



connect

A Newsletter for High School Religion Teachers, Campus Ministers, and Principals
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featuring

Maturing in Faith

Leif Kehrwald



Have you ever heard a parent say something like, "People should decide for themselves how to express their faith and what church to belong to. So we don't make our kids go to Mass on Sunday. When they get old enough, they can decide for themselves." If you haven't heard a parent say it, you've probably known some students who wished their parents would say it!

As a Catholic educator, you no doubt realize that while choice is important for growth and maturity, this logic is faulty. If we let children and youth wait to make their own choice, we actually prevent them from choosing. If parents don't nurture their children in faith, when their children reach an age to make a mature choice, religion will be the furthest thing from their heart and mind. It won't even occur to them to choose.

In responding to that hands-off parent, or to free-choice students, we might compare religion with other key parenting concerns. If there are no consequences for failing to do homework or household chores, can we fairly expect children and teens to develop a sense of responsibility on their own? If parents never talk about healthy eating and basic grooming, can we assume young people will decide to do those things when they are older? Similarly, if parents never talk about faith and religious practice, providing some faith formation for their children, then those children will arrive at the doorstep of adulthood with no foundation to choose any genuine faith expression.

So the question becomes, How do parents contribute to this important faith formation? How can parents empower religious choice in youth as they approach young adulthood? Some recent research can help.

What the Research Shows

Through a Search Institute study, over nine hundred adults and nearly the same number of teens were asked to rank the key factors that led to their faith maturity and to their choice to be active in their church. From a list of factors such as parents and family, pastor, youth group, religious education

(see *Maturing in Faith*, page 2)

this issue

- **featuring**
Maturing in Faith 1
- **in touch** 1
- **from the classroom**
Parents as Members of the High School Faith Community 4
- **it works for me** 5
- **from the press** 6
- **resource reviews** 7

in touch

Parents are the primary Christian educators of their children. Those who work in Catholic schools are probably aware that this is a foundational principle of the Vatican Council II document *Declaration on Christian Education* (*Gravissimum Educationis*, 1965). But how many of us can say that it's a foundational principle in our own work as Catholic educators? When it comes to faith formation, we may be tempted to regard the parents of our students the same way we see the weather when anticipating an important soccer or football game: crucial to the outcome, but beyond our control.

"What impact can I have on this student's life? Nothing I'm saying in class is being reinforced at home!" "That student is a wonderful influence in my class; if you met the family—they're very active

(see *in touch*, page 2)

Maturing in Faith

(continued from page 1)

classes, friends, Sunday worship, and sermons, the top choice by far was parents and family. It is perhaps no surprise that the family is the most powerful evangelizer.

The researchers then conducted in-depth interviews with a select sample of these teens and adults. From these interviews, they pinpointed three family activities that above all else seem to empower faith maturity in young people.

Can you guess what they are?

Family faith conversations.

Hearing about their parents' faith journeys is one of the most important influences on the faith of children and teenagers.

Family ritual and devotion.

People who regularly have family devotions, prayer, or Bible reading at home tend to have higher faith maturity.

Family service projects. There is no more powerful influence on faith and family unity than working together to help others.

When families engage in these faith-maturing activities, they are providing key experiences for their children's faith formation. These home-based activities won't guarantee faith formation of youth. Nothing will. Yet, in partnership with their parish and school, parents can use them to provide the best foundation for a lifelong journey of faith.

Implications for Teachers and Youth Workers

How can the Catholic high school empower families to engage in these three activities? Just think how vibrant your program or classroom would be if all the families of teens in your community regularly engaged in these practices!

Here are some ideas to get the ball rolling. Let's start from the third activity and move up.

