
LIFE TEEN PARENT LETTER

Thank you for allowing your teen to join us tonight at Life Teen. Below you'll find some information about tonight's topic. Please dialogue with your teen and encourage them to share what they learned.

LIFE NIGHT: UNEXPECTED GIFT

CONTENT OVERVIEW

The Sacrament of Matrimony is a great good. It reflects God's love to the world: God created man out of love and also calls man to love. The mutual love of husband and wife becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man. The Sacrament of Matrimony is an opportunity for a couple's love for each other to demonstrate to the world a glimpse of the love God has for each of us. (CCC 1604)

In the Sacrament of Matrimony, an indissoluble bond is created. This means that the marital union is unbreakable: "what God has joined let no man put asunder." (Matthew 19:6, CCC 1644)

Does this seem like something that is even possible today? I would imagine everyone knows several couples whose marriage has ended in divorce. But we must not lose hope. God has not placed on spouses a burden impossible to bear. By following Christ, by denying themselves and, taking up their cross, spouses can receive the original meaning of marriage - the complete gift of self. (Ephesians 5:25-26)

Saint Gianna is a beautiful model of what it means to give of oneself. Throughout her life, she was active in helping others and inspiring the faith. She was part of a lay movement called Catholic Action that focused on prayer, service, and sacrifice. She planned conferences, retreats, and special outings for young girls. She completed a degree in pediatrics and saw her medical practice as a gift and mission from God. She married and had children. While juggling her roles as wife, mother, homemaker, and doctor she prioritized teaching the faith to her children and spending one on one time with her husband.

During the second month of her last pregnancy, a medical condition was discovered that forced Gianna to choose between the life of her child and her own. Making her wishes clear to her family, she told them to save the baby. Her self-giving life led her to give her life so her child could live.

We may not be asked to give our lives for our children, but every day we make decisions that give them a better life. We are called to teach our children to be part of a family and community that works for the good of others. We need to teach them to put Jesus at the center of their dating relationships as they prepare for marriage and encourage chastity. We must remember that how we live out our vocation of marriage will guide our children in their vocation.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. Plan a family activity that serves the community; praying for the unborn, serving at a homeless shelter, cleaning the church together.
2. Affirm a family member by sharing a time when you have seen them be self-giving.
3. Pray with your teens for their future spouses.

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LIFE NIGHT: GRATEFUL BEGGAR

CONTENT OVERVIEW

We have a lot going on in our lives: parenting, working, running errands, maintaining a home etc. Life can get really busy. How often do we make time to pray and to focus entirely on God? For this reason, there have always been men and women who have been willing to enter the religious life so they can focus entirely on God. (1 Corinthians 7:32-34, CCC 1618)

When entering religious life, a person dedicates their life to God by promising to live out the virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience. These three virtues are called the evangelical counsels because they help one to live out the Gospel message more perfectly. (CCC 915-916)

Poverty is more than giving up material goods, but also about trusting and relying on God for everything. (CCC 2833)

Chastity is the ability to have self-mastery over one's sexuality. By living this virtue, one can focus more on loving God and the rest of the world. (CCC 2337-2339)

Obedience is about doing what is in the best interest of the community and rejecting selfish tendencies of independence and self-reliance. (CCC 1897-1900)

Saint Francis of Assisi is a great example of someone who lived out these evangelical counsels. Saint Francis lived out poverty by renouncing his wealth and choosing to beg for what he needed. He trusted that God would provide for him.

Saint Francis lived out chastity by giving up his immoral lifestyle and going to great lengths, like rolling in the snow, to curb temptation. By living out chastity, St. Francis was able to love those around him more perfectly.

Saint Francis obeyed God when he was told to return home from the crusade. He also obeyed God when God told Francis to "rebuild my Church." In his obedience, St. Francis built more than a church building but the Body of Christ. The Church thinks these virtues are so important to a life of holiness that she calls the laity to live out the spirit of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

We practice poverty by recognizing and being thankful for our many blessings and trusting in God to take care of our needs.

We practice chastity by exercising self-mastery in all our relationships whether single, dating, or married.

