



Family Matters



The MARRIAGE and FAMILY LIFE OFFICE

DIOCESE of COLUMBUS

WINTER 2010



Marriage and a Special-Needs Child: Tips for Meeting the Challenge

Carolyn called me to discuss her marriage to Tom. "We were like a lot of couples. It used to be hard to find time for each other what with work and the boys, but when our Jimmy was diagnosed with profound autism, it was like a bomb went off. Tom just withdrew into work and all my time was taken up taking Jimmy from one doctor to another and trying to keep my other kids' lives as normal as possible. All of a sudden, the little bit of time Tom and I had was totally gone. Between that and how resentful I feel toward him for leaving everything to me, the tension is terrible. I don't know where to begin."

Carolyn and Tom are like a lot of families with children who have special needs. According to some research, the divorce rate for couples with special-needs kids hovers around 80 percent. More hopefully, however, other studies indicate that 18 percent of these couples in this situation say their children have brought them closer together. What's the difference between the couples who rise to the challenge and those who don't? Here are some tips:

Remember you're in it together. Under any circumstances, a couple needs to be a team, but this is rarely as true as when a couple is confronted by the challenges that can come with raising a special-needs child. But the challenges can become a blessing if the couple responds to each challenge together. The research is consistent that the marital problems couples may experience in this situation are not so much caused by the time and effort it takes to attend to the child's needs, but rather from the tendency for couples to retreat into themselves and stop communicating with one another.

Make time to pray together and communicate about schedules, feelings and needs. Little actions like saying, "I love you," calling from work to check-in, and thoughtful gestures that communicate your appreciation for each other are critical to keep up morale and marital rapport. It doesn't have to take a lot of effort, just thoughtfulness. Making a "love list," in which you and your mate identify simple ways to attend to each other, can give you ideas for the days you are so busy you can't even think.

Deal honestly with your frustrations. Sometimes parents struggle because their feelings of intense love for their children become complicated with frustration, exhaustion, irritation, resentment over the care that is required of them, as well as guilt for feeling anything negative about their child, for whom they would happily give their lives even on their worst day. These negative feelings usually pass soon enough, but couples can help each other manage these emotions by being willing to express them to each other, tolerate them from each

other, nurture each other through those difficult reactions, and help each other get back on line. Couples who find the courage to confess and listen are the couples who rise to the challenges because of each other's support and love.

Take time for each other. Every couple needs time alone, but it is critical for the parents of a special-needs child to process their stress and reconnect. Getting this time can be difficult because finding competent childcare can be a challenge, especially if the child's disability is serious. But even when date nights out are impossible, it is essential that a couple at least carve out some time at home where they can be alone to play, pray, talk, and be intimate with each other. Studies consistently show that people who deal with stress by reaching out, instead of pulling in, can learn to thrive despite--or even because of--their challenging circumstances.

Get assistance and support. Make a list of the support and resources you feel you need to help your child achieve his or her potential, and to help your marriage and family function at its absolute best. Don't feel that you are burdening others with your requests for babysitting, housekeeping help, respite or support. Renounce the pride that tells you that you shouldn't trouble other people with your problems or needs. Give others the gift of allowing them to be a gift to you.

Seek help quickly. Seek assistance at the first sign that you are experiencing a spiritual, emotional, or relational problem that you aren't sure how to get through on your own. Most disabilities have national organizations dedicated to researching treatments and supporting families. Contact them early, and become involved in your local chapter and any support groups, social outlets, or advocacy opportunities they offer.

Even if your family is doing well, strike up a relationship with a counselor you trust so that if you need an answer to a quick parenting question or require a marital adjustment, you don't have to spend weeks looking for competent help. Prior planning helps assure that help will be available when you need it.

From www.ForYourMarriage.org. By Dr. Gregory Popcak, author of eight books integrating the Catholic faith and psychology. He is the director of the Pastoral Solutions Institute, an organization that provides counseling and other services to couples, families, and individuals.

Worthwhile Websites to Visit



www.FamilyLife.coldsdioc.org marriage and family enrichment resources from the Marriage and Family Life Office of the Diocese of Columbus

www.ForYourMarriage.org US Bishops' web site of resources to prepare for and care for your marriage

www.nichcy.org information, services, and programming regarding disabilities in infants, children, and youth for families, educators, and administrators

While the FLO makes every effort to assure the appropriateness of these web sites, we do not maintain them and are not responsible for their content, accuracy, opinions, or links.



