

CWG III. The Challenge to Welcome, Nurture, and Form Children
St. Timothy Parish Listening Session, September 9, 2016 + 16 Participants
Report by: Mark Kalpakgian, Synod Delegate

1. How can the Church in the diocese of San Diego more effectively communicate to our people the balanced sense of parenting expressed in the Joy of Love, while also helping parents to turn that balance into reality?

Cultural and societal norms are the toughest obstacle here.

We have a general lack of catechesis as to what is a balance. See parks full of sports on Sunday mornings. Teach parents first, lack of involvement in Catechesis programs (drop off mentality.) Face to face experience with parents in one catechesis class (sign in and out.)

Looked at CCC- so rich. Maybe put excerpts in the bulletin for parishioners to read and study.

Starts with baptism—look at the promises parents are making at this time. When deacon works with a couple, bring them back to beginnings—richness and beauty of faith you brought children into. Willingly brought them to baptism. Remind them of this choice and this responsibility. Tell them what they expect for a happy family.

Problem is that they make these promises at baptism, and then there is a gap of five years until children come to classes. Need to fill this void- MOPS? What kind of support can we offer parents of young children?

Need to do more “family” ministry in the Catholic church. Have young adults, youth group but nothing for the family.

Saw a baptism during a Mass while on vacation in Oregon. Total support for the parents from everyone in the congregation. She thinks it’s a good way to remember and be reminded of obligations of being baptized. Priest held up child for a blessing and everyone was congratulating after. That would be a good way to be reminded and encouraged.

Renewal of vows, highlight in preaching the vocation of marriage.

Used to have a family catechesis once a month: potluck, whole family, encouragement, teaching.

Conversion moment often brings change in humans. Modeling of good parenting can provide this “moment.” Need a model of what it looks like. Chrisio, Marriage Encounter, Retroville : set your ideal, give you a framework to work within in your own life. Presenting the truth as other people have lived it—told through talks, we live this way now.

2. Balance

Balance piece: Families get wrapped up in the checklist. Try to remind people what do you ultimately want for your kids.

Encourage other young families to join a group. Allow children to attend. It grew so large and was such a blessing. It was a true community. Want bonding, connection of people who can aid you in your walk.

Small Christian Communities need to be renewed in the parish life. Need pastors to help lead these programs—a big part of these programs. Has to come from the top. Is there any recourse when a priest says he won’t help organize these community organizations?

They have to want this catechesis. How to get the interest?

Only 22% of Catholics are involved in a touch point with the Church. 67% of Protestants. Many ex-Catholics go to the mega churches because they felt like they had something to offer and received something back. Involved and engaged.

Has to start at home with example of parents to the children. Parents have to establish the requirements.

Express love from the Church—welcome to Mass. Welcome families, welcome children. Challenge is to start a culture similar to the family ministry seen with Mormons and Protestants. Catholic Church is a lawsuit magnet. Can't do much without the fear.

We are way too electronic. We have lost ability to communicate—lost the human touch, eye contact. Sense of fear in the community—used to have freedom to ride around as children. People are into themselves. Talking to self, not talking to other people. When texting or emailing losing all the visual and audio nuances.

3. Empower parents as first teachers?

Share your own conversion stories to encourage and challenge others. IN marriages in the church, the family needs to see that the parents are deeply in love. Children notice that and then know what a beautiful marriage looks like.

Marriage Encounter really impacted one participant. Notes it as a conversion experience to loving the catholic faith. Rediscover the deep love of them as a couple. Church was influential in reuniting this fire of love. Made him appreciate the Church as the impetus to this newfound love.

If you get the Catholic church, helps you understand what a marriage looks like. Some parents know they are lacking but hope to drop off their kids to get what the parents don't have.

Parishes need to pray for families. Make it deliberate and often. Fundraise for couples to attend marriage encounter or Chrisio. Have parishioners give testimonies from their experiences on these retreats. Make others want it! Talk about it with others—be held accountable to others. You will stay connected if you are constantly being encouraged.

Do something Chrisio or Marriage Encounter-like would unlock a world of good for the faithful. Community focused and yields results in a ripple effect.

Leadership is a big part of this.

Want to offer childcare during events but it is a nightmare at our parish. Insurance issues but childcare is a huge issue that should be offered.

Evening Meal and it's symbolism to the Eucharist. People who don't have an evening meal won't ever appreciate the Eucharist. Communion, the presence of Christ mediated through a meal. Has to start with Mom and Dad having dinner together. Need to talk to each other—no TV, cell phones.

Church as to be willing to tell the truth from the pulpit. Moral relativism had made it way in to the church. Need to take a stand on issues—right and wrong! Problem is defining your own reality—to much pressure and a slippery slope. Parents need help from parish to define what is right and wrong. There is a truth—beautiful and needs to be celebrated. Speak the truth in love.

Not a church of numbers—in the absence of truth, numbers aren't the ultimate indicator of success.