

PARENT INVENTORY

WELCOME

Welcome to family faith formation! This is a process that puts you as parent(s) at the center of sharing faith with your children. Faith is not as much taught, as it is caught. For this to happen it must be passed on and shared by the people children love, respect, and trust the most - their parents. Hearing this is not meant to be overwhelming or intimidating. God has blessed you with everything you need to lead your family to him. You are your children's first experience of God. If the best definition of God is that he is love, you are his hands and feet as you love and take care of his children. Grab a piece of paper and a pen before you begin.

AN INVITATION

Think back to those first moments when you held each of your children. There is nothing quite like the overwhelming sense of love you instantly have for this new little human. Nothing can truly prepare you for the joy of being part of God's plan for continuing life. You are a part of his creating. Reflect or journal for a few moments on what it feels like to know you are a co-creator with God. He continues to create through you! What were those first moments like when you ushered in new life?

Those first few years of raising a child can feel like such a blur, but somehow we as parents start to figure it out. The schedule of feeding, changing, and sleeping, and repeat! Our children literally depend on us. Before we know it, we move from helping a child survive, to raising a human being. Our child/children begin to repeat the things we say and follow our every move. It is about this time we start to realize that we are forming another person. We are instilling their conscience, decision making skills, and their views of themselves and others. We are also teaching them how to possibly lead a family one day. It can be a little overwhelming! Take a moment and reflect on what it feels like to be responsible for forming another person.

We usually end up choosing to lead similar to the way our parents led us. Sometimes that seems like a good thing, and other times we have to try our best not to repeat what we now view as their mistakes. Thinking back on your childhood, what are a few positive experiences you would like to bring to your own parenting?

Faith is a gift that is passed on through families. Many times our image of God comes from our early experiences. God can be seen as a loving Father, a judge, a friend, a ruler, or he can be absent. Take a moment and divide a piece of paper into four sections. In section one, reflect on your image of God when you were a child. In section two, reflect on your image of God as a teenager. In section three, reflect on your image of God as a young adult. In section four, reflect on your image of God as a parent.

What has your relationship with God been like throughout the years?

What is the image of God you would like to instill in your children?

Do you feel that you and your children need God in your lives? Why or why not?

Many of the big questions in life come from our understanding and belief in God. Our faith also tends to steer our values, thoughts, and the purpose of our life. This is why it is important as parents to reflect and wrestle with these bigger faith questions. We will be inviting our children into our own understanding.

When you were growing up, the family was more central to daily life, and television shows, music, and pop-culture were much more aligned with family values. With the beginning of the Internet and social media, today's children are bombarded with many different voices and images that are not necessarily delivered through parents who have a child's best interest in mind. This makes today's parents' role so exceptionally important. A parent must speak intentionally into the life of their child to set the values and beliefs they feel are important as the influences of the world will not prioritize this. As parents, we have the first responsibility for the education of our children. Our homes are the place where this teaching and learning happens. We have the opportunity to teach compassion, forgiveness, respect, humility, justice, integrity, and more. Children learn more from our daily examples than from any lecture we could ever give. Take a moment and look at the values and virtues below:

Acceptance, Authenticity, Boldness, Character, Commitment, Compassion, Cooperation, Courage, Creativity, Dependability, Faith, Flexibility, Forgiveness, Friendship, Generosity, Gratefulness, Hard Work, Helpfulness, Honesty, Hope, Humility, Humor, Independence, Initiative, Integrity, Joy, Justice, Kindness, Learning, Love, Optimism, Order, Patience, Peace, Perseverance, Prayer, Relationships, Respect, Self-Control, Service, Simplicity, Teamwork, Unity, Worship.

Which of these do you hope to develop and instill in your children?

If we want faith developed in our children, we need to be mindful of how we present it. If we make it feel like we "have to go to religion class" or "have to go to Mass" our children will see faith as an obligation. Faith is meant to be interwoven into the fabric of our life.

This makes it critical for us as parents to continue to form ourselves as we examine our own beliefs, grow in faith, and raise our children. This process is meant to be part of helping you go deeper in your own thoughts and feelings about faith and to help you be even more valuable in your role as a parent. Never forget, that you are not alone. God is with you, always trying to draw you close to him.

In closing, we want to remind you that you are a big deal-- a really big deal. God thinks so too. He placed you at the head of a family. God does not only call the equipped, he equips the called. Your voice will always remain the strongest in the lives of your children. As you share faith in your home, you may get frustrated and overwhelmed, but remember faith is the greatest gift you can give your children. It is the one that remains with them forever.

PRAYER

God, please help me to be open to this new experience of sharing faith in my home. May I come to see this as an investment into leading my family. Allow me to start with myself, trusting that you meet me exactly where I am. Your love and grace are all I need. Amen.