

ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER
Office of Evangelization & Catechesis
1300 S. Steele Street
Denver, Colorado 80210
Tel. 303.715.3260

OUR MISSION

The Office of Evangelization & Catechesis provides support, training and resources to catechists, evangelists, pastors and directors of religious education in order to help them fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and teach the Catholic faith in complete fidelity to the *Magisterium* under the direction of the Archbishop.

*You are cordially invited to our Annual
DRE Appreciation*

Luncheon

Thursday, October 20th, 2011

11:30 am - 1:30 pm

*John Paul II Center - Bonfils Hall
(1300 S. Steele St. - Denver, CO 80210)*

*Guest speaker Chris Stefanick,
Director of Youth and Young Adult Office*

*Hosted by the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis
RSVP by replying this e-mail or calling to
303-715-3260*

RCIA TRAINING: THE CATECHUMENATE

For all RCIA team members. In this training we will focus on the second period of the RCIA process.

Topics include:

- Addressing the needs of the baptized and the unbaptized
- Understanding the Rite of Acceptance
- How to do Breaking open the Word
- Four methods for teaching the faith

**Saturday, Nov. 19
8:30—12:00**

John Paul II Center
(1300 S. Steele Street, Denver)

\$15. Call 303-715-3260 to register

Presenters:

- Jere Allen, DRE, St. Thomas More, Centennial
- Loretta Flom, DRE, Shrine of St. Anne, Arvada (emeritus)
- James Cavanagh, Director of Catechesis & Evangelization - Archdiocese of Denver

Finest Wheat

A newsletter for the New Evangelization
October 2011

Inside:

- When it comes to the spiritual formation of children, parents really matter
- “The Rosary: To Jesus through Mary”
- RCIA Training

Pope Benedict’s prayer intentions for October 2011



General intention: “That the terminally ill may be supported by their faith in God and the love of their brothers and sisters.”

Missionary intention: “That the celebration of World Mission Day may foster in the People of God a passion for evangelization with the willingness to support the missions with prayer and economic aid for the poorest Churches.”

*We encourage you to include these intentions
in the prayers of the faithful.*

When it comes to the spiritual formation of children, parents really matter

James Cavanagh, Metro Area Director



"Parents are the most influential agents of catechesis for their children. They have a unique responsibility for the education of their children; they are the first educators, or catechists." (National Directory for Catechesis, p. 234). The importance of parents in the religious formation of their children was driven home recently at a workshop given by Kate Daneluk called "Making Music, Praying Twice."

In her first presentation, Kate talked about the basic physiology of a child's brain development in the first few years of life. She explained, for example, how children are able to learn a second language much easier if they're exposed to it in the first couple of years of life when their language skills are still developing. The younger a child is, the easier it is for them to learn another language. This phenomenon is well known to most people.

Then Kate gave a disturbing example about "feral children" in order to drive home the point that experiences in the earliest stages of life dramatically impact a child's development. These are children who, for whatever reason, were abandoned or lost by their parents and ended up finding refuge among animals. One infamous case involved a Ukrainian girl named Oxana Malaya (you can learn more about her on YouTube). Neglected by her alcoholic parents, the little girl was left to fend for herself. In the cold, northern climate of the Ukraine the child found shelter in a dog kennel. Living with dogs, Oxana failed to develop normally.

Oxana lacked normal human emotions and language skills. Instead, she developed behaviors common to canines. For instance, she would always smell her food before eating it, and she never looked anyone in the eye (a threatening gesture among dogs). She ran around on all fours and learned to bark like a dog. By the time the authorities found her she was about eight years old. She had been living with dogs for about six years. Although she's made much progress and is learning how to interact with people, she'll never be fully normal. The damage done in those first few years of life is irreparable. As bizarre as the story about Oxana is, her case demonstrates just how critical those first few years of life are for proper human development.

