



2018-2019

Syllabus Handout

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# 1 Who am I to Judge?

## Objective

Pope Francis famously made this statement regarding priests with same sex attraction. But what underlies this quote? As Francis makes clear in context of this quote and in other writings, the Catholic church and we as individuals must continuously show mercy to those around us (and ourselves) who are broken, failing, and need healing, even as we urge each other to live virtuously in communion with God. As the Pope states, we are all sinners and in need of God’s mercy. Some consider Catholics/Christians judgmental and intolerant. Can we live lives of mercy while upholding the teachings of our faith?

## Song Suggestion:

They’ll Know We Are Christians (Blue 476; Red 728)

## Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

### John: 8:3-11

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?” This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” And once more he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus looked up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again.”

### Catechism 2478

To avoid rash judgment, everyone should be careful to interpret insofar as possible his neighbor’s thoughts, words, and deeds in a favorable way:

Every good Christian ought to be more ready to give a favorable interpretation to another’s statement than to condemn it. But if he cannot do so, let him ask how the other understands it. And if the latter understands it badly, let the former correct him with love. If that does not suffice, let the Christian try all suitable ways to bring the other to a correct interpretation so that he may be saved.

## Vignette

You are heading to the annual family Thanksgiving dinner at your sister’s home. It has been a hard year for your sister as her husband had an affair. Your sister and brother-in-law (who you never really liked) are back together now after much counseling. Your nephew and his husband will also be there along with another partner, who is transgender, who just moved in with them. You’re not sure but your niece, who is struggling with a heroin addiction, may also be there. As you drive, you are trying to figure out how to respond to each of these difficult relationships. (Taken from a real-life situation.)

## Questions for large/small group

1. Each of us is made in God’s image. Is it hard for you to see this truth in certain people? (or yourself)  
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2. Each of us is also a sinner in need of God’s mercy. Despite this truth, do we sometimes think better of ourselves than other “sinners”?

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3. Are there certain groups of people that you have a hard time being around because they don't agree with your values or beliefs (democrats, republicans, illegal immigrants, people who want to build the wall, people who listen to talk radio, pro-choice feminists, addicts, homeless, etc... you get the idea.)

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4. Is it really possible to "love the sinner but hate the sin?" in practical ways. In particular, how can we do this in our own families--children, siblings, parents? Please share your successes and struggles with the group.

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5. How can we uphold Christian principles in the marketplace and the public square without coming off as self-righteous? Is that even possible? Think about the Christian cake artist in Colorado who declined to make a cake celebrating a gay wedding. He was willing to sell the couple any cake, but would not decorate it according to their wishes. He was not vindictive about it but stood by his moral/religious convictions. His case went all the way to the Supreme Court where he won 7-2, but he suffered much and lost a lot of business. The prosecution was reprimanded by the court for harassing the baker. What would you do?

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## Action Plan

1. Is there someone in your work or home life that you tend to judge harshly? Work on your attitude toward them as you remember the mercy you have been shown by God and others.

## Author

Dave Rahner

## 2 Open Mic

## 3 The Sacrament of Confirmation: What It Means and Why It Is Still Relevant

### Objective

Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation are the three sacraments of initiation. As Catholic parents, we celebrate moments in our children's lives. Baptism and First Communion are celebrated with big family parties and gifts. We pick Godparents that we think will assist us in raising our children in the faith. But, what about the sacrament of Confirmation? The sacrament of Confirmation confers a character. By it, the baptized continue their path of Christian initiation. They are enriched with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and are more closely linked to the Church. They are made strong and more firmly obliged by word and deed to witness to Christ and to spread and defend the faith.

### Song Suggestion

The Summons or God Has Chosen Me (Blue 166; Red 669)

### Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

#### Acts 8:14-17

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

#### Joshua 1:9

I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

#### Catechism 1285

Baptism, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the "sacraments of Christian initiation," whose unity must be safeguarded. It must be explained to the faithful that the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. For "by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed."

#### Catechism 1289

Very early, the better to signify the gift of the Holy Spirit, an anointing with perfumed oil (chrism) was added to the laying on of hands. This anointing highlights the name "Christian," which means "anointed" and derives from that of Christ himself whom God "anointed with the Holy Spirit." This rite of anointing has continued ever since, in both East and West. For this reason the Eastern Churches call this sacrament Chrismation, anointing with chrism, or myron which means "chrism." In the West, the term Confirmation suggests that this sacrament both confirms and strengthens baptismal grace.

### Vignette

My wife and I raised our children in the Catholic faith. We celebrated Baptism and First Communion with large family parties. By the time the kids were ready for Confirmation, we were busy with family activities, school and work. Because our kids went to Catholic school, we relied on them to prepare our kids for Confirmation. I don't recall getting involved in the process or guiding my children in choosing a confirmation name or sponsor. Being in a different place in my faith journey now, I wish I had taken children's confirmation more seriously and more involved in their preparation for Confirmation.

## Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

1. Did you take the sacrament of Confirmation as seriously as Baptism and First Communion for your children?

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2. Why should Catholics be Confirmed?

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3. What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

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4. What is a confirmation name all about?

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5. What are confirmation sponsors for?

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6. What if my child decides not to be confirmed at this time?

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## Action Plan

If your children (or grandchildren) have not yet been confirmed:

1. Educate yourself on the meaning and importance of Confirmation
2. Actively take part in your child's (or grandchild's) preparation for Confirmation

## Author

Tony Heekin

## Resources

1. <https://saintthomaslb.org/confirmation>
2. <https://catholicmom.com/2012/03/25/how-to-spiritually-prepare-your-teen-for-confirmation/>
3. <https://www.osv.com/Article/TabId/493/ArtMID/13569/ArticleID/11392/Confirmation-Questions-and-Answers.aspx>
4. <https://www.catholicparents.org/preparation-sacrament-confirmation/>
5. <http://rediscover.archspm.org/belonging/why-is-confirmation-important-what-effect-does-it-have-on-me/>

## 4 Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius as a Guide for Men to Undertake

### Objective

“Have I ever felt a deep yearning for an inner peace that sets me searching for it? Have I looked for it in a vacation or quietness or financial security, yet sensed the peace I am after is a lot deeper than these? Have I been seeking meaning in the big picture, one that not only makes sense of the universe and humanity but also gives me the energy and inner peace to live graciously within it? When such movements tug at my soul, it is likely I am looking for the inner peace given to those who walk in the way of God.” *The First Spiritual Exercises*, St. Ignatius Loyola adapted by Michael Hanson, SJ.

### Song Suggestion

I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say (Blue 209; Red 622)

### Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

#### Acts 17:26-27

“He made from one the whole human race to dwell on the entire surface of the earth, and he fixed the ordered seasons and the boundaries of their regions, so that people might seek God, even perhaps grope for him and find him, though indeed he is not far from any one of us.”

#### Matthew 13:23

“...But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred, or sixty or thirtyfold.”

#### Catechism 2560

“If you knew the gift of God!” The wonder of prayer is revealed beside the well where we come seeking water: there, Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God’s desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of gods thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him.

#### Catechism 2567

God calls man first. Man may forget his Creator or hide far from his face; he may run after idols or accuse the deity of having abandoned him; yet the living and true God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer. In prayer, the faithful God’s initiative of love always comes first; our own first step is always a response. As God gradually reveals himself and reveals man to himself, prayer appears as a reciprocal call, a covenant drama. Through words and actions, this drama engages the heart. It unfolds throughout the whole history of salvation.

### Vignette

When I was assigned the syllabus topic of “Spiritual exercises, like St. Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises” I must confess I was not consciously seeking the answer to obtaining inner peace. My first thought was, I don’t know much about this topic.

Then my wife said she recorded a movie from EWTN “St. Ignatius Soldier, Sinner, Saint”, we watched it. It was about St. Ignatius’ life story from soldier who is injured in battle and feels disgraced to finding the Lord then living as a saint. This is a movie I highly recommend but be warned it will get you thinking seriously about your life and ways to become closer to Our Lord.

Energized by the movie I began my search for how to approach this assignment. I read about St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises,( First Spiritual Exercises, Full Spiritual Exercises) and other writings by such notables as St. Pope John Paul II's "The Way to Christ-Spiritual Exercises" a retreat for early college students.

I began to think about the opening quote and how I do feel the tug on my soul but do nothing more than say the rosary and read the Bible. Don't get me wrong the rosary and reading scripture are grace filled activities, but thoughtfully "searching" for inner peace by a structured approach? That has such an unfamiliar but refreshing feeling.

**Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion**

Are you familiar with the St Ignatius Spiritual Exercises, or any other similar exercises? Please share with the group.

- 1. What concerns might you have about embarking on a challenging venture of a daily routine over weeks and beyond, for the rewards that can be gained?

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- 2. Do you have a spiritual director? St. Ignatius recommends having one as part of following the spiritual exercises.

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- 3. What other ways might you suggest to get and keep going should you decide to embark on following a spiritual exercise guide?

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- 4. Do you know anyone who has followed the spiritual exercises and still uses them on a regular basis?

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**Action Plan**

- 1. Do some research on your own about various spiritual exercises to see if one clicks with you.
- 2. Team up with another member of your group and commit to a spiritual exercise program, maybe meet once a week for the duration of the program to discuss your progress etc.
- 3. Consider finding a spiritual director. Ask others in your group about how and where to find one.

**Author**

Nick Carpinello

**Resources**

- 1. Movie: St. Ignatius Soldier, Sinner, Saint --Check EWTN for replay times
- 2. Book- "The Way to Christ—Spiritual Exercises" (Saint) Pope John Paul II
- 3. Google- Search Catholic Spiritual Exercises or Catholic Spiritual Directors, you will find an endless number of selections.

## 5 Dogma or Not Dogma?

### Objective

As Catholics, our faith is grounded in more than just scripture. We rely on the deposit of faith, handed down by the apostles, and a collection of teachings that have endured great debate among the fathers of the church over the centuries. What do you think of when you hear the word Dogma or Doctrine? Some would say we are a church of many rules, but we shouldn't confuse *rules* with *teachings*, or *teachings* with *opinions*... Infallibility is **not** universal to everything the Church says or does. Today's topic should be an invitation to embrace the deep deposit of church teachings, while realizing there is room for reasoned disagreement on many moral issues of our times.

### Song Suggestion

The Summons (Red book only). Provide copies?

### Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

#### Matthew 16:15-19

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you lose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

#### Ephesians 4

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of **all who is over all and through all and in all**

#### Catechism 88

The Church's Magisterium exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest extent when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes, in a form obliging the Christian people to an irrevocable adherence of faith, truths contained in divine Revelation or also when it proposes, in a definitive way, truths having a necessary connection with these.

