing through Numbers, and might quit even before finishing Deuteronomy.

If you are a Christian, you might be tempted to skip the Old Testament and jump right into the Gospels. But this also is **not** the best approach, since you might be disturbed by the many discrepancies between the four Gospels, bewildered by the complex theology of Paul's letters, confused by the imagery of Hebrews, and again quit before you get to the end of Revelation.

So how should you go about reading the Bible? No one plan is best for everyone, but different people might find various methods helpful, especially since each reader may have a vastly different goal (spiritual, academic, social, etc.) in reading the Bible. Thus, some people may choose to read short selections from the scriptures daily or weekly, following the Lectionary or liturgical cycle of their Church. Others might wish to follow a one-year plan (or a multi-year plan) for reading every book of the Old and New Testaments, but not necessarily in biblical order. Still others will want to read one biblical book at a time in depth, either on their own, or with the help of commentaries, or in a Bible Study group, or in an academic course.

By now there are many resources, both online and in print, which can help you read, pray, and/or study the Bible. This webpage is not intended to be comprehensive, but merely to provide some suggestions and resources, especially for your own spiritual nourishment or small prayer groups. Below is also an introduction to *Lectio Divina*, an ancient method of reading and praying with the scriptures that is being rediscovered today.

Plans for Choosing Which Biblical Texts to Read

1) Liturgical/Lectionary Approach:

- Many people find it good to read the short biblical selections that are used at daily and/or Sunday Mass, as found in the *Lectionary for Mass*.
 - Readings for daily and Sunday Masses are available on the US Catholic Bishops' website: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/>
- To help guide you, several Catholic publishers put out monthly and/or seasonal booklets with the liturgical readings, along with commentaries, prayers, and/or study aides:
 - [Give Us This Day](#) - excellent new publication, begun Spring 2011, from [The Liturgical Press](#)

How to Read The Bible?

- [Living with Christ](#) - available in US and Canadian editions, from Novalis Press
- [Magnificat Magazine](#) - available in English, Spanish, and other languages
- [The Word Among Us](#) - daily meditations based on the Mass readings
- [Workbook for Lectors...](#) - available in US and Canadian editions, from LTP
- [Bible Alive](#) - published in Great Britain
- [God's Word Today](#) - ended publication in June 2010
- Many liturgically-related resources are online:
 - [The Lectionary for Mass](http://catholic-resources.org/Lectionary) - a section of my website (<http://catholic-resources.org/Lectionary>) with seasonal overviews, comparative analyses, and other helpful resources.
 - [Catholic Scripture Study](#) - brief weekly studies on the current liturgical readings; various other resources and helpful links; by Vince Contreras
- The American Bible Society also produces an annual [Daily Bible Reading Guide](#), suggesting one short reading per day (partly following the liturgical calendar, but not always).
 - It is available [online](#) or as a [downloadable brochure](#); it is also available [in Spanish](#)

2) Canonical Approach:

- Some people want to read the whole Bible *from beginning to end* (from the Book of *Genesis* to the Book of *Revelation*).
 - Such plans require reading thirty or more minutes each day, or one or more chapters each day, throughout the year.
- This is probably *not* the best method for beginners, since the Old Testament (OT) is so long and many parts of it are quite difficult;
 - but it could be a good practice for people who are already familiar with much of the Bible, and wish to see how it all fits together.
- Various plans for reading the whole Bible in one or more years are available in print or online:
 - [Daily Scripture and Catechism Devotional](#) – a downloadable brochure of a **one-year plan** that anyone can begin at any time, with four readings suggested for each day: two selections from the OT, one from the NT, and one from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*; by the "[Coming Home Network](#)"
 - [How to Read the Bible Every Day: A Guide for Catholics](#) – contains 1-year, 2-year, and 3-year plans; by Carmen Rojas (only in print, not online)
- Most other online reading plans and printed "One-Year Bibles" are based on Protestant editions of the Bible, which do *not* include the Deuterocanonical books considered canonical by Catholics and Orthodox Christians (for explanation of the differences, see my [Comparative Chart of Various Editions of the Bible](#)).
 - [The One-Year Bible Online](#) - four readings suggested for each day: one each from the OT, the NT, the Psalms, and the Proverbs (from Tyndale House Publishers)
 - [Zondervan Bible Reading Plan](#) - suggests a variety of different "reading plans" for beginning, intermediate, and advanced readers of the Bible; see esp. their "Three-Track Plan": Track 1 provides a brief introduction to the Bible; Track 2 covers a sample 186 chapters of the Bible; Track 3 is a three-year plan for reading the entire Bible (again, the Protestant OT, not including the Deuterocanonical books); some of this material is also online at ChristianBook.com

3) Christo-centric Approach:

- One could also read one biblical book at a time, but focusing on Jesus and seeing the relation of all the books to Jesus.
 - Begin with one of the Gospels, for the basic story about Jesus (start with Mark, the oldest & shortest Gospel).

- Then read some NT letters, followed by another Gospel; then the Acts of the Apostles, and more NT letters; then also some OT books, to learn about the history, culture, and theology of the Jewish people.
- You may want to read OT or NT books around the time when they occur in the *Lectionary for Mass* (see above).
- There are many good published commentaries on each book or section of the Bible, to help guide your study and reflection:
 - [New Collegeville Bible Commentary](#) and [Collegeville Bible Commentary](#) series – by The Liturgical Press.
 - [Little Rock Scripture Study](#) – by the Diocese of Little Rock, Arkansas, and The Liturgical Press.
 - [New Testament Message: A Biblical-Theological Commentary](#) - older series, also by The Liturgical Press.
 - [Six Weeks with the Bible: Catholic Perspectives](#) – by Loyola Press.
 - [Paulist Bible Study Program](#) – successor to the "Denver Catholic Biblical School" series; from Paulist Press.
- There are also some good resources available online:
 - [St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology](#) - free online courses and resources for studying the Bible
 - [Catholic Scripture Study International](#) - provides several 30-week in-depth online courses, focusing on one biblical book at a time.

4) Thematic/Theological Approach:

- Reading portions of the Bible that are related to some theological, ethical, spiritual, liturgical, or other theme.
 - For example, reading texts related to Jesus' resurrection, or to an issue of social justice, or to Mary, etc.
- Various booklets and guides for finding biblical texts related to certain themes are available in print or online.
 - [Threshold Bible Study](#) – thematic studies presented in short workbooks; from Twenty-third Publications.
 - [Scripture from Scratch](#) – four-page flyers published 1993-2005; still available from St. Anthony Messenger Press.
 - [Interfaces](#) – a series of short commentaries on certain biblical characters; from The Liturgical Press.

2. <http://www.catholicbible101.com/howtoreadthebible.htm>

There are 4 basic levels of scripture to understand: The literal sense, the allegorical sense, the moral sense, and the anagogical sense.

- The **literal** sense is what most people stop at when they read the bible. The literal sense when one reads about a temple in the bible is a big building where everyone went to worship. This is what the Pharisee thought that Jesus was talking about in John 2 when Jesus said "Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in 3 days."
- However, Jesus was talking about the **allegorical** sense (how the text refers to Jesus) and the fact that His Body is the new Temple.
- The **moral** sense of scripture is how the verse applies to us and our personal morality. Since the bible says that our bodies are temples for the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 6, then we should not

How to Read The Bible?

spend one second desecrating our temple by getting drunk, watching impure movies, having an abortion, cursing, etc. The desecration of the temple is what started the whole Maccabean revolt in 1 Maccabees.

- The last method, the **anagogical** sense, refers to the heavenly sense. We know that after the second coming there will be a new heavenly temple (Revelation 21), and the old earth and all of its churches and temples will pass away.

Dealing With Temptation and Lust

Summary

Nobody will ever be perfect or attain sinlessness while still on this earth, yet it is still a goal for which we strive. The Bible makes a very strong statement regarding this in [1 Thessalonians 4:7-8](#), "God has called us to be holy, not to live impure lives. Anyone who refuses to live by these rules is not disobeying human rules but is rejecting God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you." If lust has not yet gripped your heart and mind, ready yourself through a life lived above reproach to combat the temptations of lust. If you currently struggle with lust, it is time to come clean before God and ask for His intervention in your life, so that holiness can be a mark of your life as well.

Lust is what occurs when our desire for intimacy becomes subordinate to physical desires. In essence, lust attempts to separate the physical from the spiritual — something that cannot be accomplished without spiritual ramifications. Lust creates an illusion of intimacy where there is none.

"The heart has become the battlefield between love and lust. The more lust dominates the heart, the less the heart experiences the nuptial meaning of the body.... The body remains an object of lust and, therefore as a "field of appropriation" of the other human being"

Pope John Paul II

Objective

Demonstrate how the Catholic Church and the Scriptures view the daily challenges of Temptation and Lust in hope of providing a clearer understanding of what faces us everyday as men, fathers and husbands. Shed light on how we can better arm ourselves for battle against these formidable opponents, not only with God's help, but with help from our spiritual family as well.

Bible Readings

1. 1 Corinthians 10:13

No trial has come to you but what is human. God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength; but with the trial he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to bear it.

2. Matthew 26:41

Stay awake, and pray not to be put to the test. The spirit is willing enough, but human nature is weak.

3. 1 Peter 2:11

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

4. James 4:7

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

5. 1 Corinthians 7:2

But for fear of fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

6. Luke 8:11-15

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. And they by the way side are they that hear; then the devil cometh, and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved. Now they upon

the rock, are they who when they hear, receive the word with joy: and these have no roots; for they believe for a while, and in time of temptation, they fall away. And that which fell among thorns, are they who have heard, and going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit. But that on the good ground, are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience.

7. James 1:12-16

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2339

Chastity includes an *apprenticeship in self-mastery* which is a training in human freedom. The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy.¹²⁶ "Man's dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint. Man gains such dignity when, ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, he presses forward to his goal by freely choosing what is good and, by his diligence and skill, effectively secures for himself the means suited to this end."¹²⁷

2. Paragraph 2351

Lust is disordered desire for or inordinate enjoyment of sexual pleasure. Sexual pleasure is morally disordered when sought for itself, isolated from its procreative and unitive purposes.

3. Paragraph 2847

The Holy Spirit makes us *discern* between trials, which are necessary for the growth of the inner man,¹⁵² and temptation, which leads to sin and death.¹⁵³ We must also discern between being tempted and consenting to temptation. Finally, discernment unmasks the lie of temptation, whose object appears to be good, a "delight to the eyes" and desirable,¹⁵⁴ when in reality its fruit is death.

God does not want to impose the good, but wants free beings. . . . There is a certain usefulness to temptation. No one but God knows what our soul has received from him, not even we ourselves. But temptation reveals it in order to teach us to know ourselves, and in this way we discover our evil inclinations and are obliged to give thanks for the goods that temptation has revealed to us.¹⁵⁵

4. Paragraph 2848

"Lead us not into temptation" implies a *decision of the heart*: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. . . . No one can serve two masters."¹⁵⁶ "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."¹⁵⁷ In this assent to the Holy Spirit the Father gives us strength. "No testing has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, so that you may be able to endure it."¹⁵⁸

5. Paragraph 2340

Whoever wants to remain faithful to his baptismal promises and resist temptations will want to adopt the means for doing so: self-knowledge, practice of an asceticism adapted to the situations that confront him, obedience to God's commandments, exercise of the moral virtues, and fidelity to prayer. "Indeed it is

through chastity that we are gathered together and led back to the unity from which we were fragmented into multiplicity."¹²⁸

Small Group Questions

1. Do you struggle with the opposing viewpoints on temptation held by society and the Church/your faith?
2. What are some of the items or situations that cause you temptation?
3. Do you read books or magazines or watch movies or visit websites that you would not tell your wife about?
4. Have you ever overcome a battle against temptation/lust; if yes, how did you deal with it?
5. Do you have friends or activities that encourage or keep you in situations of temptation?

Accountability

1. Pray a Rosary and/or Chaplet of Divine Mercy for yourself and/or others battling temptation and lust.
2. Pray for strength and God's assistance
3. Rid your home and computer of any pornographic material.
4. Identify those areas of your life, those environments and people that cause you temptation and eliminate them or escape them.

Recommended Resources

1. Prayers Against Temptation
<http://www.ourcatholicprayers.com/prayers-against-temptation.html>
2. The Lamb's Supper" – book by Dr. Scott Haun
3. Overcoming Temptations
<http://www.catholicbible101.com/overcomingtemptations.htm>
4. Fighting the Good Fight: Resisting Temptation
<http://www.catholic.org/featured/headline.php?ID=5143>
5. Prayers For Purity
<http://www.ourcatholicprayers.com/prayers-for-purity.html>
6. Temptation -by Archbishop, Cardinal Henry Edward Manning
<http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=7066>
7. Lust Kills the Soul
<http://catholicexchange.com/lust-kills-the-soul/>

Author

Graham Galloway

Included Resources

1. LUST VS. LOVE
<http://lifeteen.com/lust-vs-love/>

By Aaron Hostetter | MARCH 28, 2012

“What color are my eyes?”

Guys, have you ever heard that before from a girl? It’s the carefully laid trap by a girl who knows when she is being looked at in a lustful way. Gentlemen, it can only get worse from there. Contrary to what we might think, there isn’t an answer that will equal a “get out of jail free” card like in Monopoly. Even if you manage to mumble through her correct eye color, chances are she is still feeling hurt from your eyes only looking at her body instead of appreciating her as a person. It’s not only guys who struggle with this sin. Both guys and girls think that something as simple as checking a person out just for their “hot bod” isn’t a big deal. It is a big deal though, and any person can tell you they can feel the difference from when someone looks at them with love or with lust. It’s degrading. You can look at the 9th commandment and think; “Coveting my neighbor’s wife” doesn’t exactly apply to me.... Let’s take a deeper look at it and see precisely why it does apply to you.

IT’S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS

In Matthew 5:28, Jesus says that, “Anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

When Jesus said this, it was completely radical, because he revealed that lust (something that happens inside your heart) is a sin just as much as an external action. What we think with our minds and desire in our hearts is a big deal.

