

PARENTING

Moments of silence help us to see God's hand

Noise has always been a big part of my life. With four brothers and one sister, the sounds of silence were nowhere to be found in my family's home. The sounds of the television, radio, stereo, laughter, fighting, teasing, game playing and lively conversations were the sounds I grew up with. "Stop that rough housing!" was the one sound heard above all others.

During my school years, I found it difficult to do my homework without music in the background. And somehow it didn't seem like a Saturday morning unless I woke up to the blare of a lawnmower's engine or the grunts of football players practicing their drills at our nearby high school.

Then I had my children. Nothing makes you crave silence and solitude more than a crying newborn. If you have an infant with colic (we did) you may find yourself in a corner of the basement or an attic crawl space in your own fetal position pleading for 15 minutes of peace and quiet.

Soon after parents have made it through their toddler's tears, the whining years begin. And you thought you craved silence when they were babies. My husband Joe, who has an extraordinary amount of patience with our two children, has a tough time when it comes to whining. In exasperation one night he started "The Whiny Patrol," a group of invisible police whose



family matters

BY ELLEN MARX

mission it is to find the whiners and tickle them until they stop. It works. There's still a lot of noise in our house but at least there's less whining.

We live in a world where we are bombarded by noise. We seem to be uncomfortable with quiet, stillness or even a brief lull in the conversation. Rather than listening to the rhythms of our souls, we're caught up in the beat of network news, talk radio, car phones, the daily newspaper and the Internet. We're a society of achievers and doers, not meditators and reflectors. Our actions are often influenced by our outside world, which hinders many opportunities to discover a world inside ourselves.

Most parents realize how necessary it is to find a few quiet moments each day and at the same time they recognize how nearly impossible it is to achieve. But listening,

prayer, reflection and silence are vital. In most conversations, it is only when we are quiet that we can really listen to what another person is saying. And only when we are still and silent can we open our minds and our hearts to what God is asking of us.

I think we can give our children a wonderful gift if we build a little quiet time into their day. Ask your children to spend an hour in quiet time every afternoon to read, to dream, to imagine, to be still and to listen to their hearts. As a mother of two spirited children, I know this is easier said than done. On especially challenging days with my kids, I often take them to the library. A library is very appealing to me — a place where there is actually a rule to be quiet!

It's also important for parents to participate in quiet activities with their children: a hike in the woods, a trip to a museum or a visit to church. Try to closely monitor the noise in your children's life by limiting the time spent watching television or playing video games. We need to let our children know that we value peace and quiet in the truest meanings of those words.

In a deeply spiritual and significant work of nonfiction, *Dakota, A Spiritual Geography*, writer and poet Kathleen Norris reflects on her almost 20 years spent on the Dakota Plains. Ms. Norris is a married Protestant woman who has formed special relation-

ships with the monks and nuns of the Benedictine communities in the Dakotas.

Ms. Norris writes, "Silence is the best response to mystery ... The silence of the Plains, this great unpeopled landscape of earth and sky, is much like the silence one finds in a monastery, an unfathomable silence that has the power to re-form you ... It was the Plains that first drew me to the monastery, which I suppose is ironic, for who would go seeking a desert within a desert? The irony and wonder of all this is that it is the desert's grimness, its stillness and isolation that bring us back to love. Here we discover the paradox of the contemplative life, that the desert of solitude can be the school where we learn to love others."

Silence isn't about isolation. It's a way to refresh and restore ourselves so we have the ability to know our true selves, to focus on what's really important and to discover ways that we can reach out to others. The quiet moments of our day can help us to appreciate God's handiwork in a beautiful sunset or a perfect spring day. And if we're really lucky, these silent times for prayer and reflection might even help us to see the presence of God in a whining child.

Marx lives in Lawrenceville, N.J., with her husband and two children.

Speaker links parents, faith

According to an African folk tale, it takes a village to raise a child.

In a similar vein, Tom Zanzig believes it takes a church community to raise a Catholic child.

Zanzig, an author, editor and consultant with St. Mary's Press in Winona, Minn., will be in Penfield Oct. 25 to explain why he believes this, and to share his vision of "Passing on the Faith: The Parent's Role." His talk, 6:45-8:30 p.m., will be at St. Joseph Church's adult learning center, 43 Gebhardt Rd., Penfield. Cost is \$6 in advance, \$8 at the door.

"Most parents have a deep desire to pass on their Christian faith and Catholic religious heritage to their children," noted Zanzig, who spoke with the *Catholic Courier* by telephone from his Winona office.

