



## Four Keys to Nurturing Faith *in Families*

### Reflection

Parents often are unaware that from the moment of birth their children learn about God and experience God's love through ordinary, everyday expressions of care and nurturing. In the home, faith is integrated and nurtured in the ebb and flow of daily life. Parents have the great privilege of being 'God's love with skin on' for their children. The way parents love and relate to their children, day in and day out, in good times and bad, is the most powerful influence on their spiritual formation.

Sometimes it is useful to take stock, and perhaps make resolutions to improve or renew the faith life of our families. It could be a simple custom rediscovered, such as saying Grace before meals, or placing a crucifix or other sacred image in the house or it may mean attending Mass more often.

For a Christian parent, the calling to pass on faith may initially seem very daunting but in reality it is very much a part of ordinary daily life. This series of handouts is designed to support you in your family faith practices.



(This Part describes Keys One and Two.)

### Caring Conversation

Caring conversation is about conveying God's love through what we choose to say and do; it involves weaving faith into our daily interactions. Our caring conversations can range from supportive listening to simple praising, from challenging questions to comfort or encouragement.

Caring conversation takes place in the home when and where family members:

- Caringly and respectfully listen to one another, engaging with each other's hurts, joys, concerns and dreams with a Christian heart;
- Give one another the gift of focused and undivided attention;
- Name the presence and activity of God in their lives and in the world around them;
- Discuss and reflect upon the great stories of faith and their relevance to our lives;
- Confess their wrongdoing and forgive one another;
- Affirm and encourage one another both through verbal and non-verbal communication e.g. "When I think of you I thank God for ...";
- Share 'highs' and 'lows' of the day or week;
- Make a point of talking about what happened at Mass, Children's Liturgy of the Word, Religious Education and Scripture Classes and youth groups;



- Seek and share 'God moments' in each day;
- Share stories of how God has worked in your life with your children;
- Share an 'attitude of gratitude'.

Great times for caring conversation include mealtimes, on the way to and from school, bath times and bedtimes, before and after church, and during leisure activities.

Look for natural opportunities to raise spiritual issues. The most poignant God moments in home life usually arise spontaneously, at unexpected times and in unexpected ways. Alert Christian parents are on the constant lookout for opportunities 'along the road' of life to point to Christ's love and his caring presence or to share or discuss Biblical truths. Even your own mistakes or failings can be used as opportunities to talk about wrongdoing, forgiveness and starting again in grace.

## **2** Devotional Practices

Devotional practices enable and encourage us to think about and celebrate our faith. They may be introduced over time and can include:

- Family blessings e.g. at bedtime, before children leave for school;
- Setting up a 'sacred space' (cross, bible, candle and symbols);
- Decorating your home with Christian symbols and artwork;
- Setting up a 'prayer board' in your home with photos/names of family and friends to pray for and lists of situations to bring before God;
- Saying Grace together at mealtimes (some families enjoy the 'grace cube');
- Praying and reading Bible stories with your children at bedtime;
- Use a Bible storybook that is applicable to the ages of your children and pray about the happenings that are part of your lives;
- Have books and DVDs available which are about faith and portray a Christian message;
- Play Christian music in your car and at home;
- Read 'Weekly Childrens' resource pages' (available from some parishes or on-line) together during the week.