“For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be. ‘The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be in darkness.’” (Matthew 6:21-23)

At Mass on Sunday, we make a public confession and ask for forgiveness for not only our actions but for what goes on in the heart and mind:

“I confess to almighty God, and to you my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words”

LUST WOUNDS LOVE

When you lust after someone, either in physical actions or in thoughts, it wounds your ability to love and be loved. Lust is deliberately inflaming a sexual desire or temptation that naturally comes to you.

Pope John Paul II always said that loving is the opposite of using. Love requires sacrifice, responsibility and a total commitment to the other person. Jesus showed us the model referenced in Ephesians 5:25 “Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church.”

A quick look at any crucifix will remind us how Christ loved the Church: by laying down his life! So when you reduce someone to an object for pleasure, it excludes God’s plan for love. Bishop Fulton Sheen once said that lust turns love into poison. Lust turns something that is designed to be given away (love) and turns it into something that’s only about “me” and what “I” can get from the other person.

Don’t confuse every lustful thought as a mortal sin. There’s a difference between thoughts that are brought on by ourselves and entertained and ones that pop up and are dismissed. Pray for help in the moment for Jesus to cleanse your mind of the image or thought!

BLESSED ARE THE PURE OF HEART (MATTHEW 5:8)

Just as looking at someone lustfully damages love and tears someone down, looking at someone lovingly affirms their dignity and can build them up. We have to untrain our eyes and hearts from lust and back to love. Purity in the heart is what we should strive for. God can clean the gunk built up in us through lust of the eyes and give us a heavenly vision.

“If, by love and right living, you wash off the filth that has become stuck to your heart, the divine beauty will shine forth in you. Think of iron, which at one moment is dark and tarnished and the next, once the rust has been scraped off, shines and glistens brightly in the sun. It is the same with the inner core of man, which the Lord calls the heart. It has been in damp and foul places and is covered in patches of rust; but once the rust has been scraped off, it will recover itself and once more resemble its ‘original design’ . And whoever is pure

in heart is blessed because, seeing his own purity, he sees the 'original designer' reflected in the image" ~St. Gregory of Nyssa

Ask God to help you if you struggle with this sin. Here are some do's and don'ts for the ninth commandment.

HOW TO OBEY THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

Don't

Lust after another person, either in your thoughts or your actions. This damages your ability to love and be loved.

Look twice. A girl I knew once said, "I know my dad looks at other women. But he never looks twice." Be the witness when people around you are undressing a person with their eyes. It could change hearts even if they never tell you.

Give up. It can seem like trying to stop a waterfall by cupping your hands under it, but purity is possible in the world today. It's worth fighting for, and God's grace is enough for us to do it!

Do

Men, turn lust into a blessing. Praise God for His masterful artistry when you see a beautiful woman, don't praise yourself and turn it into a disordered lustful reality. Use your bodies to glorify God in whatever you do (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Build up and affirm brothers and sisters in Christ for modesty in dress, speech, and actions. It's a battle to be pure and we need to hear encouragement in our walk.

Filter what you feed your heart and mind when it comes to tv shows and movies. Know what causes you to sin and get rid of it from your life. "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into hell" (Matthew 5:29).

Pray for your future spouse every day. Place your trust in God to prepare that person to be with you for the rest of your life/bring you to Heaven. Trust Him to prepare you, too!

Scripture to meditate on: Colossians 3:5, Matthew 5:8, Galatians 5:19-21, Matthew 15:19, 1 John 2:16, Ephesians 2:3, Galatians 5:16, Philipians 4:8, 1 Thessalonians 4:7

Catechism on the 9th Commandment: 2514-2527

2. Dealing With Temptation Talk

<http://catholicyouthministry.com/dealing-with-temptation-talk/>

Wisdom of the Saints:

"Sins that are easiest to amend bring the greatest punishment." – St. John Chrysostom

"The devil tempts so that he may ruin, God tempts so that He may crown." – St. Ambrose of Milan

"He did not say: you will not be troubled – you will not be tempted – you will not be distressed. But He said: You will not be overcome." – St. Julian of Norwich

"No one sins by an act he cannot avoid." – St. Augustine of Hippo

Relevant Points:

We must remember that God doesn't set us up to fail and He doesn't tempt us beyond our control (1 Cor 10:13).

We must change the way we view temptations – from burdens/trials to opportunities for growth/holiness.

Jesus was tempted, too. Go to Him. He knows what it's like to be tempted.

God's grace is enough (2 Cor. 12:9).

Temptations help us to understand ourselves and where our hearts truly are

One of the best things you can do for yourself is to identify those areas of your life, those environments and people, that cause you temptation and eliminate them or escape them. It's not enough to overcome temptation if you repeatedly put yourself in its path.

The devil is not afraid of you, but he is petrified of Christ in you. Avail yourselves of the Sacraments and prayer and drench yourself in the life of Christ and His grace and the devil will flee from you (James 4:7).

Battling Addictions - Does God want to help you?

Summary

You're making progress, you slip, you feel bad about slipping - so you fall farther. You start thinking, "What's the use after what I've done?" You give up and you maybe even end up worse off than when you began. That's not just a blueprint for dieting disaster. It's a blueprint for spiritual disaster.

I call it the Cycle of Shame. It's one of the devil's favorite tools for pulling a follower of Jesus down and keeping them down. You could be trapped in that Cycle of Shame even now. Or you've been there and you don't want to go back there. You may have fallen, but you can get up!

Satan succeeds in keeping you down with that "what's the use?" lie when you make a big mistake. You focus on you instead of the One who died so you could be free. The Bible doesn't say, "The righteous man never falls." It says in Proverbs, "Though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again" ([Proverbs 24:16](#)). You don't let one sin turn into a hundred sins. You get up right away and you pick up where you left off growing in Christ. You bring your sin and you bring your failure to Jesus.

Satan keeps pointing to your past because, well, it can't be changed. Jesus keeps pointing to your future because it's yet to be written. Yes, you went down, but you don't have to stay down! Jesus stands ready this very minute to pick you up, dust you off, bandage your wounds, and help you start running for Him again; forgiven, restored, and stronger than you have ever been before.

<http://www.hutchcraft.com/a-word-with-you/your-hard-times/when-you-ve-fallen-and-you-can-t-get-up-5992>

Objective:

Provide real life examples of how God can help you battle your addictions. How God can help you find a sense of being loved. We have the will, we do not have the power. God is the Power if we ask him.

Bible Readings

1. Matthew ,7, 7-11

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread, 10 or a snake when he asks for a fish? 11 If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him

2. Psalm 142

With my own voice I cry to the LORD; with my own voice I beseech the LORD. 3 Before him I pour out my complaint, tell of my distress in front of him. 4 When my spirit is faint within me, you know my path. As I go along this path, they have hidden a trap for me. 5 I look to my right hand to see that there is no one willing to acknowledge me. My escape has perished; no one cares for me. 6 I cry out to you, LORD, I say, You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. 7 Listen to my cry for help, for I am brought very low. Rescue me from my pursuers, for they are too strong for me. 8 Lead my soul from prison, that I may give thanks to your name. Then the righteous shall gather around me because you have been good to me.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraphs 220-221

“God’s love is “everlasting”: “For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you.” Through Jeremiah, God declares to his people, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

But St. John goes even further when he affirms that “God is love”: God’s very being is love. By sending his only Son and the Spirit of Love in the fullness of time, God has revealed his innermost secret: God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange

Small Group Questions

1. Do you think that you need structure and discipline to start/continue your recovery? Why, or why not? What happens to children when they are not disciplined?
2. Do you get discouraged when you are no longer in control? How does the exercise of self-control give you staying power when you are in tough situations such as temptations or trials?
3. What can you do or have done to resist the influences of desires, bad traditions, and sin so you can become more responsible in your faith, serve and please God, strive for moral purity, and benefit others?
4. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the *Lamb*, the only effective and ultimate sacrifice for our sins. What does this mean to you? How can you reach out, grab His hand, and respond?

Recommended Resources

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/collections/201106/battling-addiction/blinded-biochemistry> - Article that helps explain addictions. Summary quote comes from here.

<http://www.discipleshiptools.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=43689&columnid=4188>

Accountability

Ask for help from God, a friend your wife, your priest. Ask for forgiveness for past transgressions and look forward. Small Group members are a good place to start, but you have to ask for help.

You & Your Wife - Differences in Spiritual Lives

Summary

You and your wife invariably have different views on all sorts of things. What if one of these differences is how you practice your faith? Perhaps one of you is Catholic and one is not. Perhaps one of you is very active and engaged with your faith, and the other is not as much. You still have to make it work as a couple. If you have children, you have to make it work for them too. How do you handle this potentially sensitive topic?

Objective

Spiritual intimacy in marriage is about more than just spending time in God's Word. It's about learning how to connect with your spouse through your faith. Often times, couples say that they "can't connect with their spouse" because they're not in the same place spiritually. But, there are small things you can do as a couple to become more like-minded in your spiritual walk. Whether you and your wife are of different religions, or just varying "degrees" of Catholic, explore ways to more effectively relate to your wife regarding your faith(s).

Bible Readings

1. 1 Corinthians 7:12-14,16

12 To the rest I say: if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she is willing to go on living with him, he should not divorce her; 13 and if any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he is willing to go on living with her, she should not divorce her husband. 14 For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through the brother. Otherwise your children would be unclean, whereas in fact they are holy. 16 For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband; or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

2. 2 Peter 1:5-11

5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, 6 knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with devotion, 7 devotion with mutual affection, mutual affection with love. 8 If these are yours and increase in abundance, they will keep you from being idle or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 Anyone who lacks them is blind and shortsighted, forgetful of the cleansing of his past sins. 10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more eager to make your call and election firm, for, in doing so, you will never stumble. 11 For, in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you.

3. Luke 17:5-6

5 And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." 6 The Lord replied, "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to [this] mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

4. Romans 1:14-17

14 To Greeks and non-Greeks alike, to the wise and the ignorant, I am under obligation; 15 that is why I am eager to preach the gospel also to you in Rome. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: for Jew first, and then Greek. 17 For in it is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous by faith will live."

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1634

Difference of confession between the spouses does not constitute an insurmountable obstacle for marriage, when they succeed in placing in common what they have received from their respective communities, and learn from each other the way in which each lives in fidelity to Christ. But the difficulties of mixed marriages

must not be underestimated. They arise from the fact that the separation of Christians has not yet been overcome. The spouses risk experiencing the tragedy of Christian disunity even in the heart of their own home. Disparity of cult can further aggravate these difficulties. Differences about faith and the very notion of marriage, but also different religious mentalities, can become sources of tension in marriage, especially as regards the education of children. The temptation to religious indifference can then arise.

2. Paragraph 1644

The love of the spouses requires, of its very nature, the unity and indissolubility of the spouses' community of persons, which embraces their entire life: "so they are no longer two, but one flesh." They "are called to grow continually in their communion through day-to-day fidelity to their marriage promise of total mutual self-giving." This human communion is confirmed, purified, and completed by communion in Jesus Christ, given through the sacrament of Matrimony. It is deepened by lives of the common faith and by the Eucharist received together.

3. Paragraph 818-819

818 "However, one cannot charge with the sin of the separation those who at present are born into these communities [that resulted from such separation] and in them are brought up in the faith of Christ, and the Catholic Church accepts them with respect and affection as brothers All who have been justified by faith in Baptism are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers in the Lord by the children of the Catholic Church."

819 "Furthermore, many elements of sanctification and of truth" are found outside the visible confines of the Catholic Church: "the written Word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope, and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as visible elements." Christ's Spirit uses these Churches and ecclesial communities as means of salvation, whose power derives from the fullness of grace and truth that Christ has entrusted to the Catholic Church. All these blessings come from Christ and lead to him, and are in themselves calls to "Catholic unity."

Small Group Questions

1. In what ways is your own faith journey a solitary experience? A communal experience?
2. Do you and your wife have different levels of commitment to your faith? If so, how have you handled this? How have you handled your children's faith formation?

Recommended Resources

1. http://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/strengthening_your_marriage/spiritual_intimacy/ending_two_spiritual_lives.aspx
2. <http://www.sandiego.edu/interchurch/religiousdifferences/religiousdiffedu.htm>
3. <http://www.catholic.com/quickquestions/what-does-the-church-say-about-mixed-faith-marriage>
4. <http://foreverfamilies.byu.edu/Article.aspx?a=146>

Accountability

1. If your wife and you are not "on the same page", set aside some time to discuss this topic. The following are sample questions:
 - a. How important to each of us is our own religious faith?
 - b. How involved in religion do we want our child to be?
 - c. How involved does each of us want to be in our child's religious formation?
2. Related to the above, write down a list of the five most important religious or spiritual beliefs that you have in common with your wife. After each of you have composed your lists, share them with one another. How are the lists similar or different? Are there any surprises? If so, why?

Author(s)

Steve Frazer

Included Resources

1. FAITH AND MARRIAGE — WHEN SPOUSES HAVE DIFFERENT BELIEFS

BY: DONNA ERICKSON COUCH, M.A.

<http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/EDC/preview.aspx?id=231>

After the romantic dust of my marriage settled, the fundamental questions of life surfaced dramatically when my closest friend was killed in a car accident. As I grappled with grief, my husband, Dana, comforted me as best he could. When I talked, however, about my need for God and church (I had drifted away from my Catholic faith), he was silent. Eventually he told me that, while he didn't mind if I wanted religion again, he would not participate.

About 10 years into our marriage, I not only forged my way back to my faith alone, but also embarked on a spiritual quest that changed my life. Through years of confusion and struggle, I prayed and suffered in silence as I tried to reconcile my simultaneous love for God and for my nonparticipant husband. I worried about my role in Dana's salvation and agonized over how to raise our children in the faith by myself.