School-sponsored family outreach and service. We want to create service opportunities that are focused on the family instead of on individuals or just groups of kids. In their book *Parenting for Peace and Justice* (Orbis Books, 1981), Jim and Kathy McGinnis offer the following helpful advice:

- *Be invitational.* Regularly invite young people and their families into works of justice and mercy. Avoid the guilt trip, but always have opportunities available.
- *Expose youth and their families to justice issues.* Arrange activities that bring victims, advocates, and helpers together in a safe and mutual atmosphere. Even simple newsletter inserts with discussion questions can educate people about injustice, reduce their fear, and empower them to act.
- *Design activities that are within family capacities.* Relate actions to home and family living, and build on prior experiences. Keep in mind that there may be younger children in the family.
- *Integrate fun whenever possible.* Provide activities that bring families together to learn about issues in an enjoyable context. Show a good movie; provide popcorn and follow up with small-group discussion. Include an activity and involve everyone in it.
- *Do "with" instead of "for."* Get families on board in the planning stages of new initiatives; let them tell you how they would like to serve.

School-directed family ritual and devotion. While there is no lack of resources on family prayer and ritual (check out any Catholic or Christian bookstore), the challenge here is to empower families to actually use those resources and engage in prayer and ritual at home.

in touch

(continued from page 1)

in the parish—you wouldn't be surprised!" We recognize the secondary nature of our role in the faith formation of our students clearly enough. What we may not recognize is that we can take an active role in shaping the primary influence on our students—their parents.

In this month's feature article, Leif Kehrwald challenges us to view parents as our partners in the formation of the young people entrusted to us. In "From the Classroom," Jim Fish offers some additional strategies that have been successful in his school. Catholic educators are beginning to examine ways to strengthen the relationships between teens and parents, to bring families together in service activities, and to enrich the spirituality of families. Most important, we can empower parents to act on a principle that we know to be true: *Parents are the primary educators of their children!*

Live, Jesus, in our hearts forever!

Lorraine Kilmartin

Lorraine Kilmartin
Senior Editor for High
School Curriculum



The Search Institute researchers found, unfortunately, that two-thirds of Christian families do not do this.

At a recent session with religious educators, we brainstormed ways that ministry programs could empower families toward prayer and ritual. Some of the ideas we generated include the following:

- Tell parents that family ritual is a key factor in developing faith maturity. Share the research data. Regularly invite families to try simple prayers and rituals at

Maturing in Faith

(continued from page 2)

home. Communicate to parents, "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing poorly." Few parents and families are ritual experts, but even less-than-perfect devotions will have a powerful impact on faith.

- Offer lots of resources and ideas. Regularly and consistently introduce teens and their families to resources and activities for family ritual and devotion.
- Do your own rituals in a home-grown way. Pledge to model simple, easy-to-replicate rituals when either kids or adults are gathered. Challenge one another to do the next group prayer without any paper or handouts, because few copiers are found at home.
- Tell stories instead of reading them. Encourage families to tell Gospel stories from memory. Stories take on life and meaning in the telling.

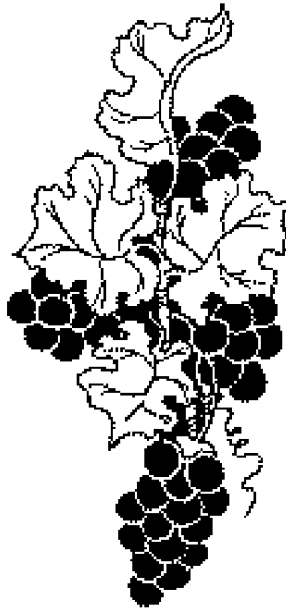
School-led family faith conversations. The researchers found that more than half of teens do not talk to their fathers about faith or God. More than a third don't talk to their mothers. How do we encourage more faith conversations at home?

- Design home "bridger" experiences into your syllabus. Develop discussion starters and homework activities that relate to your program. Consider creating a parallel program with and for adults that mirrors the topics covered with youth.
- Consider developing father-son, father-daughter, mother-son, and mother-daughter programming. When parents have more one-on-one time with their teens, they build a stronger bond and more intimate camaraderie.
- Offer tips and suggestions to parents on ways to engage teens

in dialogue, such as the following:

- Take time with your teen to listen and share.
- Invite discussions on issues that are provocative and controversial, i.e., of interest to youth.
- Allow doubts and different opinions to be expressed.
- Be open to questions about your own views and beliefs.
- Take opportunities to pray together.
- Use the bible as a source for discussing an issue.

(Note: These discussion ideas were suggested by a group of teenagers.)