The Importance of Showing Appreciation

According to author Josh McDowell, “When we express appreciation to young people, we give them a sense of significance.” This appreciation is one of the cornerstones of connecting to our children.

McDowell goes on to state that: “Our acceptance of young people tells them that their being matters. Expressing our appreciation to them says that their doing matters, too. Appreciation gives people a sense of significance—feeling that they are valued and that their accomplishments do make a difference to someone.”

McDowell encourages parents to show appreciation for their children not only for the sake of their children’s self-esteem, but for improving discipline in the home, as well. He says, “The more you praise your young people for what they are doing right, the less you have to criticize and discipline them for doing something wrong.”

Many parents struggle finding the right words to say or knowing what to praise. McDowell says, “It isn’t a matter of not being able to find things to appreciate about your kids; it’s about disciplining yourself to speak up and tell your kids what you see—to give them honest praise for their effort.” He offers several practical examples:

“Thank you for getting your homework done on time.”

“I appreciate it when you take your dirty dishes to the sink after we eat.”

“Thank you for putting the car in the garage for me without being asked.”

“I appreciate you for spending time with your little sister when you wanted to be with your friends.”

However, McDowell throws in a bit of caution. “Unless your young people are absolutely convinced that you accept them for who they are, your praise and appreciation can become manipulative. Appreciation without acceptance may prompt a student to relate to you on a performance basis.” While giving praise is necessary to your child’s well-being, make sure they also feel secure and accepted for who they are. They need to know you’ll love them whether they succeed or not.

www.FamilyMinute.com, based on the book *The Disconnected Generation*, by Josh McDowell.



Communication is Key

Have you talked with your teenager lately to spell out those things you assume s/he knows? Statements such as: “If you mess up, tell me the truth and I will respect you for that,” “You can always come to me with problems,” or “There’s nothing you could do that would make me stop loving you.” Communicate the all-important “I believe in you” in words your teen can understand. “Teen speak” is an altogether different language, and by the time you finally master it, it changes. The essence of what you want your teenager to know, however, will translate if you are authentic and honest.

www.SpiritualParenting.com

“...the family
has a special vocation
to be a place
where people are loved
not for what they do
or what they have,

*but simply because
they are.”*

“To Live in Christ Jesus,” Pastoral Letter of US Bishops

Parenting Principles: Six Critical Life Messages



- ◆ I believe in you.
- ◆ I trust you.
- ◆ I know you can handle it.
- ◆ You are listened to.
- ◆ You are cared for.
- ◆ You are very important to me.

Source: Barbara Coloroso, www.KidsAreWorthIt.com

Lord, let us be able to notice when someone needs a comforting hug, a word of praise, or a pat on the back. Remind us to always be available to give others encouragement, comfort, and the support they need. Help us to remember to spend at least a few moments each day making someone a little happier. Amen.

Family Prayers for Daily Grace by Renee Bartkowski

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Resource to Families, Parish Ministries, and Educators

Marriage Preparation/Enrichment, Natural Family Planning, Parenting, Separated, Divorced, Bereaved, Remarriage



Personal Change and Growth and Your Marriage

They say that when a man marries a woman he thinks, "She's the one I've been waiting for. She'll never change" – and she always does. And a woman looks at her man and thinks, "He just needs a little work; after we're married, I'll help him change" – and he never does.

Personal change and growth can become issues in marriage because we develop at different rates. The truth is that both men and women will change as time goes on. Biologists tell us that every seven years we have totally replaced all the cells in our bodies with new ones. Our ideas, politics, and interests evolve over the years. While research shows that personality tendencies (like introversion/extroversion) remain fairly constant throughout our adult lives, we still do change. We hope our spouses will change for the better: become more patient; stop unhealthy habits; spend more time with the family; work less – or more; go to church more – or less, talk more – or less. We are all works in progress.

Change sometimes doesn't happen fast enough to suit us. Your beloved may be oblivious to your dissatisfaction. If he or she doesn't realize the need to change something, a loving spouse can gently ask for change. Nagging, cajoling and arguing, however, get us nowhere and can make us even more miserable. *Successful couples recognize that the only person you can change is yourself.*

Enlist your spouse as your partner in self-change. When you are willing to change some behavior, tell your spouse about your plan to change, and enlist his/her support. Energy for marital growth can be ignited in your marriages. Our spouses, no matter what personal faults or issues they may have, will appreciate our efforts (they've been hoping we'd make them!).