Nagging questions plagued me: Why had this happened? Would God come between us? Was there anyone else like me in the community? Many years passed until, with the help of my studies in faith development, interpersonal communication and mysticism, I finally made peace with the uncertainties. These rather different topics resonated with me at an opportune time, and I received four transformative insights:

1. After a few years married, it's common to experience a spiritual awakening.

The richness of Catholicism often doesn't resonate until long after the wedding day. Upon completion of Confirmation class or during college, many churchgoers drift away from their practice of the faith. When thoughts turn to marriage, faith is frequently downplayed or discarded by those with limited adolescent or childhood views of faith. We may allow the naïve presumption that "love is all you need" to prevail. Religious practice becomes low or sometimes not even on the priority list.

Later, perhaps after a child or two, it's common to experience an awakening, a need for God and community again. Frequently, those who return are surprised to discover a treasury of meaning in their original faith. Along with the elation of this breakthrough, however, may linger thoughts about the negative effects this may have on significant relationships. Does God come between people?

2. Authentic spirituality isn't divisive.

As my inner life grew and I couldn't share it with Dana, I felt an increasing distance developing between us. When I tried to describe my feelings to a friend, he quoted me the words of Jesus, "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword....and one's foes will be members of one's own household" (Matthew 10:34-36).

Though discouraged, I nonetheless pressed on and, with the help of prayer and a spiritual director, found deeper meaning in this biblical passage. I learned that, even though the incompatible beliefs we hold about God can indeed feel insurmountable, time and maturity quell the fear. Like with marriage, when we commit to God for the long haul, it's natural to experience times of tension.

Perseverance matters most when it comes to love and provides the backbone of authentic spirituality. This awareness led to yet another related insight: All expressions of love are expressions of divine love. As our capacity for God's love increases, so does our ability to love others. Paradoxically, my deep love for God empowered me to love Dana on an even deeper level. In the end, the "sword" of God's love actually keeps us together.

3. The inner journey is a solitary journey into God.

In another Scripture passage, Jesus says that there is no marriage in heaven (Mark 12:25). This was in response to the Pharisees when they questioned him about the eternal consequences of multiple marriages.

If we can imagine this concept as a blueprint for the spiritual journey, an important insight is revealed: While there are many companions on the outer journey, no one may walk the inner path with us. While we can try to describe our personal relationships with God, no one else—not even those to whom we are wed—may share those experiences completely.

God calls each of us into a type of “mystical marriage” which demands that we forsake all others. No one escapes the rigors of the solitary inner journey. Those of us who walk in faith without our spouses have the opportunity of learning this sooner and in a slightly different way.

4. All relationships are mirrors of the divine relationship.

Admittedly, we have a need to share what is deep inside and we long for someone to understand our zeal for God. Fortunately, an “inner landscape” reverberates throughout creation and is communicated through the many people we call friends and intimates. All of our relationships, not just with those who share our faith walk, teach us about God.

Can we see and hear the divine in everyone? Equipped with a bigger vision, we can welcome the challenges of living with those who, without words, can teach us about the subtleties and whispers of God’s presence. Meanwhile, spiritual directors and friends can help us process the complexities of relationship with God. Frequently, others serve this need better than the ones with whom we live.

If you find yourself in the middle of a spiritual awakening, while simultaneously married to someone not on the same page, you can take heart. The challenge of living an intentional, God-centered life provides an opportunity to experience what it means to fall in love again and again—with your spouse, your faith and the beloved Holy One.

When God means something different to your spouse, it’s not the end of the world but rather the starting point for a profound encounter with love’s sacred mysteries.

What advice do you have for an "unequally yoked" marriage?

http://family.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/25920/~/%22unequally-yoked%22-marriage%3F

Here are a few principles to keep in mind as you face the daily challenge of living with a mate who doesn’t share your deepest spiritual commitments:

- 1) Be patient. Try to remember that God loves your spouse even more than you do. He may be taking your partner on a spiritual journey that you know nothing about. He may choose to use you in the process, but He doesn’t need your help. So don’t play the role of the Holy Spirit. Stay in prayer and trust the Lord to do what He wants to do.
- 2) Don’t stand in the way. While perfection isn’t possible or even necessary, your behavior can attract or repel your spouse where spiritual things are concerned. You’re living out what you’re experiencing with God. Is it appealing? Is your relationship with Christ making you a more enjoyable person to live with – or just a more religious one?
- 3) Be authentic. You should not only share your faith with your spouse, but your concerns as well. In other words, don’t be afraid to reveal your personal weaknesses. It would be hypocritical to pretend that you’re not worried when you really are, or that you don’t have doubts when you really do. Your transparency can be especially healing if your mate has felt – accurately or not – that spirituality has become a competition in your marriage. The spouse who struggles with faith issues needs a “safe” and gentle partner to come home to. A holier-than-thou approach is sure to deepen the divide – not only between your partner and yourself, but also between your partner and God.
- 4) Stay balanced. There’s no doubt about the importance of faith. But it’s possible to lose a healthy perspective when you’re worried about your spouse’s spiritual welfare. You can’t be too devoted to Christ, but overspiritualization and hyper-religiosity will hurt your efforts as much as falling into the opposite error of apathy.
- 5) Examine the reasons. Take time to explore and understand the underlying reasons for your spouse’s skepticism. What was his religious experience as a child? Was his faith nurtured or hindered? Was his parents’ faith real and meaningful or a hypocritical chore? The Bible is clear: we’re not authorized to judge others (Matthew 7:1). Sometimes in marriage we’re prone to judge because of what we know – or think we know – about our spouses. Only God can see the individual heart.

Children: Respect & Discipline

Summary

Excerpted from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy “...the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1785, 1788, 1797) ... Indeed, most contemporary discussions of respect for persons explicitly claim to rely on, develop, or challenge some aspect of Kant's ethics. Central to Kant's ethical theory is the claim that all persons are owed respect just because they are persons, that is, free rational beings. To be a person is to have a status and worth that is unlike that of any other kind of being: it is to be an end in itself with dignity. And the only response that is appropriate to such a being is respect. Respect (that is, moral recognition respect) is the acknowledgment in attitude and conduct of the dignity of persons as ends in themselves. Respect for such beings is not only appropriate but also morally and unconditionally required: the status and worth of person is such that they must always be respected.”

Emmanuel Kant, the eighteenth century philosopher sounds quite Catholic in his views. Of course neither did he give, nor should we expect any modern day philosopher to, credit Jesus Christ who over 2000 years prior taught us of the dignity of and our responsibility to respect the human person. Why is it today that **respect** seems to be an endangered act or concept? The respect for and dignity of human life is no longer universally accepted but subject to personal whims, circumstances and opinion. Respect for the elderly is becoming a public debate issue. The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist is respected and believed by only 30% of self-described Catholics. Police officers, the justice system, and authority in general is often disrespected in today's society. And parents and grandparents many times are not given due respect, whether in a specific instance or more generally, by their children and/or grandchildren.

Objective

God gave each of us the unique gifts of free will and of reason. Thus we have the freedom to choose good or evil, right or wrong, and wise or unwise, and respect or dis-respect. Thus, **disciplining our children** is the process or act of “educating them in the right use of their reason and freedom” as said so elegantly in Catechism paragraph 2228. And so the question is, how do we educate and/or discipline our children first to respect and then to obey out of respect for our requests of them? And/or, if you already have some issue where your children/grandchildren do not appropriately respect you or your wife or another family member, what are some strategies to change or modify their understanding and their respect?

NOTE: In 2012/2013 the topic regarding Disciplining Your Children focused on **methods** of discipline used by men and their families in the Fathers Team. For 2013/2014 we re-use this topic and change the perspective from discipline methodologies to the perspective of discipline within the context of respect as discussed in the Catechism teachings that accompany this topic.

Bible Readings

1. Matthew 21; 28-32 - The Parable of the Two Sons.*

"What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He came to the first and said, 'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.' He said in reply, 'I will not,' but afterwards he changed his mind and went. The man came to the other son and gave the same order. He said in reply, 'Yes, sir,' but did not go. 'Which of the two did his father's will?' They answered, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you. 'When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did. Yet even when you saw that, you did not later change your minds and believe him.'

2. Hebrews 12 7-11

7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2214

The divine fatherhood is the source of human fatherhood; this is the foundation of the honor owed to parents. The respect of children, whether minors or adults, for their father and mother is nourished by the natural affection born of the bond uniting them. It is required by God's commandment.

2. Paragraph 2215

Respect for parents (filial piety) derives from gratitude toward those who, by the gift of life, their love and their work, have brought their children into the world and enabled them to grow in stature, wisdom, and grace. "With all your heart honor your father, and do not forget the birth pangs of your mother. Remember that through your parents you were born; what can you give back to them that equals their gift to you?"

3. Paragraph 2216

Filial respect is shown by true docility and obedience. "My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. . . . When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you." "A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke."

4. Paragraph 2228

Parents' respect and affection are expressed by the care and attention they devote to bringing up their young children and providing for their physical and spiritual needs. As the children grow up, the same respect and devotion lead parents to educate them in the right use of their reason and freedom.

Small Group Questions

1. Is there anything you can take home and use for child discipline in your family?
2. Have we strayed too far from common sense discipline to the new age – 'let the child express themselves' approach? Are we letting kids grow up without realistic boundaries?
3. How do you and your wife do in agreeing (ahead of time) on discipline approaches for the kids?
4. How does discipline change from toddler – to adolescent – to teenager?
5. Is positive discipline a possibility with a large family? Is it unrealistic?

Recommended Resources

All resources were found by internet searching and are not necessarily Catholic sources and/or may not necessarily conform to Catholic teachings.

1. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/respect/>
2. <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-power-prime/201001/parenting-respect-starts-home>
3. <http://parenting.org/article/respect-0>
4. <http://www.catholic.net/index.php?option=dedestaca&id=479&grupo=Life++Family&canal=Family>
5. <http://daniellesteel.net/blog/2011/01/a-big-subject-mutual-respect-between-parents-and-adult-kids/>

Accountability

1. Consider discussing an aspect of your relationship with your children where there has been in the past or where there is currently an issue with their respect toward you, your wife or toward another family member. What did you do about it and what was the outcome?
2. What will you and your wife do differently in the future to better transmit the importance of respect from your children or grandchildren?

Author(s)

Reid Rooney, updated 8/16/2013 by Andrew Schmitt

Do we truly understand the Mass and what it truly signifies or are we mindlessly going through a ritual and calling ourselves “Catholics?”

Summary

The Mass is called the “source and summit” of our Catholic Faith, yet most of us Catholics know very little as to what is really going on during the Mass...or even why.

Objective

The Catholic Mass is the most sacred act of worship a person can participate in upon earth. At the Last Supper, Jesus Christ, sat down with his chosen Apostles for what He knew would be their last meal together. At that supper, Jesus does something new, something never done before, which now continues until the end of time.

For some, the Mass may not be as exhilarating or heartfelt as it once was. Lifelong Catholics may have grown so used to the ritual that they aimlessly go through the motions and find that their minds often wander. Many are often seen gathering their jackets or leaving early before the last song has ended. By understanding what is happening in the Mass we can learn to appreciate this most sacred gift, this miracle from our Lord Jesus Christ. We can come to appreciate its beauty, its rhythm, even why many in history have faced death rather than be deprived of the opportunity to participate in the Mass. With a better understanding, we can more readily do as the Deacon or Priest commands at the end of Mass...**"GO IN PEACE TO LOVE AND SERVE THE LORD."**

Bible Readings

1. 1 Cor. 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ‘This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant of my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes"

2. Matthew 5:23–24

Assemble on the Lord’s day, and break bread and offer the Eucharist; but first make confession of your faults, so that your sacrifice may be a pure one. Anyone who has a difference with his fellow is not to take part with you until he has been reconciled, so as to avoid any profanation of your sacrifice.

3. Luke 22:19

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me’.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1382

The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's body and blood. But the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed toward the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through

Do we truly understand the Mass and what it truly signifies or are we mindlessly going through a ritual and calling ourselves “Catholics?”

communion. To receive communion is to receive Christ himself who has offered himself for us.

2. Paragraph 1378

Worship of the Eucharist.

In the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord. "The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession.

3. Paragraph 1345

As early as the second century we have the witness of St. Justin Martyr for the basic lines of the order of the Eucharistic celebration. They have stayed the same until our own day for all the great liturgical families. St. Justin wrote to the pagan emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161) around the year 155, explaining what Christians did:

On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place.

The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits. When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things.

Then we all rise together and offer prayers for ourselves . . .and for all others, wherever they may be, so that we may be found righteous by our life and actions, and faithful to the commandments, so as to obtain eternal salvation.*

When the prayers are concluded we exchange the kiss.

Then someone brings bread and a cup of water and wine mixed together to him who presides over the brethren.

He takes them and offers praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and for a considerable time he gives thanks (in Greek: eucharistian) that we have been judged worthy of these gifts.

When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all present give voice to an acclamation by saying: 'Amen.'

When he who presides has given thanks and the people have responded, those whom we call deacons give to those present the "eucharisted" bread, wine and water and take them to those who are absent.

Small Group Questions

1. What parts of the Mass leave you a bit confused and Why? Any that make you uncomfortable?
2. What parts of the Mass do you wish you understood better?
3. How does even a small improvement in your understanding of the history and meaning of the Mass affect how you approach coming to Church? What can it do for your involvement during the Mass?
4. What are ways you can truly participate in the Mass moving forward? Why is this important?
5. What are some compelling ways in which you can explain even some of what is going on in the Mass to your children?

Recommended Resources

1. Explaining the Catholic Mass <http://www.verdekc.org/explainingthemass.html>
2. "The Lamb's Supper" – book by Dr. Scott Haun
3. A Biblical Walk Through the Mass (Book): Understanding What We Say and Do In The Liturgy

Do we truly understand the Mass and what it truly signifies or are we mindlessly going through a ritual and calling ourselves "Catholics?"

– Dr. Edward Sri

4. Explaining the Mass <http://www.salesians.org.uk/chap/eucharist03.doc>
5. Youtube video - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgwScU1RFJ4> (a nice explanation!)

