



For 4th Graders . . . Christianity and Cookies

Tell me about Jesus. When you pray, how do you picture him? One short paragraph will do.

In one collective action, Room 18, 4th grade religion, wrinkles its forehead, frowns, bites its pencil.

It is next to the last class of the year. It has been a fast year, but a big one. They have worked hard, been rewarded. There have been lots of parties. Cookies and Christianity go well together. A package deal.

They have talked a lot about Our Lord. Prayed to Him before each class, standing in a circle, passing the candle (He is the Light of the world) from person to person, as each intones a petition, a thank you. For grandfather in the hospital, for a lost pet, for the hostages in Iran.

Jesus is real. He is with us. Tell me about Jesus.

They do. In sometimes neat, sometimes messy, almost always sloping lines.

"Jesus is a big bother to us all," writes Cara, whose spelling I've been correcting for a long time.

A bother?

"Oh, I forgot the R. Jesus is a big brother to us all."

Sarah Child



All in the Family

"He is everywhere," says Mike who lives down the street from us, "but, I wonder how he is everywhere?"

"I think in the night how Jesus is caring for me and my grandma and grandpa," writes yellow-haired Brian.

Matt poses some questions. "I wonder if God can read my mind? Does he really exist? Do other people dream what I do? Does Cassie, my three-year-old sister really understand God?"

Meredith has a poem she wishes to share first. It deals with classtime interfering with recreation. It goes: (Religion) takes your time away, so you can't go out and play.

On a second sheet of paper she writes: "Jesus is a father to me."

To Andrea He is "a good and close friend."

Sue points out that "Jesus helped people long ago and still helps us today."

Jason is terse. "I picture him on the cross."

Kelly F. wonders: "How does He handle everybody's prayers at the same time?"

Kelly M. says "He's always there."

David thinks "He likes to be thanked and praised."

"He is always meaning well," says Anne.

Richie draws a car and a cross. "He helps others."

"Whenever I talk to him, He always always answers me," confides Paulette.

Corey is absent today. The flu bug is still with us.

Jean hands hers in. It is typical Jeannie. "I think," she writes "He has a mustache, a beard and is holding out his arms just waiting to hug us."

I think so, too.

Developing Family Spirituality

Easter is here. He is risen. Yet again we are reminded that we are saved. Now, let's act like it in the family. Let's break out the smiles, the laughter, and the good dishes. Let's take a ride in the country and pick wildflowers together, jog in the park, or, if we're too creaking for that, try a family volleyball or card game. It doesn't matter what we do as long as we enjoy doing it together — parents, grandparents, teens, and toddlers.

What does that have to do with Easter? Or with family spirituality? Absolutely everything.

Family spirituality begins with the family bond. It doesn't make up for it. Sometimes families say to me, "We aren't getting along very well together. Maybe we ought to try some family prayer." I never discourage them, but it's rarely the answer to a family who doesn't like being together. I encourage such families to seek some activities that will give them a sense of familiness, a bond that will lead them to comfortable prayer together.

Some families go fishing, others roller skate on bicycle lanes. The Kennedys played touch football. In my large childhood family, we played cards a lot. Nearly every Sunday afternoon, somebody popped a dishpan of popcorn and brought out the cards. We

Dolores Curran



Talks With Parents

laughed, shouted, and fought our way through "Hearts," "I Doubt You" and a variety of other family unifiers.

In my family today, we enjoy a good movie together. (My teen's friends ask incredulously, "You went with your parents? And your little brothers? Gross.") One of the most enjoyable evenings we've shared recently was seeing the delightful movie, *Breaking Away*, together. We laughed over the family conversation, cried over the poignancies, and cheered the bicycle race.

Every couple of months, if we can work it out, we get away to a borrowed cabin where we hike, show old home movies of when we were a younger family, play cards, and read five good books alone together. (I

confess we confiscated one son's *Guinness Book of Records* to preserve our solitude and sanity. Every two minutes, we'd hear, "Did you know that the record life span of a round worm living in someone's body was two years?")

Developing family spirituality is directly related to developing a sense of family fun. Two parishes I know have initiated a return to the family dance.

In both, the dances are immensely successful. Old square and round dances like the waltz, quadrille, circle two step, schottische, polka and the Virginia reel are joined in by the whole family. It's common to see a grandfather dancing with a little girl, a mother with a son, and families with other families. Both parishes originally intended to have one family dance but, like all good traditions, something so valuable to parish families is being continued.

Dancing and laughing together is an appropriate way to end this six-part series on family spirituality. I hope that any newfound faith experiences in your family don't end with Lent but begin with Easter and continue through the whole springtime. That's what Easter is all about, after all: a new beginning and new hope for all of us in God's family.

Springtime in the Church

Monsignor James P. McPeak lived until 95 (his "baby brother" Tom reached 104 before the Lord called him home) and served as the Cathedral's rector for almost half a century.

Every year when the bishop arrived for priesthood ordinations, Monsignor McPeak would make the same comment: "It is springtime once again in the Church."

It was an apt observation, for indeed through this sacrament of holy orders the Church is constantly renewed and aging priests are replenished by young men fresh from the seminary and eager to build up the Lord's kingdom.

So, too, year after year during the Chrism Mass, Catholics are reminded that through their bishop they are linked with sisters and brothers everywhere in the world. The chief shepherd of a diocese at this Eucharist blesses those holy oils which will be taken to each parish and used for various sacraments. Thus, in a sense, when a baby is baptized, a person confirmed or a sick individual anointed, we maintain the bishop baptizes, confirms or anoints. Furthermore, through him we become joined with his brother bishops around the globe and ultimately with our Holy Father.

There are two very practical ways on the parish level to dramatize and hence underscore these points about priests and bishops.

Fr. Joseph M. Champlin



Our Church Family

First of all, the parish leadership could seek out delegates who will travel to the annual Holy Week Chrism Mass, normally at the Cathedral, participate in it and afterwards secure a new supply of the just blessed sacred oils.

Ideally, these people should possess a special connection with the particular oil to which they have been assigned: expectant parents for the oil of catechumens; confirmation candidate for the holy chrism; a nurse, physician or other health care person for the oil of the sick.

At the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper in their parishes, these people would walk in the procession for the presentation of gifts, each carrying the appropriate holy oil vessel. Those three containers could then be placed in the sanctuary on a table in full view of the congregation with perhaps an explanatory poster or banner near them.

Later, when those parents have their infant baptized and the celebrant spreads oil on the child's breast and head, or the bishop places chrism upon the candidate's forehead, or a nurse assists the priest with anointing an ailing individual, those rituals will carry a wider, deeper meaning.

We form a universal, world wide people of God united among other ways by these common sacramental celebrations.

Secondly, on Holy Thursday night, the president of the parish council or a comparable person could renew the vows of the local priest(s) using the formula followed by the bishop at the Chrism Mass.

The leader invites these men to renew their dedication to Christ as priests of the new covenant, their resolve to become more like the Lord by joyfully sacrificing pleasure and ambition to bring Jesus' peace and love to others, their intention of teaching the Christian faith without thought of personal profit, but solely for the well-being of the people.

At the end, the leader asks the community to pray for their priests, to lift them up in the Lord's sight, "to help them be faithful ministers of Christ the High Priest."