#### Catechism 89

There is an organic connection between our spiritual life and the dogmas. Dogmas are lights along the path of faith; they illuminate it and make it secure. Conversely, if our life is upright, our intellect and heart will be open to welcome the light shed by the dogmas of faith.

### Vignette

As the curtain came up, Brian could feel the nervousness increase. He had never been on a gameshow before, and Jeopardy was always a 50-50 proposition whether he knew the topic or not. He narrowed in on the board and his eyes lit up when he saw a topic that seemed like a shoe-in:

"Alex, I'll take 'Practice, Doctrine or Dogma' for 1000"

Alex replied: "Priests must remain celibate and may not marry"

Brian: "What is 'Doctrine'!"

Alex: Ooh, no, I'm sorry, that is actually a practice that can be changed.

“OK How about ‘Practice, Doctrine or Dogma’ for 500”

Alex: “Catholics must abstain from eating meat on Fridays during Lent” Brian: “What is ‘Dogma’?”

Alex: “Incorrect. It’s a *practice*. It also can be changed”

“Shoot! OK, give me ‘Practice, Doctrine or Dogma’ for 300”

Alex: “The concept of Purgatory, for those burdened with venial sins or temporal punishment due to sins”

Brian: “What is ‘Practice’”

Alex: “Time’s up! I’m sorry, that too is incorrect. Purgatory is in fact, a dogma of the Church. I’m afraid you’re going home today empty handed, but we’ve got some great parting gifts for you...”

## Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion

1. How well do you know the Church’s proclaimed teachings and dogmas? Did you know that some practices of the church CAN be revised?

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2. Although we owe our Holy Father our devotion and an attentive ear, it is actually permissible to disagree with the pope on how we go about achieving justice in our world. There are no dogmas or doctrines spelling out required belief regarding immigration policies, gun control, economic systems, etc. How do you form an authentically Catholic opinion in such cases of “prudential judgment”?

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3. As practicing Catholics, we must assent to the church’s infallible teachings. Do you find this burdensome that we are compelled to believe certain things on faith, or is it a relief to know that *some* things are settled once for all?

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4. What role does a sense of wonder and awe play in dogmas such as the Incarnation or the Trinity?

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## Action Plan

1. Commit to reading an excerpt from the Catechism on a topic of your choice.

## Resources

1. <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/dogma-is-not-a-dirty-word>
2. <https://catholicexchange.com/difference-between-doctrine-and-dogma>
3. <http://simplecatholictruth.com/2017/07/26/what-catholics-must-believe-dogma-doctrine-or-discipline/>

## Author

Jeff Farmer

## 6 Do You See the Childlike Innocence in Others?

### Objective

When you look into a child's eyes, you can see his or her innocence. There is a precious quality that a child possesses. With this innocence, children have a joyous enthusiasm for life and can freely receive God's love. As we age, we seem to lose joyous enthusiasm, or at least forget about it, as we encounter life experiences that clutter our minds and harden our souls.

### Song Suggestion

Gather Us In (Blue 150; Red 743)

### Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings:

#### Matthew 18:1-6, 19:14

At that time the disciples approached Jesus and said, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me. "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

#### Luke 18:17

Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.

#### Mark 10:13-16

And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

#### Catechism 526

To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom. For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more: to become "children of God" we must be "born from above" or "born of God". Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us. Christmas is the mystery of this "marvelous exchange": O marvelous exchange! Man's Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity.

### Vignette

Tom was a long-time parishioner at Guardian Angels, even attending daily Mass there. Tom always had a big, joyous smile for everyone he encountered, especially newcomers. He was the first person I met there at GA, and he welcomed me into the church community. Each time Tom greeted me I immediately would think of MT 25: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." Tom really lived his faith with childlike innocence.

### Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion

1. By looking for the childlike innocence others, can you change the way you think and feel about others, especially those who are your adversaries or those with whom you disagree?

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2. By doing so, can you bring yourself closer to God and closer to heaven?  
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3. Are there things we can learn from our young children or grandchildren about God?  
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4. When we see our children becoming disillusioned by life's setbacks how can we reassure them that they are children of God and to maintain their joyous enthusiasm?  
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5. What does it mean for you to humble yourself like a child in God's presence, as Jesus says in Luke 18:17, to accept the kingdom of God like a child?  
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6. What does the Catechism mean when it says, "Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us."?  
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7. Can you imagine how difficult it was for God to humble himself and become a child born in a stable?  
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**Action Plan**

1. Next time you have a conflict with someone, try to see him or her as a God sees them.
2. Reflect on how life experience has impacted your enthusiasm for God's kingdom

**Authors**

Raul Tellez, Vince Phelan

## 7 Best Ways to Share Your Faith with Your Kids When They're 10, 20, or 40 (Thursday Evening 6:03pm, East Heritage)

### Objective

Fathers in different stages of parenting have questions and concerns about how to share the faith with their children. Children at 10, 20 and 40 also have questions and concerns about matters of faith as they mature. Fathers' Team members are very effective in sharing wisdom and inspiration. We can be always be better witnesses to God's love and mercy.

### Song Suggestion

They Will Know We are Christians (Blue 476; Red 728)

### Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

#### MT 19:13-14

Then children were brought to Him that He might lay His hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked them, but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these"

#### John 17:15

Jesus said, "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one."

#### Proverbs 22:6

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it".

#### Catechism 2226

Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God.

### Vignette

Forty-five-year-old Tim is the single father of three kids, ages 10-21. He is struggling to work his job and take care of his kids at home. Lately he's noticing his oldest is resisting going to church with him on Sunday and the other children are listening to her arguing with her dad.

Also, Tim's realizing that he values more than ever the wisdom and guidance of his own father whom he wishes would open up more about his faith.

### Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion

1. Have you been tempted to not take responsibility for sharing the faith with your young children, thinking that their good Catholic school will take care of it?

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2. What are some successes you have had in sharing your faith with your children, in whichever stage of life they are?

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3. For fathers of 20-year-olds: Ask yourself, "What do I fear? What is my deepest concern, when my adult son/daughter says s/he doesn't believe in \_\_\_\_\_."

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4. Do you agree with Brandon Vogt ( author of the Word on Fire article), that you shouldn't force your college age child to go to Mass with the family when he's home for a visit?

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5. For fathers over 40, What do you wish your own father had shared with you about his faith when you were 10, 20 or now?

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6. Is Proverbs 22:6 too simplistic: (train up a child and when he is old he won't depart from it, really??)

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**Action Plan**

- 1. This week think about how your faith impacts your life. Look for ways to share your thoughts with your child of any age.
- 2. Talk with your children about their successes and struggles in going back to school, or in their job. Do they see God in the events of their lives?

**Author**

Vince Phelan

**Resources**

- 1. A great article for faith sharing ideas for parents of young kids  
<https://www.uscatholic.org/life/everyday-spirituality/2012/02/show-and-tell-six-ways-teach-your-children-faith>
- 2. A thought provoking article, includes a link to a free 4 part video series about leading your adult child back to the faith!  
<https://www.wordonfire.org/resources/blog/3-ways-not-to-lead-your-fallen-away-child-back-to-the-church/4969/>
- 3. An article from a youth minister for parents of teenagers and young adults  
<https://faithit.com/parents-push-their-kids-away-from-god-realizing/>
- 4. For parenting 20, 40 and beyond!  
<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/when-your-adult-child-chooses-a-different-path/>

## 8 Catholicism and End-of-Life Decisions

### Objective

We all will be with a family member or friend, and eventually our self, who is facing end of life. This can be a very difficult emotional time of decisions and frankly, knowing what to say or do. It is essential to prepare now for this time by understanding basic Catholic teachings, decisions to be made now for this eventual event, and learn from information available about what is most important to persons who are dying.

### Song Suggestion

I Am the Bread of Life (Blue 202; Red 822 Vs. 1, 2, 4)

### Bible Readings

#### Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

#### Deuteronomy 31:6

Be strong and steadfast; have no fear or dread of them, for it is the Lord, your God, who marches with you; he will never fail you or forsake you.

#### Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, on your own intelligence rely not; In all your ways be mindful of him, and he will make straight your paths.

#### Catechism 1020

The Christian who unites his own death to that of Jesus views it as a step towards him and an entrance to everlasting life. When the Church for the last time speaks Christ's words of pardon and absolution over the dying Christian, seals him for the last time with a strengthening anointing, and gives him Christ in viaticum as nourishment for the journey, she speaks with gentle assurance .....

### Vignette

Two Couples: Couple 1 had completed Advanced Health Care Directives and Health Power of Attorney and considered the content of the Catholic Directive in doing so. They were familiar with Catholic teachings related to medical-ethics and had located several good books that pointed out important things to do when a loved one was facing end of life. They found these books very helpful considering the change in cultural beliefs and in our country's individual moral and ethical beliefs. Couple 2 did not feel comfortable discussing this topic and have not studied, decided or taken any actions Couple 1 had addressed. One thing they did know was that one can never be sure when being prepared will be needed. One thing they didn't realize was that at that moment it will be difficult, perhaps even impossible, to catch up!

### Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion

1. Are you knowledgeable of these end-of-life care issues?
  - Ordinary or Proportionate means versus Extraordinary or Disproportionate means
  - Should excessive burden or expense be considered
  - Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide
  - Nutrition and Hydration

Find the answers at: <https://www.ncbcenter.org/resources/position-papers-ncbc/> end of life

2. How has care for end of life individuals changed over the last 2-3 generations? During this same time, how has the US cultural emphasis and beliefs changed and impacted decisions that affect this care?

Find answers in: Chapter 8 –“How to Defend the Faith; without Raising Your Voice” by Austen Ivereigh & Kathryn Jean Lopez

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3. Aside from providing medical care what are six important things to do/provide for your family member facing end of life?

Find answers in: “Being Mortal” by Atul Gawande (Illness, Medicine and What Matters in the End)

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4. Do you and your wife have an Advanced Health Care Directive and Power of Attorney for Health Care? Is it the last one modified for the State of Ohio? Have you looked at the Catholic Advanced Directive for any differences you would want to consider?

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5. What is the difference between curative care and palliative care? Once you understand this difference; do your medical care providers have on their team a palliative specialist?

For a good understanding of Palliative care see [www.VITAS.com](http://www.VITAS.com) “What is Palliative Care?”

