



Teaching the Way of Love

Parenting With the Heart of Christ

For all parents
with young adults.



If the faith of a child does not develop into the faith of an adult, it can result in a view of religion that is childish, outmoded, and of no influence in adult life. We see this today in people who bring to their individual lives, work, businesses, professions, and politics, a faith they learned as a child.

In every sense, it's a mismatch.

~Bernard Lonergan, S. J.

Where do you want your child to go, Harvard or Heaven? While this may seem like a silly question there is something behind it that every parent should contemplate. What is the trajectory that you want for your child? Is it to be successful in this life or to achieve eternal life?

Let's be clear. There is nothing wrong with wanting a child to get accepted to a prestigious university. It is possible for a young person to pass through Harvard on the way to Heaven. But what parents need to consider is which of these two is more important. Is it more important to set one's sights on earthly success or is it better to set one's focus on returning to Our Almighty Father?

Parenting for worldly success in today's world is very different from parenting for eternal salvation. It requires that the parents buy into secular thought and relativism. Secular thought means that parents will allow their children to think for themselves and create their own standards. They will be directed to invent their own rules of morality with an understanding that these rules can change. Relativism is the acceptance that what is right for one person is not necessarily right for another. That is why parents who want success for their children here on earth will promote diversity and tolerance. They will expose their children to every possible lifestyle and activity so that they are not limited nor held back.

Accessing worldly gain will also include an "enlightened" understanding of God and faith. The Bible will be considered literature rather than the Word of God. It should be read like any classic but never considered the basis for a life well lived. And God will be reduced to a thing rather than a person. God will be considered a universal force that could be eternal if someone can conclusively prove God exists. Human reason and experience will be the bedrock of any decision which means that faith will be directed towards oneself rather than towards an eternal Supreme Being.

A quest to achieve all that this world has to offer will include the creation of a career path that is based on what the young

person enjoys doing. Parents will help the child build this path by reducing all of the hardships and removing all of the obstacles. They will ensure that the youth feels motivated and excited by applauding any effort that may advance towards that livelihood.

How does this compare with parenting for eternal salvation? The most obvious difference is that parents who want their children to spend eternity in Heaven will acknowledge God's existence each and every day. They will leave no doubt that all that is found on earth is a gift from God. They will show gratitude for these gifts and cultivate that sense of praise for the Almighty in their children. And, they will participate in a faith community. They will make the effort to become part of a parish, attend Mass, and joyfully worship in community with others. Parents with an everlasting focus will desire the grace of the sacraments and find peace in God's unconditional love.

Parents who want more for their young people than this world offers will pray. They will let their children see them offer prayers of praise and adoration, petition and thanksgiving. They will teach their children to pray and delight in doing so.

Godly parents will live by and teach their children God's standards that empower us to determine what is right and wrong. They will not waiver on the Ten Commandments but rather strive to live according to them. They will accept the crosses that they are given and bear their loads joyfully. They will not complain either that life is unfair or that they have to suffer, because they know that this world is fallen. It is not the final destination for a person created in the image and likeness of God.

Finally, parents who set their gaze on God's will know that connecting their children with the Creator is the only thing that truly matters. They will focus on helping their children live according to God's will and build the Kingdom of God here on earth. These parents will help their children cultivate a personal desire to know, love and serve God.

So, what will it be Mom and Dad? Where do you want your child to end up? Heaven or Harvard? Which one matters more?

From the DVD (WATCH THE CLIP THAT CORRESPONDS WITH THIS SEGMENT.)

The best answers to life's biggest questions come from _____.

We can discern God's will through _____ events, through _____ and _____ of others and through the gentle promptings of the _____.

There are three different levels of discernment:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Daily discernment is an exercise of _____ that helps us make the best decisions each day.

Vocational discernment helps us determine how God is _____ us to live; as a _____, _____, or _____ person.

Our mission is how we are called to use our _____ and _____ to serve the family of God.

Parents can help their children discern in five ways.

1. Instill a habit of _____.
2. _____ the Ten Commandments.
3. _____ for God working in their life.
4. Look for _____ that show you the direction God is leading them.
5. _____ in God.

Continue the Discussion

Read and reflect on the following questions and examples.

1. What does it mean to be in the world but not of the world?
2. What role does faith play in the life of your family, specifically your children?
3. When your children need to find the truth, where are they most likely to go: to God and their faith or to a secular outlet?
4. What makes it difficult to share your faith with your family? With your co-workers? With your neighbors? What would make it easier to share your faith?
5. Today's culture wants your children to believe that they are self-sufficient and without a need for a faith in God. Is this what you want? Explain.

Make a Plan

For The Parent

Parents are the first educators for their children in matters of faith and this reality can be overwhelming – especially when children get older and are able to ask deep, probing questions about life. That is why parents are encouraged to become lifelong learners of the faith themselves. The plan for this segment is to help identify how well you know the basics of the Catholic faith and then provide you with resources to learn what you might not know.

Begin by answering the 15 questions below without the help from any resources. When you are done, go to www.twl4parents.com/what-matters-answers and check your answers for their completeness. Then, ask your child to complete his or her worksheet. When they are done, share what you have learned. Together, strengthen your faith and your ability to discuss it.

1. Who are the three persons of the Holy Trinity?
2. What is the one main reason that Jesus came to earth?
3. What are the two sources of Divine Revelation (sources that reveal God and His truth to us?)
4. Name and define the three theological virtues.
5. What does the word liturgy mean? How do we celebrate the liturgy?
6. What are the seven sacraments? Which are the sacraments of initiation? Which are the sacraments of healing? Which are the sacraments of service?
7. Name and define the four cardinal virtues.
8. What is sin and what does it do to a person?
9. What does a person have to do to achieve the Kingdom of Heaven?
10. Define grace and explain how a person acquires grace.
11. What is the main purpose of prayer?
12. What are the different ways that you can pray?
13. Which prayer reveals what the Catholic Faith believes?
14. What is a catechism and how does it help you understand your Faith?
15. What is the ultimate goal of living a life of Faith as a Catholic?

As you continue to move towards adulthood, you will want to know the truth about life and love. You will have to answer questions about the meaning of life, like who are you and why you are here on earth at this time in history. Where will you find the truthful answers to these questions?

The Catholic Church teaches that God is the source of the truth and the answers you seek will be found in Him and in the practice of the faith. So, how well do you know your faith? How strong is your relationship with God? To find out, answer the 15 questions below without the use of any resources (no books, internet searches or peeking at your parent's answers). When you are done, compare your answers with your parents'. Together, strengthen your faith and your ability to discuss it.

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Bishop of LaCrosse
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