

Catholic Parenting Newsletter

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“Two ways to overcome the problems in our lives and let God turn them into opportunities are by being hopeful and by being grateful.”

Justin Fatica

“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.”

Stephen R. Covey

“Listening is different than simply hearing.”

Jon Leonetti

“God gives us countless opportunities to help our children grow in goodness and to come to know, love, and serve him.”

Thomas Lickona

“When our children observe our behavior, we are teaching by merely being present.”

Dolores Curran

“Hope is like the sun, which, as we journey toward it, casts the shadow of our burden behind us.”

Samuel Smiles

“To keep a lamp burning we have to keep putting oil in it.”

St. Teresa of Calcutta



Create a Family Prayer Life

Creating a family prayer life is an important responsibility. It means making time and space for prayer—admittedly not easy to do in today’s busy society with so many competing activities. Yet this “busyness” may make it even more important for families to find time to pray together.

Choose a time and place for your family to pray together. Mealtime graces and bedtime blessings are remembered long after children grow up, leave home, and have children of their own.

Even the youngest children can be part of family prayer. They can learn to hold hands and to be quietly attentive during grace and bedtime prayers. The first prayer children should learn is only one word long—they can say “amen” after prayers led by others.

Older children can choose prayers, or make up prayers of their own. They may

want to sing, meditate, listen to a recording, or discuss their intentions. Variety in prayer will help to keep children interested and, at the same time, broaden their faith experience. While it is natural for junior high and high school-aged children to not always want to be part of the family prayer, it is important to continue to invite them.

A lifelong blessing...Praying families make lasting impressions on all their members. Though children grow up and leave home, they never forget the faith environment of their earliest years. Praying together will help you and your family discover the rich heritage of Catholic prayer and, as you pray together, to recognize God’s presence within your family life. May you and your family receive many graces as prayer becomes a lifelong resource and blessing.

Adapted from A Prayer Book for Catholic Families

Recommended Reading: “*What Matters Most: Empowering Young Catholics for Life’s Big Decisions*” by Leonard J. DeLorenzo

In *What Matters Most*, University of Notre Dame theology professor Leonard J. DeLorenzo urges youth ministers, teachers, and parents to help young people redefine success in light of their call to discipleship—completely saying yes to God. In Luke’s account of the Annunciation, Mary offers a true model of discipleship for young people to follow. Her example will empower them to make choices about how to live their lives as a courageous yes to God in everything they choose—just as she did. DeLorenzo shows how Mary exhibited four habits that will guide young people to make important life decisions: *Listen carefully and practice patience—Remember who we are and what we value most—Respond with compassion to choices we face—Embrace sacrifice for the sake of love.* DeLorenzo includes personal stories from his experience as a father and working with youth and young adults with spiritual wisdom to equip teachers, mentors, pastoral ministers, and parents to reexamine the way they encourage and help form young Catholics approaching significant life choices such as college and jobs. He presents ways to remedy spiritual deficits in these young people created by cultural realities such as the fast pace of tech-driven lives and the looming pressure to succeed with worldly accomplishments.

Back-to-School Tips



Going from a laid-back summer to a hectic back-to-school schedule is challenging for most households. What can parents do to make the transition a smooth one?

First, just know that no matter how well-prepared you and your child are, the first weeks of school can be difficult. New experiences, people, and classes are exciting, and can cause stress too. Being well-prepared for the transition can certainly cut down on some of the stress.

The basic things to prepare for all kids include gradually bringing bedtime in line with what it needs to be on school nights, always making sure kids get enough sleep, getting back to regular mealtimes if they've changed over the summer, making sure your child has healthy food, encouraging kids to get back in the habit of reading every day if they have changed that habit in the summer, and reading to young kids about starting or returning to school. If your child is in child care, involved in after-school activities, or is mature enough to stay home alone after school, make sure everyone involved knows where to go, when, what the rules are, and what the back-up plan is. Also, it can help to keep the week just before school starts and the few weeks after less hectic and free of vacations, camps, extra activities, or lots of guests.

As with most big recurring occasions in life, a special something you routinely do around the occasion will be something kids will remember and carry with them throughout their lives. Even something simple like ice cream sundaes as part of an annual "back-to-school dinner" will make a lasting impression. Another way to make it positive is to compare pictures of previous years to recent pictures, and talk about how much your child has grown and changed, and how much more he/she knows and can do now than in the previous year. Talk about how every year of school offers the opportunity to try new things, make new friends, and explore new ideas.