Accountability

1. Pray to God for the desire to participate more fully in the Mass.
2. Pray to the Holy Spirit for the gifts of Wisdom, Understanding and Knowledge with regard to the Mass.
3. Read an article this week that discusses or explains simply one part of the Mass and make it a goal within the following week to have a casual conversation or even try to explain that one part to a family member.

Author

Graham Galloway

Included Resources

1. The Mass

<http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/the-catholic-worship-service-the-mass.html>

The Catholic Worship Service: The Mass

The **Mass**, the formal, official worship service of Catholicism, is the most important and sacred act of worship in the Catholic Church. Going to Mass is the only way a Catholic can fulfill the Third Commandment to keep holy the Sabbath day and the only regular opportunity to receive the **Holy Eucharist**.

The Mass incorporates the Bible (Sacred Scripture), prayer, sacrifice, hymns, symbols, gestures, sacred food for the soul, and directions on how to live a Catholic life — all in one ceremony.

The first part of the Mass in the Western (Latin) Church is the *Liturgy of the Word*, and its main focus is on Bible readings as an integral part of daily and weekly worship. The second part is the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*, and its main focus is the holiest and most sacred part of the Mass — Holy Eucharist.

Eastern Rite Catholics call their Mass the *Divine Liturgy*, but it's essentially the same. Eastern Catholics also use the two-fold division of *Liturgy of the Catechumens* and *Liturgy of the Faithful*, which coincide with the *Liturgy of the Word* and the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*. The differences are merely from the fact that in the West, the Mass follows the tradition of the Roman liturgy, but in the East, it's the liturgical tradition of Constantinople.

The Liturgy of the Word

The first part of the Mass is built around hearing the word of God. After the **priest** and his attendants process to the **altar**, the priest and congregation

Do we truly understand the Mass and what it truly signifies or are we mindlessly going through a ritual and calling ourselves “Catholics?”

participate in the Penitential Rite, which is simply an acknowledgement that everyone is a sinner and has sinned to some degree during the week. This Confiteor is followed by the *kyrie*, which expresses public guilt and shame for any sins against God.

The *Gloria*, a prayer or hymn of adoration of God, is followed by a prayer that addresses all three persons of the [Holy Trinity](#), and that usually sets the tone for the rest of the prayers and Bible readings at Mass. Every day has its own unique prayers and readings chosen by the Church, not the individual [parish](#).

A qualified [lector](#) then reads the designated passages of the day. Following these readings, the congregation, which has been sitting, stands while the priest or [deacon](#) reads the holy Gospel, which contain the very words and deeds of Christ and require the respect shown by standing.

The congregation sits and listens to the [homily](#), which is different than a sermon in that it's an explanation and reflection on the Word of God read only by clergy. The priest or deacon connects the Scripture readings to the daily lives of the people, the teachings of the Church, or the particular celebration at hand.

On Sundays and holy days, the homily is followed by the Profession of Faith, or [Creed](#), which succinctly sums up all the teachings of the Church. Then comes the Prayers of the Faithful, which are petitions for the [pope](#), the Church, the civil authorities, current concerns, and so on, to which the people respond with "Lord, hear our prayer" or "Hear us, O Lord."

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

As the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins, everyone sits down and baskets are passed to collect monetary offerings. These are then brought to the altar along with a cruet of plain drinking water, a cruet of grape wine, and a container of unconsecrated [hosts](#) during the *offertory*.

The deacon or priest pours wine into the [chalice](#) and adds a few drops of water to symbolize the union of the divinity and humanity of Christ. The priest lifts the hosts above the altar as an offering to God, then does the same with the wine-filled chalice. The priest then ceremonially washes his hands as priests and rabbis did before ritual slaughters. It's a reenactment of the real sacrifice of Jesus.

After the Sanctus (Latin for *Holy*) is prayed, or, more often sung, the congregation kneels for the first time for the holiest part of the Mass, the [Consecration](#). Catholicism professes that when the priest *consecrates* the bread and wine, it becomes the body and blood of Christ in the miracle of [transubstantiation](#). It still looks, feels, and tastes like bread and wine, but it's not.

Do we truly understand the Mass and what it truly signifies or are we mindlessly going through a ritual and calling ourselves "Catholics?"

The ringing of bells at the Consecration signifies the holiest moment of the Mass, a symbol of reverent rejoicing. Often, bells are rung when the priest elevates the Host, and again, when he elevates the chalice.

After the congregation prays the Our Father, the priest or deacon *may* say “Let us offer each other a sign of peace,” and each parishioner gives those standing next to and near to her a simple handshake to show solidarity as one family of faith before the real and most intimate sign of unity — [Holy Communion](#).

The *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God), which asks God for mercy and peace, is said or sung, and then the people kneel in prayer before lining up to receive the Holy Eucharist.

The priest first consumes the consecrated Host and then drinks the consecrated wine from the chalice. Then Catholics who are in a state of [grace](#) approach the priest, deacon or extraordinary minister and are given a consecrated Host. Sometimes, they’re also offered a sip of the Precious Blood (the consecrated wine) from the cup. Before actually receiving Holy Communion, a Catholic makes some sign of reverence — a bow of the head, the [sign of the cross](#), a [genuflection](#), kneeling, and so on.

When presenting the consecrated Host, the priest, deacon or extraordinary minister says “the Body of Christ” to which the recipient replies “Amen,” signifying, “Yes, I do believe it is Jesus.” If the Precious Blood is offered, the communicant may go to the person holding it who says, “the Blood of Christ,” and she replies again, “Amen.” Then she takes the cup and drinks a few sips of the consecrated wine and hands the cup back.

After receiving Holy Communion, the faithful go back to their pews and pray silently for a few minutes before sitting down.

The Mass ends with the priest blessing the congregation and sending them forth to spread the Word of God and put it into practice.

Do we truly understand the Mass and what it truly signifies or are we mindlessly going through a ritual and calling ourselves “Catholics?”

How Do You Make Your Spouse Feel Appreciated?

Summary

Whether it has been one year or fifty since your wedding, what are you doing to let the awesome person you married know that you appreciate them? Routine is a good thing, but making your wife feel special is a GREAT thing and everyone likes to feel appreciated. Get your creative juices flowing and demonstrate to your wife how special she is!

Objective

A majority of the problems that occur in a marriage can be attributed to the fact that one or both partners feel unappreciated. Boredom with the relationship, jealousy, nagging and a general sense of discontent are marriage relationship problems that find their roots in a sense of not being appreciated. Your goal as a husband is to realize this, then take action. Improve your marriage relationship "by doing" and let your wife know she is appreciated by you.

Bible Readings

1. Ephesians 5:25-30

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So (also) husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

2. Colossians 3:19

Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1639

The consent by which the spouses mutually give and receive one another is sealed by God himself. From their covenant arises "an institution, confirmed by the divine law, . . . even in the eyes of society." The covenant between the spouses is integrated into God's covenant with man: "Authentic married love is caught up into divine love."

Small Group Questions

1. What is something unique that you have done that made your spouse feel appreciated?
2. What are the root causes that may make your wife to feel unappreciated by you?
3. What will you do in the next week to show your wife she is appreciated by you?

Recommended Resources

1. 10 Ways to Love Your Spouse
<http://www.simplecatholicliving.com/reflections/10-ways-to-love-your-spouse>

How Do You Make Your Spouse Feel Appreciated?

2. Do You Tell Your Wife That You Appreciate Her?

<http://respectedhusband.wordpress.com/2013/01/04/do-you-tell-your-wife-that-you-appreciate-her/>

Accountability

1. Do one thing for your wife this week that she will be able to tell her friends about that you have never done before. Complement her in front of others!
2. Investigate and search fun things going on in town and recommend that the two of you need to make a plan to attend or participate.
3. Secretly do a chore around the house you have never done and see if anyone notices.

Author(s)

Reid Rooney

Included Resources

1. The 5 Step Secret to making your wife Feel Appreciated

Step 1 Understanding: Although you cannot make anyone 100% happy, you can do your part in making your wife feel special and appreciated. The wife (like the husband) has a unique and key role in the marital partnership. If she feels abandoned, neglected, or otherwise unappreciated it will be difficult for her to maintain that positive ambiance.

Step 2 Show Direct Appreciation: Women need the small things that may be easily overlooked. A phone call in the middle of the day for no reason; fresh flower arrangements; date night; unexpected tokens of affection, etc. Keep note of her interests and use them to personalize your surprises i.e. if she's dieting do not get her chocolates.

Step 3 Acknowledgement: You may not understand her emotional needs but you definitely need to acknowledge them. Take the time to actively listen to her. Be the initiator of conversations. Be nonjudgmental with your opinions.

Step 4 Pick your Battles: Let the small things pass. Arguing or a domineering attitude will only fester and eventually poison the love you share. If it irritates you that she isn't the best housekeeper, try to hire help or help clean up when you have time. Remember that you are not perfect either. Was it her laugh you fell in love with or her clean kitchen?

Step 5 Tell her you love her everyday. Tell others you love her. Hearing it and saying it will keep the love alive. Love is a chain reaction. The more love you give the more love you receive.

2. Other ideas to show direct Appreciation to your wife:

Acts of service.

Doing something special for your wife is an easy and free way to show your appreciation. A foot rub after a long day of work would be greatly appreciated. Use some scented lotion for a bit of aromatherapy as well. Clean the house! Coming home to a messy house can be very stressful. If you are home during the day on a weekend, keeping the house clean shows your appreciation for the hard work your wife does.

Making your spouse's favorite meal or dessert on an ordinary day is a terrific way to make her feel special, especially if you don't make it very often. Or make something new for dinner to try together; the same old things can get boring after a while.

Whatever your spouse's job around the house is, give her a day off. Who wouldn't feel special and enjoy not having to do a chore? Folding the laundry, doing the dishes for once and let your spouse enjoy a little well-deserved rest.

Offer a massage. Don't do it because you want one in return. Don't wait until your wife asks. Just offer one to show that you really enjoy the act of touching the person that you're in a love with.

Treats and Surprises.

A simple and inexpensive way to surprise your wife with a treat is to pick up her favorite treats at the grocery store. Then you can sneak them into a her purse or computer bag for your wife to find and enjoy at work or out running errands. Or leave a treat on the pillow or nightstand, or in a coat pocket.

Leave your spouse alone to do a hobby, with no strings attached. She is probably tired of hearing you complain when she is watching TV while the laundry is not done. Let her have a night off to do her own thing, and don't be looking over her shoulder. Or your wife might enjoy a night out

Show your appreciation.

If your spouse works hard at a job, thank her for working hard for you and your family. A simple thank you can mean a lot. Send an "I love you" text message, or leave a message on your spouse's voicemail. If your spouse travels out of town on business, write love notes and hide them in the luggage. Put one in her purse, in reading materials, tucked in a shoe etc. You could even have the kids write notes, or draw pictures so your wife will know how much she will be missed by you and your family. Hiding love notes around the house works just as well.

Say thank you.

It turns out that it's the little things that count. Mom and Dad probably taught you that you're supposed to say thanks when someone does something nice for you but you may have picked up their bad habits of failing to say it to one another. Don't take anything that your wife does for you for granted.

Create an appreciation scrapbook.

Take the time to sit down and put together a list of all of the things that you appreciate about your wife. Go through magazines and find images that go along with each item. Use these images to create pages for a scrapbook that depicts the things that you appreciate. Your wife will appreciate this gift for a long time.

Try to notice the small things.

The small haircut that she got on the way home from the store or the new seasoning that was used on a meal are all really small things but noticing them goes a long way towards making your wife feel like you're actually paying attention and appreciating what you've got.

Do things that your wife likes.

When figuring out what you want to do over the weekend, consider trying things that you don't love but you know your wife really enjoys. It won't kill you to sit through a chick flick and it will make your wife feel appreciated.

The Husband does not feel appreciated by his wife.

In some cases, the husband may often wish that his wife would do things to show us that we are appreciated. Try to think in the reverse instead; make an effort to show your wife that you're appreciative of the marriage. This will improve things drastically and probably produce the results that you as a husband are looking for.

What Did My Dad Teach Me?

Summary

We all have our own personal stories when it comes to words of wisdom we learned from our Dads. This topic will be a shared dialogue as we all contribute those stories that impacted our lives.

Objective

This will be an interactive topic for the group that allows each of us to give pause to reflect on those words of wisdom we garnered from our Fathers. How many of us are turning into our Fathers as we age?....more importantly how many of us are passing off those very same traits to our own children?.....& may not even realize it? Much of what we learn from our Fathers might not have come from a verbal exchange but rather is an inherited trait learned by osmosis such as a strong work ethic. Our objective will be to package the best advice to share among the Fathers that we can pass on to our children. For those of us whose Fathers are still living it's never too late to seek out some Fatherly advice as we all know life is short.....embrace it!

Bible Readings

1. The Praise of the Father.... Matthew 11: 25-26

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶ Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

2. Proverbs 13 :1,24

A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a mocker does not respond to rebukes.

Catechism Readings

1. [2221](#) The fecundity of conjugal love cannot be reduced solely to the procreation of children, but must extend to their moral education and their spiritual formation. "The *role of parents in education* is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute."²⁹ The right and the duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable.³⁰

Small Group Questions

1. Name one teaching example from today's discussion you would like to pass on to your children this week.
2. Do you have a question you would still like to ask your Dad for today?

Recommended Resources

[The Greatest Generation - By Tom Brokaw.](#)

Author(s)

Bob Considine

Included Resources

Dealing with ...

http://fatherhood.about.com/od/valuesandspirituality/a/teaching_values.htm

Help them learn to stay with hard things. We have a daughter that excels at the piano. She loves music and was excited about learning to play the piano, and we really didn't even have to encourage her to practice much when she was learning. But when we saw that potential, we found a teacher who would really push her to achieve. There were certainly times she wanted to give up when she struggled with a particularly hard classical piece. But with our encouragement, she stuck with it and developed her playing to an entirely new level. I know that if we had just said, "Yes, honey, it is so hard. Maybe you could go back to the other teacher," she would never have felt the joy of really excelling at something tough.