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## Action Plan

1. This week - Discuss with your spouse, or the person that will have POA for Health, to list the things needed to consider, and plan out the steps to obtain, study and decide what needs to be prepared or revisited.
2. In small Group, each member can discuss what action had been taken during the last week to begin on Item 1.
3. If you have difficulty knowing what to say to the dying get the book “Being Mortal” and read it for insights on what the dying want.
4. If you have a living parent – discuss with them now what they want when they reach the end of life needs.

## Author

Clyde Dial

Review: Dave Rahner

## 9 Prayer Life

### Objective

We will stress the importance of daily prayer and to improve one's prayer life through meditative prayer. In life, breathing is vital. In our quest for eternal life, prayer is vital. Through daily prayer, we develop daily relationships with God, the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints. Making a daily connection with the Blessed Trinity is more important than breathing because daily prayer is our connection to Jesus, our Lord and Savior, as well as the Almighty Father, and the Holy Spirit. Requesting intercessory help from the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints adds power to our prayer requests since they are special Friends of Jesus.

Meditative prayer is especially powerful since the person praying uses all senses to connect with God. Meditating on God's Word through Lectio Divina or meditating on the lives of Jesus and Mary when praying the Rosary or meditating on the Passion and Death of Jesus in reciting the Divine Mercy Chaplet are effective ways to make a special connection with Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

### Song Suggestion

How Can I Keep from Singing (Blue 192, Vs. 1, 2, 5; Red \_\_\_ Vs. 1, 2, 4)

### Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

#### 1 Thess 5: 16-18

Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you

#### Eph 6: 10-11, 18

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

#### Catechism 2558

"Great is the mystery of Faith." .....This mystery, then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. This relationship is prayer.

#### Catechism 2559

"Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or requesting good things from God." (St John Damascene).... Humility is the foundation of prayer.

#### Catechism 2638

As in the prayer of petition, every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving.

#### Catechism 2761

The Lord's Prayer is "truly the summary of the whole Gospel" (Tertullian)

### Vignette

Bob is a busy Father and Husband and claims that he does not have time to pray. Bob is very involved with work and with his kids' activities such as driving them to soccer practice, attending their school functions, and helping his wife around the home. Are there opportunities to pray that Bob is missing? Does he pray when driving to or from work or walking from one meeting to another? Does Bob pray when he is traveling for work when is waiting in line to go through airport security or when he flying to another city? Does he pray the Rosary while driving to Kroger to pick up some groceries? Is there enough time to pray three

decades on his drive to Kroger and two decades on his return trip? Or, for shorter errands, is Bob able offer a prayer of thanksgiving or recite the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Does Bob pray when he walks the dog or cuts the grass? Does he say Grace at every meal at work and at home? Does he pray with his kids when he puts them to bed? Is Bob really too busy to pray or are their numerous opportunities to pray even in our very busy lives? If Bob has a genuine will to pray daily, will Bob be able to find opportunities to pray? Yes, Bob has numerous opportunities to pray if he wants to pray. What is your excuse? No excuse, Sir!!!!

**Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion**

1. What does it mean to “pray constantly” mean? How can I do this in my busy life? What are some opportunities to pray in my busy life?

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2. Is daily prayer as vital as breathing? Explain how and why? Describe your relationship with Jesus through daily prayer.

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3. How can we be “thankful in all circumstances” as St Paul said to the Thessalonians? How can we be thankful even in bad circumstances? Is this even possible?

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4. How can you pray memorized prayers like the Lord’s Prayer and the Hail Mary and lift your “heart and mind” in genuine prayer to God?

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5. What is meditative prayer and how do you meditate on Sacred Scripture when you pray the Rosary?

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6. What is meant by “praying to Jesus through Mary”?

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**Action Plan**

- 1. Try to meditate on God’s Word in Sacred Scripture by reading the Bible for 10 minutes and meditating for 10 minutes every day for a week.
- 2. Try praying the Rosary daily by meditating on the lives of Jesus and Mary in Sacred Scripture.

**Author**

George Cullen

**Special Note**

To illustrate how to meditate on Sacred Scripture with praying the Rosary, George Cullen is willing to do a 4-minute Lectio Divina meditation aloud so the Fathers will learn how to do this. He will do this upon request from the Small Group responsible for the presentation on Prayer Life. If interested, please contact him in person or via cell at 513 256-9900.

## 10 Open Mic

# 11 Fake News Today and in Jesus Christ's Time

## Objective

The pharisees whipped up the people of Jerusalem with “fake news” of Jesus’s blasphemy to the point of Pilate condemning Jesus to death. This was the last of countless rumors the pharisees had been spreading about Christ as He proclaimed a heavenly kingdom attained through love. Jesus preached a message of truth and loved his accusers unto His death. How are we today looking for the “truth” in what we hear? Do we let purveyors of “fake news” divide us from each other? From Christ? More importantly, are we sure of the “truth” in what we post and proclaim?

## Song Suggestion

We Have Been Told (Blue 518; Red 694)

## Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

### John 18: 37-38

So Pilate said to him, “Then you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate said to him, “What is truth?” When he had said this, he again went out to the Jews and said to them, “I find no guilt in him.”

### Timothy 2:16-19, 4:3-5

Avoid profane, idle talk, for such people will become more and more godless, and their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have deviated from the truth by saying that [the] resurrection has already taken place and are upsetting the faith of some. Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands, bearing this inscription, “The Lord knows those who are his”; and “Let everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord avoid evil.”

### John 2:9; 14: 6

Whoever says he is in the light, yet hates his brother, is still in the darkness. Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

### Ephesians 6: 13-14

Therefore, put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist on the evil day and, having done everything, to hold your ground. So stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate.

**Catechism 2492** Everyone should observe an appropriate reserve concerning persons' private lives. Those in charge of communications should maintain a fair balance between the requirements of the common good and respect for individual rights. Interference by the media in the private lives of persons engaged in political or public activity is to be condemned to the extent that it infringes upon their privacy and freedom.

**Catechism 2497** By the very nature of their profession, journalists have an obligation to serve the truth and not offend against charity in disseminating information. They should strive to respect, with equal care, the nature of the facts and the limits of critical judgment concerning individuals. They should not stoop to defamation.

**Catechism 2472** The duty of Christians to take part in the life of the Church impels them to act as witnesses of the Gospel and of the obligations that flow from it. This witness is a transmission of the faith in words and deeds. Witness is an act of justice that establishes the truth or makes it known

**Catechism 2483** Lying is the most direct offense against the truth. To lie is to speak or act against the truth in order to lead someone into error. By injuring man's relation to truth and to his neighbor, a lie offends against the fundamental relation of man and of his word to the Lord.

## Vignette

Josh felt the family gatherings had just about gotten to the point of being unbearable. One sister-in-law was constantly posting and re-posting everything she could get her hands on in support of her political positions. Of course there was a brother-in-law who consistently held the polar opposite position on every topic, and was a ready and regular poster of his side. Neither seemed to possess or have an interest in applying a “truth filter” to what they read or passed on. The result was that all the other members of the family tended to gravitate to one side or the other when the “extremists” pushed their issue de jour. The net result was that regardless of the news topic, there was a constant level of stress in room at all the family gatherings that made everyone uncomfortable. Josh struggled with how people had gotten so rigid in their beliefs and even more so in their non-acceptance of differing opinions. Was there always this divisiveness?

## Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion

1. What do you do to make sure you are getting “both sides of the story”?  
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2. Can you identify a time recently when you modified your opinion on something you believed based on a news report that turned out to be “fake”?  
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3. Do you engage in discussions with individuals who have opinions different from yours? If you do, how do you maintain a respectful degree of openness?  
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4. Few opinions are changed based on exchanging comments in posts. How do you respectfully present your opinions?  
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5. Before we speak what do we do to contemplate the real perspective of others as they hear our content and how it is delivered. Are we a loud gong or a clashing cymbal? Do we speak with love?  
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## Action Plan

Take a critical accounting of what you use to gather information....media sources, experts, influencers....and be sure that you are developing well informed opinions. Do not hesitate to engage with those who hold different opinions from yours. Do so in a respectful manner that results in a relationship that is based on a shared humanity and openness to growth.

## Author

Reid Rooney

# 12 Is “Sympathy for the Devil” (Rolling Stones) Really Sympathy for Yourself?

## Objective

It’s hard to approach this topic without making mention of the Rolling Stones infamous song “Sympathy for the Devil.” This song became an Anthem for much of the turmoil that was surrounded our Country in the late 60’s. We faced civil unrest that included protests to the Vietnam War along with the assassinations of the Kennedy’s & Dr. Martin Luther King. Did the devil cause after all of these things?

Upon further review the Rolling Stone’s song’s actually is not a magnification or glorification of the evil demonstrated by the events it portrays. Rather, the events establish the devil’s enormous power as evidence of our inferior position in relation to him. Yet, it is this inferiority that demands our sympathy; for, if we are unable to sympathize with evil, we are susceptible to falling victim to it.

## Song Suggestion

- Is There Room on the Cross for Me...Scott Miller  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kb8kVft54s>
- Amazing Grace Vs. 1, 2, 5 (Blue 36; Red 586)

## Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

### John 8:44

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

### Ephesians 6:11

Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.

### 2 Timothy 2:26

And that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

## Vignette

Satan uses many snares and traps to deceive and enslave human beings. He tricks people into doing his will by giving them alluring temptations. He enhances our natural desires, pride and selfishness. And he even convinces people that his evil ways are actually good! It takes repentance—turning from doing Satan’s will to doing God’s will—and seeking God’s help to escape from Satan’s clutches.

Flip Wilson was a gifted comedian in the early 70’s who attained some notoriety for one of his comedy routines where he proclaimed, “The Devil Made Me Do it.” Playing back this video for the large group might serve as an ice breaker for some large group discussion on the subject of the Devil & how he roams in our world today. <https://vimeo.com/165796381>

## Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion

1. As a Father, what am I doing to shield my family from the snares of the Devil?

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2. What meaning does putting on the Armor of Christ hold in my life?

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3. How does Social Media play a part in the infiltration of the Devil in my home?