For yourself, take some time to sit back, take pause, and reflect on all you have done to bring this child to this place in time. Think of all you have done that has brought your child further along the path of becoming all that he or she can be.

Adapted from FamilyFun

After-School Snack — "Monkey Munch"

Ingredients:

9 cups Chex cereal (any variety)

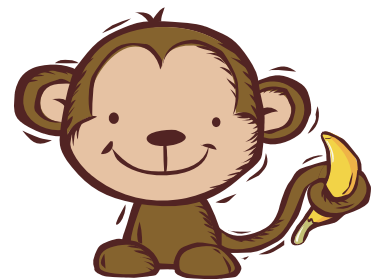
1 cup semisweet chocolate chips

1/2 cup peanut butter

1/4 cup butter or margarine

1 teaspoon vanilla

1 1/2 cups powdered sugar



1. Into a large bowl, measure cereal; set aside. 2. In a 1-quart microwavable bowl, stir together chocolate chips, peanut butter and butter. Microwave uncovered on High 1 minute; stir. Microwave about 30 seconds longer or until mixture can be stirred smooth. Stir in vanilla. Pour mixture over cereal, stirring until evenly coated. Pour into 2-gallon resealable food-storage plastic bag. 3. Add powdered sugar. Seal bag; shake until well-coated. Spread on waxed paper to cool. Store in airtight container in refrigerator.

“Listen” to your Children...



Are you really listening to your kids? And are they listening to you? The most important way to talk so your child will listen is to listen to your child. It is important to listen without “fixing.” To listen without “judgement.” To listen until your small children have had plenty of time to form and articulate their thoughts. Here are some reasons why it is important to listen:

- **It strengthens the child-parent bond.** You want your children to know that they can come to you with anything at all and you will listen and be there for them.
- **It opens the lines of communication.** It is important to know what is going on in your children’s lives—the good and the bad.
- **It improves the likelihood that they will in turn listen to you.** When a person feels respected and appreciated, they are much more likely to respond in turn with respect and appreciation. In this way, children are no different. Connection is so vitally important to influence.
- **It helps to build self-esteem.** Your time and your attention are valuable, kids know that, and by giving them your undivided time and attention, they feel valued which is great for developing self-esteem.
- **It helps them to feel understood.** It is important to listen with the intent to understand, not to reply (or to fix). Asking a specific question in response to what they say lets your child know you are really listening.
- **It provides insight into their emotional state.** According to researcher Michael Grose, “the biggest single preventative factor for anxiety and depressive illnesses in young people is being in a family that has 5-6 shared meals together with the television and other communication devices off.” Eat together as a family as regularly as you can—remember it isn’t just dinner that counts.
- **It helps them to develop effective social skills.** Your attentive listening provides your child with a fabulous role model for the development of positive social relationships. They learn about the give and take of conversation and how good it feels to be heard.
- **Because kids have great ideas.** Children have great ideas and it is through these ideas that many people (children included) are able to plan a course of action and make these ideas come to fruition. Make some of your everyday travel time technology-free for everyone, especially if you are travelling with just one of your kids.

Adapted from *childhood101*

Cherishing the Gift of Time

TIME. In today’s world there never seems to be enough of it. As the speed of family life continues to increase, how we use our time together (and even the time we are apart) becomes more important. Celebrate the gift of family time. We find holiness in the ordinary experiences of our lives. When we teach a child a new skill, when we discipline a child with love, when we keep our children safe and healthy, we are living our lives in the same way that the Holy Family lived. The essence of what we see in the lives of Jesus, Mary and Joseph is a relationship of love—loving God and loving each other. Hold hands as you pray together at mealtimes this month.



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BACK-TO-SCHOOL PRAYER

Gracious God, as the summer begins to fade,
new possibilities lie on the horizon.

Bless all of those who are beginning or returning
to their roles as teachers and catechists as well as
those who lead and support them in their efforts.
May this school year be a time of grace and
potential as they teach, share and challenge others
to grow in faith, knowledge, and wisdom.

Bless children and youth, along with their parents,
as they begin a new school year. May their minds
be open to learning and to the wonder
of discovery and insight.
Be with us all as we embark on the
new school year.
Amen