***How to Walk Your Child Toward God***

 ***“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the World.”***

***Jn 1:29***

When a child seeks the comfort of a parent they serve and are viewed as the natural destination point in a child’s heart and mind. If something goes wrong or the child feels misplaced, he will seek them out for reassurance, comfort and help. One of the main reasons a child would naturally go to his parents other than the fact that they’re his parents is that the child has recognized that mom and dad have helped him cope with the daily challenges of life especially as he grows in physical, mental and spiritual maturity.

As children created in His image and likeness we are naturally in a constant state of journeying toward God even if we ignore this very fact. As parents it is important that we are keenly aware of this because our role is to help our children know and recognize who God is by our witness of faith toward God. This visible reality is very important because the intent is to help our children see and begin to understand the importance of seeking a relationship with our Lord. And if an opportunity is genuinely established to seek God, then the nature of who God is as our Father in Heaven who is all-powerful, all-knowing, omnipotent does not appear that difficult to understand. The child thus begins to know and understand who God is because he sees his parent’s actively walking with God and including him on this journey through a daily practice of the faith especially in the active participation of the holy sacrifice of the Mass that serves as the source and summit of the Christian life (CCC 1324).

**A Journey toward God**

When I speak of the term “journey” in relation to God the Catechism provides us with a clear and precise explanation in the following way; “The universe was created in a state of journeying toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it.” (CCC 302) Taking this definition a step further Jesus asks for childlike abandonment to the providence of our heavenly Father who takes care of his children’s smallest needs . . . (CCC 305). This means that our duty as parents is to provide the visible and tangible realities of God’s existence and Divine Providence within the daily structure of life.

God, who creates and conserves all things by his Word, provides men with constant evidence of himself in created realities. And furthermore, wishing to open up the way to heavenly salvation, he manifested himself to our first parents from the very beginning.” He invited them to intimate communion with himself and clothed them with resplendent grace and justice. (CCC 54)

St. Paul in his second letter to St. Timothy tells him to follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us (1:13-14). Part of the task of leading our children to God is how we project our own faith in word and deed toward our children. If we express the Catholic faith as a chore, then our children will embrace a similar attitude to the point of making it part of their character. On the opposite end of the spectrum if we as parents express our faith with a prudent and charitable attitude intimately desiring a relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church then our children would hopefully first embrace this Christian attitude and second embrace it as part of their character.

**Practically Speaking**

There are many practical ways a parent can walk their child toward God. The **first and most important practical step** you can take with your child is to be a visible instrument of prayer where your son or daughter actually sees and hears you praying to Christ. This initial witness of faith is probably the most important because it sets the stage for everything else you want your child to learn about their faith. In prayer the child begins to see that there is a direct correlation between faith and prayer. This formula becomes the seed bed toward living out the sacramental life in word and deed. Thus nightly family prayers, praying and blessing your children at night before they go to bed, prayer before meals and praying for others in need sets the stage for their journey.

A **second practical step** to consider is to create a sacred space i.e. a prayer space in your home. This typically consists of placing a bible on a stand opened in a highly visible area where you reflect on the Word of God as a family at least two to three days a week preferably every day.

And this leads to a **third practical step**; introducing the lives of the Saints. The Christian witness of the Saints can only strengthen the journey and give our children further hope that it is not impossible to have a relationship with our Lord and walk with Him.

A **fourth and final practical step** is allotting time to receive the sacraments especially Confession and Holy Communion. The sacramental life is rooted in Christ, in order to genuinely love Christ and His Church we must actively engage the gifts of grace we have received in the sacraments themselves. In baptism we enter in the Kingdom of God, its important to remind our children of this as much as possible even to the point of celebrating the day of their baptism as we would celebrate their actual birthday.

As you can see there are various ways we can lead our children toward God. Ultimately our role and function as parents is to lead our children to Heaven hence our walk to and with God. St. Augustine, one of the greatest saints and Doctors of the Church gives us a small taste of what it means to walk with God through a description of his intimate participation in the Mass;

**How I wept, deeply moved by your hymns, songs, and the voices that echoed through your Church! What emotion I experienced through your Church! What emotion I experienced in them! Those sounds flowed into my ears, distilling the truth in my heart. A feeling of devotion surged within me, and tears streamed down my face-tears that did me good (Confessions, 9, 6, 14; CCC 1157).**