

26 September 2021

## The Teachers of Faith

Brothers & Sisters in Christ+,

I hope that you are enjoying these beautiful autumn days that we have been experiencing and that you find yourself 'falling' into a slower season with a bit more rhythm and structure to it. Even though we have an empty nest at our house, we still find that autumn seems to naturally take on a pace of more organization and scheduling than the summer months do.

This is the month that Faith Formation classes begin for the year and I want to give a huge shout-out to all of our wonderful Catechists who have stepped up to volunteer to help educate your children in our faith. These selfless volunteers are helping each one of our parents in fulfilling the promise they made at the baptism of their children.

Yesterday, I was visiting with Ted a bit about the challenges that we as Catholic parents are faced with. We were noting how there is such a fine line between giving your children all the tools to love Jesus and their faith and perhaps overwhelming them with faith life to the point that they will choose to rebel or abandon their faith.

As Catholic parents, we made a promise at our children's baptism. If you remember, during the baptism of your children, you heard the presider say the following words:

*"You have asked to have your child baptized. **In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him in the practice of the faith.** It will be your duty to bring him up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand the commitment you are undertaking?"*

Whoa! That is a lot, isn't it? We all promised this as Catholic parents, but did we *really* clearly understand the commitment? Raising children is hard work—I would venture to guess that any one of us who are parents would say that it is very different than we anticipated and as much joy as raising our children brings us, it can bring an equal amount of struggle. Being a good and loving parent all the time when our children are testing our patience can take everything you've got! You're not alone. I think it is safe to say, we have all been there.

Over the years, I have had conversations with some of the most faithful Catholics that I know who lament that their children are no longer practicing the faith. I see the pain in their eyes as they wonder what they did wrong; how they failed to fulfill the promise they made at their children's baptism. I share those feelings as my own two beautiful daughters merely identify as Catholic, but don't practice their faith. I often wonder if we pushed too hard or not enough. Did my work at the parish impact how my daughters felt about church in general? What did we do or fail to do? What life experiences did they have that shaped their thoughts about their faith drawing them away from it? I know in my heart, we did the best that we could and at some point our children grow into adults and choose for themselves, but it makes the sadness no less real. I just pray daily to St. Monica for a conversion of heart—there is always hope.

To the young parents in our community, I want to encourage you to live the promise of your children's baptism. Do your best to provide your children with all the tools to love Jesus and their faith and please let us, as a community, offer support in any way that we can through Faith Formation classes, small groups and activities.

To the parents of adult children who, like me, are still working on drawing their children closer to Christ through their faith, I hope you will share with me, by gently inviting your children back to Mass this month. Maybe have a Mass said for them and invite them to attend with you. However you choose to do it, this month as we are focusing on ***Back to school-back to Mass***, what better way to celebrate than inviting your children back to Mass? I will pray that it is a transformative experience for your children, and I ask that you pray the same for mine.

In Christ+

Lorrie