

Evangelization Starts at Home



In our Parish's Baptism Prep Class, my wife Darlene and I ask young parents about their goals for their child. The answers invariably boil down to some form of: "I just want my child to be happy." Although unconditioned happiness is our ultimate destination, we steer them towards more concrete things they can start doing with their child(ren) immediately, like attending Mass as a family, teaching them to pray, and helping them understand their new relationship to God as adopted sons and daughters. That is to say, to evangelize!

Hi. I'm Ryan Duggan. My wife Darlene and I have three daughters: Maddie (H.S. Freshman), Regina (H.S. Junior), and Keegan (H.S. Senior). We've been a part of this parish/school and its many transformations for decades and in that time have tried to grow in our faith as a family and have learned some valuable lessons on which I'd like to reflect.

Lesson 1: ***Sending your child to a Catholic school does not constitute raising them in the Faith.*** Although it's a blessing to have a school that reinforces Catholic doctrine and ethics, we cannot out-source our children's formation and expect them to become mature faith-filled adults. We must live our faith in our homes. Despite parish efforts for adult and youth ministries, successful faith development requires a foundation built at home. Our efforts to evangelize outside the home are secondary and remedial to our primary responsibility to evangelize our families.

Lesson 2: We've found that ***living the liturgical calendar at home keeps the rhythm of the year front and center.*** Beyond decorating at Christmas, we use signs and symbols to signify the seasons, like an Advent Wreath or a May Altar for the Blessed Mother, or making rosaries more present during October. It's small things like this scattered throughout the year that help keep the faith a part of our routine.

Lesson 3: ***Normalizing the sacramental life.*** This includes the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, reverencing Confession, preparing for Holy Communion, and supporting discernment toward vocations, whether married or religious. We help our children develop the foundational faith necessary to persevere into adulthood, even as their desire to fully participate in their faith may fluctuate from time to time.

Lesson 4: ***We prioritize open and honest discussion of the faith.*** Having difficulties with Catholic doctrine is perfectly normal. There should be room for sharing those difficulties and asking for clarification. As St. John Henry Newman states: "Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt." I encourage my daughters to engage our Catholic faith both intellectually and spiritually. If I don't have an answer, it becomes a great opportunity for us to research it together.

Ultimately, raising children in the Faith is a primary responsibility that begins and is sustained through intentional, lived practices within the family home. ***What practices has your family embraced at home to raise your children in the Faith?***

Ryan Duggan