Celebrate right behavior. As fathers, we are often quick to correct and slow to praise our children. So, in teaching values, we should not only correct behavior not in alignment with our values, we must [reward behavior](#) that exemplifies fundamental values. So when your child is honest even when it is hard, tell them how proud you are of them. When he or she is courteous or respectful to you or others, let them know it. The old adage that "there is no substitute for a good compliment" is never truer than in child-raising.

Share your stories. Look for times to [share your experiences](#) in living your values. Sometimes, without naming names, I have shared stories from my workplace about people who made good or poor ethical decisions and the consequences of those choices. Children, particularly the older ones, appreciate seeing how values apply in the adult world. So share your own stories and those you experience from others and help them see the application of timeless values in life.

Helping children see the value of your values is a role every father should play. Your efforts at shaping the people they become will be worth it. And, as life develops for all of us, whatever our experience, later in life we often find ourselves coming back to the values we learned as children. So take the time to teach and exemplify the values you have chosen for your life and then by word and example, let your children know how to find happiness in life through the application of fundamental human values.

When Bad Things Happen, Are You Prepared?

Summary

Life marches on, but what if the proverbial “getting hit by a bus” actually happens? Is your family prepared if the worst case scenario would occur to you, or your wife? Or even worse, if you BOTH get “hit by the bus”?

Objective

We read about tragedies every day, but we don’t think about those things happening to us. Life doesn’t always turn out like you plan. Lots of things we take for granted all of a sudden need special attention. If life suddenly takes an unforeseen turn, are the most important things in your life going to be taken care of like you want? Who will pay the bills? Will my family be able to survive in a way I would want? What happens to my assets? If I am disabled, who will make health care decisions for me? Who will take care of my children???

Bible Readings

1. 2 Kings 20:1

In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.

2. Isaiah 57:1-2

The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.

3. 1 Peter 5:2-3

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

4. 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1007

Death is the end of earthly life. Our lives are measured by time, in the course of which we change, grow old and, as with all living beings on earth, death seems like the normal end of life. That aspect of death lends urgency to our lives: remembering our mortality helps us realize that we have only a limited time in which to bring our lives to fulfillment:

2. Paragraph 1013

Death is the end of man's earthly pilgrimage, of the time of grace and mercy which God offers him so as to work out his earthly life in keeping with the divine plan, and to decide his ultimate destiny. When "the single course of our earthly life" is completed, we shall not return to other earthly lives: "It is appointed for men to die once." There is no "reincarnation" after death.

3. Paragraph 1014

The Church encourages us to prepare ourselves for the hour of our death. In the ancient litany of the saints, for instance, she has us pray: "From a sudden and unforeseen death, deliver us, O Lord"; to ask the Mother

When Bad Things Happen, Are You Prepared?

of God to intercede for us "at the hour of our death" in the Hail Mary; and to entrust ourselves to St. Joseph, the patron of a happy death.

Every action of yours, every thought, should be those of one who expects to die before the day is out. Death would have no great terrors for you if you had a quiet conscience. . . . Then why not keep clear of sin instead of running away from death? If you aren't fit to face death today, it's very unlikely you will be tomorrow. . . .

Small Group Questions

1. Have you done any "end of life" planning? If so, what has been helpful to you?
2. Do you have a system for your key documents?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/moneymag/money101/lesson21/index.htm>
2. <http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/12-simple-steps-estate-plan-29472.html>
3. <http://www.bankrate.com/finance/retirement/estate-planning-checklist-young-folks-1.aspx>
4. <http://getyourshitttogether.org/>
5. <http://www.estateplanning.com/>

Accountability

1. Talk with your wife about starting/updating your plans
2. Begin taking inventory of your key documents. Make a plan to have them available in case of emergency.

Author(s)

Steve Frazer

Included Resources

1. If tragedy strikes, are you financially prepared?
<https://www.manilla.com/blog/if-tragedy-strikes-are-you-financially-prepared/>

By Kimberly Rotter

The time for financial preparedness is now

If you were to lose your husband tomorrow, would you know how many credit cards he has in his wallet, and the telephone numbers to close the accounts? If your wife were to die next week, would you know where and how to log on and pay all of your bills? Could you do something as simple as access your loved one's email or Facebook account to notify friends of the death?

None of us likes to think about the untimely death of someone we love, especially before we're "old enough" to start thinking about dying. But it's important to think about the necessary financial actions to take in the tragic event that something happens to your spouse or partner.

It could happen to any of us

Recent articles in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal illustrate the myriad of harsh realities a surviving spouse can encounter in the absence of careful planning.

One woman lost her husband to a heart attack at age 57. She found herself locked out of various online banking and bill paying accounts.

One man, whose wife paid all the bills prior to losing her battle to cancer, found out the hard way that removing his wife's name from their bank account effectively closed the account and wiped out any bill-pay settings she had put into place.

Another woman, who lost her husband in a tragic bicycle accident, was faced with a sudden loss of income, lack of knowledge of the details and numbers of accounts her husband managed himself and no properly executed will.

Countless other survivors can testify to the difficulties and costs involved in transferring ownership of real estate, stocks, bonds and other assets – difficulties and costs that could have been avoided by taking simple steps before tragedy struck. And keep in mind that survivors face these challenges and costs while in the grip of overwhelming grief over the loss of their partners. This all comes at the worst possible time for life to burden you with such a heavy load.

What you can do now:

We all hope tragedy never strikes too near. But we will all die, and few of us have the luxury of knowing when we'll go.

If you're like most people, you don't have a will. Approximately 57 percent of American adults don't have one, according to a 2011 survey from market research group Harris Interactive. And if you're in the dark about what bills get paid and when, you're not alone. You don't have to suddenly become the household bookkeeper if that's not a role that you already fill. But you and your partner are well advised to set aside some time, in small chunks if necessary, to gather certain paperwork and information.

Add your spouse's name to assets, including real estate, stocks, bonds and bank accounts

Across the board, financial advisers and surviving spouses advise that you put both names on all assets. The more you keep things separate in life, the more it will cost you after death – in probate costs or inheritance taxes, for example, as well as in time and effort.

Real estate that one person owns can easily be put into both names by filing a quitclaim deed (specifying joint tenancy with right of survivorship). This quick task is usually handled at the county real estate records office. You do not have to add your spouse's name to the mortgage in order to add it to the deed.

List all online accounts and their passwords

Passwords are tricky. Security experts advise against using the same password on all sites, but multiple passwords of your own are hard enough to keep track of without adding another person's passwords to the mix. Experts also advise against writing passwords down. But you need to devise a system for sharing this information, and you should update it at least twice a year. Find a safe place to store your list. Make a handwritten list and keep the paper in a safe. Or use an online file storage site that encrypts data. Try DropBox with Boxcryptor or SecureSafe (both options are free).

Take care of paperwork

If you have any assets, you need to have a will. You should also write a living will, expressing your desires with regard to life-sustaining measures in the event you are unable to communicate with doctors.

A Power of Attorney is a simple but critical document that designates your representative under a variety of conditions. It can be as broad or limited as you desire. Use one to give one person access to your bank accounts, and another to designate a guardian for your children (this can also be stipulated in your will).

Consider life insurance

Most of us dutifully make mortgage and car loan payments each month. Many of us continue to pay off student loan debt for ourselves or our children. Still others carry revolving credit card debt. Think about how much money it would take to pay everything off at once, and price out life insurance for at least that amount plus six months' living expenses and extra money to cover costs related to the death (plot, casket, preparation for viewing, cremation, professional service fee, reception, etc.). In some cases, more coverage comes with lower premiums, due to policy popularity among purchasers.

Consider disability insurance

Long-term and short-term disability insurance can replace lost income when a family member survives an event or illness but cannot work (or cannot work as much).

Where to start

Plenty of information is out there to help you. In fact, one widow dedicated her hard-won experiences to creating a website that helps others avoid the financial nightmare she lived. Chanel Reynolds, the woman

who lost her husband far too soon in a bicycle accident, created GetYourShitTogether.org, a website designed to help you get things in order. You'll find sample documents, a checklist, and helpful links there.

You should consult an estate lawyer to help you craft and finalize your will, and a tax professional if you have significant assets. As Ms. Reynolds points out, if you can afford to take a family vacation this year, you can afford to get professional help on these simple but very important matters.

Now it's up to you to get it together.

2. Guardianship for Your Children

<http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/guardianship-children-30227.html>

Choose a personal guardian -- someone to raise your children in the unlikely event you can't.

If your children are young, you've probably thought about who would raise them if for some reason you or another parent couldn't. It's not an easy thing to consider, but with a simple arrangement of a guardian in your will, you can feel sure that, in the extremely unlikely event you can't raise your kids, they will be well cared for.

Naming a Personal Guardian

You should name one personal guardian (and one alternate, in case your first choice can't serve) for each of your children.

Legally, you may name more than one guardian, but it's generally not a good idea because of the possibility that the coguardians will later disagree. On the other hand, if you prefer that two people care for your child -- for example, a stable couple who would act as coparents -- name both of them, so that they each have the legal power to make important decisions on behalf of your child.

Here are some factors to consider when choosing a personal guardian:

Is the prospective guardian old enough? (You must choose an adult -- 18 years old in most states.)

Does the prospective guardian have a genuine concern for your children's welfare?

Is the prospective guardian physically able to handle the job?

Does he or she have the time?

Does he or she have kids of an age close to that of your children?

Can you provide enough assets to raise the children? If not, can your prospective guardian afford to bring them up?

Does the prospective guardian share your moral beliefs?

Would your children have to move?

If you're having a hard time choosing someone, take some time to talk with the person you're considering. One or more of your candidates may not be willing or able to accept the responsibility, or their feelings about acting as guardian may help you decide.

Choosing Different Guardians for Different Children

Most people want their children to stay together; if you do, name the same personal guardian for all of your kids.

You can, however, name different personal guardians for different children. Some parents may do this if their children are not close in age or if they have strong attachments to different adults outside of the immediate family. For instance, one child may spend a lot of time with a grandparent while another child may be close to an aunt and uncle. Or, if you have children from different marriages, they may be close to different adults. In every situation, you want to choose the personal guardian you believe would be best able to care for each child.

Choosing a Different Person to Watch the Checkbook

Some parents name one person to be the children's personal guardian and a different person to look after financial matters. Often this is because the person who would be the best surrogate parent would not be the best person to handle the money.

For example, you might feel that your brother-in-law would provide the most stable, loving home for your kids, but not have much faith in his abilities as a financial manager. Perhaps you have a close friend who cares about your kids and would be better at dealing with the economic aspects of bringing them up. Provided that your brother-in-law and your friend agree and you trust them to get along in the best interest of your children, you can name one as personal guardian and the other as custodian or trustee to manage your children's inheritance. (See Nolo's article [Leaving an Inheritance for Children](#).)

If You and the Other Parent Can't Agree

When you and your child's other parent make your wills, you should name the same person as personal guardian. If you don't agree on whom to name, there could be a court fight if both of you die while the child is still a minor. Faced with conflicting wishes, a judge would have to make a choice based on the evidence of what's in the best interests of your child.

Writing a Letter of Explanation

Leaving a written explanation may be important if you think that a judge could have reason to question your choice for personal guardian.

Judges are required to act in the child's best interests, so in your letter explain why your choice is best for your child. Here are some issues the judge will consider:

- the child's preference, to the extent it can be ascertained

- who will provide the greatest stability and continuity of care

- who will best meet the child's needs

- the relationships between the child and the adults being considered for guardian, and

- the moral fitness and conduct of the proposed guardians.

If you are in the following situation, writing an explanatory letter may be a good idea:

If You Don't Want the Other Parent to Raise Your Child

You may not trust your child's other parent to care for your child if something happens to you. However, a judge will grant custody to a child's surviving parent unless that parent has legally abandoned the child or is clearly unfit. In most cases, it is difficult to prove that a parent is unfit, unless he or she has serious problems such as chronic drug or alcohol abuse, mental illness, or a history of child abuse.

If you honestly believe the other parent is incapable of caring for your children properly, or simply won't assume the responsibility, you should write a letter explaining why.

Many Parts, One Body: Different Catholic Spiritualities

Summary

The saints have left us the legacy of their spiritual journeys to God. We will look at St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Francis of Assisi, and St. John of the Cross and the spiritual practices they left for their orders and the universal Church.

Objective

The history of the Church is rich in people who have shared their experience of how they came close to God. The saints provide us roadmaps to God. As with any roadmap, there are many different ways to arrive at the same place. One path is not superior to another as long as their destination is the same: eternal union with God in heaven as part of the Communion of Saints. While every person's path to God is unique, there is also no reason to "reinvent the wheel" completely. God has given us the saints as guides, and we can benefit from their experience as we have benefited from the experience of our parents and as our children have benefited from our experience.

St. Ignatius of Loyola founded the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). St. Francis of Assisi founded the Franciscans. St. John of the Cross helped found the Discalced ("shoeless") Carmelites. All three were reformers in their day. St. Ignatius was an important part of the Catholic Counter-Reformation; St. Francis answered Jesus' call to him to "rebuild my Church"; St. John helped to reform the Carmelite order to return it to a greater simplicity. Starting from their own personal encounters with God, these men were sent by the Holy Spirit to touch others and help bring them closer to God. The spiritual approaches these saints developed can speak to us across the centuries and be as applicable to us in this day and age as it was to them in theirs.

Bible Readings

1. 1 Corinthians 12:12-20

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single organ, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

2. 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers, you are God's field, God's building.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2684

In the communion of saints, many and varied *spiritualities* have been developed throughout the history of the churches. The personal charism of some witnesses to God's love for men has been handed on, like "the spirit" of Elijah to Elisha and John the Baptist, so that their followers may have a share in this spirit. A distinct spirituality can also arise at the point of convergence of liturgical and theological currents, bearing witness to the integration of the faith into a particular human environment and its history. The different schools of Christian spirituality share in the living tradition of prayer and are essential guides for the faithful. In their rich diversity they are refractions of the one pure light of the Holy Spirit.

