



Formative Parenting

Cultivating Character in Children

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

Developing Moral Maturity – Part 6 HABITS OF PRAYER

Moral maturity builds upon skills of heart, mind, and action. In addition, Christian maturity (or conscience) integrates Christian principles and prayerful discernment in the decision-making process. Parents and teachers help children to develop a moral mentality by fostering these five habits. This newsletter focuses on **Habits of Prayer**.

Jesus witnessed that prayer was a primary pattern in his life. The intimate relationship that he cultivated with his Father was his source of identity, strength, direction, and re-fueling. Simply put, prayer is communication with God who loves you. In the human realm, consistent communication with another person often leads to shared attitudes, preferences and, often, even to mutual mannerisms. The same is true of prayer. A steady diet or regular pattern of prayer brings us to unity with the will of God. Carmelite Christopher O'Donnell wrote: "It is impossible to face God daily in silent prayer and remain obstinately in opposition to his love. It may take time, but prayer has the power to transform moral attitudes and finally produce a conversion."

Moral maturity is developmental as is faith development. Age, reasoning ability, and circumstances combine to define prayer at a given moment in personal history. (For a guide to age/stage spiritual development and prayer suggestions refer to The Spiritual Self <http://www.peterli.com/archive/tct/1019.shtm>.) Though a variety of prayer forms and prayer styles are helpful to moral formation, I believe that praying with the Gospels and Eucharistic prayer have the most formative influence. This newsletter limits its focus to two aspects of Eucharistic devotion.

PARTICIPATION AT MASS

The Eucharistic Liturgy celebrates God's works of creation, redemption, and sanctification. It re-presents the sacrifice of the cross and it renews God's promises. The Catechism of the Catholic Church explained that the liturgy concludes with sending forth (*missio*) the faithful to fulfill God's will in their daily lives. Consequently, we call the Eucharistic Celebration the Holy Mass [*Missae*] (CCC#1332).

Two great parts form a fundamental unity, a "single act of worship."

1. The gathering, the liturgy of the Word, with readings, homily and general intercessions

2. The liturgy of the Eucharist, with the presentation of the bread and wine, the consecratory thanksgiving, and communion (CCC #1346).

Contribute attention, reverence, and devotion to the Mass.

- Before Mass, with the Holy Spirit look over the readings and psalm. What theme, question, or words "pop out"? What in your life connects with them?
- Recall the events of the past week that need healing or evoke gratitude. Project the week ahead. What joys, anxieties, needs exist? During the Offertory and Consecration, mentally place last week

on the Paten and next week in the Chalice. Offer your gifts to God through Christ.

- After receiving Holy Communion and before you leave the Church, speak words of thanksgiving to Jesus whose body and blood are within your body.

VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Catholics call the Eucharist “the Most Blessed Sacrament because it is the Sacrament of sacraments” (CCC #1330). Consecrated hosts are reserved in the **tabernacle** and a burning **sanctuary lamp** signals the Real Presence. Sometimes a large consecrated host is placed in a glass case called a **luna**. The luna is placed within a **monstrance** and set on an altar so that the Eucharist is visible to anyone in the chapel. Prayer on these occasions is called adoration. Some parishes arrange to have the monstrance always on display. This practice is called **Perpetual Adoration**.

Model the custom of making visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Teach various ways to pray. For instance, within your soul sing favorite hymns. Read from a Holy Hour prayer book. Write a letter to Jesus. Divide the prayer period into four sections for **ACTS** : Adore, Confess, Thank, Seek.

ADORE: Express admiration for God’s greatness. For what do you praise, honor, worship, revere, admire, commend, value, esteem or glorify God?

CONFESS: Express sorrow for your sins, faults, and failings. What life-blocking choices do you acknowledge, admit, disclose, divulge, or regret?

THANK: Express gratitude for the graces and gifts in your life. What kindnesses or favors do you recognize and appreciate?

SEEK: Express your needs and questions to God. What needs or desires do you seek, ask, search, beg, and petition?

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