So there you have it. Three key activities that research shows will double the likelihood of a young person's coming to mature faith. We should pursue these activities with vigor, even if it means re-designing some of our curriculum and programs. I don't mean to add to your workload. God knows you don't need more work. But is everything you're doing the "right"

work? Perhaps something could be set aside, or (dare I say?) eliminated, for the sake of empowering families in these faith-maturing activities.

About The Research Noted

The Search Institute conducted the "Effective Christian Education Study," and the full results are published in *The Teaching Church: Moving Christian Education to Center Stage*, edited by Eugene Roehlkepartian (Abingdon Press, 1994). They surveyed adults and teens from five mainline congregations. Although the Catholic denomination was not specifically represented in the study, there is no apparent reason that these results would not apply to Catholic families as well as Protestant ones.

The Search Institute is well known for its research into faith and religious issues pertaining to youth and adolescence.

Leif Kehrwald lives with his wife and two teenage sons in Portland, Oregon. Leif is the coordinator of Family Faith-Life Resources of Saint Mary's Press and the author of *Family Spirituality: The Raw Ingredients of Faith* (ACTA Publications, 1994), and *Marriage and the Spirituality of Intimacy* (St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1997).

“ . . . ”

Mission is not the kindness of the lucky to the unlucky, it is mutual, united obedience to the one God whose mission it is. —*Anglican Manifesto: Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ*

from the classroom

Parents As Members of the High School Faith Community

Jim Fish

In 1977 when I began teaching and ministering in the high school apostolate, parents were not considered a part of the official work on student retreats. As the teachers, we had the answers for their sons and daughters; we had the education and the spirituality. It would have been rare for a parent to be included in a significant leadership role on the campus ministry team. The job of parents was to support us as cooks or drivers; they certainly were not viewed as collaborators!

Today I can see that our myopic view has shifted. Increasingly we have begun to see parents as allies and, in fact, collaborators. As the number of Jesuits in the high school apostolate has decreased, the need to include the laity in the Jesuit mission has mushroomed. In the last ten years, locally and nationally, the Society of Jesus has promoted a vision of Jesuit-lay collaboration.

In examining my own attitude, I discover that I have been guilty of a bit of professional arrogance. I thought that parents could not possibly have much of a role in their adolescent's faith formation. My training, education, and experience were of greater value than the experience of the parent. Looking back I can see that this attitude pitted me against parents.

Parents As Witnesses

In recent years we have become increasingly confident about enlisting the leadership, faith, and spirituality of parents in ministering to their children and their children's peers, especially in retreat work. Like many other Catholic schools across the country, we have asked for and received countless volunteer hours from parents in assisting in our ministry to their children.

Thanks be to God for parental support! Currently there isn't an overnight retreat that takes place at Bellarmine Preparatory School that doesn't involve the witness of parents. Parents participate in small group work just as teachers do on our two-and-a-half-day Junior Encounter, our three-and-a-half-day Senior Magis, our two-day Senior Pilgrimage, and our overnight Montserrat (silent) retreats.

In *Evangelium Vitae*, Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, points out that

in raising children . . . the family fulfills its mission to proclaim the Gospel of Life. By word and example, in the daily round of relations and choices, and through concrete actions and signs, parents lead their children to authentic freedom, actualized in the sincere gift of self. . . . Parents must be concerned about their children's faith and help them to fulfill the vocation God has given them. (Number 92)

Our retreat experience has shown that including parents, as John Paul teaches, has blessed us as well as the young people we attempt to form in the image of Christ.

Parents As Seekers

One and a half years ago, our school had the opportunity to create the position of director of adult formation, a role that had previously been one of my responsibilities as campus minister. Over these last two school years, Fr. Greg Vance, SJ, with the support of the administration of the school, has begun to target our adult community as his specific mission. Besides working with faculty, he has begun

to reach out to parents at parent association meetings, board of director meetings and retreats, as well as offering ongoing educational classes to Bellarmine parents, teachers, and members of nearby parishes. These are offered during Advent and Lent, with each series focusing on a topic such as the Scriptures or sacraments. His goal is to present current theological reflection in order to stimulate questions, build faith, and help the adult members of the high school community find resources for their own growth in Christ.

