



## Teaching the Way of Love

### Parenting With the Heart of Christ

For parents whose  
children are  
approaching puberty.



*Parents should always strive to give example and witness with their own lives to fidelity to God and one another in the marriage covenant. Their example is especially decisive in adolescence, the phase when young people are looking for lived and attractive behavior models.*  
*Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality #102*

Whether you are a fan of football or not, it is likely that you recognize the name of Vince Lombardi.

Lombardi, who was the head coach of the Green Bay Packers in the 1960s, transformed a rag tag team of men into one of the finest football teams in history. In fact, his legendary style of coaching is memorialized in the Super Bowl trophy that bears his name. Why did Vince Lombardi receive so much recognition in the world of football? The answer lies in the fact that he focused on what he knew to be best and used his leadership skills to focus his players on the same.

Lombardi often credited his ability to seek what was best to his parents. His father, Harry, was a butcher who worked as hard as he played. And his mother, Matilda, surrounded Vince with unavoidable family affection, commotion, and Catholic tradition. Both Harry and Matilda witnessed to Vince a fidelity to God, the necessity of hard work and family structure through their marriage and principled living.

Harry and Matilda considered the practice of faith to be foundational to their family which meant that daily mass and prayer framed each day. In addition, they created a daily routine that provided order – a rhythm and flow – to their family life. They ascribed to a “division of labor” within the home which meant that Vince was assigned his own set of chores and responsibilities. And, they agreed that work done well should be celebrated with the freedom to play and enjoy activities.

The Lombardi family story presents us with a wonderful example of what it means to provide the best for one’s children. If you analyze their family dynamic, four main elements emerge; faith, order, responsibility, and celebration. Let’s take a closer look at each of these factors.

Faith is trust that what God has revealed to us about himself is true, and it leads us to the awareness of God’s almighty power. Families who are centered on faith are more likely to hear God’s word, act with moral discretion and rejoice in the dignity of humanity. Families who frequently receive the sacraments, recite family prayers, and dedicate themselves to

Catholic education, establish a focus for their children on what is right and good.

Order refers to the arrangement of our lives to produce a sense of peace and security. Order is in contrast to chaos and strife in the family. When parents want to provide what is best they have to concentrate on developing an order in the family that reflects the reasonableness and faithfulness of God. What would a well-ordered family look like? It begins with clearly defined roles for the chores and tasks that need to be done. There is clear but not overbearing parental authority. (If you can, go back to the [Embrace Parenthood](#) program and review the first segment entitled, Authority). An orderly family has open lines of communication that allow for problem solving without shouting and fighting. Finally, in a well-ordered home, the physical appearance of the home is clean and organized. All of these items lead to a “right” order that sequences events, routines and relationships so that the family can flourish.

Responsibilities bring the best out of a family – albeit through work and sacrifice. There are two different ways to look at a family’s ability to “respond ably.” The first is to identify what a person should do for the betterment of the family and the second is to be clear about how a person should do what they do. Both are necessary in achieving what is best. As a family, being aware of the moral and social obligations due to society help us live in peace and harmony.

The final element of celebration brings joy to a family. Celebration is the confirmation of love within the family. It is the expression of delight in both the small and grand accomplishments that happen within the family. Celebrations remind everyone that they are a community of persons and share a common purpose. They strengthen the bond between family members and promote goodwill.

Providing the best for a family includes faith, order, responsibility and celebration. These four ingredients are universally important to any parents who want their children to be happy, healthy and holy. Let’s take a practical look at how each of these elements can help you provide what is best for your family.

**F**rom the DVD (WATCH THE CLIP THAT CORRESPONDS WITH THIS SEGMENT.)

Faith, order, responsibility, and celebration are the \_\_\_\_\_ of strong Catholic family life.

Create a \_\_\_\_\_ presence of God in your home with sacred art and through your joyful witness to the Catholic faith.

\_\_\_\_\_ takes the form of routines that help the family to flourish and live in harmony.

Children and parents should both have household chores for which they are \_\_\_\_\_.

Celebration is an act of love that recognizes the \_\_\_\_\_ of those involved.

## **C**ontinue the Discussion

**Read and reflect on the following questions and examples.**

1. Compare your home to that of your parents or grandparents. Which one(s) displayed objects of faith for all to see in their home? Has the practice of decorating with religious art increased or decreased since you were a child? Explain.
2. If you were to ask one of your children to describe how you demonstrate a love of God, what do you think they would say? What would you like them to say?
3. How can an orderly home create time for a family to celebrate?
4. What challenges does a parent face in establishing a set of responsibilities for an orderly home? How can these challenges be overcome?
5. Which do you think is more important – providing the best for your family or trying to make your family perfect? Explain.

# Make a Plan

Providing the best for your children begins with the four foundational principles of faith, order, responsibility and celebration. This activity will help you assess how firmly these values are integrated into your family life. Complete the three sections below.

## FAITH

1. Where is God's presence physically "visible" in your home? Walk through your home and look for objects that help you think of God and your faith. What did you see? If the scope of God's visible presence is limited in your home, how can you make it more prominent?
2. How do your actions reveal God's love to your family members? Pick three consecutive days this week and track how you revealed God's love in your words, actions and deeds. At the end of each day, reflect on how you did by asking yourself, "How well did I share Christ's love to my family today?"

## ORDER and RESPONSIBILITY

Complete the table on the next page. List all the chores that establish order in your home. We have provided several chores common to all households with space below them to add those that are unique to your family. Once you have finalized your list, determine how often the chore needs to be done (daily, weekly, monthly...). Finally, identify the person or persons in your family who are responsible for each chore. When you are done, make sure to share this with your family.

Remember that it is up to you to teach your children how to do each of the chores on the list. It is never a good idea to assume they know what you expect. And, all children should know the positive outcomes of completing the chores as well as the negative consequences of letting a chore go unfinished.

Basic Chore List	How Often	Who is Responsible
Make the bed		
Put clothing away (not thrown around)		
Put toys or personal items where they belong		
Clean the bathroom		
Help with meal preparation		
Clean up after the meal		
Take out trash/garbage		
Wash/vacuum floors		
Sort clothing for laundry		
Put laundry away		

## CELEBRATION

Celebration is the confirmation of love within the family. Answer the following questions.

1. How does your family have fun together? What do you do as a family that delights *everyone* and creates joy?

2. When was the last time that you planned an activity with your entire family that lasted more than an hour? What did you do?

3. What family activity could you plan in the future that includes conversation, taking turns, team work, rather than just sitting together watching some form of media?

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Bishop of LaCrosse  
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