

A Message to Parents

In today's world, bringing up adolescents can be a harrowing experience for parents. There are so many evils to beware of: alcoholism, pornography, immorality, drugs, gun violence... At the same time, temptations to sin come from many directions: television, magazines, friends, movies, social media...

To help their children, parents need to teach and guide them, especially by their own non-hypocritical examples. They must love them, spend time with them, and pray with them. They should correct and discipline them, but also allow their children some privacy and opportunities for self-expression and maturation, remembering that their offspring do not necessarily become exactly what parents hope and plan.

In this chapter three important considerations are emphasized: parents must pray for their children, they must have faith in God, they must not live in fear.

1. PRAY FOR YOUR CHILDREN

A mother's prayer

The prayer of a parent is very powerful. The passage below illustrates how a persistent mother hung on to Jesus and moved him to perform a miracle for her daughter.

Jesus left that place and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And suddenly out came a Canaanite woman from that district and started shouting, "Lord, Son of David, take pity on me. My daughter is tormented by a devil." But he said not a word in answer to her. And his disciples went and pleaded with him, saying, "Give her what she wants, because she keeps shouting after us." He said in reply, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel." But the woman had come up and was bowing low before him. "Lord," she said, "help me." He replied, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to little dogs." She retorted, "Ah yes, Lord; but even little dogs eat the scraps that fall from their master's table." Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, you have great faith. Let your desire be granted." And from that moment her daughter was well again. (Mt 15:21–28, NJB)

A father's prayer

The father in the next passage had asked the disciples to help. But when they could not, he persevered by going to Jesus.

As they were rejoining the crowd a man came up to him and went down on his knees before him. "Lord," he said, "take pity on my son: he is demented and in a wretched state; he is always falling into fire and into water. I took him to your disciples and they were unable to cure him." In reply, Jesus said, "Faithless and perverse generation! How much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him here to me." And when Jesus rebuked it the devil came out of the boy, who was cured from that moment. (Mt 17:14–18, NJB)

Pray

What troubles your children? Whatever it is, pray for them. What troubles you concerning your children? Examine yourself truthfully, and pray for yourself.

If there is anything you can do, do it with wisdom and affection, and pray. If there is nothing you or anyone else can do, pray.

In Mark's version of the above healing story, when asked by the disciples why they themselves could not cast out the demon from the boy, Jesus answered: "This is the kind that can be driven out only *by prayer.*" (Mk 9:29, NJB)

2. HAVE FAITH

When you pray, do so with faith. Jesus said to the Canaanite mother: “Woman, you have great *faith*! Let your desire be granted.” (Mt 15:28, NJB)

He said to the demented boy’s father in the Gospel according to Mark: “Everything is possible for one who has *faith*.” (Mk 9:23, NJB)

To the disciples who could not heal the demented boy, he gave the reason: “Because you have so little faith. In truth I tell you, if your *faith* is the size of a mustard seed you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; nothing will be impossible for you.” (Mt 17:20, NJB)

By believing in Jesus, the father in the next story obtained what he asked for.

And at Caper’na-um there was an official whose son was ill. When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. Jesus therefore said to him, “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.” The official said to him, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” Jesus said to him, “Go; your son will live.” The man *believed the word that Jesus spoke to him* and went his way. As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was living. So he asked them the hour when he began to mend, and they said to him, “Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.” The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live”; and he himself believed, and all his household. (Jn 4:46–53, RSV)

The dying

The concern you have for your sons and daughters may not be physical. Read the above texts again as though they are about your own children, but replace the mentioned illness by the maladies threatening the young ones in your home.

Read the next story as if it is about your child whom you imagine to be on the road to eternal damnation.

And suddenly there came a man named Jairus, who was president of the synagogue. He fell at Jesus’ feet and pleaded with him to come to his house, because he had an only daughter about twelve years old, who was dying...