Just as faculty faith formation indirectly serves our students, so does parent faith formation. Again, in *Evangelium Vitae*, John Paul II writes, "In this mobilization for a new culture of life no one must feel excluded: *everyone has an important role to play*" (number 98). As we continue to include more parents in campus ministry, and as we offer more parents tools for their own spiritual growth, we minister more effectively to our students. We are slowly learning that including parents transforms kids.



Jim Fish has directed the campus ministry program at Bellarmine Preparatory School in Tacoma, Washington for eighteen years. He began his teaching career

twenty-four years ago, and has taught in Seattle, Portland, and Sidney, Australia. Jim and his wife are the parents of three children of high school and college age.

Faith Community Builders

Summer Workshops for Catholic High School Teachers, Campus Ministers, Administrators, and Staff

The Catholic High School As Faith Community

28 June–1 July 2001
Mundelein, Illinois

17–20 July 2001
Malibu, California

The Catholic High School as Faith Community is our foundational workshop that presents a vision of faith community and many concrete ideas for integrating theology, spirituality, and service throughout the school. We recommend that you attend this workshop before attending our other two workshops (Nurturing Spirituality with Faculty and Staff, and Live It! Peace, Justice, and Service in the Catholic High School), as they build on themes from this one. Topics for this workshop include:

- a vision of faith community in the school
- insights into teaching theology, nurturing spirituality, and encouraging service—essential activities of the faith community
- conversion in the school
- models of faith community leadership
- strategies and resources

Live It! Peace, Justice, and Service in the Catholic High School

27–29 July 2001
Mundelein, Illinois

Live It! Peace, Justice, and Service in the Catholic High School is a workshop designed to focus on building a faith community in your high school through experiences of serving community and working for peace and justice. Topics include:

- peace, justice, and service rooted in Catholic social teaching

- “two feet of social ministry”—social service (charity) and social change (justice)
- service learning concepts
- service as a way of life
- christian service versus volunteerism
- integration of service into all areas of school life
- resources and strategies

Nurturing Spirituality with Faculty and Staff

4–6 August 2001
Columbia, Pennsylvania

Nurturing Spirituality with Faculty and Staff is a workshop designed to deepen and nurture the relationships and faith experiences of the adults in the faith community in your high school. Topics include:

- helping faculty and staff understand and embrace the vision of faith community
- feeding the spirit: personal and community enrichment for adults in the school
- dealing with challenges to nurturing spirituality with faculty and staff
- effecting change in the school
- gaining support from administrators
- getting started, practical approaches, strategizing

For each workshop, the cost for one participant is \$425; two from the same school, \$375 each; three or more from the same school, \$325 each. The cost includes a private room and meals. Space is limited to fifty people per workshop.

Register by 15 May 2001! For more information, contact Shirley Kelter, 800-533-8095 or skelter@smp.org, or check out our Web site, www.smp.org/hs, and click on “Workshops.”

it works for me

From Jean Ferrara, of Visitation School, Kansas City, Missouri: We ask our parents to share their e-mail addresses so that on specific days and at specific times, our students can send them an e-mail with their questions. These pre-screened volunteers turn out to be great online mentors for our junior high students.

From Sr. Linda Cusano, of Immaculate Heart Academy, Washington Township, New Jersey: We invite parents to join their daughters for “Christmas in April,” when we partner with Habitat for Humanity. Last year we renovated eight houses, and this year we plan to do fifteen!

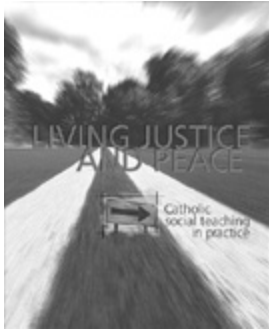
From Kat Hodapp, of Mercy Academy, Louisville, Kentucky: Parents were instrumental in designing our four-year service learning program—and are still involved in its ongoing implementation and evaluation.

