

Parents: the primary catechists

Parenting has always been a challenge. Passing on religious values can be a daunting task, for it requires presenting the Gospel message in a way that connects with young people.

This task is especially hard today because of the secularism that works against Christian ideals. Consumerism, toxic social media, TV, movies, music and fashion — all promote a superficial or false view of the world that can tempt young people to compromise their dignity as sons and daughters of God.

None of these cultural forces, however, should distract us from a fundamental truth: “Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children” (Catechism, No. 2223).

The Catechism goes on: “Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child’s earliest years. [...] Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God” (No. 2226).

Many parents feel that they aren’t up to the task of teaching their children religion.

Some parents weren’t catechized well themselves when they were kids and so feel inadequate to pass on the faith.

Other parents think that “religion” is just a school subject, best left to teachers and trained catechists.

For those who weren’t taught the faith well or for those who’d prefer to leave the task of catechizing their kids to others, there is help.

It’s the Parish Religious Education Program.

PREP aims to fulfill the ideal mentioned in the Catechism: “The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents” (No. 2226).

By actively engaging with PREP, parents can fulfill one of the most important tasks entrusted to them: to help their kids get to heaven.

Understandably, parents do their best to provide their kids with the material possessions they need and get them into sports activities that teach physical fitness and teamwork.

But ultimately those things come and go. What can last for a lifetime is the faith. Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train the young in the way they should go; even when old, they will not swerve from it.”

Jesus calls all of us to join in this mission of passing on the jewel of our faith to our children. It’s the best way to equip them for life.

