

May 2018

Proposed Theme: Children and Young People

The joy of love – Pope Francis

The questions I would put to parents are these: "Do you understand 'where' our children really are in their journey?" "Where is their soul, do we really know?" And, above all, "do we want to know?" (261)

The strengthening of the will and the repetition of specific actions are the building blocks of moral conduct; without the conscious, free, and valued repetition of certain patterns of good behaviour, moral education cannot take place. Mere desire, or an attraction to a certain value, is not enough to instil a virtue in the absence of those properly motivated acts. (266)

Raising children calls for an orderly process of handing on the faith. This is made difficult by current lifestyles, work schedules, and the complexity of today's world, where many people keep up a frenetic pace just to survive. Even so, the home must continue to be the place where we learn to appreciate the meaning and beauty of the faith, to pray, and to serve our neighbour. (287)

Some Thoughts:

- May, going into June, is a very special time for young people, it is exam time! It can be a time of anxiety and worry for many. It can be a time of relief for others. For those who are moving on to work or to Third Level Education it is the end of a long phase of their lives. So much depends on these few weeks that will have a huge effect on the rest of their lives.
- This is also a very special time for our schools. The work of the past year is now being tested, not just for the pupils, but for the teachers also. The reputation of the school is a factor that depends on how well the pupils will do.
- It can be a time of tension for parents and other members of the families of the young people too. So much of family life has to be lived around the young people who are doing the exams.
- And it is also the month of Mary, the Mother of Christ and our Mother too. For us as Catholics this is a very significant reality for all that we are and all that we can be.

Generally the rest of the Community goes on as normal, not really affected by what is happening in the lives of these young people, their parents, and their teachers.

Questions:

1. How can we, as a parish community, show a real interest in our young people during these weeks of the exams?
2. How can we, as a parish community, show support for the schools that our young people are attending, during these weeks of the exams?
3. How can we, as a parish community, encourage the parents and families of our young people during these weeks of exams so that they will have the energy and the generosity to be ever more fully supportive of their daughters and sons during this time?
4. How can we use these weeks of the exams to help our young people to have a greater devotion to Mary so that they will have her help in their lives?

The answers to those questions will depend on our answers to a few other questions to ourselves.

- What do we want for these young people who are growing up in our community? Obviously at this time we want them to be successful in their exams. But is that all?

- Do we want them to be successful according to their own gifts and talents? If so, how can we affirm them in these?
- Do we want them to be successful as human beings, as full members of society?
- Do we want them to be successful as members of the Body of Christ in our parish community?
- Do we want them to be successful in faith, hope, and love?

If the answer to these and similar questions is yes then we have a responsibility to help them towards those kinds of successes.

Some suggestions:

- Make May a month of prayer for the young people in the parish who are doing exams.
- Contact the schools where the young people of the parish are studying to thank the teachers and staff for the work they have done during the year and assure them of the prayers of the community at this time.
- Have a special Mass or Prayer Service early in the month for the young people and their families. At this time the names of those doing exams could be recorded in a special book. This book then could have a special place at all the Masses etc. in the parish for the month.
- Encourage families to pray each day for the exams in their homes, maybe with a special emphasis on prayer to Mary under the powerful title of Our Mother of Perpetual Help.
- Have a family/school/parish celebration to mark the end of the exams.

A prayer for children and young people

God of love, we praise and thank you for the wonderful gift of life. Help us to cherish this gift in ourselves and in all whom we meet.

Bless all children that they may know the joy of being alive and that we may help them towards a great future.

Bless all young women and men. Be with them through these years of change in their bodies, their priorities, and their relationships so that nothing may damage their joy and their hope.

Bless especially all those in our parish who are doing exams at this time. May they have every success, not just in their exams but in their lives. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.