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### **Action Plan**

Carve out some time this week to reflect and possibly recite this prayer as a conduit to escape the snares of the Devil: **Armor of God Prayer**

*Dear God,*

*We thank you that you hold the victory over sin and death in this world. We thank you that you came to set the captives free. We thank you for your redemptive work you've done in our lives. We thank you for freedom and the hope you bring.*

*We hold your Word of Truth as weapon against the enemy's schemes, and proclaim he does not have authority over our lives for we've been set free. Give us wisdom and discernment to recognize his traps and to stand strong against his work. Fill us fresh with the power of your Holy Spirit.*

*Today we put on the full armor to guard our lives against attack. We put on the belt of truth to protect against lies and deception. We put on the breastplate of righteousness to protect our hearts from the temptations we battle. We put the gospel of peace on our feet, so we're ready to take your light wherever you send us this day. We choose to walk in the peace and freedom of your Spirit and not be overcome with fear and anxious thoughts. We take up your shield of faith that will extinguish all the darts and threats hurled our way by the enemy. We believe in your power to protect us and choose to trust in you. We put on the helmet of salvation, which covers our minds and thoughts, reminding us we are children of the day, forgiven, set free, saved by the grace of Christ Jesus. We take up the sword of the Spirit, your very Word, the one offensive weapon given to us for battle, which has the power to demolish strongholds, alive, active, and sharper than any double-edged sword.*

*We ask that you'd remind us to pray, constantly, for all believers. We ask for your help to stay alert in a dark world. We ask for your help to be salt and light, that we'd be loving and gracious, yet unyielding to sin.*

*We ask for your help in remembering to put on your full armor every day, for you give us all that we need to stand firm in this world. Forgive us God for the times we've been unprepared, too busy to care, or trying to fight and wrestle in our own strength.*

*Thank you that we never fight alone, for you are constantly at work on our behalf, shielding, protecting, strengthening, exposing deeds of darkness, bringing to light what needs to be known, covering us from the cruel attacks we face even when we're unaware.*

*We love you Lord, we need you today. In the Powerful Name of Jesus, Amen."*

### **Author**

Bob Considine

## **13 Praying the Rosary (Bob Hilmer)**

## 14 Open Mic

# 15 Service – How Group Service Energizes Our Community and Family Faith While Serving Those in Need

## Objective

To examine how group service impacts the faith of the individual, the family, and the community perspective, and to consider why and how we should promote and extend our involvement.

## Song Suggestion

Servant Song (Red 661; Gather 285, Music Issue 374)

## Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

### 1 Peter 4:10

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve **others**, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.

### Isaiah 58:10

Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon.

### Galatians 5:13-14

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

### Catechism 1932

The duty of making oneself a neighbor to others and actively serving them becomes even more urgent when it involves the disadvantaged, in whatever area this may be. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

## Vignette

Dan was troubled by the apparent indifference of his teenage sons regarding their practice of faith, and even more by what he perceived to be their self-centered existence in general. When they were invited by their high school to participate in group service projects they chose a housing rehab project in the inner city, and asked Dan to join them. Much to Dan’s surprise and delight, he watched a transformation occur in his sons with each visit, as they grew in awareness of and empathy for the people and the neighborhood they were serving. Their initial discomfort quickly turned to curiosity, then a genuine interest. And their commitment deepened with each trip as they exchanged stories and excitement over what they were able to accomplish, and how it impacted the people they were serving. Dan delighted in seeing them work hard, have fun, and embrace the spirit of helping others. Years later both sons continue their involvement in service opportunities and one of them has returned to the church. When Dan asked his son to describe why he remains committed to service he responded, “because it is so purposeful”.

## Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion

- 1. What good does it do to serve others? Who benefits?

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2. Where does service fit in your family's priorities?

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3. Think about a service project experience you've been involved with, and describe the impact it had on someone (recipient, or giver).

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4. How has involvement in service projects stimulated faith in your family?

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5. What types of projects do you wish to get involved with but haven't yet?

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6. What is holding you back from further involvement and commitment to service?

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7. How have you been successful in building interest and commitment to service within your family?

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8. Have you ever been the recipient of servant love? How did that impact you?

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### **Action Plan**

In serving others we disturb our self-centeredness. And it is in this other-centeredness that we find God's love within us, and we recognize the imperative to share that love.

Identify a service project that you can invite your family to share in!

### **Author**

Bill Birmingham

# 16 Understanding Bread and Wine vs Body and Blood

## Objective

To help increase our awareness that our Catholic understanding of Eucharist is very different from non-Catholic views. Here is a description of the essential differences: Catholic understanding of Eucharist as “real presence” vs. “remembered presence”; Jesus Christ’s “body & blood, soul & divinity” vs. “bread & wine signifying Jesus”; “supernatural” vs. “natural”; “sacrament” vs. “symbol”. At the Last Supper Jesus said: “This is my body. . .this is my blood.” He did not say: “This is a symbol of my body & blood.”

How the bread & wine actually become Jesus Christ’s body & blood, soul & divinity is a sacred mystery (a supernatural miracle), and we need to be careful that in trying to explain it, we don’t de-mystify it to natural terms like Martin Luther and other writers before and after him did.

St. Thomas Aquinas described it using Aristotelian distinctions of “substance” (not our contemporary scientific understanding of the word meaning “material” or “matter”, but rather the Medieval Scholastic understanding of the real “essence” or “being” of something) and “accidents” (the appearances of something). So, the substance of the bread & wine is transformed to Jesus Christ’s real body & blood, soul & divinity (Council of Trent’s definitive teaching) while retaining the appearances of bread & wine. Thus, we have the philosophical term “transubstantiation” vs. “transignification”.

Why is this so important? Vatican II teaches that the Eucharist is the core of our faith and the source & summit of all of our worship. Jesus incarnates the human & divine, and He offers His total self to us in the Eucharist out of sacrificial love uniting us in holy communion with the Holy Trinity and all the angels & saints! When we truly ponder this mystery, we will never walk up to receive communion the same.

## Suggested Song

One Bread, One Body (Blue 337; Red 813)

**Suggested Kick-off:** Robert Barron’s 5-minute video on Flannery O’Connor & the Eucharist (see resources at the end of this document).

## Suggested Bible & Catechism Readings

**John 6: 32-60** (or shorter version John 6: 51-60)

### Catechism

**737** “The Holy Spirit makes present the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, in order to reconcile men, to bring them into communion with God, that they may bear much fruit.”

**1378** “In the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord.”

**1374** “The mode of Christ’s presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as ‘the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend.’ In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist ‘the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.’ This presence is called ‘real’ because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a substantial presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present.”

**1336** “The first announcement of the Eucharist divided the disciples, just as the announcement of the Passion scandalized them: ‘This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?’ The Eucharist and the Cross are **stumbling blocks**. It is the **same mystery** and it never ceases to be an occasion of division. ‘Will you also go away?’: The Lord’s question echoes through the ages, as a loving invitation to discover that only he has ‘the words of eternal life’ and that to receive in faith the gift of his Eucharist is to receive the Lord himself.”

## Vignette

A sixteen-year-old son says to his father: "I don't want to go to Mass anymore." "Why?" the father asks. "Because it's boring. I don't get anything out of it, and you look bored at Mass too!" The father hesitates and then says, "Going to the Eucharist is important because it reminds us of Jesus and all that he has done for us." The son replies, "That's horseshit. A lot of things can remind me of Jesus, not just the Mass. To hell with it!" The father at this point is dumbfounded and gets angry. Jesus says, "What loving response are you going to give your son?" "Or are you going to give up on him?" "Will you also leave me?"

## Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion

1. Will I also leave the faith because I don't understand it, or will I take the time to study the Catholic Church's actual teachings?  
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2. If I actually believe that Jesus Christ is really present here & now in the Eucharist, how will it change my behavior at Mass and at other times? Will I go to Mass more often? Will I **be more present**? More attentive and grateful?  
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3. Have I ever tried to explain to my kids about the Eucharist? Why or why not? If I did, how did it go?  
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4. Do I believe the Eucharist is the Miracle of all miracles and that it happens every day? How can I increase my faith?  
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5. Do you believe that the Eucharist is the spiritual food & drink to nourish your soul, or do you try to fill the hole in your soul with earthly pleasures that never truly satisfy? How has that worked for you?  
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6. In his book, *The Passion of the Lamb*, Thomas Acklin, OSB maintains that Jesus' passion and death on the cross and giving himself to us in the Eucharist are the highest forms of vulnerability, sacrificial love, and intimacy. How can we become more vulnerable, loving, intimate, and sacrificing in our own lives?  
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## Action Plan

1. Prepare your heart before receiving Holy Communion, and silently pray a Prayer of Thanksgiving after receiving the Lord and returning to your pew.
2. Allow yourself to be vulnerable before the Lord in an Hour of Holy Adoration.
3. Read Thomas Acklin's, *The Passion of the Lamb*, esp. Ch. 9: "Real Food, Real Drink, Real Presence."
4. Talk to your children in the car on the way to Mass about the real meaning of Eucharist.

## Resources

Bible, Catholic Catechism, Website: catholic-answers.com, *The Passion of the Lamb* by Thomas Acklin, OSB, Bishop Robert Barron's video at <https://pivotalplayersfilming.com/flannery-oconnor>

## Author

Rick Kasper

# 17 Forgiveness

## Objective

Forgiveness is one of the most powerful and healing actions one can experience.

There are a wide range of degrees of offense that call for forgiveness. Forgiveness is something we can both give and receive. Hanging on the cross Jesus forgave “for they know not what they do”. We receive his forgiveness each time we go to confession. Forgiveness can be from or to us with a spouse, child, family member, friend or even someone we do not know. Forgiveness can be exceedingly difficult on either side of the event. **Our peace and fullness of life are compromised when we refuse to forgive someone.** It is even worse when we do something unknown to others, for which we should ask for forgiveness, but cannot bring ourselves to do so. Father Pat’s homily on Saturday morning, August 4<sup>th</sup> addressed one of the consequences of refusing to forgive can be seeking revenge; totally against what God asks of us.

## Song Suggestion

Make Me a Channel of Your Peace [Verses 1, 2, 4] (Blue 368; Red 721)

## Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

### Ephesians 4:31–32

All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. [And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ.]

### Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter approaching asked him, ‘Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.’

### Luke 23:34

Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.’

### Catechism 2447

The *works of mercy* are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities and include forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently.

### Catechism 982

There is no offense, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive. There is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness, provided his repentance is honest.

## Vignette

Betty’s father had died several years before her mother was in need of continued care. She considered several places where her mother could be placed to get the care needed. After placing her mother in the place of her choice, a sister complained that it was not a good choice and a change should be made. Betty asked her sister to step up and make a change. The sister informed her she did not want to take the effort needed with that responsibility. At this point, and 14 years since then, neither has talked to the other; creating many uncomfortable times for all members of their large family.

