

BEYOND THE CRADLE

Parents as Primary Catechists / Catholic Parenting

GOAL FOR THE PARENT GATHERING

The goal for this night is to get parents thinking and talking about the challenges and blessings of raising Catholic teens today. This night will help parents identify their own strengths as a Catholic parent, identify the challenges they currently have and share in the blessings that being Catholic brings. They will also be reminded of their vocation to be a parent.

PARENT GATHERING AT A GLANCE

The most important reason to have this parent night is affirm parents in their vocation as a Catholic parent. Parents today face many challenges in raising Catholic teens. Demands on family time, expectations from school and sports often get in the way of “church time.” But also, many parents feel a lack of confidence in their own knowledge of the faith and feel challenge in their own faith journey. They need the opportunity to understand the role God has asked of them but also to feel as if they are not alone in this role. This night starts by watching video called “A Parent’s Love.” A short teaching and time of discussion follows the video. The night ends with a time of prayer and blessing of the parents in their vocation as Catholic parents.

ENVIRONMENT

The environment for this night should be comfortable and simple. At the front of the room, have a collection of family mementos. On one side have a collection of family photos and mementos from the “early days” of family life, such as photos and mementos from Baptisms, First Communions, drawings, art projects from Vacation Bible School, elementary faith formation, etc. On the other side, have items that represent all that is happening in a teen’s life right now – athletic uniforms, books, SAT Prep books, a calendar that shows a family’s schedule, cell phone, Ipod, etc. Also include family photos, Bible, rosary and other Catholic items. Somewhere in the front of the room place a large cross.

GATHER 15 MINUTES

FELLOWSHIP & FOOD (5 min)

As the parents gather together have plenty of coffee, drinks, and food available. Encourage the group to make themselves comfortable and get to know each other. The facilitators should help introduce parents to each other. During this time have music playing in the background.

INTRODUCTIONS & OPENING PRAYER

(5 min)

The facilitator should gather the group together and open the night in prayer. After the prayer, go around the room and have everyone introduce him or herself.

“A PARENT’S LOVE” VIDEO (10 min)

This video is a powerful video showing the change in relationship between a parent and their children as the children grow up. This video can be found on the Parent Life Resource DVD

PROCLAIM 10 MINUTES

TEACHING (10 min)

This teaching is intended to remind parents of their call to be primary catechists to their children and the promises they made at their child(ren)’s baptism. It is also intended to acknowledge all the challenges and blessings in fulfilling their role as Catholic parents. It is also important to note how the faith community should provide support, wisdom and living faith examples. It is important that the presenter makes the content very applicable to everyday family life, keeping in mind that the family situations in the room will be varied. He/she should personalize the talk by adding in stories of their own children. Below are some main points to cover during the talk:

- What do you want for your kids? What do you want for your kids in their relationship with God?

CATECHISM REFERENCES:

- # 1254-1255
- # 1267-1269
- # 1653-1656
- # 2221-2231

SCRIPTURES:

- Ephesians 6:1-4
- Colossians 3:18-20
- Sirach 3:1-16
- Proverbs 19:13-29

- As parents, we are the primary catechists for our children. The family is the first place for Christian formation. When our children were baptized we were given a calling, a vocation. With that, we are called to be living examples of the faith. We pass our faith on not just by reading Scripture together but also by living it. Our example is greater than our words. This role can be overwhelming and intimidating – but there is none more important.
- We need to start by taking an honest assessment of the role of God and faith in your family right now. Is it a priority? Do your children see examples of prayer and Catholic living in the home?
- The reality is that we as parents are the #1 factor in determining whether or not our children will remain Catholic throughout their lives.
- So in the midst of school schedules, sports, jobs, friends, culture, college and all the other demands placed on our teenage children – how do we help keep them grounded and rooted in the faith?
- While this is by no means a complete list – but here are a few suggestions:

Weekly Mass – the Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith. It must be the source and summit of our family life as well. It is imperative that we ensure that our family is attending Mass each week.

Family Dinner – While it may not be possible every night, family dinner once or twice a week is important to keep the lines of communication open. Be sure to pray together before the meal.

Share Your Faith Journey – make God a part of your everyday conversation with your kids. Tell them about your faith journey and what God is doing in your life. Allow opportunities for them to ask questions about their faith.

Family Prayer – Use special occasions such as birthdays to pray together in thanksgiving. Use the liturgical seasons such as Advent or Lent to

incorporate special prayers in the home.

- Our teens are looking for guidance, boundaries and direction (even if they don't say it). This is true for faith as well. If we are not calling our teens to holiness and a relationship with God, who will?
- The good news is that we do not have to be perfect, have a perfect prayer life or know all the answers to Catholic questions. Our teens just need us to be real, striving to know and love God, and love them along this journey.
- Even though we may face challenges – questions we can't answer, lack of interest, demands from school and sports – we also experience blessings. Our role as parents is a calling, a gift, a vocation. We aren't in this because of our plan but because of God's. He called us, he believes in us and loves us. We also recognize that in spite of all that we do and how we live, there is no perfect formula or checklist that guarantees results. We need to do our part and our trust needs to be placed in God.

OPTION FOR PROCLAIM – If possible have someone from outside the Parent Life group to come in and talk about the vocation, blessings and challenges of Catholic parenting today. Ask the parish priest or Religious Education Director to recommend someone to give this talk.

BREAK 20 MINUTES

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION (20 min)

Every group will be different, but the goal of this time is to give the parents a time to process the teaching and apply it to their own families. This can be done in a time of large group discussion or having the parents' pair up and answer questions. The method will depend on the size of the group and their willingness to share. Below are a few possible discussion/reflection questions:

1. What is your biggest challenge in raising your children in the faith? What is the biggest blessing?

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2. How does your family reinforce a Catholic identity for your kids? What is one thing your family could do to improve it?
3. It won't be long before our teens are on their own and off in the world, what is your wish for them in terms of their own faith and beliefs?
4. What is your greatest joy of being a Catholic parent?

SEND 20 MINUTES

RECAP (5 min)

Gather back together and recap the discussion of the night. Highlight a couple of stories from the sharing time.

PRAYER FOR YOUR CHILDREN (10 min)

Set an atmosphere of prayer in the room. Pass out paper and pen to each person. The facilitator should ask the group to take some time to write a letter to their teenage child (or children). This letter can include their hopes and prayers for their children, as well as their hopes for the spiritual life of the family. Challenge the parents to give the letter to their teens that week.

PRAYER AND BLESSING (5 min)

Ask your priest to be a part of this evening. Have him bestow a special blessing on the parents, for their own vocation as parents. In addition, have the entire group pray together for the vocation of their own children. Work with your priest to create a short prayer service or consult the Book of Blessings for appropriate blessings. Close the night by praying the Hail Mary and Ave Maria.



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