Standing in sharp contrast to Oxana Malaya is "the little flower" – St. Therese of Lisieux. Therese was raised in a deeply religious family and surrounded by love. Her parents, who both considered religious life before they were married, were devout Catholics who loved each other and their five daughters very much. Religious devotion, built on a strong foundation of love, permeated the Martin household. All five daughters became Carmelite nuns. St. Therese, of course is the most well known among them, but all five sisters were renowned for their holiness. How could one single family produce so many extraordinary, holy women? Answer: their parents. Their parents were so instrumental, in fact, that Louis and Marie Zélie Martin were beatified October 19, 2008. One religious writer said "Zélie and Louis were not declared 'blessed' because of Thérèse; she became a saint because of them. They created an environment that invited her to holiness, and she responded freely to the invitation they offered her." A few months before she died, St. Thérèse wrote in her autobiography, "God gave me a father and mother more worthy of Heaven than of earth." Zélie and Louis are a beautiful example of Christian parenthood and an inspiration for all parents.

Religious music, song and prayer can have an enormous impact on a child's spiritual life. That's why a healthy Catholic environment in the home is so important, and also why it's so important for parents to attend Mass with their children. Even if a child doesn't seem to be paying attention, or is too young to understand what's going on, the sights and sounds, music, incense, light, color, movement, gesture, signs and symbols all have an affect on a child's spiritual development.

As the first teachers of the faith parents have the primary responsibility for catechizing their children. But catechesis doesn't just mean formal instruction; it includes the full range of religious activity, especially worship. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church says, the liturgy is "the privileged place for catechizing the people of God." (no. 1074). Parish religious education programs exist to support parents, not replace them. Whether religious education takes place mainly in the home or in the parish, parents are indispensable in the spiritual formation of their children.

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The single most important thing parents can do to prepare their children for First Communion or Confirmation is go to Mass. From the time they're married, husbands and wives need to get into the habit of going to Mass every Sunday. Parents should also get into the habit of singing and praying with their children from the time they're born, and not just at church but at home too. What sets human beings apart from animals is their creative imagination and ability to reason. The finest artistic creations to spring from the human mind, the loftiest philosophies and noblest scientific discoveries were sparked by religious faith. Children who don't go to Mass run the risk of becoming spiritually "feral," and fail to develop a vital part of their personality that allows them to realize their full human potential, which enables them to excel in other areas of life.

Parents need to understand the tremendous influence they have on the spiritual development of their children. They don't have to have a degree in theology; they just need to want what's best for their children and set a good example. The Church is reticent about imposing educational requirements as a condition for receiving the sacraments. However, insofar as requirements can be established regular atten-

dance at Mass should be at the top of the list. One way or another, parents need to be serious about the spiritual well-being of their children, especially as they prepare for First Communion and Confirmation. To that end, the following guidelines might be helpful: set

Parents should:

1. Attend Mass every Sunday and on holy days of obligation.
2. Pray with and for their children at home each day. Praying the rosary, or even just one decade of the rosary is a valuable devotional practice for the whole family. Grace at mealtime and prayers at bedtime are also very important.
3. Appreciate the fact that religious education and moral development are just as important as other subjects like math and science, history and English, if not more so. Parents should talk to their children about what they're learning at church.
4. Read the Bible, the Catechism and good Catholic books on a regular basis. Parents should take advantage of Bible studies and other classes offered at their parish whenever they can.

"The Rosary: To Jesus through Mary"

-Bishop James Conley



At the beginning of my conversion to Catholicism, I struggled to understand true devotion to Mary. But very soon after my reception into the Catholic Church I was introduced to the writings of St. Louis de Montfort, who urged Catholics to be totally consecrated to Jesus through Mary. Consecration is the act of offering something, and setting it aside, for holy use. When we consecrate ourselves to Jesus through Mary, we offer ourselves for his use. We abandon our plans and desires in service to the saving work of Christ. This isn't easy—and we need help. When we consecrate ourselves through Mary, we ask her to pray for us and to guide us as we offer ourselves to Christ. We follow after Mary as she follows after Christ—"Be it done unto me according to your will."

To read complete article see *Denver Catholic Register*, 10/5/11