



The Armor of Faith
Topic Summary: The Battle for Our Children
Part VIII: Parents, Teach Your Children



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Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Helen is a lay-Dominican, which is also known as the Order of Preachers, and she, along with her husband Dan, are engaged in music ministry and have experience with youth catechesis. Sharon is our token cradle Catholic, and, as everyone knows by now, I am simply here to ask questions. To answer those questions is why we have our panelists, so welcome to our panelists as well as to our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.

Discussion:

Last time, we talked about some concerns within the Catholic Church as they may influence our children. Of course, when we reference the Church, we must recognize that we are all part of the body of Christ, therefore, we all have a role in support of the efforts of the Church to accomplish what God asks of us. Part of that is to raise our children to know and respect God.

While the evil one will continue to attack the Church Christ built upon Peter both from within and without, we must remember the promise of Jesus that “the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it [meaning His church].” (Matthew 16:18) That promise is fulfilled through the efforts of those who believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and endeavor to do His will.

As we participate in His Church and the ministries of the Church, we put our faith into action and we provide an example for our children. As we engage our children in the faith, our actions in support of their learning and activities will speak louder than words. As our children are provided the opportunity to live their faith, we prepare them with knowledge and skills which will enable them to assume their role as adults so they may help to educate and encourage the generations to come.

The Catholic Church is there to help us in that endeavor, but it will not happen if we are seduced to be passive in our faith. If we want our children to learn and grow, we must be active with them. As we engage, we too, will have opportunities for our own growth and learning. We must remember that our children are our future. If we want the future to be bright, we cannot cede them to the world and the designs of the evil one. Let us, then, work with the Church Jesus built for us, not only for the blessings of our children, but for the blessing of all who will cross their path.

Today, we will conclude our series on the battle for our children with a discussion concerning the call for parents to teach their children. We encounter this phrase, “parents teach your children,” in the Old Testament when Moses instructed the people in the desert:

(Deuteronomy 4:9-10) [Moses said:]

*9 However, be on your guard and be very careful not to forget the things your own eyes have seen, nor let them slip from your heart as long as you live, but **make them known to your children and to your children’s children,** 10 that day you stood before the LORD, your God, at Horeb, when the LORD said to me: Assemble the people for me, that I may let them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me as long as they live in the land and may so **teach their children.***

[We see a similar instruction from Moses in Deuteronomy 11:18-21, which reads:]

*18 Therefore, take these words of mine into your heart and soul. Bind them on your arm as a sign, and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. 19 **Teach them to your children, speaking of them when you are at home and when you are away,** when you lie down and when you get up, 20 and write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates, 21 so that, as long as the heavens are above the earth, you and your **children may live on in the land which the LORD swore to your ancestors he would give them.** (Deuteronomy 11:18-21)*

(Question 1: These words, “Parents, teach your children,” may be a little intimidating to some, because to teach, one must have knowledge of what is to be taught. **So, as we hear this call, are**

parents being called to be theologians? What knowledge should parents have to teach their children?)

- Who is God?
- Why do we worship Him?
- What are His commandments?
- Why should we follow His commandments?
- What are the main stories of the Bible and what might we learn from them?
- What is prayer and why do we pray?
- What are the different types of prayer and why is each important?
- What are good prayers for us to know and say?
- What is the difference between prayers we recite and spontaneous prayer?
- How do we demonstrate our love of God?
- What are the Apostle's and Nicene Creeds?
- Who is Jesus, Mary, and Joseph?
- Who is John the Baptist and what did he do?
- What is the importance of baptism?
- Why did God send His only begotten Son to the world? (John 3:16)
- What is the Golden Rule?
- Who are the Apostles and what did they do?
- What are the parables of Jesus and what might we learn from them?
- Why do we refer to God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?
- Why was Jesus crucified?
- What does forgiveness mean to us?
- What is the meaning of heaven and hell to us?
- Why are we called not to judge?
- What are saints and what is their importance to us?
- Who is the Pope and what is his meaning to us?
- Why do we go to Mass and how does it nourish us?
- What is Church history and why is it important to us?
- Who were the Church Doctors and what might we learn from them?
- What is natural law?
- What does God ask of us?