One of the main reasons why it is hard to forgive is because it requires humility. When someone sins against us, we are hurt and that hurt can easily turn into pride. We place ourselves above the person who

harmd us. In a way we believe that it is a display of weakness to forgive someone. Forgiveness requires a person to become weak and vulnerable. It goes against all of our natural inclinations and means that we have to let go of the offense. We cannot hold on to it.

**Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion**

(To get the most of these discussions read several of the references before the meeting.)

1. Define forgiveness that you offer – What does it mean to you?  
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2. Define forgiveness that you receive – what does it mean to you?  
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3. Why is it so easy to hold a grudge? What are the effects of holding a grudge?  
One Reference for Questions 1, 2, 3: [Forgiveness: Letting go of grudges and bitterness](#)  
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4. Name the Benefits of the Gift of Forgiveness that you have experienced.  
Check here: [The Many Benefits of the Gift of Forgiveness](#)  
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5. Most of us experience a sadness or dampened spirit when we know of things for which we should be asking forgiveness and haven't. Do you think this is the first step for asking forgiveness from the person you've hurt and for going to confession? Does your spirit feel lifted (a) after asking for forgiveness, (b) on leaving the Confessional?  
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**Action Plan**

- 1. If a bad day at the office resulted in an angry discipline of a child, or a terribly unloving response to a spouse, within the next two days plan to approach that family member to apologize and ask for forgiveness for the way you behaved.
- 2. Pick a person with whom you have lost an old friendship and attempt to reestablish the friendship. Could it be that something had happened, perhaps not realized, for which your request for forgiveness could mend things between the two of you?
- 3. Pray for the strength to forgive as part of your daily prayers.

**Author**  
Clyde Dial

# 18 Sustaining Heart When Facing Depression, Anxiety or Stress

## Objective

Depression is one of the most common mental illnesses in the United States, affecting about 26% of adults. That being said the chances are very good that you know someone who is suffering from this mental disorder. Some people may find it difficult to understand how these feelings are manifested so the challenge of this topic of sustaining heart during these low periods when one is feeling depressed or anxious requires a support system of family, friends & medical professionals along with a strong Faith.

## Song Suggestion

Servant Song (Red 661; Gather 285, Music Issue 374)

## Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

### Psalm 143:7-8

Answer me quickly, Lord; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me or I will be like those who go down to the pit. Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life.

### Leviticus 14:37

He is to examine the mold on the walls, and if it has greenish or reddish **depressions** that appear to be deeper than the surface of the wall.

## Vignette

The next thing I knew I was being shaken awake by someone, but I couldn't tell who. As I opened my eyes I saw a dark shadow over me and it sang the words, "Good morning sunshine" right in my face. I shot up immediately and looked at my old friend standing in my dark room and I was so happy to see him. I had rejected everyone that had tried to come and see me since my incident, but it was good to see him. We both sat on the edge of my bed and talked as if nothing had ever happened. We talked about sports, girls, school, everything you can think of, we covered it. It reminded me of the times before I felt so low and helpless. Before I would even think about taking my own life. It was odd, but no matter how happy I seemed to him I knew he could tell I wasn't doing well.

We were watching Sports Center when I heard him take a deep breath before he asked the question, "What happened to you?" I didn't have the courage to look at him as my eyes began to fill with tears. I avoided going into detail about how my brother had found me passed out in the kitchen with both of my wrists slit, I didn't have the stomach for it. So instead I shrugged my shoulders and whispered: "I don't know; I just couldn't do it anymore". He looked at me with a slight frown and inhaled deeply. He opened his mouth but no words came out, almost like he was waiting for the words to come out on their own. "Why didn't you ever tell anyone?" he finally asked. I sat quietly for a few seconds before I muttered: "I didn't think anyone would care". I could tell he was staring right at me without even looking at him. "That's crazy!" he finally said, "You have plenty of people who care about you". I shook my head slightly in disagreement. It was hard for me to hear that someone actually cared about me, no matter how much I wanted to believe it. He put his arm around me and said: "Everyone deals with this type of pain at some point, maybe not on a clinical level, but other people know how this feels too". Again, I remained silent. "I know things seem bad right now, but you have an opportunity to try and get back to the old you", he said. I knew he was right, but I didn't want to believe him. "You mean by taking those pills", I mumbled, he just looked at me and said "Yes,

a lot of people did not have the opportunity to make it as far as you have. They didn't get the opportunity to get help with their problems. Do you realize you could be dead right now? Do you realize you have a chance to get better? You have the opportunity to get treatment and get yourself back to normal and be happy again. Even if you don't believe it for yourself, believe it for the sake of the people that care about you. Your little brother doesn't have anyone to play catch with, your mother cooks dinner by herself, and your father watches the games alone in the basement. Your classmates miss you, and your teachers worry about what happened to you." I sat there in thought, for what seemed like an eternity, about everything I had just heard. I thought about how the people I love were suffering too. It never occurred to me that my presence had such an impact on so many people. It felt an odd feeling come over me that I had not felt in quite some time, and my friend could tell. "See, " he said with a smile, "You know that everything I've said is true. You matter more than you will ever know to so many people. And they all want to have the old you back. But most importantly I want back the old you." After he said that he ruffled my hair, stood up, and began to walk towards the door. Before he could open the door, I let out a tearful "Thank you, I miss you too". It was then that he turned and stepped into the sunlight and I saw myself, almost as if I were looking in a mirror. The old me. He looked so happy to see me smiling, and I began to feel happiness for the first time in a long time. "I'm looking forward to seeing you soon" he as he closed the door behind him.

Almost as soon as the door closed the door re-opened with my mother on the other side. "Who are you talking to, dear?" she questioned. I paused for a moment then looked at her with a smile and said, "Oh nobody, just an old friend". I rolled over to grab my pill bottle and inhaled deeply before popping it in my mouth and swallowing it. I knew nothing was going to happen instantly, but hey it's a start. I knew that I was going to have to at least try and be happy because nothing can happen if I don't make an effort. So, with that, I got out of bed, for the first time in a few days, and went downstairs to have lunch with my family. My old friend was right, they did miss me.

**Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion**

- 1. When you ask a friend how they are doing....are you really listening or just being polite?  
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- 2. How do you define a 2:00am Friend?  
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- 3. Have you picked up on any mixed signals from a Friend that seem out of the norm?  
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**Action Plan**

In your Small Group did you discover a Fellow Father who is struggling with Depression or maybe has a Child going thru a rough patch? Father's Team has a Support Group called the Misfit Toy that meets once a month. Maybe you come to the next meeting...or better yet maybe make a point to invite a Father in need to go together. Our Mission in the Father's Team....Fathers supporting Fathers.

**Author**  
Bob Considine

## 19 Open Mic

## 20 Disciplining Teenagers

### Objective

Parenting your children is not second in importance to building a relationship with your wife. They are equal in importance and second only to building a relationship with God; all three require your full attention.

Disciplining teenagers must start when your child is very young. Spare the rod and spoil the child is not a golden rule, it is in fact harmful to both parent and child. For the parent it will lead to regret, regret for losing one's self-control and causing damage and anger. For the child it can lead to spitefulness and resentment toward the parent. Everyone loses, nobody wins. Every child is different and unique. Finding a method of punishment or discipline will vary with each child. None of these include pain or physical or mental abuse.

### Song Suggestion

You Are Mine (Blue 552; Red 627)

### Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

#### Luke 2:41-50

Jesus stays behind in the temple and was conversing with the teachers, His parents heard Him they were astonished, they explained their concern and Mary explained their displeasure.

#### Ephesians 6:4

And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

#### Galatians 6:7-8

Make no mistake: God is not mocked, for a person will reap what he sows, if he sows evil he will reap evil, if he sows for the spirit he will reap eternal life from the spirit. Do good don't give up

#### Catechism 2198

The 4th commandment is expressed in positive terms of duties to be fulfilled. It introduces the subsequent commandments, which are concerned with particular respect for life, marriage, earthly goods, and speech. It constitutes one of the foundations of the social doctrine of the Church

#### Catechism 2199

The fourth commandment is addressed expressly to children in their relationship to their father and mother, because this relationship is the most universal. It likewise concerns the ties of kinship between members of the extended family. It requires honor, affection, and gratitude toward elders and ancestors. Finally, it extends to the duties of pupils to teachers, employees to employers, subordinates to leaders, citizens to their country, and to those who administer or govern it

#### Catechism 2248

According to the fourth commandment, God has willed that, after him, we should honor our parents and those whom he has vested with authority for our good.

### Vignette

All children are difficult. they come into this world void of experiences and knowledge. Parents come into a marriage with the experiences from their childhood, teenage years and young adulthood. They tend to use

these experiences when they are trying to deal with each other and the children. Teaching respect, consideration, love and caring are taught by action not words. Children have a great fear of being abandoned. Pushing away from parents is natural but all the while they will keep looking back to see if you are still there. You must be there. The process of correction must be reasonable and just, forgiveness must follow.

Peer pressure is very strong and it can be used to lead a young person astray. The effects can be willful disobedience and many other destructive activities that can cause stress and anxiety in any home. Building a strong bond of trust between children and parents is so important. Remember, our actions and interactions with family friends and neighbors, are observed by our children. These times are strong teaching moments. We are the first teachers of our children; make these lessons clear and strong

**Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion**

- 1. The book of Proverbs has many lessons on disciplining our children, all verses tell us about the value of these lessons. Can you quote any of these?  
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- 2. How can the practicing of your faith be used to strengthen the need to be a child of faith?  
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- 3. How can we best create the “want to” in our children to do good and avoid evil?  
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- 4. Why is it necessary to maintain control over our emotions when dealing with unacceptable behavior?  
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- 5. Is it the duty of Parents to protect children from the consequences of their actions? Or is it our duty to explain that there are consequences for good and bad behavior?  
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**Action Plan**

- 1. Has this subject changed your opinion about how to best administer your response to your and other people’s youth when they are behaving badly?
- 2. Will these ideas be used in the future when dealing with or when behavior is unacceptable at home or away?

**Author**

James Houlehan

## 21 Making Mass a Weekly Priority

### Objective

Considering all the commitments with kids and personal activities, we face many excuses to skip Mass. We spend a lot of time rationalizing why we can skip Mass and, in so doing, we place our souls in jeopardy by. Let's consider why we do as the Lord has asked, to receive his grace and build a closer relation with Our Lord, so that we can enter the kingdom of eternal presence of the Lord. "The obligation to attend Mass on Sunday is a Church law, not a Divine commandment like the 10 commandments." *Fr. Joe Scott*. When reminded of the Church's teaching on the Mass, a renewed understanding may be of guidance to anyone who is faced with deciding how to arrange their schedules to make attending Mass every Sunday a priority.

