

Empowering Parents in Passing on The Faith

November 12, 2017

Dear Parishioners:

I am writing this just to share with you some of my thoughts on “the challenge facing parents, as they struggle to juggle all the activity and chaos in their families’ lives and still make faith/church the priority.” Lately, I’ve been reading and learning more about how young people’s faith is truly influenced and who and what are the biggest influencers, and it is becoming very clear that the answer to their questions is, the parents.

I believe you, as parents, often feel inadequate or incompetent when it comes to sharing your faith so you turn the responsibility over to those you feel have the expertise required, namely our parishes and Catholic schools. But, according to numerous studies conducted over the past 20+ years, the crucial place where a child’s faith is largely decided and influenced is not the school or parish, but THE HOME. The definitive influencers of faith for youth are neither their pastors nor teachers nor the voice of popular culture, but parents. We hear all the time that parents are the primary educators of faith, but how many of our parents actually accept that role and live it out each and every day at home?

A recent report published by the University of Notre Dame entitled “A Report on American Catholic Religious Parenting” lays out this reality, focusing on the various roles parents play in successfully transmitting the faith to their children. Through interviews with 245 parents in 145 households, between 2014 and 2016, the report explains that parents wishing to pass on their Catholic faith must understand that their home is a miniature culture, and that the parents embed the faith into that culture is what ultimately influences or transmits the faith to our children.

The report goes on to state that, “Parents are the dominant influence on children, not only because they occupy a preeminent position with regard to communication and intimacy in young people’s lives, but also because they make administrative choices about how the family spends its time, what priorities are most esteemed in the household, and what sorts of opportunities children will encounter through which they will develop their values, identify, and a sense of responsibility.”

I think it is important to understand that effectively transmitting the faith is not based on parents having a certain level of theological competency, but to the relationship and conversations that occur between parents and children every day, and the intentionality with which parents bring the faith into the home. It is also important to note that parents are not, and should not be, on their own to transmit the faith. Parents should have access to quality opportunities outside the home that will give their children real, tangible, authentic encounters with God. This is where the parishes and schools can play a significant role, by supporting and empowering parents in passing on the Faith.

I would like to close with a quote from the last section of the report that really summarizes my point for writing this article. “Parents must therefore realize how potent they are as role models, and respond not by seeking to become theological experts, but by building a common life in which religion is a guiding light and represents a parent’s own gift of self.”

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Fr. KK", written over a circular stamp or seal.

Fr. KK, Your Pastor