(Question 2: We just discussed a pretty long list of questions, which easily lead to more and more questions. **If we are not theologians, how are we to answer them all?)**

- Teaching our children is a life long journey; as we learn, we can share
- Look for age appropriate resources
 - ➔ Bible story coloring books
 - ➔ Children's, youth and teen Bibles
 - ➔ Children's and youth Bible story books
 - ➔ Catechism of the Catholic Church (youth and teen Catechisms)
- Follow along with Faith Formation materials

- Listen and be there for a conversation
- Work together on researching and discussing questions

(Question 3: With jobs, school, and extra-curricular activities, time becomes a challenge. **Where is a parent supposed to fit in teaching the blessings of faith to their children?)**

- Teaching is not always a classroom affair
- A conversation is an opportunity to teach and to learn
- Listen for questions and engage in conversation towards the answer
- If an answer is not known in the moment, jot it down, and work together to research and find the answer
- Teach by example by going to Mass and engaging in ministry
- Help children memorize the creeds, prayers, and responses (make a game of learning a little each day until a goal is achieved – celebrate what is learned)
- Ask your children to teach you something, for to teach, one must learn
- Reflect on your thoughts and feelings at their age
- Reflect on what is different between how they see the world and how you did
- Ask about their views, perceptions, concerns
- Ask about who influences them and inspires them → discuss perspective
- Discuss the differences between what you saw at their age and now
- Help them find resources through which to explore the fullness of their faith
- Explain the meaning of and engage them in Catholic traditions and celebrations
- Walk with them on their faith journey → share with them the blessings of love

(Question 4: So, we identified a long, yet incomplete, list of things we should be prepared to discuss with our children. We also mentioned we need to help our children find resources which may assist them. **Where can we find such resources?)**

- An approved, age appropriate, Catholic Bible
- An approved, age appropriate Catechism
- Internet resources, but be careful and vet what is found
- Look for sites for Catholic youth and teen issues → again, vet what is presented
- Partner with and ask recommendations from Faith Formation teams
- Consult book reviews and visit the library

(Question 5: Our children do not come with an instruction manual. **Where can we look for assistance to help us focus our parenting skills?)**

- Prayer → Ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in the moments
- Ask about parish resources and reading material
- usccb.org: From the main page, select “Issues and Action,” then, select “Marriage and Family,” then, look to the left menu and select “Parents and Parenting:” <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/parents-and-parenting/index.cfm>
- Catholicparents.org – provides links to a variety of sites and articles

- Waterloocatholics.org – Look under “Resources,” then, select “Faithful Parenting” - <https://waterloocatholics.org/faithful-parenting>
- Catholiceducation.org – Select “Marriage and Family” then, look to the left side menu and select “Parenting” - <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/marriage-and-family/parenting/>
- Catholicfamilyfaith.org – Select “Parents,” then, “Parenting”
- Conversation with parents (What do they know now they wish they knew then?)
- Conversation with other parents in the parish
- Visit the library, but again, vet the source

(Question 6: Of course, some of our listeners have already raised their children. How does the responsibility of parents change as their children become parents?)

Remember what Moses spoke to the people in the desert:

(Deuteronomy 4:9)

9 However, be on your guard and be very careful not to forget the things your own eyes have seen, nor let them slip from your heart as long as you live, but make them known to your children and to your children’s children,....

- Be supportive of your children as they raise their children
- Reflect on things you wish you knew then and discuss with your adult children
- Support and engage Catholic traditions and celebrations within the family
- Support and celebrate the sacramental milestones of the family
- Read Bible stories to grand-children or let them read to you
- Be prepared to answer questions as they arise or help find the answers
- Live as an example of the loving Word of God

Quotes:

Families should be authentic communities of love and life in which the flame of faith may be handed down from generation to generation.

– *Pope Benedict XVI*

(CCC: 2223) Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery—the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the “material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones.” Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children. By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them:

Final Thoughts:

This concludes our series concerning the battle for the hearts, minds, and souls of our children. During today's discussion, we addressed some of the challenges parents face towards fulfilling their vocation as parents and helping their children understand the meaning and importance of their faith. We discussed a rather long, but certainly not complete, list of topics we should be prepared to discuss with our children and resources which may assist in our own understanding so that we are better prepared to enable the understanding of our children.

Parental teaching of faith to children is often more informal than formal; meaning that most of our teaching is by opportunity and example rather than classroom style presentation. The most important aspect of this ability to teach is keeping the doors of conversation open with our children and making time for living our faith traditions and celebrations.

For some of us, (I know it was the case for me), we may fear revealing to our children what we do not know. We are tempted to remain silent, but we cannot fall into this trap. If we do not know an answer to a question, it is better to say so, but then, we must research the answer and follow-up with our children. The time we take to help our children learn their faith and put on the armor of God will pay dividends, not only for them, but for us as well. Our children are our future. What we do to prepare them will help them to prepare the generations which will come from them. Let us pray the generations which follow us will rejoice over the faith passed to them through us.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we begin a new series concerning what does God ask of us.

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: What Does God Ask of Us – Part I: Obedience

References:

Catechism of the Catholic Church; (1994); 2nd Edition; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; <http://ccc.usccb.org/flipbooks/catechism/index.html>

The New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE); (9 Mar 2011); United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; <http://usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/index.cfm>