From Rudy Navarro, of Bellarmine Preparatory School, Tacoma, Washington: Administration, faculty, staff, and their families as well as students and their families participate in the Phoenix Housing Project, a Tacoma area program that houses homeless families. Twice a year for two weeks, several homeless families are housed in the school. Members of the school community work together to serve as cooks, hosts, and overnight chaperones.

from the press

Our Newest Textbook!

Living Justice and Peace: Catholic Social Teaching in Practice



In this completely new course for eleventh and twelfth graders, students explore how the Scriptures and Catholic

social teaching call them to justice. The course has three objectives: to cultivate students' sense of compassion by inviting them to a deeper awareness of injustice; to enable students to critically examine society using the values of Scripture and Catholic teaching, and to imagine ways toward justice and peace; and to inspire students to act, using true stories of how people who work for justice and peace can transform the world. Contributors include Kathleen Crawford Hoddapp, Lorraine Kilmartin, Christine Schertz Navarro, Michael Wilt, and Chuck Trapkus. Text: paper, 336 pages, \$17.20; teaching manual: spiral, 296 pages, \$25.95

More Scripture News

The Catholic Youth Bible Now Available in Leatherette

The Catholic Youth Bible is now in the hands of over 160,000 young people across America. The new leatherette edition is perfect for classroom use or for gift giving!

"I love this Bible!

I'm sixteen years old and have always wanted to start reading the Bible but haven't. This one makes

it so enjoyable. . . . I especially like the themes with selected passages and the reading plans. Thanks a lot!" —Emily C.
The Catholic Youth Bible: Paper, \$27.95; Hardcover, \$37.95; Leatherette, \$47.95. 5–10 copies, 10% discount; 11–19 copies, 20% discount; 20 or more copies, 35% discount.

Strategies and Activities

In Bringing Catholic Youth and the Bible Together, edited by Brian



Singer-Towns, nine experienced teachers and biblical experts provide background on how Catholics approach the Scriptures, help you understand what it

means to be biblically literate, and provide lots of strategies and activities you can use today to bring Catholic youth and the Bible together. Paper, 96 pages, \$14.95.

Know It! Pray It! Live It! A Family Guide to "The Catholic Youth Bible," by Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart, leads families on a tour through the Scriptures. What does God's word have to say to life's most puzzling questions, such as, Why are we here? How do we



live? Why do we die? What are we called to be? and more. Exploring a cluster of major biblical themes related to these and other questions, families can ponder together, pray together, and put into action the guidance they receive as they take time together with God's word. Paper, 96 pages, \$12.95

Maps Too!

The Biblical Journeys Map Pack,



a set of full-color, laminated maps from *The Catholic Youth Bible*, helps students locate biblical stories within their geographical origins. In-

cluded are maps that show

- the ministry of Jesus,
 - the Exodus from Egypt,
 - Paul's first and second journeys,
 - Paul's third and fourth journeys.
- Each set of four 19-by-25-inch full-color laminated maps sells for \$14.95.

A Gift Idea for Graduating Seniors!

Turn into the Wind *Reflections and Prayers* by College Students



The journey into adulthood is ripe with questions, risks, dreams, struggles, and growth. In this collection of 117 Scripture-based prayers and reflections, college students express

insights, feelings, and beliefs that have emerged from key moments and ordinary experiences along the way. A perfect gift for young adults, *Turn into the Wind* is enriched with God-filled stories of courage, vulnerability, and surrender. Each prayer is based on the writer's favorite Scripture passage, often providing the reader with a new insight about the relationship between the Scriptures and life's experiences. Paper, 160 pages, \$7.95.

resource reviews

To Use with Your Students

Humankind, developed for public radio and available on audiotape, may lack the eye candy of videos, but if you're looking for thought-provoking discussion around issues of human dignity, you should definitely consider this series of thirteen 29-minute documentaries. Each segment features thoughtful discussion from a variety of people with special experience in the topic area. "Simplicity," for instance, features the founder of "simplicity circles" as well as a fourteen-year-old boy who has intentionally chosen to live simply. "Healing the Wounds of War" features Vietnam war veterans whose work with Vietnamese victims of the war has facilitated their own healing. "Hospitality" features families who open their homes to out-of-town strangers who need a place to stay while loved ones are hospitalized. Other topics include "Unconditional Love," "Building Community," "A Different Sort of Food," "Equal Ground," "Waste and Want," "Giving Back," "Peace Camp," and "Humble Recovery." The discussions are grounded in a spiritual sensibility—often in a specific religious tradition. For the most part, they strongly reflect important themes of Catholic social teaching and Christian ethics in general. These would be especially appropriate for a justice course. Because audiotapes do not hold students' attention as well as a speaker or video, consider playing the tapes in 10-minute excerpts, with class discussion in between. Order the whole set of tapes for \$24.95 from Human Media, 800-5-LISTEN; Web site www.humanmedia.org.

