

More on Raising Catholic Children

By Deacon Tim Sullivan

On the subject of how to raise children who are more likely to embrace their Catholic faith when they become adults, I came across a great article by Christian Smith, author of *Handing Down the Faith: How Parents Pass Their Religion on to the Next Generation*. Here is what Mr. Smith advises.

With regard to parenting styles, Christian Smith writes: “American children are more likely to embrace the religion of their parents when they enjoy a relationship with them that expresses both clear parental authority and affective warmth. Such children know that their parents hold them to high standards precisely because they love them.”

Smith indicates that it’s very important that, as a normal part of family life, parents and children talk about religion, “what they believe and practice, what it means and why it matters to them.” Children should be encouraged “to explore and express their own ideas and feelings along the way,” within reasonable boundaries.

Finally, Smith encourages what he calls “channeling,” which refers to parents’ efforts to guide their children into activities and relationships that reinforce the parents’ values. The main goal is for the children to have interaction with people other than the parents who can engage them in constructive, meaningful conversation. They can be peers of the children or other adults. The goal, Smith says, is “to facilitate, not coerce, religious connections, networks and growth.”

All the time, of course, the parents are praying and hoping that their children are being led by the Holy Spirit into a deeper relationship with Jesus and His Church.

Closing Prayer: “Lord, may I be effective in passing on the Catholic faith to my children, in what I say and what I do. Lord, I pray and trust that you will bring people into the lives of my children to help them embrace Jesus and all that He has handed down through the Catholic Church.”