

**Subject: Some Ideas to Supplement Existing Religious Education Programs**

**WHAT HAPPENS IN THE HOME**

- The love of our Catholic faith is often fostered thru simple acts and practices performed in a devotional manner as a “matter of fact”. The acts can become imprinted into the behavior and serve as reminders of the deeper truths of our faith. Examples of these practices would be:
  - Grace said before meals at home and in public, lead by various family members.
  - In addition to celebrating birthdays, celebrate the feast days associated with family member’s names, i.e. know the story behind the saint, and send a card/e-card.
  - Encourage grandparents to tell stories about practicing their faith.
  - Emphasize the religious aspects of Christmas, Holy Week, and major church feast days.
  - Have older children teach the younger ones basic prayers, i.e. the Our Father, Hail Mary, etc.
  - Have parents say night prayers with their young children.
  - Have religious artifacts around the house, i.e. crucifixes, pictures, etc. and ensure the children know their meaning.
  - Reciting the rosary during long car trips.

**CULTURAL TRADITIONS**

- It seems that many of the cultural traditions associated with our faith have been subtly usurped by our secular society. Maintaining the cultural traditions of our ancestors can be useful in transmitting the richness of our Catholic faith. A small example of this is a Polish tradition my grandmother would use on my feast day of St. Stephen the proto-martyr, December 26<sup>th</sup>. Upon entering her house on that day, I would unexpectedly be pelted with a handful of nuts as a reminder of St. Stephen’s death by stoning. My kids and my grandkids still do this to me...maybe it is a little silly...but it still offers an opportunity to remind them about the first martyr of the church.

**WORLD WIDE NET**

- The amount of good Catholic material available on the internet is remarkable. Any parishioner with an interest in deepening their understanding of the faith and having access to the internet can pursue their curiosity on an individual basis. A small selection of suggested sites:
  - **newadvent.org** = Contemporary Catholic articles and access to the Bible and major church documents
  - **catechetics.com** = website of the *The Catechetical Review*, devoted to material used in teaching the faith.
  - **ewtn.com** = huge web site supported by the Eternal Word Television Network

- **catholicculture.org** = comments on contemporary cultural issues; of particular interest are the reviews of websites found in the resource section
- **catholiceducation.org** = site of the Catholic Education Resource Center; well organized as a first step in doing research
- **usccb.org** = U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops. Comprehensive site; has the daily readings used at Mass
- **vatican.com** = the official site of the Vatican, focusing on the universal church
- **ignitumtoday.com** = site devoted to the millennial generation and social networking

### **PUBLISHED PROGRAMS**

- In researching structured established religious education programs, I googled Catholic Parish Evangelization and was overwhelmed. One of the better and most comprehensive appeared to be The Amazing Parish at **amazingparish.org**. I recommend that the parish council check it out.

### **SUPPORT FOR OUR YOUTH PAST CONFIRMATION**

- The period of development regarding our young parishioners is critical. How to support them varies with where they are going to school to prepare for their futures. Realize that the lives of our youth center on their high schools. Some ideas for letting them know we care for them as members of our parish.
  - High School Students
    - Provide informal classes in apologetics that emphasize the “whys” to support the “what” of Catholic doctrine
    - Ensure that youths are involved in the “nuts and bolts” of the parish i.e. usher duties; lectors; advocates for the students
    - Identify student milestones and publish in the bulletin
    - For college students, arrange for social events during breaks
    - Invite upper class high school students to participate in Question and Answer sessions with the college students

### **SOME THINGS TO TRY NOW**

- Publish a weekly recommended article from the internet and ask for blog comments. Periodically have a discussion session at the parish with interested parties.
- Profile individual high/college students in the bulletin.
- Continue to support the new bible studies
- Conduct an interest survey asking areas where the parish might participate in adult religious education classes.