2. Paragraph 2663

In the living tradition of prayer, each Church proposes to its faithful, according to its historical, social, and cultural context, a language for prayer: words, melodies, gestures, iconography. The Magisterium of the Church has the task of discerning the fidelity of these ways of praying to the tradition of apostolic faith; it is for pastors and catechists to explain their meaning, always in relation to Jesus Christ.

Small Group Questions

1. Do you have experience with Jesuit, Franciscan, or Carmelite spirituality? If not, is there another Catholic spirituality (for example, Marianist, Benedictine, Dominican, Trappist, etc.) with which you have experience? What has that experience been? What about that spirituality speaks to you? Is there anything about that spirituality that does not work for you?
2. Although these spiritualities have their roots in religious orders, these spiritualities are not only applicable to priests, brothers, or sisters in those orders. In fact, Franciscan and Carmelite orders have "third order" or secular/lay groups, and Jesuit practices such as the *examen* are used by many lay people. How can one of these spiritualities be applied in your daily life in the secular world?
3. Is there anything in the life of St. Ignatius, St. Francis, or St. John that speaks to you? St. Ignatius started out as a worldly, vain, and ambitious aristocrat/soldier who was wounded in battle and during his convalescence began to turn toward God; it took him quite a while to discern the path God had set for him and a great deal of growth in his relationship with God. He saw God working in every aspect of his daily life. St. Francis gave up his family's wealthy lifestyle to live simply upon the providence of God, living as an example of God's love for other people and all of creation. St. John helped reform the Carmelite order to make it simpler, facing much opposition and persecution. He also emphasized the importance of contemplation and direct encounters with God. All three of these saints placed Jesus at the center of their lives.

Recommended Resources

1. St. Ignatius and Jesuit Spirituality: http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/prs/stign/ignatian_spirit.html
2. What is Ignatian Prayer? (video): <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/what-is-ignatian-spirituality/the-ignatian-way/what-is-ignatian-prayer/>
3. St. Francis and Franciscan Spirituality: <http://www.ofmqc.ca/eng/spirituality/spirituality01.htm>
4. Franciscan Spirituality (video): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWDEDgPWro>
5. St. John of the Cross and Carmelite Spirituality: <http://www.carmelite.com/spirituality/default.cfm?loadref=4>
6. Carmelite Spirituality: *lectio divina*: <http://ocarm.org/en/content/lectio/what-lectio-divina>
7. St. John of the Cross (video): <http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=st.+john+of+the+cross&q=SC&sk=&FORM=VBREQY&pg=st.%20john%20of%20the%20co&sc=2-18&sp=1&q=SC&sk=#view=detail&mid=2AB0B536A3B7DBABD5912AB0B536A3B7DBABD591>

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to learn a little more about Jesuit, Franciscan, or Carmelite spirituality (or another spirituality you are interested in). Or you might want to learn more about the life of St. Ignatius, St. Francis, or St. John.
2. Sometime this week pray to St. Ignatius, St. Francis, or St. John (or another saint whose spirituality appeals to you) for his intercession as you seek to deepen your relationship with God.
3. Engage in some specific practice particular to one of these spiritualities. For example, you could use the Jesuit *examen*. You could sit outside and meditate on the Franciscan way of seeing creation as pointing toward God and being in relationship with us as created by God (as in the Cantic of the Sun). You could read Scripture using *lectio divina* as Carmelites (and others) do, moving towards contemplation.
4. St. Ignatius, St. Francis, and St. John all put Christ at the center of their lives. This week take a concrete action to put Christ more at the center of your life. Some possibilities are: pray 10 minutes each day (or a little more if already praying daily), take 10 minutes in Eucharistic adoration, read a chapter of one of the Gospels, pray the Jesus Prayer – “Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner” repeatedly in contemplation, or meditate on a crucifix.

Author(s)

Pete Caccavari

Included Resources

1. Pope Francis’ homily on the Feast of St. Ignatius (July 31, 2013)

The emblem of us Jesuits is a monogram, the acronym of “Jesus, the Saviour of Mankind” (IHS). Every one of you can tell me: we know that very well! But this crest continually reminds us of a reality that we must never forget: the centrality of Christ for each one of us and for the whole Company, the Company that Saint Ignatius wanted to name “of Jesus” to indicate the point of reference. Moreover, even at the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises he places our Lord Jesus Christ, our Creator and Saviour (Spiritual Exercises, 6) in front of us. And this leads all of us Jesuits, and the whole Company, to be “decentred,” to have “Christ more and more” before us, the “Deus semper maior” [“God always greater”], the “intimior intimo meo” [God is “more intimate than I am to myself”], that leads us continually outside ourselves, that brings us to a certain kenosis, a “going beyond our own loves, desires, and interests” (Spiritual Exercises, 189). Isn’t it obvious, the question for us? For all of us? “Is Christ the centre of my life? Do I really put Christ at the centre of my life?” Because there is always the temptation to want to put ourselves in the centre. And when a Jesuit puts himself and not Christ in the centre, he goes astray. In the first Reading, Moses forcefully calls upon the people to love the Lord, to walk in His ways, “because He is your life” (cf. Deut. 30, 16-20). Christ is our life! The centrality of Christ corresponds also to the centrality of the Church: they are two flames that cannot be separated: I cannot follow Christ except in and with the Church. And even in this case we Jesuits and the whole Company, are not at the centre, we are, so to speak, “displaced”, we are at the service of Christ and of the Church, the Bride of Christ our Lord, who is our Holy Mother Hierarchical Church (cf. Spiritual Exercises, 353). To be men rooted and grounded in the Church: that is what Jesus desires of us. There cannot be parallel or isolated paths for us. Yes, paths of searching, creative paths, yes, this is important: to go to the peripheries, so many peripheries. This takes creativity, but always in community, in the Church, with this membership that give us the courage to go forward. To serve Christ is to love this concrete Church, and to serve her with generosity and with the spirit of obedience.

2. Prayer of St. Francis: Cantic of the Sun

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord, Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor, and all blessing. To You alone, Most High, do they belong, and no man is worthy to mention Your name. Praised be You, my Lord,

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with all your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, Who brings the day and through whom You give us light. And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor; and bears a likeness of You, Most High One. Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful. Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind, and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather through which You give sustenance to Your creatures. Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water, which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste. Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom You light the night and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong. Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs. Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for love of You and bear infirmity and tribulation. Blessed are those who endure in peace for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned. Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death, from whom no living man can escape. Woe to those who die in mortal sin! Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will, for the second death shall do them no harm. Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility.

3. St. John of the Cross: The Sayings of Light and Love, 27

Mine are the heavens and mine is the earth. Mine are the nations, the just are mine, and mine the sinners. The angels are mine, and the Mother of God, and all things are mine; and God himself is mine and for me, because Christ is mine and all for me. What do you ask, then, and seek, my soul? Yours is all of this, and all is for you. Do not engage yourself in something less or pay heed to the crumbs that fall from your Father's table. Go forth and exult in your Glory! Hide yourself in it and rejoice and you will obtain the supplications of your heart.

How to commit to giving God 10 Minutes a day

Summary

We are each called as Catholic Men to a deepening relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. A daily habit of committing 10 minutes for prayer should be an attainable goal for each of us to strive for.

Objective

Can Catholic daily prayers change your life? Absolutely! You can develop a fuller relationship with God and live a better life through prayer. You have a better chance at finding fulfillment (to say nothing of salvation!), from daily prayers than from the many distractions bombarding us these days!

Think of all the promises we hear on TV and elsewhere: you'll find happiness if you buy this car, this book, this exercise bike, or this pill (after checking with your doctor first on that last one)! Yet many times our souls feel as empty as our wallets afterwards.

Developing a good prayer life can really change you for the better. Praying can become a most satisfying routine in many ways. It might not be an easy habit to start at first, but it's definitely one you won't want to break! Catholic daily prayers can give you a sense of peace and purpose.

Prayer has often been called "the raising up of the mind and heart to God". We engage in a literally divine conversation with Him. You get a wonderful opportunity from prayer to strengthen and deepen your relationship with our Creator and with your fellow human beings by praying for their needs as well as your own.

Bible Readings

1. Luke 11: 1-13

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him,
"Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples."
He said to them, "When you pray, say:
Father, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread
and forgive us our sins
for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us,
and do not subject us to the final test."

2. 1 Thessalonians 4: 10-11

We urge you....to progress even more and to aspire to live a tranquil life

3. Seeking Her Intercession

The Memorare

REMEMBER, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly to thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother; to thee do I come; before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2697

Prayer is the life of the new heart. It ought to animate us at every moment. But we tend to forget him who is our life and our all. This is why the Fathers of the spiritual life in the Deuteronomic and prophetic traditions insist that prayer is a remembrance of God often awakened by the memory of the heart "We must remember God more often than we draw breath."¹ But we cannot pray "at all times" if we do not pray at specific times, consciously willing it. These are the special times of Christian prayer, both in intensity and duration.

2. Paragraph 2698

The Tradition of the Church proposes to the faithful certain rhythms of praying intended to nourish continual prayer. Some are daily, such as morning and evening prayer, grace before and after meals, the Liturgy of the Hours. Sundays, centered on the Eucharist, are kept holy primarily by prayer. the cycle of the liturgical year and its great feasts are also basic rhythms of the Christian's life of prayer.

3. Paragraph 2699

The Lord leads all persons by paths and in ways pleasing to him, and each believer responds according to his heart's resolve and the personal expressions of his prayer. However, Christian Tradition has retained three major expressions of prayer: vocal meditative, and contemplative. They have one basic trait in common: composure of heart. This vigilance in keeping the Word and dwelling in the presence of God makes these three expressions intense times in the life of prayer.

Small Group Questions

1. What time of day is the best for you to pray?
2. What resources i.e. daily devotions, scripture or quiet reflections help to put you in a state of grace?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.ourcatholicprayers.com/catholic-daily-prayers.html>
2. <http://www.livingfaith.com/>
3. http://thereasonforourhope.org/meet_father/homilies.php

Accountability

1. Did you carve out a time this week to devote 10 minutes of daily prayer?
2. Did you Pray for your small group members to help him reach his goals?

Author(s)
Bob Considine

Four ways to Encounter Jesus in the Mass

Objective

Pay more attention during mass and learn to encounter Jesus

1. In the community
2. In His Word
3. Through the Priest
4. Through the Eucharist

When we learn how to “be on the lookout for Jesus Christ at Mass; when the Mass is no longer just a ritual that repeats the same old thing every time, but becomes an event through which we encounter Jesus Christ, then it will be anything but boring.

Bible Readings

1. 1 Cor. 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ‘This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant of my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes”

2. Matthew. 5:23–24

Assemble on the Lord’s day, and break bread and offer the Eucharist; but first make confession of your faults, so that your sacrifice may be a pure one. Anyone who has a difference with his fellow is not to take part with you until he has been reconciled, so as to avoid any profanation of your sacrifice.

3. Luke 22:19

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me’.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1382

The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's body and blood. But the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed toward the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through communion. To receive communion is to receive Christ himself who has offered himself for us.

2. Paragraph 1378

Worship of the Eucharist.

Four ways to Encounter Jesus in the Mass

In the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord. "The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession.

Small Group Questions

1. What effort do you put in to understanding what is going on during Mass? You only get out of it what you put in.
2. Do you challenge your family to participate and be attentive during Mass?

Recommended Resources

1. The Mass: Four Encounters with Jesus That Will Change Your Life, Dr. Tom Curran
2. "The Holy Mass- The Testimony of Catalina" – Document is on the Father's Team website
3. "The Lamb's Supper – Scott Hahn

Accountability

1. Next time you attend Mass actively try to encounter Jesus through your fellow parishioners, in the readings, through the priest's homily and through the Eucharist.

Author(s)

Tony Heekin and Graham Galloway

The Holy Rosary

Summary

We, as Catholics, know and understand that the Mass is the most powerful prayer since Jesus commanded us to “do this in memory of me”. As Vatican II stated, the Holy Eucharist is the “Source, Center, and Summit of our Faith.” Of the numerous Catholic prayers and devotions, the Holy Rosary is arguably the second most powerful prayer.

Objective

History and Origin of the Rosary: before Christianity, the ancient Hebrews used to pray the 150 Psalms and used to tie 150 knots to represent all of the Psalms in the Bible. The origin of the Rosary is rooted in the 13th Century, when Saint Dominic de Guzman was sadly praying to the Blessed Mother about his lack of progress in his preaching to the Albigensians who were a growing group of heretics in France at that time. The Albigensians denounced the Incarnation and the dignity of human life and even praised suicide. In response to Saint Dominic’s lamentations, the Blessed Mother appeared to him and taught him to pray the Holy Rosary to which she referred as “heavenly dew” which would bring an “abundant harvest” and that it did for St Dominic. In subsequent apparitions (ie, Lourdes and Fatima), our Blessed Mother has strongly encouraged us to pray the Rosary. Starting with Pope Urban IV, numerous Popes throughout the centuries have strongly endorsed the Holy Rosary including Pope John Paul II who wrote an encyclical on the Rosary. In fact, it was Pope John Paul II, a staunch advocate of the Rosary, who added 5 more decades to the traditional 15 decades.

The mechanics of the Rosary are simple with the main prayers being the Apostles’ Creed, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Glory Be. However, the real power of the Rosary is that it is a meditative prayer with which we pray to both Jesus and His Blessed Mother and meditate on the Scriptural verses which depicts key events in the lives of Jesus and His Blessed Mother which are found in the Sorrowful, Joyful, Glorious, and Luminous Mysteries. 18 of the 20 decades have direct links to Sacred Scripture while 2 have indirect references in Sacred Scripture. According to St Louis de Montfort, a spiritual disciple of St Dominic who was strongly devoted to our Blessed Mother, meditating on the mysteries of the Holy Rosary will produce some wonderful results:

1. It will gradually give us perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ
2. It purifies our souls, washing away sins
3. It gives us victory over our enemies
4. It makes it easy to practice virtue
5. It sets us on fire with a love of Jesus
6. It enriches us with graces and merits.