What if your self-change strategy doesn't light a fire under your spouse? Despite your hopes and personal improvement efforts, he or she is resistant or unable to change. This is where the most powerful – and paradoxical – tool of marital change is at your service: Acceptance. When spouses show each other love and acceptance, they respond more quickly to each other's changes.

Be ready to support any effort your partner makes towards change, no matter how tentative or incomplete that effort is. If he or she discloses a desire to change, be ready to help and not hinder the process. It may be that professional help is in order, but your role as helpmate is indispensable. You are the one who loves your spouse the most.

On www.ForYourMarriage.org. By Lauri Przybysz, Coordinator of Marriage & Family Enrichment for the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Create a Romantic Idea Jar!

Write a hundred romantic ideas on slips of paper and fill a jar with them. Take turns weekly picking a slip at random—then create the romance!



1001 Ways to Be Romantic and *10,000 Ways to Say I Love You* by Gregory J. P. Godek or visit www.1001WaysToBeRomantic.com

Find support and enrichment for your marriage at the United States Catholic Bishops' website

www.ForYourMarriage.org

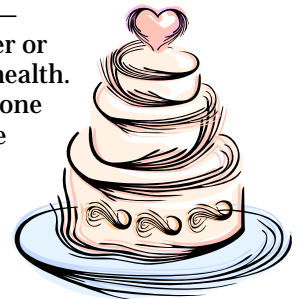
FOR YOUR
MARRIAGE

What have you done for your marriage today?

What does marriage mean to you? For many people, it's all about the actual wedding day. But marriage isn't a single life event. It's an eventful life that unfolds a day at a time—a series of circumstances and seasons: for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health. Knowing that you and your spouse can rely on one another for love and support through it all—the good and the bad—is what makes a marriage strong.

Getting married... that's easy. *Staying married... now that's an achievement—and it happens one day at a time.*

www.FamilyFirst.net



Provided by The Marriage and Family Life Office, Diocese of Columbus
Also available online at www.FamilyLife.coldsdioc.org



Keeping Romance in Your Marriage

Most married couples can look back fondly on their courtship when they were filled with desire for one another and romance was an integral part of their relationship. But many times after couples marry and get settled into routines, romance takes a back seat to life. Busyness wears them down, and the effort to keep the marriage new and exciting seems too great. Then when couples reach a point where they want to make a better turn in their marriage, they are often at a loss for where to begin. The best place to start in rediscovering and maintaining romance is to first understand what it is.

So what exactly is romance?

- ♥ **It's a relationship.** Begin by thinking of romance not as an event, but as a day-to-day relationship. It's asking each other about their day, how a hobby or special project is going, or even just reminiscing together. It's sharing common interests and simply taking the time to enjoy each other's company, as best friends.
- ♥ **It's a joint process.** Many times a spouse will try to initiate romance with a surprise dinner or vacation, and then are disappointed when the event isn't the dream date or getaway they'd imagined. It's not necessarily that their partner isn't appreciative of the effort—but what is fun or relaxing to one person may not be to the other. Since most people aren't mind readers, the only way to really know for sure what will impress your spouse is to ask. What is romantic to you? What is your idea of a dream date: where would you go, how dressed up would you want to be, what kind of restaurant? What kind of vacation would you want to go on: what time of year, where, what kind of hotel, what kind of activities? Does your wife love art? Take her to a museum or art fair. Is your husband into the outdoors? Take a hike through the park or go fishing together. Find out what your common interests are and build on them.
- ♥ **It's surprises.** Finding out what your spouse thinks is romantic doesn't mean you still can't have surprises. It doesn't have to be an unexpected date or weekend trip. It could be something simple like a note in a briefcase, a favorite meal or dessert, or offering to take your spouse to that new movie s/he's been really wanting to see.
- ♥ **It's consistency.** It's not putting effort into planning a nice Friday night date then neglecting romance the rest of the week. It takes a consistent effort. Unless you're very creative, it may get harder and harder to think of new ways to keep the romance alive. So build up some resources to help you think of ideas. Look into buying a book or two on the subject.
- ♥ **It's attention.** Focus on each other, not on what else you could be doing. Going to the park for the day? Don't take the briefcase or cell phone. Thinking of giving your wife flowers? Don't wait until you need to ask for a favor. Did your wife ask for a quiet stroll on the beach? Leave the fishing pole at home. Eliminate the distracters, and focus on enjoying your time with each other.

