

Taking your teen to Mass

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the fourth article in a series on raising your children in the faith.

If you don't enjoy going to Mass — and make a point of letting your children know — don't be surprised if they start resisting going to liturgies when they become teenagers, according to Nora Bradbury-Haehl, youth ministry coordinator at St. Paul's Parish in Webster.

"(A parent) is sending the message that it's important to go to Mass, but then griping about the music and complaining all the way home," she said during an interview at her office.

A parent to one teenager herself, Bradbury-Haehl has given workshops for parents on getting teenagers interested in their faith and Mass. But what if a teenager confronts a parent with the "B" word about Mass, as in "It's boring!" Parishes often gear their liturgies to older, married people, she said, and rarely is the preaching designed with young people in mind. Bradbury-Haehl urged parents to discuss homilies with their children after Mass, so that they can find positive points together in what the homilist said.

On the other hand, Bradbury-Haehl added that teenagers have to learn that rituals of all sorts, including funerals and weddings, give people a sense of the importance of a moment.

"I've watched rituals help (young people) grieve and help them celebrate," she said. "Something I want for my children when these moments come along is to have a language to express themselves."



Rebecca Gosselin/Catholic Courier

Fifteen-year-old Kim Turner (center, arms folded) attends Mass with her family (left) June 15 at St. Paul Church in Webster.

Parenting

On that note, parishes can help by introducing young people into the language and practice of liturgy. Young people can serve on the altar, lector, sing, cantor, usher, greet worshipers and play instruments, she said.

Bradbury-Haehl also pointed out that teenagers and children should be introduced to parish staff members, and parents who are also active in the church. That way, the church will become a home to them, and they won't think their "mom is the only weird church lady," she said with a chuckle.

Bradbury-Haehl also said it helps to talk with your kids about what the

church is for, not just what it's against. Equality, diversity, truth, justice, integrity and freedom are values the church espouses, she noted.

Bradbury-Haehl said if a teenager resists going to Mass, she suggests talking with him or her in a non-judgmental way about why they don't like going to church, and sharing honestly with them what you believe about God.

Finally, Bradbury-Haehl said that parents can only be stewards of their teenagers' faith, and that ultimately, God will take care of the rest. Teenagers may wander away from the faith once they become adults, but parents should not unduly fret about such a possibility.

"God's ability to draw a child into God's heart is far beyond ours," she said.

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

■ **JUNE 20, 27** — Cool Kids in the Park: Sagawa Park, Main St., Brockport; June 20: "Wildlife Encounters"; June 27: "Steel Drum Paradise"; 7 p.m.; free; 585/637-3984.

■ **SAT, JUNE 21** — Dance: students perform "Peter and the Wolf"; Hochstein Hall, 50 N. Plymouth Ave., Rochester; 2:30 p.m.; 585/454-4596.

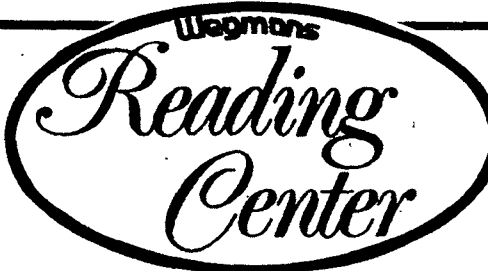
■ **SAT, JUNE 21** — Photo Workshop: George Eastman House, 900 East Ave., Rochester; ages 9-14; 10 a.m.-1 p.m.; \$30; 585/271-3361.

■ **JUNE 26, JULY 3** — Summer Serenades: Sagawa Park, Main St., Brockport; June 26: "Kilbrannan"; Celtic musicians; July 3: "Traveling Cabaret of Irondequoit"; movie, pop music; 7-9 p.m.; free; 585/637-3984.

■ **SAT, JUNE 28** — Interactive walking tour: "A Circle of Friends: An Abolitionist's Tour of Mt. Hope in 1860"; Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery & RMSC Players; Frederick Douglass' personal, public life in Rochester; North Gate House, Mt. Hope Cemetery, Mt. Hope Ave., Rochester; 10 & 11:30 a.m.; \$10 adults, \$5 ages 3-18; 585/271-4552.

■ **SUN, JUNE 29** — Children's nature walk: Cumming Nature Center, 6472 Gullick Rd., Naples; 1-2 p.m.; \$3 suggested donation; 585/374-6160.

■ **WED, JULY 9** — Exhibit kickoff: "Team Up! Explore Science & Sports"; Rochester Museum & Science Center, 657 East Ave., Rochester; Mon-Sat: 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun: noon-5 p.m.; \$7 adults, \$6 seniors, \$5 ages 3-18; 585/271-1880.




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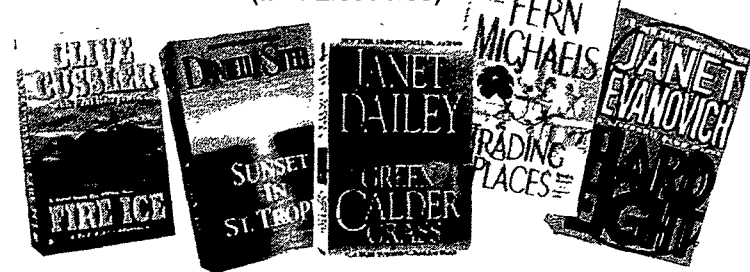
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