### Suggested Song

Christ, Be Our Light (Blue 91; Red 512)

### Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

#### Catechism 2041

Precepts of the Catholic Church. The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the very minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor.

- I. To attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation and resting from servile works.
- II. To observe the days of abstinence and fasting.
- III. To confess our sins to a priest, at least once a year.
- IV. To receive Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist at least once a year during Easter Season.
- V. To contribute to the support of the Church.

#### Catechism 2181

The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin.

**In place of scripture here are some points of wisdom.**

#### Pope Francis

"It's so important to go to Mass every Sunday because that's where people receive Christ who saves, forgives and unites everyone to his father, church and each other," Pope Francis said.

#### St. John Paul

Those of you who are parents have a responsibility to help your children, even your grandchildren, to see the importance of Sunday as an opportunity to enjoy family life. Keeping holy the Lord's Day is not only an obligation but also a need. As we thank Christ for liberating us from sin, we should remember that everything belongs to God, including our time.

As the weekly "solemnity," Sunday will continue to shape the time of the Church's pilgrimage, until that Sunday which will know no evening. Therefore, dear Brother Bishops and Priests, I urge you to work tirelessly with the faithful to ensure that the value of this sacred day is understood and lived ever more deeply. This will bear rich fruit in Christian communities, and will not fail to have a positive influence on civil society as a whole.

#### **What are the consequences for others if we stop going to Mass?** (*James Stenson*)

Our ancestors risked persecution, even death, to be able to take part in Mass. When you have children someday, they will need the graces and strength that come from the Mass. If you fail to pass it on because of your own indifference,

you will do the gravest injustice to them and to God. You have the power to snuff out, in one generation, the faith that has sustained your family for generations. This is an enormous responsibility.

### **Vignette**

I remember an occasion in our parish school having a lively discussion with teenagers on the Mass. Naturally; I was encouraging them to take part each Sunday and was trying to help them understand what it's about. At one point, a young man blurted out his frustration: 'but Father, the Mass is boring! It's the same thing every time!' Boom! How does one respond to that? In a moment of inspiration from the Holy Spirit, I responded with something like this. 'Well, in one sense you are right. It is the same thing every time. But let me ask you a question. If you were a husband and as you went out to work every morning you told your wife that you loved her, would she say something like 'please stop saying that! It's boring! You told me that yesterday. There is no need to repeat it'. Of course she would't! If she knew that those words were from your heart and that you meant them every time you said 'I love you' then it would never be boring for her to hear them again. As her husband, the love you are offering her is for the moment that counts most – that moment and that day. In the same way, the Mass might appear to be the same every time but it is God's way of saying to us 'I love you' at that moment and on that day'. A silence descended on the class. A chord had been struck.

### **Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion**

1. It is impossible to ignore that missing Mass on Sunday is a grave (mortal) sin. How does this affect your thinking about attending Mass?  
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2. Would you consider making copies of this handout available to your family members or to peers?  
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3. How would you avoid being taken down the path of the multitude of reasons, hypothetical or real, that arise when discussing making Mass a priority with others?  
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4. Are there ways Fathers Team might evangelize, within our parish, those who don't attend Mass.  
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5. How does the parish get the message out to those who don't come to Mass or read the bulletin?  
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### **Action Plan**

(Each group decide based on discussions)

### **Author**

Nick Carpinello

### **Resources**

Google the following: "obligation of Catholics to attend mass"

## 22 Open Mic

## 23 The Relationship of Physical Fitness and Spiritual Fitness

### Objective

“Fitness” is defined as, “the quality of being suitable to fulfill a particular role or task”. Let us first consider the particular role or task that we are called to....and then how we best become spiritually and physically suitable to fulfill that. How are those two types of fitness measured, and how are they related?

### Song Suggestion

We Walk by Faith (Blue 517; Red 583)

### Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

#### 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

#### Matthew 16:26

What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

#### From the Baltimore Catechism:

**Q. 152.** Of which must we take more care, our soul or our body?

**A.** We must take more care of our soul than of our body.

**Q. 153.** Why must we take more care of our soul than of our body?

**A.** We must take more care of our soul than of our body, because in losing our soul we lose God and everlasting happiness.

### Vignette

Bob has experienced an up and down relationship with physical fitness all his life. He knows that when he was in his best shape he had the most energy and stamina. While he never had a six pack, he can pretty much trace his periods of greatest energy to the times when he practiced a disciplined lifestyle of exercise and proper diet. Likewise, he has experienced an up and down spiritual journey, with the highs being when he put in the most work (prayer, and pursuit of holiness). His spiritual high points were always marked by an increased hunger to know God, and with that, a clear calling to serve others.

The lows in both areas were well deserved for Bob, always brought on by laziness and lack of discipline.

After too many years of ups and downs Bob has finally come to realize that a SHARED devotion to both types of fitness is way more effective than a singular effort towards either one. He has learned that the best way to master a disciplined approach to exercise is to simultaneously pursue a disciplined approach to prayer. The two are entirely compatible, and synergistic for Bob. In fact, he has come to combine both into one “workout”. Bob now leaves his radio at home when he runs, and prays the rosary on his hands. Or he reads his daily thoughts and inspirations while stretching and laying out on his inversion table. As he prays he connects with his call to serve others. And as he exercises he finds greater strength and energy and desire to serve. He finds that the time goes quickly, and he delights in the fact that he is double

dipping! When he fails to maintain that discipline, life begins to creep back in charge of his attention and his condition.

**Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion**

- 1. Do you consider yourself fit? Spiritually? Physically?  
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- 2. How do you measure your physical fitness? Your spiritual fitness?  
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- 3. Does “no pain, no gain” apply to spiritual development?  
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- 4. Do you feel “fit” to pursue your true calling?  
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- 5. If not, why not? What would it take for you to be fit to answer God’s call?  
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- 6. How do you prioritize your efforts toward physical and spiritual fitness?  
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- 7. How do you regard your responsibility to keep your body “fit”? Is this a spiritual matter?  
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- 8. How might you link prayer with exercise?  
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**Action Plan**

Jesus called His followers disciples, a term that means "disciplined ones." Yet how many of us would honestly say we are disciplined in the area of food and fitness? Challenge yourself to make this your goal in the coming year. Be a disciple. The decision you make today to get healthy will reap countless benefits—not only for you, but also for those you love.

**Author**

Bill Birmingham

## 24 How Do You Keep Your Love Alive While Dealing with Kids at Various Ages? (Thursday Evening 6:03 pm, East Heritage)

### Objective

Children are stressful to a marriage. Some days are just full of drudgery, be it changing diapers, pushing homework, or arguing over curfew or chores. Date nights are great, but how do you keep a marriage going, day-by-day, when time is short? Being purposefully virtuous by focusing on one fruit of the Holy Spirit can give a spark to a marriage when life just seems like survival. Marriage sometimes takes aggressive pruning to bear fruit, but grace comes to those who seek it out.

### Song Suggestion

Though the Mountains May Fall (Blue486; Red 595)

### Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

#### Ephesians 5: 28-30

In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body.

#### Proverbs 31:10-11, 28-30

A capable wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. Her children rise up and call her happy; her husband too, and he praises her: 'Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.' Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

#### Galatians 5: 22-23

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

#### Catechism 1660 (*emphasis added*)

The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman form with each other an intimate communion of life and love, has been founded and endowed with its own special laws by the Creator. ***By its very nature it is ordered to the good of the couple***, as well as to the generation and education of children. Christ the Lord raised marriage between the baptized to the dignity of a sacrament.

#### Catechism 1609

After the fall, marriage helps to overcome self-absorption, egoism, pursuit of one's own pleasure, and to open oneself to the other, to mutual aid and to self-giving.

### Vignette

Johnny got his best ideas while gardening. He was struggling coming up with ways to show his wife that she was appreciated, as time and money were short with having 5 kids. But while pruning his fruit trees, his mind, making the strange connections that minds do sometimes, went to the fruits of the Holy Spirit that his daughter was learning in PRP. Suddenly he knew what he had to do. He was going to pick one fruit of the spirit for his family each week. If he focused on being the most patient man he could possibly be, he would have a beautiful collection of grace. So, at the family dinner table, he challenged his family. Sometimes it got comical, as the little ones were so "patient" that nothing got done. But, in making that

challenge, Johnny noticed the times in the day where he could be more patient with his wife and the family had just a little more harmony.

**Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion**

- 1. Can you identify a virtue that you might be lacking? How might you identify a virtue that would improve your relationship with your wife?  
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- 2. Have you tried establishing good habits instead of focusing on eliminating bad habits? How do you remain mindful of opportunities to practice these habits?  
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- 3. What would your wife say is your best spiritual virtue? How was that virtue established and grown?  
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**Action Plan**

After some prayer and discernment, pick one fruit of the Spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Ask your family to try to demonstrate that fruit to the fullest extent. If you want, start with one day to one person and build from there.

**Author**

John Murphy

## 25 Importance of Bible Studies

### **Objective:**

The Bible is an incredible book of history and facts that proves that there is a God that created all things. Most important of all, the Bible is the Word of God. It contains the mind of God and His will for each one of our lives. That is why the Bible was given to us. It is infallible, complete, authoritative, and totally sufficient for all of our needs.

So, why can't I just read the bible myself, why should I consider a "bible study"?

Christianity is meant to be relational—first, on a vertical axis between ourselves and God and, second, on a horizontal axis between ourselves and those around us. These relationships don't just happen. We have to work on them. They require an investment of time, and a certain level of vulnerability and trust.

For those relationships with others, we all need friends to help us through life's challenges. A small group Bible study can be a place to celebrate life's victories, get prayer support, be encouraged in tough times, and keep ourselves accountable in our personal growth.

### **Song Suggestion**

Hosea (Blue 190; Red 405)

### **Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings**

#### **Psalm 119:48**

I lift up my hands to your commandments; I study your statutes, which I love.

#### **Wisdom 6:17-20**

For the first step toward Wisdom is an earnest desire for discipline; then, care for discipline is love of her; love means the keeping of her laws; To observe her laws is the basis for incorruptibility; and incorruptibility makes one close to God; thus the desire for Wisdom leads to a kingdom.

#### **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

#### **2 Peter 1:5-8**

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with devotion, devotion with mutual affection, mutual affection with love. If these are yours and increase in abundance, they will keep you from being idle or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **Catechism 132-133**

"Therefore, the study of the sacred page should be the very soul of sacred theology. The ministry of the Word, too - pastoral preaching, catechetics and all forms of Christian instruction, among which the liturgical homily should hold pride of place - is healthily nourished and thrives in holiness through the Word of Scripture." The Church "forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful... to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.