According to the book *Love Is a Decision*, by Gary Smalley and John Trent, "Romance is the act of keeping your courtship alive long after the wedding day. Put another way, romance is an intimate friendship, celebrated with expressions of love reserved only for each other." Building a romantic atmosphere in your marriage won't happen overnight or without effort, but the result is worth it. Keep the friendship in your marriage relationship strong, plan events centered on shared interests, surprise each other with special tokens of love, and give your spouse your undivided attention on your romantic times together. You'll both be glad you did!

Based on *Love Is a Decision* by Dr. Gary Smalley and Dr. John Trent. Adapted from www.FamilyFirst.net.

Provided by The Marriage and Family Life Office, Diocese of Columbus
Also available online at www.FamilyLife.colsdioc.org

It's Time for a Great Date!



Fun is not a frivolous add-on to marriage, it's an essential. Fun is created when you date your mate—like you did before you were married. Here's a tip to jump start dating: tonight sit down together and brainstorm things you enjoy doing together—anything from an overnight getaway to learning how to wallpaper to taking a Saturday-afternoon hike. If you're short on ideas, consider some of these:

Greeting Card Date. Visit a card store and read cards to each other. You'll feel loved, amused, and appreciated without spending a dime!

Get Fit Date. Exercise together. You might want to walk or jog together at a new and inviting location.

Window Shopping Date. After the stores close, window shop together. Instead of dreaming about what you would like to have, point out all the things in the windows you already have.

Home Depot Date. Go to a local home-improvement store and dream about remodeling projects you'd like to tackle someday.

We're Just Too Tired Date. Put the kids to bed early, let voice mail take your calls, pop in a video, and just relax with each other. Maybe even unfold the hide-a-bed and sleep in the family room.

Whatever date you choose, pick an evening and make it happen. Find a sitter and clear your schedule. Take the initiative to make your marriage come alive with fun, laughter and good times. For more fun dates check out *52 Fantastic Dates for You and Your Mate*. **Start dating your mate—and remember to have fun!**

www.MarriageAlive.com



Lifting Your Heart to God

During Lent we make a special effort to practice our faith. By the daily practice of prayer—in whatever way of praying is best for you—we not only pray more, but we also become more prayerful... something we can keep doing throughout the year.

From uplifted hearts, hearts full of gratitude,
may this prayer of thanksgiving rise to You,
God of All Gifts and Great Generosity.

We are thankful for times of stillness
which allow us to listen
to that holy river of prayer
flowing in the heart;
for the presence
of Your Holy Spirit within,
the Spirit who prays continuously.

These times of quiet heal us, within and without,
replenish our spirit with new strength
and prepare us to meet the constant struggle of daily life
with renewed hope and joy.

Like Your Son, Jesus,
who climbed mountains at night,
who retreated deep into the desert
to find You in stillness,
may we,
after this silent-solitary communion with You,
allow our lives to reveal
Your glory and grace.

Lord, may the seeds of the tree of stillness
bear fruit for us
and for all the restless world.

Blessed are You, Lord our God,
who gives to us nourishment
in times of silence and solitude. Amen.

Edward Hays, *Prayers for the Domestic Church/A Handbook for Worship in the Home*

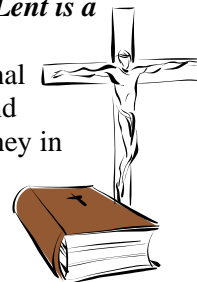
Just as we celebrate the seasons of winter, spring, summer and fall—along with various holidays that take place throughout the secular year—the liturgical year celebrates the mysteries of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It is a cycle that repeats itself year after year. But from a spiritual standpoint it is always new, because it continues to draw us more deeply into our relationship with Jesus.

Lent is an important season in the liturgical year. It is a 40-day period of fasting, abstinence, and repentance that begins on Ash Wednesday. The season of Lent culminates with the liturgies of Holy Week, which recall the passion and death of Jesus.



Take Out/Family Faith on the Go, November 2008

The season of Lent was originally a time of intense prayer and study for those who were to be baptized and prepared to join the Church community at the Easter Vigil. Because these new members were to be received into the living Body of Christ, the whole community was called to preparation. Today, *Lent is a time of fasting, almsgiving, and prayer* in preparation for the Paschal Mystery (the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ). It is a journey in which we are called to walk with Christ through his suffering.



