

How can parents help?

A volunteer catechist who teaches first graders shared this concern about confirming school-age children: Will we have enough time to get them ready?

Like hundreds of other volunteers across this diocese, this woman strives to teach the faith to wiggly little ones on Wednesday nights. Subtract the time the kids are distracted or goofing off, and only a fraction of the one-hour class time remains for connecting with the small students.

If Bishop Gilmore decides to reorder the initiation sacraments so that Confirmation precedes First Eucharist, our religious education teachers will likely request specific support from parents. In fact, parents will prepare with their children for Confirmation, as they currently do for First Eucharist. And that involvement will need to continue beyond Confirmation through the middle school and high school years.

Pope John Paul II called the family the “basic cell of society.” Meanwhile, the Catechism identifies the family as a “domestic church.” Hmm. A sociologist might embrace such terminology, but for the rest of us, there is a more humble description. That is, as, a little church.

Our homes are a little church whether we realize it or not. Just by doing what comes naturally, we live as the church Jesus established. We love. We sacrifice. We forgive. We pray. Even if we have no confidence in our ability to teach our kids doctrine, we families are a little church. Even if we remember little from our religious education because we were too busy passing notes in class, we families are a little church. Even if our first communion was our last communion, we families are still a little church.

Parents or not, all of us are called to be apostles, to present Christ to others. How undeniable that we must do this in our own homes. But how do we do it?

Lent provides us with some ideas. As we focus on truly converting our hearts to God, many of us participate in Word Working groups or Stations of the Cross. We attend Confession. We give up something or mindfully do something extra. We are more attentive to our relationship with Jesus during Lent. Can we sustain that level of commitment throughout the whole Church year?

Even during Ordinary Time, we parents can attempt to “word work” the Sunday scripture with our children before Mass. We can focus on Jesus’ life through family rosary time, even at the pace of one decade a day if our kids are small. We can model for our children an examination of conscience, and celebrate Reconciliation. And with prayer as our foundation, our little church will weather any stormy times.

A number of websites provide information and ideas for families who wish to live the liturgical year with the same energy they do during Lent. Maybe you already have some favorites. What follows are a few to use as a starting point, plus a short description.

Websites:

www.domestic-church.com (for articles and information)

www.fisheaters.com (for details on the “whys and hows” of our faith)

www.catholicculture.org (for a link to a liturgical calendar for the month, plus prayers, activities, even recipes)

www.catholicmom.com (for kids’ Mass coloring sheets, craft ideas, and much more on faith, family, and fun)

<http://uscgb.org> (for Mass readings and movie reviews)

<http://catholicexchange.com> (for news, commentaries, and the saint of the day)

The little church we build, supplemented by formal instruction in our Catholic schools and parish schools of religion, can be our children’s permanent spiritual home. Though children someday leave our care, their spiritual safe house will be a forever home, filled with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Trish Keller of St. Dominic Parish in Garden City has occasionally addressed the possible changes in the administration of the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Dodge City Diocese. One more installment remains in this series. Your comments are welcomed at stdomoffice@st-dominic.org.