Note: Meditation is very easy. You just think about the mystery that is described in the Bible as you pray the decade of Our Father with 10 Hail Mary’s. For example, for the sorrowful mystery of the Crucifixion, you visualize the stripping of Jesus’ clothes; nailing Jesus to the cross; Jesus’ suffering on the cross; people shouting at Jesus; etc

Bible Readings

1. Luke 1: 28 (what the Angel Gabriel said to Mary at the Annunciation)
And he came to her and said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you."
2. Luke 1: 42 (how Elizabeth greeted Mary at the Visitation)
And she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2708
"Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. This mobilization of faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ. Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, as in lectio divina or the **rosary**. This form of prayerful reflection is of great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the knowledge of love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him."

Small Group Questions

1. For those of you who already say the Rosary regularly, what have been the benefits for you, your Family, and the people for whom you pray?
2. If you meditate on Sacred Scripture as you pray the Rosary, why is this NOT boring?
3. What opportunities do you have to pray the Rosary in your busy schedule?
4. What makes the Rosary such a powerful prayer?
5. Do you have opportunities to pray the Rosary with your Family? If so, when?

Recommended Resources

1. The Rosary "The Little Summa" by Robert Feeney
2. Real Men Pray the Rosary: A Practical Guide to a Powerful Prayer by David N Calvillo
3. David Calvillo's website: <http://www.realmenpraytherosary.org>

Accountability

1. Take the 33 day challenge offered by David Calvillo at his website.
2. Before you begin your Rosary, look at the Sacred Scripture that describes the mysteries. For example, the scriptural verses related to the Sorrowful Mysteries (the Passion and Death) will provide you with much for your meditation. After you do that for the Sorrowful Mysteries, repeat this process of reading applicable scriptural verses for the Glorious, the Joyful, and the Luminous Mysteries. This will help your meditation tremendously.
3. If you need help, purchase a Rosary prayer book at your local Catholic book store. These prayer books normally have the scriptural verses related to mysteries of the Rosary.

Author(s)

George Cullen

Included Resources

1. **The 33 Day Challenge from David Calvillo's website**
<http://www.realmenpraytherosary.org>

Pray the Rosary daily. Not for 30 days but 33 days. 33 represents the number of years that Jesus dwelt among us in the fullness of his humanity. 33 constitutes a direct connection to the fullness of the Divine-made man, a connection to Jesus himself. One day of praying the Rosary for every year that Jesus gave us, setting aside his glory as God, and living and breathing and walking among us. Pray the Rosary daily for 33 days. Focus on the content of the mysteries. Meditate upon that Gospel story and apply the lessons to your life. Pray for the Holy Spirit to open your heart to receive the fullness of His mystery-the fullness of faith.

You won't be alone. We'll all be praying with you. Beginning May 1, the entire RMPTR community, the Body of Christ, will pray along with you. Share your journey with us – on Facebook- or post a comment on this page. Share your reflection on a mystery of the day. You can subscribe to our daily reflection and receive it by email. Ask the RMPTR community to join in your intentions. Share your journey. Share your laughter. Invite someone you love to join the journey. We know it will change your prayer life. We know praying the Rosary daily will change your life.

Praying the Rosary daily permits us to employ the full gospel story — the new covenant salvation story — within our continuing faith journey. Those who pray the Rosary daily and who respond to the call to faithfully meditate on each day's mysteries, find that within one week, they have lived through it. They revisit the imminent joy of Advent and the birth of our Lord; they cherish the illuminating reality that Jesus walked among us, talked to and taught us directly; they intimately observe, with Mary by their side, the sorrowful cruelty meted upon him by our sinful humanity and marvel at his loving response; they experience the glory and wonder of promises kept as they stand at the tomb and begin to understand the reality of the covenant satisfied.

Our circle of faith is completed by the visceral story prayed by us and lived by us in this daily prayer.

Such frequent relationship with Jesus and Mary for 25-30 minutes a day is bound to change us. As Pope John Paul II reminded us: "Just as two friends, frequently in each other's company, tend to develop similar friends, tend to develop similar habits, so too, by holding familiar converse with Jesus and the Blessed Virgin, by meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, ... we can become similar to them" and live that elusive, virtuous holy life.

At the end of the 33 days, pray it forward. Share your experience with a loved one. Invite them to continue the 33 day Rosary challenge for themselves. And for you, notice the arrow on the logo- it continues in perpetuity. The 33 day Rosary challenge invites you to make praying the Rosary a permanent and integral part of your spiritual journey. Pray it forward.

Take the "Real Men Pray the Rosary 33 day Challenge." Love made you do it! 😊

Strategies for Keeping Your Kids or Grandkids Catholic

Summary

A child's faith trajectory is fairly established by the time they reach 14 years of age. Young adults are considered one of the most un-churched generations. The challenge is to help young people experience Catholicism as fulfilling their spiritual hunger. What can we do to help our children and grandchildren nurture and remain active in their faith?

Objective

Children tend to follow the faith of their parents. Roman Catholic families have traditionally had a passive approach to educating their children about the Catholic faith, delegating the responsibility of teaching our faith to others (teachers, schools, priests, nuns, etc.). As Fathers, we have a critical role in establishing the importance of faith in our families. Our children look to us for guidance. We have a narrow window of time to influence their beliefs and establish the faith as an important part of their lives. The powerful memories that we give our kids will sustain them and give them roots, when temptations of the world challenge them. Research has consistently shown that the chosen path of Faith by Adult Children is more impacted by Fathers than Mothers (even very devout Mothers). As Leaders of our Families, Fathers must lead by the example of "living our Faith" and teaching our children/grandchildren the Truths revealed by Jesus in the Bible and in the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Bible Readings

1. Proverbs 22:6

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

2. Ephesians 6:4

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

3. Matthew 19:13-14

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people; but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2223

"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 disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for *education in the virtues*. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery - the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the "material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones." Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children. By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them."

2. Paragraph 2228

"Parents' respect and affection are expressed by the care and attention they devote to bringing up their young children and *providing for their physical and spiritual needs*. As the children grow up, the same respect and devotion lead parents to educate them in the right use of their reason and freedom."

Small Group Questions

1. What type of spiritual example are you setting for your children?
2. Do you pray with your kids? (ie, evening meal or bedtime) Do you look for opportunities to pray the Rosary with them. (ie, on a routine basis like once each week or in the car on the way to a fun activity or after a death in the Family or to thank God for something good in the Family or when they are grounded or punished, etc)
3. What events/things do you do with your kids to put faith in action?
4. Do you use the Bible and/or Catechism to teach the Catholic Faith (ie, about the Mass and the Holy Eucharist or about morality or current social issues, etc)
5. Do you focus unique Catholic teachings that separate us from other Christians? (ie, the Holy Eucharist, the Mass, Sacrament of Reconciliation, moral teachings that are counter-cultural like marriage or contraception, the Virgin Mary, teachings on salvation, Sacred Tradition, Papal Authority, the Saints, etc)
6. Can you explain how Jesus founded the Catholic Church and all other Christian Churches were founded by another human being?

Recommended Resources

1. "8 Strategies for Keeping Your Kids Catholic", by Robert McCarty, 2008 Liguori Publications (Most of pamphlet included below)
2. Strong Catholic Families, Strong Catholic Youth by Michael Theisen (National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry):
<http://www.diojeffcity.org/Ministries/ChristianEd/ReligiousEd/Strong%20Catholic%20Families/A2FamilyFaithResourceBookBWrevised.pdf>
3. "Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers", by Christian Smith and Melina Lundquist Denton, 2009
4. "Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults", by Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, 2009
5. <http://www.catholic.com> which is an excellent resource to answer Catholic questions and to find Biblical and Catechism references (ie, great search engine)

Accountability

1. Set a positive image and be your child's spiritual example.
2. Review the 8 strategies with your wife and look for ways to be engaged with your kids regarding putting the faith in action.
3. Conversation starters about faith and religion you can use with you kids:
 - a. Do you understand the Church's teachings on the "Real Presence" of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist and do you know what the Bible says about this Sacrament? How much of this is just accepting what Jesus says about the Holy Eucharist? Can you accept this teaching because "Jesus says so" or must this be proven scientifically before you can accept this teaching? Are there other things that you accept as true without scientific testing?
 - b. How and why do you pray? What kind of relationship do you have with God?
 - c. Why do you love Jesus?

- d. What is sin and why is avoiding sin important? Can you name sins that are common in our society? Do the 10 Commandments apply to today's world?
- e. On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is going to Mass on Sunday for you? What makes it that number?
- f. Have you ever had an experience where your faith was really tested?
- g. Have you ever had an experience where your faith has really helped you?
- h. Who do you consider to be a genuine person of faith?
- i. What church teaching most confuses you?
- j. How is your faith different now from when you were younger?
- k. What experiences, places, or persons have really fostered your growth in faith?
- l. Should we conform to what God has revealed through the Bible and His Church or should we pick and choose what we like best? Why?

Author(s): Michael Copfer and Ken Mai (amended by George Cullen)

Included Resources

8 Strategies for Keeping Your Kids Catholic, by Robert McCarty, 2008 Liguori Publications

1. Practice and Participate:

Contrary to popular opinion, the Number 1 influence in the faith life of young people is the faith life of their parents. Young people really do mirror the faith life of their parents, so the way we practice our religion is very important. Our participation in Sunday Mass and other special liturgical celebrations, as well as our active involvement in the life of the parish, shows our children that our religion is a significant part of our lives. In addition to Mass attendance, we can participate in retreats, Bible study groups, church organizations and ministries, or adult catechesis sessions.

If you want your young adults to go to Mass, invite them to go with you – even if it's just on a special holy day or anniversary. They may decline, but your invitation will remind them that Mass is a meaningful part of your life and that you wish to share your faith with them.

2. Model Our Faith:

In addition to worshipping with our children, we can have a great impact on the faith of young people when our faith guides our daily routines and interactions. Faith should influence our lifestyle choices, use of time, how we handle conflicts, the relationships we form, and even how we handle work issues. It may sound trite, but the two most obvious challenges to the practice of faith in real life are how adults drive their cars and how they behave at sports events! Our spontaneous reactions in emotional situations can reveal to others whether our faith and values influence our behavior.

So we might ask ourselves: Do we pray at home in the evening? Before family meals? In restaurants? Do we remember people who are less fortunate in our prayers? Do we pray for our children's intentions? For their friends? Do we model forgiveness and reconciliation in our lives by admitting when we are wrong and forgiving others who hurt us? How do we handle crises such as death, divorce and illnesses? Does our faith impact how we celebrate Christmas, Easter, or other holy days? Do we volunteer our time and talent to ant service organizations or civic programs? All of these situations are part of life. Our young people watch to see if faith makes sense to us, if faith works for us. They are looking for a faith that provides meaning in all areas of their life, not just on Sundays.

If you want your young adults to go to Mass on Sunday, model your Catholicism at all times and in all settings.

3. Include Young Adults:

What a blessing it would be if all our young people were greeted by name when they walked through the church doors! We begin to meet their hunger for connection by welcoming them on Sunday and fostering their participation in the faith community. A sense of belonging is a very strong bond.

These experiences begin with the parish young adult ministry program. Young adults need to gather with their peers right in their own church. They need opportunities to build community with their peers, to feel connected with other faith-filled persons, and to interact with caring, believing adults. Parents should encourage their young adult's participation in appropriate parish activities. Parishes must be intentional in including young adults in their liturgical, pastoral, and leadership ministries. We can't wait until young people ask or volunteer: we must actively invite them into responsible participation in the life, work and mission of the faith community.

Of course, the experience of community goes beyond the local Church. Gathering with other young adults through national groups such as Theology on Tap or at diocesan or international events like World Youth Day will give them a sense of belonging to something bigger. One of the main benefits of these events is that participants connect with their peers from other regions and cultures. It helps bring home the truth that they are part of an important and inclusive global community.

If you want your young adults to go to Mass, help them experience their membership in the greater Catholic family. Encourage them to be involved in liturgical ministries and invite them to be leaders in parish programs.

4. Doing Faith:

One of the most important characteristics of the spirituality of young adults is their need to "do faith." Actions inspired by faith are powerful experiences. Perhaps the most profound experience of doing faith is involvement in justice and service projects. Serving in soup kitchens, participating in a work camp, working in a community shelter program or emergency-outreach center, tutoring children, or participating in public events for justice can have a significant impact on the faith of young adults and respond to their hunger for justice.

Similarly, young people "do faith" when they participate in retreats, pilgrimages, or public Stations of the Cross. These can be moving experiences of faith in action, too. All of these experiences are even more powerful when young adults and their parents participate in events together.

If you want your young adults to go to Mass, encourage them to "do faith" through their participation in service to the community, in parish ministries and in special liturgical events.

5. Learning Opportunities:

Young adults do need to know the traditions, creed, teachings and stories of our faith community. They need to know the story of Jesus and the gospel message. Many are genuinely interested in reading and understanding Scripture. They need to know what it means to be Catholic, and they want to learn how to participate in the rituals and worship of the Church. The faith community needs to be a safe place where young adults can bring their questions and where they can search with others for answers that make sense, meet their needs and provide meaning and purpose in their lives.

Further, our young people need to know about that unique dimension of our faith often described as our Catholic "imagination." Catholics "see" the world differently. Through our sacramental lens, we encounter a world filled with God's presence. Our traditional practices, our use of images, our symbols, and our rituals provide an avenue to an encounter with an imminent, loving God.

If you want your young adults to go to Mass, find opportunities for them to learn more about their faith through Bible study, faith-sharing groups, or other diocesan programs-and offer to go with them!

6. Prayer Skills:

Young adults need both personal and communal experiences of prayer. They can be creative and enthusiastic when they are invited to compose original prayers or spiritual poems that incorporate their favorite music and symbols. Often they are very open to traditional contemplative Catholic approaches to prayer, such as the Ignatian exercises, which enable them to connect with Spirit within.