Almsgiving calls us to compassion for our brothers and sisters who are less fortunate. In feeding the hungry and clothing the naked we are Christ to one another.

The number 40 is representative of the 40 days that Jesus spent in the desert battling his temptations that strove to keep him from his earthly ministry. We, too, battle temptations throughout the season of Lent—a season marked by self-examination and repentance.

Fasting reminds us of our need for Christ. Our hunger and thirst also represents Christ's suffering in the desert, and call to mind how empty we would be without him.

The deep purple color that fills the church during Lent symbolizes Christ's suffering and death. However, because purple is also the color of royalty, it foreshadows Christ's kingship and resurrection. At Easter, the liturgical color changes to white to represent Christ's victory over death and the hope that, one day, we will all share in his resurrection at the heavenly banquet.

Take Out/Family Faith on the Go, February 2008

Yours are the eyes

through which the compassion of Christ must look out into the world.

Yours are the feet

with which he is to go about doing good.

Yours are the hands

with which he is to bless his people.



St. Teresa of Avila

Each person's mission
is a mission of love...
Begin where you are,
with the people closest to you.
Make your homes
centers of compassion,
and forgive endlessly.

- Mother Teresa

Learning to Apologize



Lord,
it's often very hard
for us to apologize,
so we
keep putting it off.

Let us realize that the longer we wait,
the more time there is
for bad feelings to build up.

Don't let us ever be so stubborn
that we are unable to say we're sorry
quickly and sincerely.

Renee Bartkowski, *Family Prayers for Daily Grace*.

Simple Prayer Ideas to Enrich Your Lent

- ◆ Attend daily Mass
- ◆ Mark your day with prayer
- ◆ Pray with Scripture
- ◆ Do some spiritual reading
- ◆ Pray with others
- ◆ Make an online retreat
(www.usccb.org/lent or www.Jesuit.ie/prayer, or ww.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/online.html)



WAYS to RECONCILE at HOME

Time together heals hearts when words aren't enough

Establish forgiveness

Establish a habit of forgiveness between parents and child/ren. Say the words "I'm sorry for..." and "I forgive you" as often as necessary. Teach your child to say these words by asking: "Are you ready to say 'I'm sorry'?" Never force or demand an apology.

See "Eye to Eye"

The word reconcile comes from the Latin meaning "seeing eye to eye." Express forgiveness or sorrow by looking straight at the other person, touching their shoulder or hand, or hugging. Body language speaks as loudly or louder than words.

Forgiveness Rituals

Make forgiving one another a part of your family's everyday life. Establish family and individual rituals of forgiveness in the home. Set aside times for reconciliation (bedtime, after church, etc.). Choose a space at home where you can go to reconcile differences (staircase, bedroom, front porch, etc.).

Examination of Conscience

Help your child examine his/her conscience on a daily basis. There are numerous examples in children's prayer books - or create your own. Follow by talking about ways to change bad habits. End with an act of contrition or an informal prayer expressing sorrow and gratitude for forgiveness.

Eucharist

Remember that there is a special time at the celebration of the Eucharist for reconciliation. Remind children to mention in their silent prayer the things they are sorry for at the appropriate time during Mass. Explain the meaning of the term "contrite heart," which the priest uses.



Celebrate forgiveness

When a serious hurt has been forgiven between family members, find a way to celebrate together: go out for a treat, read a special story, enjoy quiet time. *Time together heals hearts when words aren't enough.*

Model forgiveness

Children need to watch adults forgiving each other and resolving conflicts. It helps if parents can share examples of forgiveness such as: "I was very hurt by ___ for what s/he said, but we talked about it and made things right."

Don't fake forgiveness

If you are genuinely hurt by someone over a long period of time and cannot forgive him/her, explain to your child that you understand the necessity and value of forgiving that person. Let your child know that you are trying to forgive and are praying for the grace to reconcile. Sincerity is crucial: never give children the impression of having forgiven someone, then showing unforgiving behavior toward that person.

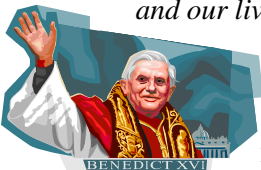


Alleluia! Alleluia!