Speaking Our Peace, a free thirteen-minute video from Catholic Relief Services, features Rwandan teens at a CRS-sponsored peace camp speaking about their efforts at peace

building in the wake of the genocide that swept the country. The teens are presented as the best hope for future peace in their country, and as a model for U.S. teens. The accompanying study guide (in English and Spanish) contains nine activities to help students explore human rights in the context of the experience of young Rwandans. *Speaking Our Peace* is part of the CRS Food Fast curriculum and can be ordered from Catholic Relief Services, 410-625-2220.

For Your Own Enrichment

Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation, by Parker J. Palmer, invites the reader to take a new look at what vocation is all about, weaving the question, Is the life I am living the same as the life that wants to live in me? throughout each chapter. Written in a down-to-earth style, Palmer's personal stories shine with authenticity. Learning to embrace the true self, with all the potential and limits that come with it, is a process and the ultimate goal of life. When one finds this "inner teacher" and listens to the voice within, true communion with others and God is found.

This book is excellent reading for any teacher, particularly someone looking for "food for thought" in a lifestyles course. Sections of the book would be excellent for discussion with twelfth-grade students. Order this book for \$18.00 from Jossey-Bass Publishers, 350 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94104; phone 415-433-1740; fax 415-433-0499; Web site www.josseybass.com.

Religion Teachers: Your Mission, Your Message, by S. Kevin Regan, offers a refreshing look at the vocation of the religion teacher—both in the school and in the parish setting.

If we are unafraid to be ourselves before God, we are free to

be ourselves before our students. From our own sacred journey we can invite them to the awareness that life is both a human and divine adventure. We will help them see through eyes bright with curiosity, and offer clues where to look. We will help them develop their imaginations, form courageous moral wills, and shape clear, discerning consciences. (P. 34)

This fifty-five page book presents brief, insightful, and challenging reflections on topics such as confronting our culture, teaching as conversation, nurturing spiritual growth, and fostering respect. Each chapter contains reflection questions, prayers, and quotes that make the book helpful for personal and group enrichment. For instance, a religion department might use this resource for a portion of their monthly meetings or as the foundation for a retreat on the ministry of catechesis. It would be especially helpful for those who are new to teaching religion, whether professional or volunteer.

Regan has been a participant in our summer workshop, Nurturing Spirituality with Faculty and Staff. We are happy to share the good news of his new book with all of you who are fostering faith community in your schools! Order for \$7.95 from Twenty-Third Publications, P.O. Box 180, Mystic, CT 06355; phone 800-321-0411; fax 800-572-0788; e-mail ttpubs@aol.com; Web site www.twentythirdpublications.com.

“ . . . ”

Essentially, a church is a community that keeps alive the dangerous memories of its classics.—David Tracy, University of Chicago

Faith Community Workshops

Our workshops for Catholic high school teachers, campus ministers, and administrators continue to grow and evolve. Here are this summer's offerings:

- The Catholic High School As Faith Community
- Nurturing Spirituality with Faculty and Staff
- **NEW!** Live It! Peace, Justice, and Service in the Catholic High School

See page 5 for dates and locations. Consider attending with a colleague to take advantage of our discounts for two or more from the same school.

Acknowledgments

The excerpt on page 3 is from the *Anglican Manifesto: Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ*, approved by the Anglican Congress on 17 August 1963 in Toronto, Canada.

The excerpt on page 7 is a quote by David Tracy from "A Dissenting Voice," by Eugene Kennedy (*New York Times*, 9 November 1986).

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