

Learning to Live a Fully Human Life

Accompaniment



Teaching the Way of Love

because humanity passes by way of the family ...

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PLEASE PRAY THAT

- Parents will be granted wisdom, courage and patience in guiding their children to truth, goodness, and ultimate to God's love and Heaven.
- Our culture will continue to value the roles of mothers, fathers and families in providing the well-being and formation of children.
- Families can be a place where everyone learns they are respected and loved, as well as how to respect and love others.
- The Catholic teaching on marriage & family life will be better understood and more clearly taught.
- This summer will be a time for families to reconnect and accompany each other.
- The Holy Spirit will grant all parents the gifts of fortitude (courage) and wisdom to empower parents to become sure guides for their children.
- All parents and children will seek Heaven as their final destination.

Your Guidance Has a Destination

Mother's Day and Father's Day are beautiful celebrations of parenthood. Both honor parents and all they do for their children and by extension for society. We hear stories from children young and old about why they respect and love their mothers and fathers. And most of these are stories of accompaniment and encouragement.

I often think about these stories as I sit in the stands for my son's basketball games or attend the 3-hour dance recital to watch my daughter perform. Sometimes I feel like most my parenting is creating rules, giving consequences, and feeding, sheltering and clothing my children. Certainly these are important, but the most important actions that I take as a father include supporting dreams, being present during challenges and struggles, and cheering and encouraging from the sports stands or auditorium seats.

Good parenting is a balancing act between demands and affirmation. The best parents hold high expectations for their children. They set high standards for behavior. But they also encourage their children to dream big – and more importantly to listen to God's will for their lives. And good parents surround their demands with high levels of affirmation and love. Put together, these two elements of parenting lead to accompaniment—the ability to be with their kids no matter what occurs. The best parents hang in there even when behavior doesn't meet high expectations, and charitably work with their children to help them meet the mark when they go off course. Parents are also called to help children identify and nurture their gifts.

The guidance and support we give to our children ultimately has a single destination. All parents are called to guide their children to Heaven. This task starts with bringing them to the Sacrament of Baptism. The main focus for guiding our children to Heaven at first involves teaching them to make good moral decisions by obeying the Law of God found in the 10 Commandments. But guiding our children to Heaven goes beyond teaching them to "be good." Ultimately, Heaven is a relationship of eternal love with God and parents have the privilege and responsibility to lead their children to God's love through the Sacraments and through family spirituality. Parents also teach their children how to participate God's love and life by sharing that love with others. This is the high and noble calling of every parent.



Parents need to be reminded very often that the guidance they give their children has a glorious destination!

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This calling is strengthened in the presence of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Through the Sacrament a married couple becomes a sacramental sign of God's love for His Church. A sacramental sign not only signifies something that God does in our lives, it also brings it about. The water of baptism signifies the cleansing of the soul from Original Sin and the actual act of pouring the water over the head during the Sacrament brings that cleansing about. Holy Matrimony brings about the reality of God's love when a husband and wife create an environment of marital love, welcome new life into that environment to create a family, and then guide that new life through family love to the love of God. Married couples are encouraged to pray for a stirring of the Sacramental graces to empower their efforts as parents.

By virtue of their role as parents, **all** parents share in this vocation. God wants to bless your efforts. That's why our first recommendation this month is to pray for God's grace to love Him more completely, and for the Gift of Wisdom to help you guide your children to all that is true and good.

This lofty goal of parenting is easily lost during the struggles and toil of parenting. My wife and I recently caught our son stealing and lying. We were shocked, hurt and angry. Fortunately, we kept our cool, explained to our son why stealing and lying failed to meet the expectations that we have for our children to follow the 10 Commandments, and gave him a reasonable but meaningful consequence. Sadly, our son decided to resist the consequence. Getting him to follow through with the consequence and discuss what he did wrong became a battle. My wife and I had to remind ourselves again and again that our goal is to guide our children to Heaven. It would be easy to turn bitter, to give up on our son, to refuse to go to more basketball games until he improved his attitude. But our job is to accompany this little guy and his sister. We need to love them where they're at. We need to stay by their side. We need to keep encouraging them to follow God's Law and to seek God's will for their lives. It's not easy. It's going to require a lot of guidance. But our guidance has a destination. And that destination is glory itself.

Accompany Your Children on Their Destination to Heaven

Your challenge this month is to plan ways you can accompany your children by meeting them in their current state, showing them affirmation and acceptance, and guiding them to the next step of their journey. Give these challenges a try this summer.

1. Identify the traits in your children that are most likely to make you angry or frustrated. Make a list—write them down (someplace your children won't see them).
2. Make a plan for how you will respond to your children the next time these traits get acted out. How will you remain calm? How will you give your children the opportunity to be heard? What is the next step on the journey toward holiness that your child is able to take?
3. Pray that God will stir His grace into *your heart* to help you guide your children towards holiness.
4. Pray that God will stir His grace in *your children* to help them take the next step toward holiness.

This challenge is just a small part of good Catholic parenting. Visit www.twl4parents.com for more strategies that will help you become the best parent you can be. And for the best systematic approach to parenting, consider purchasing the Teaching the Way of Love program, which can be found at the same website.

This article series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, authors of the Teaching the Way of Love home study series for parents. Find out more at www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love.