The Second Vatican Council recognized parents' primary roles as educators and catechists for their children, the father of two now-adult children said.

Unfortunately, Zanzig remarked, "many parents labor under incredible guilt because they have an unrealistic sense of what that means."

He said parents must work in conjunction with their faith communities. "It takes the whole community."

Rather than assuming they have to be able to explain church doctrines, parents should be more concerned about teaching by example.

"The critical thing," he explained, "is they have to live out their own faith journey as authentically as they can. To some degree they have to be able to share and articulate why they believe and act as they do."

"The question is not, 'Why does the church believe this dogma,'" he added. "The question is more, 'What does this mean to me and why?'"

Zanzig said the basic message he hopes to share with parents is, "to love their kids as fully as they can, to live their faith as fully as they can and to be able to explain their faith to their children, including their doubts."

To register for Zanzig's talk, call Karen at 716/528-5128 or 800/588-7177, ext. 235.



Creative WKids

At left, Ashley Wagner, 6, creates an apple carousel with her mother Carol during Wegmans' WKids Saturdays at Strong Museum Oct. 10. They are parishioners at Church of the Transfiguration, Pittsford. At right, Aaron Smith, 2, wore his Halloween costume a few weeks early while visiting the museum with his mother Abigail. WKids Saturdays feature live performances, crafts, refreshments and strolling characters.



Greg Francia/Staff photographer

family events

◎ OCT. 16-18, 23-25 — Halloween Legends and Lore; with trick or treating; 5:30-9:30 p.m. Fri. and Sat., 5:30-8:30 p.m. Sun.; Genesee Country Village, Flint Hill Road, Mumfordsville, 716/538-6822.

◎ SAT., OCT. 17 — Rafe Martin reads his latest book, *The Brave Little Parrot*; The Eleventh Hour storytime; 11 a.m.; Borders Books, 1000 Hylan Dr., Rochester; free; 716/292-5000.

◎ SAT., OCT. 17 — Make a Scarecrow Day; 1-3 p.m.; Gunning Nature Center, Gulick Road, South Bristol; bring overalls, flannel shirt; stuffing materials will be provided; \$3 per child, plus center entry fee (Rochester Museum & Science Center members and preschoolers free, students \$1.50, seniors and college students \$3, adults \$4); 716/374-6160.

◎ OCT. 21, 28 — Familytime: stories, fingerplay, songs; 7-7:30 p.m.; Wood Library, 154 Main St. N.,

Canandaigua; 716/394-1381.

◎ OCT. 21, 28 — Story time; featuring *Let's be Animals* by Ann Turner (Sept. 21) and *Hide and Seek* by David McKee (Oct. 28); 11 a.m.; Barnes and Noble Bookstore, 3349 Monroe Ave., Rochester; free; 716/586-6020.

◎ OCT. 21, 28 — Tiny Tots Story Time: Autumn, pumpkins and Halloween (Oct. 21) and play program by Gymboree (Oct. 28); 11 a.m.; Borders Books, 1000 Hylan Dr., Rochester; 716/292-5000.

◎ SAT., OCT. 24 — Pumpkin sale; Halloween party; Church of the Annunciation Parish hall, 1754 Norton St., Rochester; 6:30 p.m.

◎ SUN., OCT. 25 — Halloween House; for kids; treats, prizes, spooky fun, music by Gary the Happy Pirate; 14:30 p.m.; George Eastman House, 900 East Ave., Rochester; \$6.50 for adults, \$3 for students, \$2.50 for children 5-12, children 4 and younger free;

716/271-3361, ext. 218.

◎ THU., OCT. 29 — Wolf: Meet wolves from Colorado's Wolf Sanctuary; 7:30 p.m.; Genesee Country Nature Center, 1410 Flint Hill Road, Mumfordsville; \$4 for adults, \$3 for children; 716/358-6822.

◎ FRI., OCT. 30 — Halloween party; with crafts, treats, music by The Dinner Dogs; 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Strong Museum, 1 Manhattan Square, Rochester; come dressed in costume; included in regular admission fee; 716/263-2701, ext. 202.

◎ FRI., OCT. 30 — Family Dance Macabre; participatory family Halloween performance; 6-8 p.m.; \$20 per family; Park Avenue Dance Studio, 15 Vick Park B., Rochester; 716/461-2766.

◎ SAT., OCT. 31 — Halloween story; Diane de Groat's "Trick or Treat, Smell my Feet!"; 11 a.m.; Borders Books, 1000 Hylan Dr. free.