## Vignette

My job has caused me to move to this new community. The job is great, but I just don't have much of a feeling of belonging here. My kids have found friends at school. My wife seems to have made connections, but it seems all I have is work. That is great, but it just seems like something is missing.

A friend from back home advised me to look into joining a small bible study group – either by myself, or maybe find something my wife and I can do together - maybe one that is for couples.

Whoa! A bible study? That is waaayyy out of my comfort zone. Am I going to have to say stuff, and open up with things? I don't think I can do that.

Although, maybe I will meet some new friends that have similar issues that I do. Maybe I can pick up on some things without having to say anything. Maybe I can even learn some things about my faith that might help. Maybe...

## Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion

1. Have you ever been involved with group bible study? What did you think of it?  
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2. Do you know of any of your friends that might be in a bible study? What has been their experience?  
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3. What would you want to get out of a bible study group?  
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4. If you have ever been to Father's Team Lite, discuss how this meeting might be like a "bible study"? What is the benefit of reading the scripture with others present and participating?  
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5. How might a bible study group be similar to a small social group? How might it be different?  
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## Action Plan

Prayerfully consider joining a Bible study group

1. Perhaps approach some of your friends to see if they might be interested in starting one
2. Visit the parish office and see what things they have to offer in this area

## Author

Steve Frazer

## 26 Letting Our Children Fail

### Objective

Have you ever looked at some of the things that are going on in your kids' lives and wondered why they are doing one thing or the other? You ask yourself why they just won't listen to you and gain knowledge you share from your experiences. Perhaps God is allowing these situations in our children's lives in order for them to become what He desires? If we constantly bail our children out when they make poor choices or if we constantly control situations, they will fail to understand that choices and performance have consequences. So, when we as parents sometimes say that our kids must learn the hard way, remember that this is not only true, but it is by design. And yet, in today's world there is a fine line we must constantly monitor to balance life learning and life changing decisions with serious ramifications.

### Song Suggestion

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling (Blue 288; Red 613)

### Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

#### Romans 11:30-32

For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

#### Proverbs 22:6

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

#### Ephesians 2:12-13

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

#### Catechism 2206

The relationships within the family bring an affinity of feelings, affections and interests, arising above all from the members' respect for one another. The family is a privileged community called to achieve a "sharing of thought and common deliberation by the spouses as well as their eager cooperation as parents in the children's upbringing."

#### Catechism 2207

The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society.

### Vignette

It came like a ton of bricks. The call from the principal's office at the high school. Joe's son Mike was in a car with sophomore friends who had been stopped by the sheriff for speeding. Mike wasn't driving, but the car and occupants were searched, and Mike was found to have a small bag of marijuana in the car. Because the school had a zero-tolerance rule in place for students being caught with drugs, Mike was being called before the Director of Discipline and was in all likelihood going to be expelled. Because Mike was holding the marijuana and none of the others did, he was likely going to be the only one of the boys expelled while the others receive suspensions. This was going to be an excruciating life lesson for Mike....and his family.

## Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion

1. Think of a time when you let your child fail. Discuss the outcome with the team.

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2. Think of a time when you wished you had let your child fail, but you didn't. Discuss the outcome with the team.

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3. Today, it seems like the stakes are higher than ever. Whether it is getting into schools, getting grades, or keeping your record clean. How do you balance getting too involved vs not standing up for your child?

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4. How does your faith help you keep failure of your children in perspective?

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5. How has a "failure" formed you as a better man? A better Christian?

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## Action Plan

Is there an opportunity to let your child fail in the near future? Think about what they would learn from this lesson. Share with your children in a calm fashion, real failures others have experienced and discuss how they (and you) will act if and when they experience failure.

## Resources

1. <http://g12studyjournal.blogspot.com/2008/08/let-your-kids-fail-sometimes.html>
2. [https://www.sinaitemple.org/learning\\_with\\_the\\_rabbis/writings/2007/022207LettingYourChildrenFail.pdf](https://www.sinaitemple.org/learning_with_the_rabbis/writings/2007/022207LettingYourChildrenFail.pdf)

## Author

Reid Rooney

## 27 Controlling Our Anger and Growing Our Patience

### Objective

Do you fume when someone cuts you off in traffic? Does your blood pressure rocket when your child refuses to cooperate? Do you holler at the children when you get home and chores aren't done, they're not ready for practice, or their homework isn't finished? Even Jesus felt anger when he drove the sellers and the tax collectors from the temple. Anger is a normal and even healthy emotion – but it's important to deal with it in a positive way. Uncontrolled anger can take a toll on both your health and your relationships. The objective is to analyze when we experience anger and rage, and how we can practice patience at those times to diffuse the situation.

### Song Suggestion

Prayer of St Francis (Blue 368; Red 721)

### Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

#### Ephesians 4:1-6

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

#### James 1:19-20, 22-25

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

#### Colossians 3:11-13

Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

#### Catechism 2842

This "as" is not unique in Jesus' teaching: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect"; "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful"; "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." It is impossible to keep the Lord's commandment by imitating the divine model from outside; there has to be a vital participation, coming from the depths of the heart, in the holiness and the mercy and the love of our God. Only the Spirit by whom we live can make "ours" the same mind that was in Christ Jesus. Then the unity of forgiveness becomes possible and we find ourselves "forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave" us.

#### Catechism 2223

Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery - the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the "material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones." Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their

children. By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them: He who loves his son will not spare the rod. . . . He who disciplines his son will profit by him.

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

## Vignette

For this I chose to look at two times where Jesus experienced anger:

### John 2:13-17 (also Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-18, Luke 19:45-46)

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"

His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

### Mark 3:1-6

Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.

He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

Jesus is indeed shown as displaying anger in the latter two passages above. However, consider the context of each. In the case of the temple, Jesus threw out those who were taking advantage of the poor. He was angry at the wrong they were doing and also at the blatant disrespect for God they showed by doing wrong even in God's temple. In the next passage, Jesus was angry with the Pharisees, who wanted to catch Jesus breaking one of their laws, yet were unwilling to consider the morality of the law or to believe in Jesus despite seeing the miracles he did. In both cases, Jesus was angry with people who were doing wrong and refused to listen to God.

And is such anger wrong? To say "God is never angry" or "God should never be angry" is to say that God shouldn't be angry when innocent people are hurt or killed, or that he shouldn't be angry that the Holocaust took place.

## Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion

1. Did you lose your patience over something in the past week? If not is there a particularly memorable time where you lost your temper?  
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2. When you did lose your temper, did you later apologize to anyone who you might have hurt with screaming, hollering, or scowling?  
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3. When you experience anger, do you forgive later? If you do, have you considered that had you forgiven in advance you might not have lost your anger at all?  
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4. Have you ever lost your temper over something, lashed out, then found out that you were wrong? You had the facts wrong, you acted before listening, or you believed the wrong person?

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5. Jesus did lose his anger on those occasions noted, but his love for us gives us forgiveness for our transgressions. He sets an example for us of unconditional love and patience. Do you set an example for your children of patience and forgiveness?
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## Action Plan

Use simple anger management tips to keep your temper in check – from taking a timeout to using "I" statements – to stay in control. Practice these tips to tame your temper.

1. **Think before you speak:** In the heat of the moment, it's easy to say something you'll later regret. Take a few moments to collect your thoughts before saying anything – and allow others involved in the situation to do the same.
2. **Once you're calm, express your anger:** As soon as you're thinking clearly, express your frustration in an assertive but nonconfrontational way. State your concerns and needs clearly and directly, without hurting others or trying to control them.
3. **Get some exercise:** Physical activity can help reduce stress that can cause you to become angry. If you feel your anger escalating, go for a brisk walk or run, or spend some time doing other enjoyable physical activities.
4. **Take a timeout:** Timeouts aren't just for kids. Give yourself short breaks during times of the day that tend to be stressful. A few moments of quiet time might help you feel better prepared to handle what's ahead without getting irritated or angry.
5. **Identify possible solutions:** Instead of focusing on what made you mad, work on resolving the issue at hand. Does your child's messy room drive you crazy? Close the door. Is your partner late for dinner every night? Schedule meals later in the evening – or agree to eat on your own a few times a week. Remind yourself that anger won't fix anything and might only make it worse.
6. **Stick with 'I' statements:** To avoid criticizing or placing blame – which might only increase tension – use "I" statements to describe the problem. Be respectful and specific. For example, say, "I'm upset that you left the table without offering to help with the dishes" instead of "You never do any housework."
7. **Don't hold a grudge:** Forgiveness is a powerful tool. If you allow anger and other negative feelings to crowd out positive feelings, you might find yourself swallowed up by your own bitterness or sense of injustice. But if you can forgive someone who angered you, you might both learn from the situation and strengthen your relationship. Be Christ-like and set an example for others.
8. **Practice relaxation skills:** When your temper flares, put relaxation skills to work. Practice deep-breathing exercises, imagine a relaxing scene, or repeat a calming word or phrase, such as "Take it easy." You might also listen to music, write in a journal or do a few yoga poses – whatever it takes to encourage relaxation.
9. **Know when to seek help:** Learning to control anger is a challenge for everyone at times. Seek help for anger issues if your anger seems out of control, causes you to do things you regret or hurts those around you.

## Author

Dan Lape

# 28 Girls: How Men Can Help Raise Them

## Objective

This week we will explore ways in which we as fathers can increase our awareness of our role in raising our daughters, so that they can become the best version of themselves as Children of God. On television, we hear messages like, “Just believe in yourself and you can do anything or be anyone.” While certainly encouraging, the message is lacking any religious or spiritual component. Perhaps the message we should also teach our daughters should be, “You are a special Child of God. God has a plan for you. With God’s help, you can become the best version of yourself; nothing is impossible with God.” Ultimately, we know that we can have a strong, positive influence over our daughters.

## Song Suggestion

Lord of All Hopefulness (Blue 273; Red 560)

## Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

### Gen 1:27

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him: male and female.

### 2 Timothy 3:14-17

But you, remain faithful to what you have learned and believed, because you know from whom you learned it, and that from infancy you have known [the] sacred scriptures, which are capable of giving you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

### Proverbs 22:6

Train the young in the way they should go; even when old, they will not swerve from it.

### Catechism 2222

Parents must regard their children as children of God and respect them as human persons. Showing themselves obedient to the will of the Father in heaven, they educate their children to fulfill God’s law.