He is risen as he said

The Easter proclamation spreads throughout the world with the joyful song of the Alleluia.

Let us sing it with our lips, and let us sing it above all with our hearts and our lives, with a manner of life that is “unleavened,”



*that is to say,
simple, humble, and fruitful in good works.*

From the HOMILY of HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI
Easter Sunday, 12 April 2009

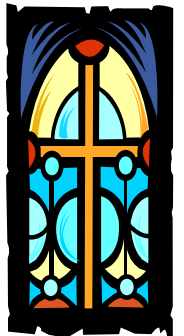
Sundays Are Easter Days

In the time of the Old Testament, the people of God kept the Sabbath as a day of rest. That meant that they observed the lesson of the story of Creation: they paused to give thanks and praise for the goodness of God's gifts. Because Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday, Christians gradually came to observe their Sabbath on Sunday, and it came to have a whole new meaning. Sunday was still a day of rest, but it also came to be a day to share with family and friends, for it was on a Sunday evening that Jesus first appeared to his friends after his death and resurrection. ***With your family you might plan together how you can observe that same spirit of Sunday as a day of thanksgiving and joy: a day to be with family and friends.*** Sundays might be a time for you to:

- ◆ Go out to breakfast or brunch after Sunday morning Mass;
- ◆ Visit friends or relatives, particularly those homebound, grieving, or otherwise in need of care and love;
- ◆ Go on picnics, go to parks, join in simple games outdoors, or around the table;
- ◆ Write letters, call, or e-mail friends and relatives;
- ◆ Observe the day of rest with quiet time set aside from the week's work.

We are an Easter people, a joyful people, a people assured of everlasting salvation and glory.

In the Church liturgical year, Easter is more than one day. The Easter season, beginning on Easter Sunday and concluding on Pentecost, celebrates Jesus' victory over death and his resurrection to new life. Christians everywhere share in this promise of new life. At baptism we are given a white garment that represents the victory of the Resurrection; likewise, the white pall that is laid on the coffin when someone has died is a promise of eternal life with Christ.



Christians adopted the egg as a symbol of the new life that comes with the Resurrection. Dying eggs in bright colors became popular in the Middle Ages.



Provided by The Marriage and Family Life Office,
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Also available online at www.FamilyLife.colsdioc.org



Easter Customs from around the World

IN FRANCE, children roll raw eggs down a small hill to see which will reach the bottom without breaking. The surviving egg is said to symbolize the stone being rolled away from the tomb.

IN GERMANY, a popular Easter tradition is the “egg tree.” A small branch is put in a vase about two weeks before Easter, and eggs that have been painted and decorated are hung from the branch to celebrate birth and blessings.

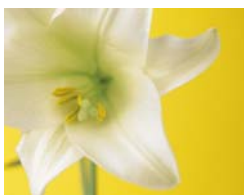
IN IRELAND, people dance in the streets on Easter Sunday. The dancers compete for cakes and other sweet treats. Priests also bless and distribute holy water to families on Easter. Each member of the household is sprinkled, then the house, and finally any livestock—all to symbolize new life in Christ.

IN POLAND, Easter is celebrated with the Blessing Basket. Poles prepare the basket the Saturday before Easter. Inside the basket they place beautifully colored eggs (to symbolize the Risen Christ), bread, cake and salt (for good health and a prosperous life), and white-colored sausages (for enough food, and fertility in the coming spring). The basket is then blessed at church on Easter Sunday.

IN ITALY, church bells ring joyfully during the year. But the bells stop ringing on the Thursday before Good Friday, remaining silent through the next few days while people remember the death of Jesus. On Easter Sunday morning, the bells ring out, telling people that Jesus is alive again. When people hear the bells, they kiss and hug in celebration!

IN BULGARIA, two partners, eggs in hand, greet each other three times with “Christ is Risen!” then tap the eggs against each other to crack them.

“Take Out/Family Faith on the Go,” Easter/April 2009



In both Catholic and Jewish tradition, a new day begins at sundown, so the Easter Vigil Mass, held sometime between sunset on Holy Saturday and sunrise on Easter Sunday is the first Eucharistic celebration of the Easter season. Like Mary Magdalene and the other women who came to the

tomb “as the first day of the week was dawning,” we gather in the darkness to experience the Light of the World who brings new life to all of us. One of the most beautiful and profound liturgical expressions the Church has to offer, the Vigil is an experience you should share with your family at least once (although, since it can last as long as three hours, you might want to hold off a few years if you have very young, restless ones!).

