

# Catholic Parenting Newsletter

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“The value of consistent prayer is not that God will hear us, but that we will hear God.” *William McGill*

“Whose prayer can you be the answer to today?” *Matthew Kelly*

“Our children are watching us live, and what we ARE shouts louder than anything we can say.”  
*Wilfred A. Peterson*

“What greater gift could parents give their children than the opportunity for a joyful, productive, and responsible adult life?” *Jim Fay*

“Show your children God’s love by loving them and others as Christ loves you. Be quick to forgive, don’t hold a grudge, look for what’s best, and speak gently into areas of their lives that need growth.”  
*Genny Monchamp*

## **Catholic Schools Week**

**Jan 26—Jan 31**  
**“Learn. Serve.  
Lead. Succeed.”**

## First Day of Lent, February 26



A successful Lent is defined by commitment to prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Here are some ideas for how the whole family can participate.

### **Prayer—**

**Pray for Family—Friends—  
Immigrants—Missionaries—  
The Gift of Strong Faith**

### **Fasting—(things to give up)**

**Dessert—Video games—TV—  
Tablet/Phone Use—Saying unkind words**

### **Almsgiving—(helping others)**

**Donate Canned Goods—Gift Cards for  
Neighbors—Hugs to Family—Donate  
used clothing and toys**

*“For I was hungry and you gave me food,  
I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a  
stranger and you welcomed me, naked and  
you clothed me, ill and you cared for me,  
in prison and you visited me.”*

*Matthew 25:35-36*

Think about your favorite food. Now think about giving that food up. It’s hard to go without something that is your favorite. During Lent, we grow closer to God by giving up our favorites and joining Jesus in His sacrifice. One way adults do this is by giving up, or abstaining from, meat on Fridays. We give up things for Christ because He gave His life for us. We also can promise to add things into our lives during Lent—more prayer time or committing to helping around the house are options.

### **Recommended Reading: “Parenting With the Beatitudes: Eight Holy Habits for Daily Living” by Jeannie & Ben Ewing**

*Parenting with the Beatitudes* offers deep spiritual insights for both mothers and fathers about how to strengthen their own virtue formation while also educating their children in moral development.

This is no “self-help” book . . . it is much more than that. *Parenting with the Beatitudes* assists families in their spiritual walk toward holiness, strengthening and encouraging them along the way.

Each chapter is based on one of the eight Beatitudes and offers reflections from both Ben and Jeannie Ewing (parents themselves who have experienced the joys and difficulties of raising Catholic children today) on how St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother lived out this Beatitude in their family, respectively.

Each chapter also includes specific “sub-virtues” for each Beatitude. For example, in the chapter on meekness, they explain how to grow in humility (a virtue that is most helpful in teaching meekness) and how to teach children the importance of obedience.

But don’t put it all on your shoulders! Each chapter includes a saint profile (for family discussion or further devotion) and a concluding prayer.



# Let's Slow Down in the New Year



January is an excellent time to slow down and take stock of your many blessings. Make a commitment with your family to keep this month simple by slowing down and rediscovering the joy you feel in the company of your loved ones.

**Make Room for Family Time**—One important way to keep your time sacred is to huddle as a family and plan. Early in the month, sit down and look at your entire January calendar. Cross a big X through the days you want to reserve just for your family to be together. No matter what days work for your family, make sure that everyone understands that these days are sacred—no last-

minute scheduling. When you and your family commit to this time together, you show each other in an outward way that this IS valuable time. Nothing says “I love you and value you” more sincerely than commitment.

**Back to Basics**—Pick up one or two simple activities in which everyone can participate.

- \* Blow the dust off the Monopoly game. Learn a new card game.
- \* Take a winter walk. Listen!
- \* Go through a cookbook together and find something new to try.
- \* Pull a good novel or book of poetry from the shelf. You will be surprised at how much everyone in the family still enjoys a good story read to them while snuggled in blankets with a cup of hot cocoa.

**Faith-Talk Tools**—Don't forget that you are striving for peace and connection, which sometimes means sitting quietly and listening. Start a faith conversation with questions like: “Where did you see God today?” (Tell your children that God is all around us—in all the people who do good in the world.)

