



Formative Parenting

Cultivating Character in Children

A Ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Immaculata, Pennsylvania

A Guide to Catholic Parenting: CATHOLIC PARENTS KEEP PROMISES

During the Rite of Baptism parents make public promises to guide their child in the practice of the faith. While giving a lighted Baptismal Candle to the parents the celebrant charges: **“Receive the light of Christ. This light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly.”** What a sacred responsibility!

Suppose it were a crime to live out the promises that you made at the Baptism of your child. If you were charged and put on trial for being a CATHOLIC PARENT, would there be sufficient evidence for a jury to convict you? If the prosecutor lived with your family for two weeks, how would he/she rate the spiritual climate of your home? For instance, consider five elements:

- **Environment:** Are there crucifixes in the major rooms; images of Jesus like the Sacred Heart, Good Shepherd, or Divine Mercy; and statues or pictures of Mary and/or the patron saints of your children?
- **Prayer:** How faithful are family members to the practice of morning and night prayer as well as grace before and after meals? Do parents pronounce a ritual blessing when children leave home in the morning or go to bed in the evening?
- **Rituals:** Does the family “mark” the sacred seasons with practices like an Advent wreath, Christmas Courts of the King, or Lenten observances?
- **Sacraments:** Does the family celebrate annual Mass events like: Birthday of Mary (9/8), Exaltation of the Holy Cross (9/14), and Christ the King Sunday? Does the family frequent the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- **Service:** Does the family practice the Works of Mercy and the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching?

Ten Indicators of Catholic Parenting

Suppose the prosecutor examined your children on how well you are fulfilling your vocation as the “first teacher; primary educator” who leads them to grow in knowledge, love, and service of God? How well would you score in these ten indicators?

1. I teach my children the words and the meaning of age-appropriate prayers like Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Angel of God, Act of Contrition, etc.
2. My family prays grace before and after meals.
3. I establish a bedtime ritual that includes prayer, an examination of conscience, and an act of contrition.
4. I oversee the study of religion lessons. I read and study the lessons, too. I help my children to understand, memorize, and practice faith formulas like the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, precepts of the Church, and principles of Catholic Social Teaching.
5. I explain that the Ten Commandments are standards of love and expressions of a loving relationship rather than a set of rules. I provide an age-appropriate understanding of the Ten Commandments.
6. My children and I participate weekly in the Sunday Eucharist. I help my children to participate with attention, reverence, and devotion.
7. My children and I practice regular reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
8. My family is growing familiar with the Gospels and learning to apply the messages of the Sunday Gospel to daily living.
9. I am cultivating within my family devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. We make visits to the Blessed Sacrament. There we pray ACTS: Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, Seeking.
10. My family demonstrates reverence for Mary and the Saints. Each member of the family knows the life and character-qualities of his/her patron saint.

Promises, Promises!

Christian parenting is a vocation. It is a call from God, for God, with God, to God. You were called to parent in partnership with Jesus. With the vocation comes the promise that the Holy Spirit will be with you always to inform your decisions and to bring healing to your failures and hurts. Trust that when you are in active relationship with Jesus, and you turn over the pieces of life to him, you will experience that “all things work together for good” (Rm. 8:28). Trust in God and trust in yourself because God trusts you. God called you to the vocation of parent and God does not make mistakes. Be at peace as you strive to be faithful to your promises!

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