“Take Out/Family Faith on the Go,” April 2007

Passing on Your Faith

You don't need a degree in theology to pass your faith on to your kids. Here are five ways to make the most of everyday teachable moments.

Attitude

Encourage Christian attitudes of patience, kindness, and forgiveness.

Example

Set an example of a positive attitude. *Choose rules wisely*. Select a few major principles that are important. *Watch for contradictions*. Children will follow examples rather than words. *Show the way*. Let your children see you praying and being of service.

Experience

Create rituals unique to your family (Lent and Easter traditions at home).

Effort

Take inventory. Do you “walk the walk”? *Reward effort*. Let your children know when you are proud of them. *Do something challenging at least once a year* (cut back on your own spending to help others or volunteer).

Enthusiasm

Do your kids see you excited about the faith you say is so important? *Seek natural wonders* (marvel at rainbows, enjoy winter's snowfall). *Bask in beauty* (admire stained glass during a quiet visit to church). *Share what you enjoy*. Talk with your children about how gardening feels sacred to you, how creating connects us to God our Creator.

Everything we do teaches our children in profound ways what it means to be a person of faith in a mixed-up world. Let's be sure to teach them well.

Adapted. By Mary Lynn Hendrickson, editor of the family newsletter *At Home with Our Faith* (www.homefaith.com), published by Claretain publications.



Be MediaWise

Don't let technology replace the human connection

Manage Your Online Reputation

Chances are you already have a reputation online, even if you don't want one. On Web sites across the Internet, people can find information about you. *You should be aware of your online reputation so you can protect it.* This is important for both kids and adults. Some colleges and employers check the Web to learn about potential candidates, and because Web content is accessible to anybody who searches for it, information can be interpreted in ways you never intended. And online content can surface even years after it's posted. First, find out what information is already on the Internet and assess the impression it leaves on people.

Follow these tips to monitor and evaluate your online reputation:



- ◆ **Search your name.** Begin by typing your first and last name into several popular search engines to see where you are mentioned and in what context.
- ◆ **Focus your search.** To get more precise results, put quotation marks around your name, so that the search engine reads your name as a phrase and not as two or more unrelated words that just happen to appear in the text. If you find other people who share your name, you can eliminate many false hits by using keywords. You can add keywords that apply only to you, such as your city, your employer, or a hobby.
- ◆ **Search all of your names.** If you have ever used a different name, if you use your middle name or initial, if you use a nickname, or if your name is frequently misspelled, search all variations to make sure you don't miss anything important.
- ◆ **Expand your search.** Use similar techniques to search for your phone numbers, home address, e-mail addresses, and personal Web site domain names. You should also search for your social security and credit card numbers to make sure they don't appear anywhere online.
- ◆ **Target specific sites.** Check online phone directories, genealogy sites, alumni sites, the Web sites of organizations to which you belong or donate time or money, and other sites that compile personal, professional, or contact information about people.
- ◆ **Read blogs.** If any of your friends, family members, or coworkers have blogs or personal Web pages on social networking sites, check them out to see if they are writing about you or posting pictures of you.
- ◆ **Sign up for alerts.** Use the feature provided by some search engines that automatically notifies you of any new mention of your name or other personal information.

These tips can help you manage and protect your online reputation:

- ◆ **Safeguard your personal information.** A basic strategy to avoid identity theft and online fraud is to keep your personal information private when you go online. Be equally careful about sharing information offline, and be sure you know how organizations will use your information before you give it to them.
- ◆ **Use privacy settings.** Most social networking and photo-sharing sites allow you to determine who can access and respond to your content. If you're using a site that doesn't offer privacy settings, find another site.
- ◆ **Don't mix your public and private lives online.** Use different e-mail addresses for different online activities to help keep your public and private lives separate.
- ◆ **Choose your photos thoughtfully.** Whether you're a child or an adult, make sure potential colleges or employers can't search the Web and find photos that make you look irresponsible.
- ◆ **Watch your language and content.** You should always assume that anyone can read anything you've written online.
- ◆ **Take action.** If you find information about yourself online that is unflattering, embarrassing, or untrue, contact the Web site owner or administrator and ask them to remove it. Most sites have policies to deal with such requests.

www.Microsoft.com

Is texting keeping your kids up at night?