We practice obedience by including God in our decisions and respecting those in authority.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. Have you or any member of your family considered the religious life?
2. Is a vocation to the religious life supported in your family?
3. How can you live out the spirit of poverty, chastity, and obedience?

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LIFE NIGHT: ABUNDANT SACRIFICE

CONTENT OVERVIEW

Believe it or not, every Catholic is called to the priestly ministry. By virtue of our Baptism, we share in the priesthood of Christ and receive the duty and power to act like Christ. We are called to preach the Gospel, serve the needy, and offer prayer and sacrifice. (CCC 1546)

The Priesthood of the Faithful is different than the Common Ministerial Priesthood. By the sacrament of Holy Orders, the clergy receive the duty and power to act in the person of Christ. The Sacrament of Baptism calls all the faithful to work in the world for its salvation. The Sacrament of Holy Orders, calls clergy to work in the spiritual and sacramental realm. Together, the baptized and ordained from a Church, Christ's instrument of salvation.(CCC 1547)

A vocation to the priesthood is a unique calling to offer oneself as a gift for the salvation of all of God's people. A model example of a holy priest is Karol Wojtyla or Saint John Paul II. Karol faced many hardships throughout his life, losing his mother and brother at an early age, and the Nazi occupation of his homeland. However, He was an athlete and had a passion for theatre and poetry. He eventually felt a call to the priesthood and studied in an underground seminary.

Throughout his life, St. John Paul II, gave of himself to all those he encountered. His life was a testament to how he cared about the salvation of everyone and led him to spread the Good News tirelessly traveling a total of 775,000 miles during his Papacy.

Parenting is by nature a very self-giving vocation. We want the best for our children and often sacrifice our time and finances for their benefit. But we are also called to spread the Good News and give of ourselves to all people. This means evangelizing our extended family and co-workers, serving in ministries at our parish, encouraging our children to do the same, and embracing our call to the priesthood of the faithful.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. When have you experienced a priest giving of himself to you with the intention of helping you and your salvation?
2. Are you open to God having a different plan for either yourself or your children?
3. How does your family support your parish priest?
4. Plan a family prayer time to pray for the Priesthood and asking for the intercession of St. Pope John Paul II.

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LIFE NIGHT: RED SOLDIER

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In the past few weeks, we have learned about several saints and their journeys to holiness. We too are called to be holy. All people, everywhere, at every age, are called to mirror God in their lives and to become holy, to become saints. (CCC 941)

In a very difficult time of Mexican history, the Mexican government outlawed Christianity. They closed churches, deported priests, and prohibited even persecuted people who practiced their faith. Catholics formed an armed resistance and eventually a Civil War began.

A boy named José joined the Catholic forces and because of his young age became a flag-bearer. In January of 1928, he was captured and imprisoned. After two weeks of questioning and beatings, José still refused to renounce his faith. Deciding to execute him, they marched him on skinned feet while stabbing him with machetes to the execution site.

They told him that it could all be over if he would simply renounce his faith in Jesus. José repeatedly responded, "Viva Cristo Rey," Long Live Christ the King. His final act after being shot was to trace a small cross on the ground with his finger and to kiss it.

We too are called to sacrifice everything for Christ. Blessed José was a Red Martyr because he shed his blood. Most of us will not be called to be a red martyr, but we are all called to become white martyrs and die to ourselves so that Christ might live in us.

One type of "death" we have to undergo is a death to sin. When faced with a temptation, there is a part of us that wants to sin. That is the part of us that must undergo death. The part of us that wants to gossip, steal, lie, cheat, etc.

Another type of "death" we experience is death to self. This is when we want something, but decide to let it go for another good. We have to be willing to give up what we want, so that God can give us the gift He wants us to have.

It might seem like this life of sacrifice is just going to be one boring, depressing, existence. However, God knows us better than we know ourselves and He wants to give us more joy than we could even imagine. When Jesus calls us to sacrifice something, it is because He has something better in store for us. It's like a parent telling a child they can't have a cupcake with their lunch, and then surprising him with a whole cake after dinner.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. Who is one of your favorite saints? Why?
2. Share a circumstance when you have had to die to self to follow Jesus.
3. Study the lives of saints and pick a family saint that your family can relate to and pray for their intercession.