While he was still speaking, someone arrived from the house of the president of the synagogue to say, “Your daughter has died. Do not trouble the Master any further.” But Jesus heard this, and he spoke to the man, “Do not be afraid, only *have faith* and she will be saved.”... They were all crying and mourning for her, but Jesus said, “Stop crying; she is not dead, but asleep.” But they ridiculed him, knowing she was dead. But taking her by the hand himself he spoke to her, “Child, get up.” And her spirit returned and she got up at that very moment. Then he told them to give her something to eat. (Lk 8:41–42, 49–50, 52–55, NJB)

No matter how hopeless the situation appears, entrust your children to Jesus. Entrust yourself to him. Learn from his example. He took the child by the hand with kindness; he spoke with her; he asked her parents to give her something to eat, to nourish her, to care for her, to be attentive and loving towards her, to cherish her.

Trust Jesus’ mission

He said:

“All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.” (Jn 6:37–39, NIV)

“The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life; they will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from my hand. The Father, for what he has given me, is greater than anyone, and no one can steal anything from the Father’s hand.” (Jn 10:27–29, NJB)

“See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.” (Mt 18:10–14, RSV)

3. DO NOT BE AFRAID

In the account of Jairus’ daughter, Jesus said to the father of the little girl: “*Do not be afraid*, only have faith and she will be saved... She is not dead, but asleep.” (Lk 8:50, 52, NJB)

In another passage of the gospel, he assures everyone:

“Can you not buy five sparrows for two pennies? And yet not one is forgotten in God’s sight. Why, every hair on your head has been counted. *There is no need to be afraid*: you are worth more than many sparrows.” (Lk 12:6–7, NJB)

You are very precious in God’s eyes. So are your children. God has not forgotten them. He looks after them – just as he has looked after you from your youth, and will continue doing so because you still need him just as much as your children do.

“*Do not let your hearts be troubled*. You trust in God; trust also in me.” (Jn 14:1, NJB)

When you have done all that you can, place everything else in God’s hands. Let his power be displayed in the healing of your children and you.

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him.” (Jn 9:1–3, RSV)

Young people have their hardships. They are passing through a difficult stage in life. The devil will try to make you treat them like enemies. Do not be misled by him. Scripture says:

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. (1 Pet 5:8-9, NIV)

Jesus’ command is to love one another, not hate. Your children are your flesh and blood. If you don’t love them, who will?

By love, the Canaanite mother was able to enlist Jesus’ help in casting out the devil from her daughter. (Mt 15:21–28, in the first story above.)

Next time the devil attacks by creating a storm in your heart, do not fall for his tricks or react irrationally. Turn to Jesus immediately and ask him to come into the situation.

Go in peace

It takes a long time for young adults to grow and mature. It takes a long time for parents to grow and mature. Parents have lived more years; they should not use their greater age to browbeat their children, or to create more discord and conflict, but to bring affection and peace to their homes. They should not wait to be grandparents for this to happen. Let them begin now.

“Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.” (Mk 9:50, RSV)

There may be occasional troubles and pain, but with God’s help all will be well in the end. Through overcoming your trials and difficulties, you will ripen into understanding and loving Christians.

Do whatever is in your power for your children. Go to the parish library or a trustworthy Catholic bookstore to find a suitable book on parenting. Ask those who might be able to lend a hand, for example, an experienced priest. But above all, pray for your children, have faith in God, do not live in fear.

“Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” (Lk 7:50, NIV) Faith will save your family. Faith will bring peace.

A word to all youths

The work of bringing up the young is not easy. Parents do not always possess enough knowledge or presence of mind to take the best course of action in every situation. You, sons and daughters, can help by your co-operation and love.

Jesus said: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” (Jn 15:12, RSV)

He also said: “Honour your father and your mother.” (Mt 19:19, NJB)

You give them the most honour, love, and peace of mind, by leading lives of great goodness.

Act of Consecration to Jesus

Jesus, when you were twelve years old, you gave your parents quite a scare by secretly remaining in Jerusalem while they were on the road back to Nazareth. They searched anxiously for you and did not find you till the third day. Your mother has since learned how to care for the young in peace. Today, she has millions of children to look after throughout the world. Many of them are worrisome, yet she is able to stay calm and serene.

From this day forward, I consecrate to your Sacred Heart and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Queen of Peace, myself and my family members. Direct us towards holiness. Help us to pray, to have strong faith and not to be afraid. Help us to live in peace with ourselves and with our families, and be reconciled with one another, loving each other according to the commands you gave in the gospel.