A recent New York Times article revealed that teenagers sent and received an

average of 2,272 text messages a month in the fourth quarter of 2008. Some teens send hundreds of texts every day—and well into the night. For a generation that is already prone to sleep deprivation, late night texting can only make matters worse: taking a toll on their health—not to mention their grades. So what can you do if your teen is texting the night away? Why not require your kids to hand over their phones at bedtime to be recharged overnight—in your bedroom. No more sleepless nights!

www.FamilyFirst.net

Vocabulary Corner



Do your kids' electronic messages look like Greek to you? Do you wonder and worry about what they mean? Here are some common phrases to help you be aware of what's being communicated:

- F2F face to face
- ISO in search of
- K OK
- L8R later
- OMW on my way
- POV point of view
- STBY stinks to be you
- SWAK sealed with a kiss
- TAFN that's all for now
- WFM works for me

See *f@stcht!A Quick Guide to the Abbreviated Language of Instant Messaging* or www.webopedia.com for more chat abbreviations.



Staying Safe on Social Networking Sites

Although social networking sites are generally a safe place to interact with friends and acquaintances, keep in mind these suggestions to protect yourself and your family while navigating the Web:

- ◆ **Adjust website privacy settings.** Some networking sites have provided useful options to assist in adjusting settings to help protect your identity.
- ◆ **Be selective when adding friends.** Once added, contacts can access any information marked as viewable by all friends.
- ◆ **Limit access to your profile** to only those contacts you trust with your personal information.
- ◆ **Disable options** (such as photo sharing) that you might not regularly use. You can always enable these options later.
- ◆ **Be careful what you click on.** Just because someone posts a link or video to their wall doesn't mean it's safe.
- ◆ **Familiarize yourself with the security and privacy settings and learn how to report a compromised account.** Each social networking site has different procedures on how to handle a hijacked or infected account; you may want to reference their help or FAQ page for instructions.
- ◆ **If your account has been hijacked or infected, report it by visiting www.ic3.gov or www.LooksTooGoodToBeTrue.com.**



LIMITING TV TIME

Research on the effects of television is persuasive. Americans average more than 4 hours of TV viewing per day, or two full months a year, and **the tube is on in the average household for 7 hours and 40 minutes a day.** Forty percent of Americans say they “always” or “often” watch TV while eating dinner, and many family members watch different programs in separate rooms. Meanwhile, **73% of teens think their parents don't spend enough time with them.**

American children spend more time in front of the TV each year than they do in school, and the negative impact is striking. Several studies have found that children who watch more TV score

consistently lower on reading proficiency tests compared with children who watch very little. **There are also clear connections between TV viewing and violence, obesity, and many other health risks that come with a sedentary lifestyle.**

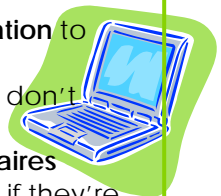
Since television has a powerful influence on our values and behavior, it's always appropriate to ask ourselves questions about what we and our children are learning from it. If you've ever wished you could find more time to spend with your family—or to pursue any number of other healthy endeavors—this is a great place to start looking.

Maybe you've already taken steps to control the TV in your household, or maybe you need to take another look at your family's viewing habits. You might try a week with the TV off, or designate one day each week for no TV. Your kids might complain, so be ready with some other fun ideas for them—like games, music, reading, or hiking—and make sure you join them for some activities. Change is never easy, but this may be one difficult choice you need to make to protect what's most important to you.

Ken Canfield on www.AllProDad.com

Internet Tips for Kids and Teens

- ✓ **Never give any personal information** to anyone you meet online.
- ✓ **Never meet up** with anyone you don't already know.
- ✓ **Don't fill out any “fun” questionnaires** that are forwarded to you, even if they're from your friends.
- ✓ **Make sure you know everyone** on your buddy list.
- ✓ **Don't answer emails or IMs** from people you don't know.
- ✓ **Remember there's no such thing as “private”** on the Internet.
- ✓ **Don't post pictures of yourself** (but if you must, don't post any showing behavior you wouldn't want your mom, dad, teacher, boss, or potential college to see).
- ✓ **Don't send pictures of other people.**
- ✓ **Don't download content without your parents' permission.**
- ✓ **Never share your password** with anyone except your parents.



Remember: as frustrated as you might be about your parents' Internet rules, they're only trying to keep you safe!

www.CommonSense.com