



FAMILY CHALLENGE

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The ultimate mission of every Catholic family, like the mission of the Church as a whole, is to turn us into little Christs. It is to foster, with the help of God's grace, the "transformation in Christ" that the Holy Spirit jump-starts in our baptism — a process that is meant to continue through our entire lives.

To grow in Christ-like character, we must nurture the cardinal virtues:

prudence - which enables us to judge what we should do;

justice - which enables us to respect the rights of others;

fortitude - which enables us to do what is right in the face of difficulties;

temperance - which enables us to control our desires and avoid abuse of even legitimate pleasures.

These natural virtues are developed through effort and practice, aided by God's grace.

We also need the supernatural "theological," virtues:

faith in God - which enables us to believe in God and the teachings of his church.

hope in God - which leads us to view eternal life as our most important goal and to place total trust in God.

love of God - which enables us to love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

What can we do as parents to build Catholic character, both the natural and supernatural virtues in our children?

Build a loving relationship - Time together. Kids will care about our values when they know we care about them.

Use the power of good example - The example we set — especially when it is coupled with a loving relationship — is one of the most important ways we affect the character of our kids.

Teach directly - If we want our example to have maximum impact, our kids need to know the values and beliefs that lie behind it. We need to practice what we preach, but we also need to preach what we practice.

Exercise authority wisely - As parents, we must have a strong sense of our moral authority and then exercise it wisely.

Provide authentic experiences of the faith - Building Catholic character requires authentic personal experiences of the faith, within and beyond the family.

A caveat: Even parents who do all the right things to build Catholic character can't control the outcome of those efforts. Not even God can make us be good. The final forming of our children's character lies in their own hands.

That said, our most important job as parents is to use the countless opportunities God gives us to help our children grow in goodness and holiness. For as the Church has always taught, the family is the first school of virtue.

To read the full article, please visit: <http://bit.ly/2DDonxg>

Your Challenge: Spend time in prayer asking God which one virtue he would like your family to work on nurturing and then take concrete steps this Lent to nurture and strengthen that virtue within your family.