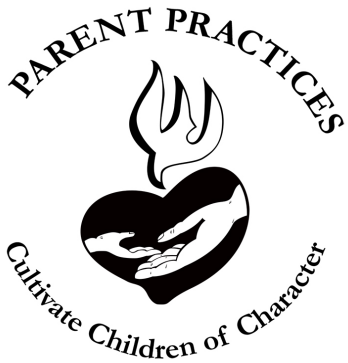
Catholic Family Character

Based on TRUTH



Often families can be identified by distinctive traits like their hospitality or tendency to defend the underdog. When family is shaped intentionally by Gospel values and a sacramental life, a *graced character* is observable. Character is *the distinguishing feature of personality and behavior that persists, regardless of outside pressure or personal temptation*. Catholic family character is based on truth, guided by principles, nourished by spirituality, rooted in faith, shaped by trust, defined by love, and supported by grace. Truth is the focus of this newsletter.

Truth, a defining quality of God, is foundational to self-respect and to relationship. If I cannot trust you, or you cannot trust me, we cannot grow in relationship. Respect and personal integrity go hand in hand. Both are rooted in truth.

Jesus explained that only when we live according to his teaching will we know the truth and then that truth will set us free—free to be the people that we were created to be. We were created with a unique potential and sacred vocation to reveal God's image through community and social responsibility. It is in this freedom that Christian parents want children to grow. To accomplish this goal parents must strive to KNOW the truth! SPEAK the truth! BE the truth!

What Is Truth?

God is truth. God's truth is that God is pure love; God lives in love; God wills love. God's nature is love and, because of God's nature, God loves you totally and irrevocably. No effort of yours can make God love you more and no choice of yours can make God love you less. God already loves you unconditionally because that's who God is! God's love for you depends on God's nature; it does not depend on you. God's love is not reactionary or changeable or conditional.

God's truth is revealed in the Scriptures and the person of Jesus. God's truth is explained in the teachings of the Catholic Church. It is summarized in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The lives of holy men and women witness to God's truth, and truth resonates in the souls of all folks of good conscience. God's truth is that God is *immanent* (near you and within you) and God is *transcendent* (above you and beyond you).

Make Truth the Foundation of Family Life

When you live true to your God-given identity, you reveal the image of God to the world. For God to reign in the heart and home, truth must be at the core of the family. Truth is a rock foundation.

- **Speak God's truth with persistence**. "*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season (whether convenient or inconvenient). Convince, rebuke, exhort, with every kind of teaching and never lose patience*." (2 Tim 4:2)

- **Speak God's truth in love**. Speak with

respect, reverence, and encouragement. Remember: "*Hearts have been broken by harsh words spoken that sorrow can never set right*."

• **Withhold the "sting" when you discipline**. Speak with a sense of loving detachment rather than emotional investment. Do not convey through word, tone, or body language a sense of personal pleasure at correcting. Speak kindly but firmly. "*Say only the good things that people need to hear; things that will help them*." (Eph. 4:29)

• **Think before you speak**. Respond rather than react. Have ready expressions like "*Let me pray about it and then we'll discuss it …*" or "*I need to think this through before I respond to you…*"

• **Share with your children instances when you struggled with telling the truth**. Let them learn from your life experiences.

• **Pass three tests before you speak**.

(1) Is it true, and whose truth is it? In other words, does it represent God's word or personal ego?

(2) Is it necessary to say? Would silence be more harmful or more helpful? Is it a matter of principle or a matter of preference?

(3) Are chances better than not that your words will be accepted? Realize that if a person feels unloved or disrespected by you, your words will fall on deaf ears!

• **Teach children that the reason for telling the truth is that lies break trust and therefore interfere with relationship**. Explain that even though speaking the truth may lead to negative consequences, respect and relationship remain intact.

• **Involve your children in analyzing a scenario and predicting its natural consequences** whenever an instance of truth or lying is obvious in a TV show, movie, or observable event.

• **Strive to be who you say that you are!** When you fail, acknowledge it and very simply explain your plan for amendment. Live the same standard that you expect of your child.

Parenting Perspective

Remember ***who you are*** and ***Whose you are***. Remember the same about your child. Trust God to supply what is wanting. You are not alone! Though the vocation of Christian parenting is incredibly complex, Jesus promised to be with you all days (Mt. 28:20). There may be days or seasons when you are painfully aware of your inadequacies and feel unqualified for the task of Christian parenting, but you have been called to the vocation. God knows what God is about. And God does not make mistakes. God knows that you have what it takes to lead your child to discipleship. Trust yourself the way that God trusts you and trust God to fulfill the good work that God has begun in you (Philippians 1:6).

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