

Marriage and Family Class | February 6th

Children and Suffering, Transitions, and the Idolatry of the Family

Rituals point to the sacred and nurture faith

Rituals mark ordinary (daily) and significant moments that are sacred. They point to meaning and help construct the reality of life as we see it.

Everyday/Common rituals: dinner together, mealtime prayer, daily farewells, bedtime stories and prayers

Seasonal rituals: What can your family do to mark major church celebrations such as Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and All Saints, as well as baptismal anniversaries?

Children and Suffering

Matthew 20.20-23 and seeking the best for our children

Christians are supposed to be experts on suffering, says Eugene Peterson, for one chief reason alone: their identifying symbol is the cross. People of faith who spend their lives steeped in the cross know, because of the one upon it, of a companion in their every pain. While it's true that some people become more resilient through suffering, and other people become more embittered through very similar suffering, it's hard for any of us to conceive of a life without suffering. The Christian faith does not remove agony and ordeal from life.

We may aim for happiness and pleasure on many days, and these are not entirely frivolous pur-suits. But we'd be wise to recognize that our lives are formed most fully through our suffering.

- From "Jesus never promised to relieve our pain" by Peter W. Marty

Matthew 16.21-26

How do we avoid or engage the narrative of suffering in our lives and in our children's lives?

Common ways in which children and youth suffer:

Grief and loss Bullying and peer pressure Changing relationships
Anxiety Lack of Resources Lack of Parental or adult attention

Psalms of individual lament: 13, 22, 31, 42, 51, 69, 71, 86, 88, 130

Teens & Independence

“You can make me go but you can’t make me have fun.”

“I should get to decide if I go to church.”

Youth need authority—it provides structure in which to explore freedoms more fully; authority also needs to be conversational in nature, which empowers agency in youth.

The Family of the Baptized and the Idolatry of the Nuclear Family

New Testament understandings of being part of the Body of Christ

Mt 10.34-39

John 19.25b-27

1 Corinthians 7

Galatians 6.10, 5.13

Ephesians 4.1-6

1 Corinthians 12.12-14

Romans 12.3-5

American Meritocracy Is Killing Youth Sports, article by Derek Thompson

We evaluate these cultural circumstances in light of our call to be part of the Body of Christ, and care for the Body of Christ. Such circumstances become a question of our ethical participation in our secular communities, living none-the-less as part of the Body of Christ.

Discussion Questions:

Talk about one of your favorite family rituals and how it creates or points to meaning in your life together. Does it point to the Christian faith or practice in any way?

In what ways have your children, youth, grandchildren, or adult children experienced suffering? How have you or can you accompany them in this?

What practices do you see that reinforce the idolatry of the family in our culture and in our local communities?

What practices or habits in your nuclear family point to being part of a larger family (the Body of Christ), of which deserves our attention and care?