They should also be encouraged to participate with the faith community in worship experiences, sharing in the Catholic community's understanding of God, our traditions, our unique rituals and our ways of prayer. This "both/and" approach to the personal and communal dimension fosters their experience of prayer as the outpouring of their relationship with God and deepens their faith.

If you want your young adults to go to Mass, talk with them about personal prayer and the value of praying together at Mass.

7. Faith Sharing:

As young adults search for a personal understanding of God, they must be able and encouraged to look for God's presence in their lived experiences. Young adults should be assisted in naming their experience of a God who is active and present in their lives. God does not wait to be invited into the lives of young people. God takes the initiative and is present, but God waits to be identified or named. Many young adults need language to help them understand and express their experiences of God.

Parents and other caring, faith-filled adults can assist young adults in identifying God's presence in their joys and sorrows, in their hopes and dreams and in their day-to-day lives. Of course, this requires that we have the language to name the presence of God in our own lives. We can ask our young adults where they experience God, where they pray best, where they feel joy and sorrow, for God is present there. And we can share our own experiences.

This faith sharing is a very important task because young people will never understand the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures until they can read the Scriptures of their own lives. Therein young adults experience the God who is always active and present. And we should be open to having our own understanding of God challenged and perhaps deepened by our young adults' experience of God.

If you want young adults to go to Mass, ask them questions about their faith life.

8. Compelling Adventure:

At the heart of their spiritual hunger is the desire of young adults for a compelling vision of life that provides a genuine sense of meaning and purpose—a noble adventure worthy of their commitment. The Catholic Church inherited the noble adventure and compelling mission of Jesus Christ—to build the reign of God—to make the world better for all people.

Participation in this spiritual adventure requires a community of companions also committed to this mission—that is, the Church. There is also a need to celebrate this adventure regularly—that is, at Mass. At its best, liturgy is a spiritual drama that tells the story of Jesus and connects that story with building the reign here and now.

If you want your young adults to go to Mass, call them to a compelling adventure worthy of their lives.

Are We called to be Saints?

Summary

In one sense, everyone who is baptized into Jesus' death and resurrection is a saint. This is not to diminish the special role of the canonized saints but to highlight the immense gift that is all of ours in Christ. Because of the power of the cross, each Christian has the same inheritance in heaven as the great saints whose lives we commemorated in a special way on All Saints Day.!

Objective

"Are you a saint?" If someone were to ask you this question, how would you answer it? At the very beginning of his letter to the Philippians, Paul called his readers "saints," or "holy ones" (Note: many Bible translations use the word saints in place of "holy ones.") When we hear the word "saint," most of us think of the special Christians of the past-canonized saints-who are renowned because of their extraordinary holiness and witness, in some cases to the point of martyrdom. However, when Paul used the word "saint," he used it with a small "s" not a capital "S." and thus meant all Christians-even us today!

Bible Readings

1. 2 Timothy Chapter 1, 9

He saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began.

2. Philippians Chapter 1, 1-11

Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the holy ones in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the overseers and ministers: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you, praying always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.

It is right that I should think this way about all of you, because I hold you in my heart, you who are all partners with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 823

"The Church... is held, as a matter of faith, to be unfailingly holy. This is because Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is hailed as 'alone holy,' loved the Church as his Bride, giving himself up for her so as to sanctify her; he joined her to himself as his body and endowed her with the gift of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God." The Church, then, is "the holy People of God," and her members are called "saints."

Small Group Questions

1. How would you answer the question: "Are you a saint? Are you Holy?"

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- a. Correct answer is: “yes I am holy, not because of me, but because of Christ, Who lives inside of me. The day I was chosen and baptized, god set me apart as His own. Now I am holy in God.”
2. What steps can you take to open yourself more to the work of the Holy Spirit to form you more and more into a “saint”?
3. At the end of your meeting, pray for one another that each of you would be empowered to be saints and a witness to this broken and hurting world. Use this prayer as a starting point.

“Father, thank you for giving me a share in the fellowship of your saints. By your Spirit, empower me to embrace Jesus and his life in me. Empower me to be a saint.”

Recommended Resources

<http://catholicexchange.com/what-does-it-means-to-be-a-saint/>

Based on the characteristics that Paul mentioned in the first few verses of Philippians, we can begin to define what makes a person a “saint.”:

- Saints are “in Christ” (Philippians 1:1).
- They are united with Jesus; they are “partners . . . in grace” (1:7).
- They have access to the love and power of the Spirit in their everyday lives.
- Because of their “partnership for the gospel” (1:5), they are all called and empowered to proclaim the gospel and build the kingdom of God.
- Baptized into Christ and filled with the Spirit, saints stand as a sign to the world of the love and power of God.

Author(s)

Fr Larry Richards, Be a Man Chapter 9.

How to get your career unstuck

Summary

In a rut career-wise? Does it seem like others are getting much more out of their careers.... and you are struggling to find satisfaction in yours? How do you take action to find fulfillment in your work or put a plan in place to make a career change?

Objective

Are you unhappy in your current job? Has the changing economy or a “re-organization” forced you to consider a new career? Whatever your reason for seeking out a new path, it's a decision that you can't take lightly. Changing careers can be very stressful on both you and your family, and be very costly. Before you give your two-week notice, take a moment to look at your current situation. Are you really stuck?

Maybe you are way better off than you think. Things always seem to look better on the other side of the street....from a distance. Are there options available to you that you have not investigated? Have you considered that your career dissatisfaction may be coming from a lack of “balance” in your life? Sometimes all we know is that we want a change.

No plan...no road map...no destination.

Take an objective look at your current situation, level of satisfaction, assess your options and put a plan in place to make a change....or not.

Bible Readings

1. Proverbs 3: 5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, on your own intelligence do not rely;
In all your ways be mindful of him, and he will make straight your paths.

2. Isaiah 43: 11-13

But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, and formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine.

When you pass through the water, I will be with you; in the rivers you shall not drown. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned; the flames shall not consume you.

For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your savior.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 378

The sign of man's familiarity with God is that God places him in the garden.²⁵⁵ There he lives "to till it and keep it". Work is not yet a burden, but rather the collaboration of man and woman with God in perfecting the visible creation.

2. Paragraph 901

Hence the laity, dedicated as they are to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvelously called and prepared so that even richer fruits of the Spirit maybe produced in them. For all their works, prayers, and apostolic undertakings, family and married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body, if they are

accomplished in the Spirit - indeed even the hardships of life if patiently born - all these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Small Group Questions

1. Are the career expectations that you had when you started your job being met?
2. Who do you know that made a successful career change or transition?
3. What would cause you make a change? External conditions or internal desire?

Recommended Resources

1. Changing Careers is a Big Decision. Make Sure You Plan Ahead
<http://financialplan.about.com/od/planningforlifestages/a/ready-for-a-career-change.htm>
2. 10 Steps to a Successful Career Change
<http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/careerresources/a/10steps.htm>
3. 3 Ways To Get Unstuck In Your Career – Forbes – Nov 2012
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/kathycaprino/2012/11/30/3-ways-to-get-unstuck-in-your-career/>
4. Job Loss Support Group at IHM
<http://ihom.org/Serve/HealthMinistrySupport/JobLossSupportGroup.aspx>

Accountability

1. What do you like about your career?
2. Are you taking action to at least assess, or better yet, change job and career issues that are dissatisfying for you?
3. Can you be helping someone making a career change?

Author(s)

Reid Rooney

Included Resources

8 Career Change Tips

<http://animalcareers.about.com/od/Animals/a/8-Career-Change-Tips.htm>

Making the change to a new career can certainly be difficult in a tough economy, but it is far from an impossible task. Here are a few key steps that will prepare you for making a successful transition from one career path to another:

1. Research the career fully by searching the internet and reading books and career guides at your local library. There is a wealth of information available from both the web and the library if you take the time to look for it. Be sure you are familiar with all of the duties that will be required of you in your new career, and be sure that these duties are things that you will enjoy. It is also important to research the salary range that you can expect in the new career so that you can be sure you will be able to meet your current financial obligations (mortgage, car payment, and other bills). If a pay cut is involved it might be a good time to review your budget.

2. Connect with a professional who has the type of job you are intending to pursue. This could be someone you know personally, someone you are referred to by a friend, or someone recommended to you by your college alumni association or a professional group. Prepare a list of questions to ask and see if it would be

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possible to shadow them for a day while they complete their duties. An up close and personal view of the job's responsibilities can be invaluable, so if this is possible be sure to take advantage of the opportunity.

3. Identify transferable skills that you will be able to use in your new position. Making a list of skills that you have developed on your current job or through participation in sports and hobbies is a good starting point. There is also a site on the U.S. Department of Labor website, known as O*Net, that lists skills necessary for success in over 25,000 career paths. This is another great place to look for specific qualities that may deserve some emphasis on your resume.

4. Seek additional training or education if it will improve your chances of making a successful career change. There are many colleges, universities, and trade schools that offer night or weekend classes designed for adult students who have full time jobs. Even if you just take a semester-long professional training course it will show that you have current knowledge of the field. You can also highlight this additional education on your resume.

5. Volunteer in positions related to your intended career. While you probably can't commit to a full time internship while also holding down a full time job, you can often find weekend or evening activities that will help you add skills that will enhance your resume. It is especially true in the animal industry that there is no substitute for having practical hands on experience. If you don't have experience working with a particular type of animal (and it will factor into your new position) be sure to tailor your volunteering or internship experiences to correct that lack of experience.

6. Utilize social media networking to expand your job search through person to person contacts and referrals. It is always easier to get your foot in the door when someone puts in a good word for you. Networking through social media sites such as LinkedIn can put you in contact with the professional contacts of your friends and business connections. The wider you cast your net in a career search, especially when changing careers, the better.

7. Prepare a resume that highlights your transferable skills and the strengths that you developed in your previous career. Using the functional resume format will highlight the skills that you have developed in your other positions. The functional resume lists each major skill as a heading and then lists a few achievements related to the skill. This style minimizes any work experience that doesn't enhance your job prospects in the new field while maximizing exposure for skills and abilities gained through volunteer work, internships, or other non-work activities.

8. Be persistent and keep trying to make the change, even if it takes a while to find the right employer that is willing to give you a chance. In the current job market there are many applicants for each available position, and employers may have quite a few qualified candidates to select from. Networking, preparing a great resume, gaining additional training, and volunteering should help career changers enhance their job prospects.

Becoming a Better Listener

Summary

Often when someone else is talking, we are either thinking of the next thing we want to say, or we are thinking of something else entirely. How can husbands be more present to our wives and our kids? Come learn techniques for really hearing others.

Objective

As the old saying goes, God gave us two ears and one mouth because we should listen twice as much as we talk. And yet, we tend to talk more than we listen. "Active listening" is not passive but helps us to focus on what the other person is saying. This makes the other person feel valued and helps strengthen our relationships with a spouse, child, co-worker, etc. Using methods of reflecting back the other's feelings and statements, receiving and giving verbal and non-verbal cues, and waiting to respond are among the ways to improve your listening skills and creating stronger bonds with those who are important in your life.

Bible Readings

1. Proverbs 18:13
If one gives answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.
2. Matthew 13:43
He who has ears, let him hear.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2604
The second prayer, before the raising of Lazarus, is recorded by St. John.⁵⁰ Thanksgiving precedes the event: "Father, I thank you for having heard me," which implies that the Father always hears his petitions. Jesus immediately adds: "I know that you always hear me," which implies that Jesus, on his part, constantly made such petitions. Jesus' prayer, characterized by thanksgiving, reveals to us how to ask: before the gift is given, Jesus commits himself to the One who in giving gives himself. The Giver is more precious than the gift; he is the "treasure"; in him abides his Son's heart; the gift is given "as well."
2. Paragraph 2716
Contemplative prayer is hearing the Word of God. Far from being passive, such attentiveness is the obedience of faith, the unconditional acceptance of a servant, and the loving commitment of a child. It participates in the "Yes" of the Son become servant and the Fiat of God's lowly handmaid.

Small Group Questions

1. Do you think you are a good listener? Would your wife and children agree?
2. Think of a specific situation from this week where you were in a conversation. How well did you listen?
3. Who do you know is an example of a great listener? What makes that person a great listener?

Recommended Resources

1. It's Not About the Nail (video): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4EDhdAHrOg>

2. Active Listening is Not a Spectator Sport (Archdiocese of Detroit): <http://www.aod.org/being-catholic/marriage-and-family/marriage-support/enrichment-articles/active-listening-is-not-a-spectator-sport/>
3. LISTEN techniques (video): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENkwUBPhMJw&list=PLB429DDA7B7DC2E70>
4. Reflective Listening (Archdiocese of Indianapolis): <http://www.archindy.org/family/documents/Reflective%20Listening.pdf>

Accountability

1. In your next conversation this week with your wife or children, use one or more aspects of active or reflective listening.
2. This week ask your wife or children how you can be a better listener.
3. One of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit is *understanding*. Pray to the Holy Spirit this week to help you listen better in your daily conversations so as to gain greater understanding about the other person.

Author(s)

Pete Caccavari

Included Resources

Three qualities essential to deep listening

The Sacred Art of Listening by Kay Lindahl, p. 16

Silence creates the space for listening to God. It provides time to explore our relationship to Source. The practice of being in this silence nurtures our capacity to listen to others.

Reflection gives us access to listening for our inner voice. The practice of taking a few breaths before responding to a situation, question, or comment gives time for your true wisdom to reveal itself. It's a slowing down, waiting, practicing patience.

Presence is the awareness of listening to another, of connecting at the heart level. The practice of taking a mundane, ordinary activity and giving it your full attention, for example, washing your hands or brushing your teeth, trains your concentration and your ability to be in the present moment with another.

Listening and being assertive

Speak Up! Christian Assertiveness by Randolph K. Sanders and H. Newton Malony, p. 109

Again, knowing when to shut up is helpful because it means we believe other people's ideas are just as important as our own. Notice we did not say that others' ideas are necessarily more correct than ours. We said that others' opinions are as *important* as our own. Listening to what they have to say does not mean we have to agree with them, only that we have to respect them. This is an important part of being assertive.