### Catechism 2223

Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness in this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. Parents have a grave responsibility to give a good example to their children.

## Vignette

Bob is a Father of three daughters whom he loves very much but sometimes struggles to relate to them. Bob grew up in a Family of 5 boys and was a good athlete in high school and college. Bob also served in the military and currently works in construction. His Daughters tend to copy his wife by playing with dolls; playing house; and trying on their Mother’s jewelry. What can Bob do to connect better with his three young daughters under the age of seven?

## Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion

1. What are some opportunities for Dads to connect with their Daughters spiritually?

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2. What are some opportunities for Dads to connect with their Daughters in areas that interest their Daughters?

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3. What are some ways to set a good example for your Daughters?

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4. How can you, as their Dad, protect your Daughters from the negative influences in our culture, in social media, and on television and the internet?

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5. How can you teach your Daughters to respect themselves as Children of God and to serve God and others?

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**Action Plan**

Meet with each of your Daughters and explain how much you love and respect her. In your own words, explain how she is not only very special to you but also even more special to God who has a plan just for her. Explain that, with God’s help, nothing is impossible.

Pray with your Daughters at bedtime and at meal times. Talk to each of your Daughters about the importance of developing a relationship with Jesus.

**Author**

George Cullen

## 29 Empty Nesting - How Do You Deal with Children Moving On?

### Objective

Children moving on for college, the service, or marriage can be big for a family, especially when it's the first or last child. Or perhaps the ONLY child. These changes can also be felt in younger homes as children move on to full-time school. Use this session to work on exposing the emotions surrounding the change, and the need for communications between spouses. How do we prepare for these changes? Older fathers should see this coming – are they preparing? Younger men may have seen their parents deal with this – poorly or in a good way. Older fathers may have seen their children deal with the last one off to school, how did their child deal with it? Did they discuss it at all? This doesn't have to be just the old guys talking, there are many ways to engage the young and old on this.

### Song Suggestion

Gather Us In (Blue 150; Red 743)

### Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

#### Deuteronomy 30:19-20

This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

#### Mark 10: 6-9

But from the beginning of creation, ' God made them male and female. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother [and be joined to his wife], and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.

#### Catechism 2228

Parents' respect and affection are expressed by the care and attention they devote to bringing up their young children and providing for their physical and spiritual needs. As the children grow up, the same respect and devotion lead parents to educate them in the right use of their reason and freedom.

#### Catechism 2232

Family ties are important but not absolute. Just as the child grows to maturity and human and spiritual autonomy, so his unique vocation which comes from God asserts itself more clearly and forcefully. Parents should respect this call and encourage their children to follow it. They must be convinced that the first vocation of the Christian is to follow Jesus: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

### Vignette

Jerry was a father of four and he loved that job. Jerry and his wife Bea knew they wanted to be parents early on and that made the task of raising a family all the more rewarding. Jerry and Bea were active in their kids sports and school activities and didn't mind talking about the kids and their events to anyone and especially to each other. Even when they stole away for the occasional dinner they wound up talking about the kids in one way or another, but it didn't seem to bother them. After nearly 30 years of actively raising their children and having one child at home, even part time if they were away at school, now they children would all be out and on their own. As the time was nearing Jerry was concerned whether he would have as

much to talk about with Bea. How would their days and nights be filled? Would they be a statistic like so many others he knew that grew apart once they were alone? How could he prepare for this? 4 months before their last child graduated from high school, Bea was diagnosed with cancer and Jerry’s world was rocked. He now had to be there in a big way for Bea and the attention and focus that Jerry now put on Bea helped transform their relationship back to a more one-on-one like they had when they were first married. Bea and Jerry survived cancer and the transition to an empty nest and have continued close in their relationship while still enjoying their children and grand-children.

**Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion**

- 1. Do you have a looming change in your “Nest” that you should be preparing for? Are you communicating with your spouse about it?  
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- 2. Do you have dread over changes with children moving on because you feel you haven’t done enough to prepare them? There are times when guilt or feelings of inadequacy can be a factor in these situations.  
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- 3. As parents you are tasked with preparing your children to be independent and while loving their parents is key, loving God should be above all else. Are you preparing your children to be close to their Father in heaven?  
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- 4. Are you or your spouse holding on too hard to your children? Can you let them go with the confidence that your relationship will continue, even if it does change?  
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**Action Plan**

- 1. Examine your nest. Are there things that you could prepare for better?
- 2. Think about your relationship with your wife, can you come up with some actions to make sure you are in sync with upcoming changes in your household.
- 3. How could you improve things so that when the children leave you are prepared and your marriage thrives? Plan a date to discuss this with your spouse.
- 4. Are you preparing your children for an adult relationship with God? Make it a point to show your children that God should be first in their life.

**Author**

Dan Lape

## 30 Open Mic

# 31 Asking the Holy Spirit to Direct Our Daily Lives

## Objective

To help men explore how to grow in awareness and connection to the Holy Spirit. Confirmation expressly confers gifts of the Holy Spirit that can be instinctively used and habitually applied in our daily lives with predisposition. Revisit His gifts and proactively invite the Holy Spirit into your life.

## Song Suggestion

Come Holy Ghost (Blue 104 vs 1, 2, 3; Red 472 vs 1, 2, 4)

## Opening Prayer Inspirations

Veni Creator Spiritus, Vini Sancte Spiritus

## Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings

### Isiah 11: 1-3

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse and a branch shall grow out of his roots (1).

The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord (2). His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord (3).

### Catechism 1287

This fullness of the Spirit was not to remain uniquely the Messiah's but was to be communicated to the whole messianic people (people with faith in Jesus the Messiah). On several occasions Christ promised this outpouring of the Spirit, a promise which he fulfilled first on Easter Sunday and then more strikingly at Pentecost. Filled with the Holy Spirit the apostles began to proclaim, "the mighty works of God," and Peter declared this outpouring of the Spirit to be the sign of the messianic age. Those who believed in the apostolic preaching and were baptized received the gift of the Holy Spirit in their turn.

## Vignette

Victor struggles to make sense of conflicts he feels, sees, reads and hears within our temporal world often misaligned with his journey toward heaven. He sees his loved ones being influenced and pulled away from Jesus's teachings. Victor was Confirmed as a child and was sacramentally blessed with gifts of the Holy Spirit; Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear of God. Recently he read St. Thomas Aquinas taught those gifts (becoming habits, instincts, dispositions) help us work through our human reason and nature to participate in the very life of God, as Jesus promised. St. Aquinas insisted these gifts help us perfect moral virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance) and theological virtues (faith, hope and charity). Charity, it is said, "unlocks the potential power of the seven gifts".

Victor thinks he sees how the Holy Spirit helped Jesus. Victor also knows Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to the Apostles to help them in their missions. But how does Victor invite the Holy Spirit and his gifts more completely into his daily life?

## Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion

1. Discuss how we know Isiah 11: 2 prophesies were fulfilled in Jesus' public life.

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2. What insights can we gain from reading Acts of Apostles, the first to receive the Holy Spirit?  
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3. Discuss each of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Baptism and Eucharist are essential to your Messianic life in today's times.  
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4. Silence; are you really listening to the Holy Spirit within your active and contemplative life?  
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5. Are you listening for the Holy Spirit's gentle teaching though His insistent discernments?  
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6. What spiritual readings have inspired you to bring the Holy Spirit into your life?  
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7. Discouragement is Satan's work; how do prayer, penance, power, perseverance and perfection help us connect to the Holy Spirit?  
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8. What about intercession prayer? Come Holy Spirit through the Immaculate Heart of Mary.  
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### **Action Plan**

It is up to you to pursue a relationship with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not pushy, he waits for you to be silent, humble and obedient to his voice.

1. What are your next steps?
2. What challenges will get in your way and what can you do about them?
3. What will you do differently going forward?

### **Author**

Kurt Buckman

### **Resources**

1. <https://mycatholic.life/catholic-prayers/triduum-and-easter-prayers/prayer-meditation-for-pentecost/>
2. <https://www.catholic.com/node/34744>
3. <https://catholicexchange.com/10-ways-open-holy-spirit>

## **32 Finding and Accepting God's Love. Are You Just Checking the Boxes or Really Living Your Spirituality?**

### **Objective**

Are you just checking the boxes or really living your prayer life? We are all like our children who don't understand why we say no to things they think they should or want to have. As parents we use our experiences and what others have experienced as a result of similar wants and desires when making our decisions. God who is, and who we believe to be, our Father, can see into the future and knows the results of those wants and desires. Learning to accept His will is exactly the same as our desire for our children to accept our guidance. When it comes to what we want and feel we need, we become the child, God is the Father we need to accept his guidance.

### **Song Suggestion**

City of God (Blue 100; Red 663)

### **Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings:**

#### **Romans 5:8**

God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

#### **1 John 3:1**

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

#### **John 3:16**

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

#### **Galatians 2:20**

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

#### **1 John 4:7-8**

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love

#### **Catechism 2787**

When we say "our" Father, we recognize first that all his promises of love announced by the prophets are fulfilled in the new and eternal covenant in his Christ: we have become "his" people and he is henceforth "our" God. This new relationship is the purely gratuitous gift of belonging to each other: we are to respond to "grace and truth" given us in Jesus Christ with love and faithfulness.

#### **Catechism 218**

In the course of its history, Israel was able to discover that God had only one reason to reveal himself to them, a single motive for choosing them from among all peoples as his special possession: his sheer gratuitous love. And thanks to the prophets Israel understood that it was again out of love that God never stopped saving them and pardoning their unfaithfulness and sins.

## Vignette

If we think back to our earliest memory we are told that God loves us. Then things happen and we become confused and we don't feel loved. We become lost and turn to destructive and harmful activities that feel good while we do them but leave us more lost and unloved, unworthy of love. If we are lucky or is it God's never-ending love for us, He sends someone or something that turns us around if we pay attention and life is good again. Luck?

## Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

1. Have I accepted that I am worthy of God's love?

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2. Do you practice the 8 beatitudes or do you just pick and choose, then say I'm good?

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3. Do you show others by your actions, practices, and speech that you are loved?

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4. Are you saying and actually doing what you are saying you believe?

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5. Is your prayer life shown only in the parish and not outside the parish?

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6. Have I changed from "do what I say, not what I do" to "do as I do"?

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7. What boxes have I checked or not checked?

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## Action Plan

1. What do I feel I can change in my prayer and my social life?
2. Will I fully commit to these changes?

## Author

James Houlehan