**Make Time For God**—Praying together as a family is a genuine way to bring your family together and to focus your minds on your relationship with God. So often, when we lose our connections in our life, we've also lost track of our connection with God. God wants us to live in great peace, with our family, our world and ourselves. Say a prayer of gratitude together and talk about the many things your family recognizes as blessings.

**Pray the Rosary**—January is a perfect month to practice traditional meditative prayers such as the Rosary. Try to do this as a family even if it is just one decade of the rosary.

**Take Action**—Reach out to someone in need of the basics this month. Help carry groceries for a neighbor or bring paper products to a family with a new baby. Bring joy to someone who is homebound by delivering flowers to them. Spreading joy is a great way to warm hearts and share the love of God.

*Adapted from Take Out, Family Faith on the Go*

## Random Acts of Kindness Day—Celebrated on February 17th

*“No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.”* Aesop

As parents, we can begin performing “Random Acts of Blessing.”

Look at your children and say, “I love you” with your eyes. It can work like magic. Those little eyes staring back say, “I love you” right back. We can then bring this to the world around us. Focus on the love God feels for all of us. When you encounter a stranger, bless them with a smile. There are many examples of blessing others in the *lives of the saints*. These little random acts of blessing can become like St. Theresa's ‘little way’ – one person at a time. Soon we will find that in performing random acts of blessing, in return, we will be the ones who are blessed.

*Adapted from “Catholic Life in Our Times”*

## Family Meals Can Help Save Your Family!

Father Leo Patalinghug says, “While I don’t propose to be an expert in the psychology of a family, especially as a celibate priest, I can say that after working with and interacting with healthy families from around the country and the world, I’ve discovered the one thing that determines family-unit connection is *the regular and intentional family meal.*”



Regular family meals lead to a healthy family unit. Every action begins with intentions, such as doing something challenging — like slowing down, scheduling our business around spending time with people who matter most to us. If we aren’t intentional with family meals, we may easily replace that intimate experience with extra-curricular activities that don’t feed us or bring us together. What would it look like if we seriously ask ourselves, “What do we intentionally do to show our family that we love them?” St. Teresa of Calcutta’s inspired method to holiness was “*small and simple acts, with great love!*”

How can we begin? Eat together. Family meals provide an opportunity for family members to come together, strengthen ties and build better relationships. They build a sense of belonging which leads to better self-esteem. Family meals offer parents a chance to be role models.

Take time to share at least one meal a day together. You will be nourishing loved ones with food prepared lovingly, and satisfying hungry hearts and souls with your presence. It’s both simple and incredibly challenging. It takes regular, intentional, and even heroic effort at times. It is difficult sometimes in today’s culture to have family unity — that is, community. The busyness and schedule complications are obstacles and excuses that make it difficult. It takes a “supper” hero, not a superhero, to help save our family — and God’s family!

Adapted from “*Plating Grace*”

## Playing Outside in the Winter



*“Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth,  
for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire:  
it is the time for home.”* Edith Sitwell

Winter can be a tough time of year. Less sunlight and snow and cold can foster feelings of unhappiness and a lack of energy. Help your family harness joy by getting outside together. Snow angels are fun at any age; cross-country skiing, sledging, or just a brisk walk can help battle the winter blues. Recent studies show that exposure to sunlight helps increase the body’s energy with the release of Vitamin D. Thank God for the gift of family and fresh air!

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## **Catholic Parent Newsletter**

Place your parish logo,  
and/or contact person  
information here!

### **A Parent's Prayer**

Loving God,  
You are the giver of all we possess, the source of all of our blessings.  
We thank and praise you.

Thank you for the gift of our children.

Help us to set boundaries for them, and yet encourage them to explore.  
Give us the strength and courage to treat each day as a fresh start.

May our children come to know you, the one true God,  
and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

May your Holy Spirit help them to grow in faith, hope, and love,  
so they may know peace, truth, and goodness.

May their ears hear your voice.  
May their eyes see your presence in all things.  
May their lips proclaim your word.  
May their hearts be your dwelling place.  
May their hands do works of charity.  
May their feet walk in the way of Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord.  
Amen.