

*June  
Challenge  
Create awe  
and wonder  
this  
summer.*



# Teaching the Way of Love

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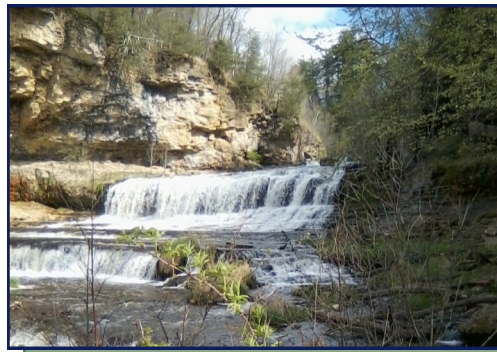
JUNE, 2015

## A Wonderful Summer

### PLEASE PRAY THAT

- The Catholic Church will be a sign of trust and hope in the world.
- The Catholic Church is recognized by all as faithful to God and trustworthy.
- Parents will find time to relax and be with their children.
- Parents will provide their children with divine guidance during the summer.
- Young people may have the courage to forge life-long, faithful commitments.
- Children will trust their parents and approach them with their questions and concerns about love and life.
- Parents are able to provide for the health and well-being of their family.

The school bus that transports the neighborhood kids to school just made its final trip to the corner for pick-up. Where did the school year go? It is hard to imagine that just a short nine months ago these children entered their academic year. And now, kids are finished with their classroom learning, eager to fill the summer break with a different kind of learning.



Like most moms and dads on my street, parents have to make plans for summer activities. Some send their kids to summer school, others to park and recreation programs. Many make provisions for summer day care because they have to work while school is out. Thankfully, most of the parents have made plans to do special activities with their children this summer; activities that will astonish their children.

What does it mean to astonish your children?

Simply, astonishment fills someone with sudden and overpowering surprise and wonder. It is the “take your breath” away moment where your children’s eyes stretch wide open and their mouth opens to a sweetly shaped circle as the sound of an “ohhhhh” escapes. It is the time when their back straightens ever so slightly and they grab your hand to make sure that you are there experiencing the same thing they are. It is a quick turn of their head along with an intense gaze as they ask you, “did you see that?”

Astonishment is the key ingredient for a wonderful summer. It has the ability to turn boring into extraordinary. In the middle of a hot and mind-numbing July back in my middle school years, my father used to leave for work shortly after we woke up. Before leaving Dad would ask a simple question that transformed the day and set a path towards awe. Simply asking, “I wonder where the stars go during the day?” or, “Why do some birds sing in the morning and others at night?” or, “I wonder why the bike chain isn’t staying on when you ride it?” a seed of curiosity would be placed in my mind; something to think about and investigate during the day. At night, he would come home and then ask if we figured out the answer to his morning inquiry. This would fuel the dinner conversation with points and counterpoints. Dad would just keep asking questions and listening to what his children were thinking.

Dad rarely stopped there. After the table discussions were done, both Mom and Dad found ways to complete our wonderment with unplanned events. One evening after we had debated the

***Because humanity passes by way of the family...***

science behind the stars, Dad woke us all up in the middle of the night. We followed him outside to find a huge blanket lying on the ground. Together, we lay down and gazed up into the night sky. A sliver of a moon gave us exquisite viewing of the Milky Way and all the major and minor constellations. Dad pointed out the North Star and other heavenly landmarks. In doing so, he created in us a sense of awe and wonder.

The ability to astonish and create awe in a child requires little expense. But it does take planning. Parents who want to have a wonderful summer (BTW – the word wonderful means excellent and marvelous) need to think about what they can do to break out of the day-to-day doldrums and add a little spice of excitement. As mentioned, a well-placed question or comment can stimulate imagination. A change of routine can also create excitement (like letting the children plan meals or cook a new recipe). Supplying your home with craft ideas and natural art supplies (glue, twine, twigs, pinecones, flowers) can spur children’s ingenuity.

Be aware that there are actions that will surely derail your attempts to give your kids a wonderful summer. The first is to leave them to their own devices with absolutely no direction. Unguided time is an invitation to disaster. Children are tempted to become idle and wonder less when parents provide no context for their children – no boundaries or expectations for their time. They often default to canned entertainment that requires no imagination at all. Or, they are lulled into exploring the dark sides of life.

Unbridled access to the media is the other killjoy to summer fun. Endless hours of electronic use retard one’s sense of wonder. It severely limits one’s interactions with others and the natural world, resulting in suspending one’s mindfulness. While it is true that the internet can be wisely used for investigation and research, it should always be regulated and monitored.

One last warning, imagination can get messy. Creating awe and wonder involves movement and rearranging and planning and tools and more movement... A wonderful summer usually means more dirt and grime with each experiment and project.

## Here is your Summer Challenge

The challenge for the summer of 2015 is to find ample ways to astonish your children. If you go to [twl4parents.com/june-challenge-activity](http://twl4parents.com/june-challenge-activity) you will find a list of ideas to stimulate your children’s imaginations. Most of the ideas will ask you to invest your time rather than your money. All will give you a shot at returning to your childhood and a time when life was easier. Enjoy your kids’ break from school.



Are you ready to meet this month’s challenge? Give it a try! You’ll find that this activity can create a memorable summer for your children, and perhaps for you as well. This challenge is just a small part of good Catholic parenting. Visit [www.twl4parents.com](http://www.twl4parents.com) for more strategies that will help you become the best parent you can be. And for the best systematic approach to parenting, consider purchasing the Teaching the Way of Love program, which can be found at the same website.

This article series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, authors of the Teaching the Way of Love home study series for parents. Find out more at [www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love](http://www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love).