



Formative Parenting

Cultivating Character in Children

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

Home Ways for School Days, Part 6 VACATION AND VOCATION

Students, parents and teachers alike consider *summer* as a synonym for **vacation** – a break time to rest from the requirements of school and to relax, renew, recreate, and celebrate! Take advantage of the opportunities that summer days offer. But all the while be clear that **there is no vacation from our vocation.**

VOCATION is a call from God. Our first vocation is to become the person that God created. We were created by Love for love to be love and to receive love. We are persons made in God's own image with the ability to think and the ability to choose. Whenever we exercise our intellect and free will in the service of love, we become more clearly who we truly are. We become free-er. We become more like God. This is why attention to the particulars of schooling is important. Education makes development possible. Whether in school or out of school we are called to develop our gifts so that we create and experience life-to-the-full. Saint Ireaneus summarized that "the glory of God is man fully alive."

The term *vocation* also means the state in life that most helps us to develop who we were created to be. For some, that is marriage, for others priesthood, religious consecration, or the single life. Each state of life has the potential to lead us to wholeness and holiness. When the vocation of marriage leads to parenting, the couple takes on the gravest obligation to educate the "whole child." So sacred is this commitment that Vatican Council II said:

"The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. It is therefore the duty of parents to create a family atmosphere inspired by love and devotion to God and their fellow-men which will promote an integrated, personal and social education of their children. The family is therefore the principal school of the social virtues which are necessary to every society" (*Christian Education* #3).

For several months of the year the Catholic school assists parents in the vocational role of forming souls – spiritually, emotionally, socially, and academically. But at all times – before, during, and after school days – parents remain the primary educators.

Parents can exert their formative influence in a variety of ways during the Summer months. Specific suggestions include:

BE FAITHFUL TO PRAYER.

Wake up and nighttime prayer, grace at mealtimes, a prayer environment on the food table, prayer of intercession during meal prayer, and participation in Mass on Sundays and the feast of the Assumption (8/15) are some ways of nurturing relationship with God. Mass participation includes vocal prayer, singing, listening with the heart to the Scripture readings and homily, making a resolve for the week ahead, reverent attention during the Consecration, receiving Eucharist, and taking time to make a thanksgiving after Holy Communion. Encourage receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation during the summer.

MAINTAIN A DAILY SCHEDULE.

Though more relaxed than schooldays, determine a time for rising, chores, play, outreach (projects of charity), learning (personal reading or tutoring), family time, care of body hygiene, and bedtime. Provide sufficient sleeptime. Ages 6-9 require ten hours; ages 10-12 need nine hours; teens need 8 to 9.5 hours.

PREPARE FOR THE OPENING OF SCHOOL.

At least a week in advance of school ease into the time schedule and routines for rising and retiring. Purchase or prepare all materials needed for school. Have children prepare a heavy duty cardboard box to be their "school box" for storing all school-related matters throughout the year.

READY CHILDREN FOR KINDERGARTEN AND GRADE ONE.

Throughout the summer fulfill the school policy for readiness. If no policy was provided, anticipate readiness in these ways: Practice listening skills, taking turns and delayed gratification. Teach proper use of a public toilet and/or urinal. Teach your child how to recognize his/her name in print and to memorize name, address, and telephone number. Often give short directions for your child to follow. Develop vocabulary, alphabet recognition and letter-sounds. Engage in conversation. Read and talk about the stories. Demonstrate "direction" in reading (left to right; top downwards, spaces, first letter of a sentence, first letter of a word). Recognize numbers.

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