

The Christian Family and Social Movement

CFSM

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For our Children

Let us start by being self-centered.
Let us start with we, - we as parents.
Let us start with what we want,
for our children.

When we got married, our marriage vows include

- to accept children lovingly from God, and
- to bring them up according in the way of Christ and the Church.

Now that we have children we are actually quite perfidious.
Most of us would take the trouble to send our children to the catechism classes organized in our Parish Churches for our children, and for the vast majority of us, that is the extent to which we discharge our responsibilities.

We are content to say to ourselves....

“Someone else can teach them about our faith, hopefully a more qualified person, perhaps someone who had gone through some training and certification.

(Actually most of us couldn't care less. We have never asked specifically who are the people teaching our children catechism, nor do we care to get to know them.)

“After all, it is the Church who requires us to bring them up as Catholics, so it is their responsibility to provide the means.”

What means?

I have heard our Parish priest lament that:

“These impressionable young children spend 5 days a week in school, in a pleasant learning environment equipped with the latest audio-visual aids and computer supported learning. Then on Saturday afternoons they come into our church got crammed into a poorly equipped classroom, or worse - the priests' kitchen, and are expected to learn our faith. No wonder we are losing them to the world.”

If you still need convincing, of the sad state of affairs, take a peek into one of your Church's catechism classes. You will be taken aback by the size of the class and the mayhem within it. Due to the limited number of classrooms and lack of teachers, each class is bursting at its seams. Furthermore, without the threat or the motivation of “examinations” hanging over their heads, most of the children pay scant attention during catechism classes. Most of them instead, gather in little groups and chat. Our catechism teachers, all volunteers, face the Herculean task of bringing order in

the class, let alone teach the children. It does not help that to most children the content of our catechism classes bear little relevance to the values propagated by popular culture and tangible everyday life in Singapore.

In my parish, the parish priest have encouraged and tried to initiate some kind of “home catechism” programs whereby small groups of parents hold classes in their own homes for the Catholic children living near them. However, the program did not seem to get any support.

What we want.

Let us put aside what we have vowed and look at what I believe we parents really want for our children.

First, we want to them to be happy here and now. Not the kind of earthly, material happiness like that thrill of getting an X-Box, or an evening out at St James Power Station (a night club) but the kind of happiness and joy that comes with being with and having a relationship with the Creator. “Too many people are unhappy today because they are not doing what they are supposed to” – Fr Johnson Fernandez. His point is that we should be doing God’s will, and we will be happy when we do.

We want our children to be happy, wondering, and then learning about the greatness of God’s creation. They should be doing their children thing, sharing their boundless enthusiasm, giving love unconditionally and without reservations, growing to become worthy children of God. We want them to be able to listen to God and be able to do His will as their second (first) nature.

Second. We want our children to love and respect us... and through that love and respect, bond with us. This can come about only when we as parents live our faith, do the right thing and, with our children there looking on, to learn from what we do. It had been found that trying to teach our faith to children in a classroom situation is the most ineffective. Children “catch it” from seeing and learning from the way their parents, and the adults they love and respect, behave and act. It is now accepted wisdom that for a child their faith and living their faith is caught, not taught.

As parents we are suppose to teach by example, by the way we live. Our mission is not to win the popularity contests judged by our children. We should not expect effusive declarations of love and admiration from our children either, our teenage children reserve such shallow displays of admiration only for pop stars, which they will grow up and grow out of in a couple of years. In fact if we compromise on our principles and values just to be popular with our teens, they are less likely to love and respect us in th long run. We want them to respect us in a quiet dignified manner that will last even when we are old and incapacitated. We have to live our parenthood the right way, the Christian way.

Then, we also like to grow old with a full intact family. We want our children to be with us, near us when we are old we want to see and play with our grandchildren regularly, and participate in their upbringing.. When we are old and dependent, will our children see us as burdensome, nagging old fools or will they understand our needs?

The only factor determining how this will play out will be the depth of the faith of both, our self, and our children, whether we have lived it, and whether we have helped form our children to make their faith real, and have grown into adults with their Christian values internalized.

To realize our marriage vows, we have to be good parents, live our faith and be seen by our children to be living our faith and values. What we do today in the formation of our children – their faith and

their character. – in short, their education, how they are catechized will result in what kind of children and family we have now, and later, in our old age.

If we “outsource the faith formation of our children” to parish catechism teachers, they may impart some knowledge of our faith to our children, but if our children do not see us living and doing what we are supposed to be doing, their faith will not be real to them, as it is not real to us.

Home Catechism is the best way in which we parents can initiate, organize and participate to catechize our children. Learning together will build bonds that come with common faith and values. It demands us to live our faith (because we are teaching it to our own children) and our children to catch it from us.

The Catholic Church teaches.....

“Through the grace of the sacrament of marriage, parents receive the responsibility and privilege of evangelizing their children. Parent should initiate their children at an early age into the mysteries of the faith of which they are the “first heralds” for their children. They should associate them from their tenderest years with the life of the Church. A wholesome family life can foster interior dispositions that are a genuine preparation for a living faith and remains a support for it throughout one’s life.”

Another bonus - this also indirectly serve and fulfill our selfish interests as parents. Our personal selfish) interests, our family’s interests, and those of the Church are the same. All benefit from us living our faith, personally teaching it to our children by word and example. Parents should therefore take ownership of their children’s faith formation and become the initiators, the prime movers and protagonists in this way of life.

The world will be a better place.

.....article by Andrew - CFSM Ex Co

“Every Liturgical and Eucharistic instruction should always aim at making the daily life of the children conform more and more to the gospel.”

“The Christian Family has the greatest part to play in teaching these human and Christian values. Hence, even from the point of view of the liturgical formation of their children, it is **very important to encourage the Christian education of parent** and other educators.”

- Quotations from Conciliar and post Conciliar Documents of the Vatican II-