

**CWG III: The Challenge to Welcome, Nurture and Form Children  
Corpus Christi Parish, Seven listening sessions + 150 Participants  
Report by: Michael Wickham, Synod Delegate**

1. How can the Church 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?

I meet with the parents of children in our Religious education Program while their kids were in class. Discussed how some families bring balance-when going on vacations, the kids goggle Catholic Churches in the area they are vacationing in to find out where and when to attend Mass on Sunday. Mass in a new church becomes part of their vacation plans.

Many parents stated that God and the church came first, including their Religious Ed classes, then come sports and other activities. The difficulty is how to reach the hundreds of parents who do NOT register their children for classes. Many parents do not see there is an imbalance in their lives, religion class is the same and in many cases, less important than these other activities.

Somehow as a Diocese we need to communicate to all parents how short the period of time is that their children will be under their care. The impact that we make or not make doing these precious few years, will affect our child as they become adults.

We need parenting classes available at the parish level. How many of us as teens, swore we would never become our parents-and yet, how many of us have adopted those same parenting skills. Why???? , because it was the only model of being a parent that we have ever seen. Maybe a child psychologist could help to educate parents to different ways to parent.

2. Cultural distortions abound, the new reality which indicates that as long as I am married all is good. The influence of the Catholic Church has lost its influence in many homes. Divorced families often fight over the children-in particular if one of the parents has a dislike towards the Catholic Church. Parents in many cases realize there are lacking in a true understanding of our faith, but are embarrassed to admit it, even to themselves. And even if they do, where can they turn for good Catholic advice?
3. Empower parents as first teachers? The overwhelming majority of parents do not understand or accept the concept that they are ultimately responsible for the faith development of their children. Many truly believe, that they are a good catholic parent if 1. They take their children to mass-most Sundays and 2. Enroll their child in the Religious Education Program of their parish. Our parish has 850 students in K-8<sup>th</sup> grade and we offer Bible Study for parents 7 different times a week-every time that we have religious ed classes. A really good turnout is 20 parents many times there will only be 5 parents. And these are the parents that have a tleast taken the time to enroll their children. Many truly take the approach-let the parish education the kids, that is what they are there for.

We need some strong statements from our priests that this attitude is contrary to what Jesus wants for his children and for parent's to be reminded of their Baptism vows-that they promise God that they will raise their children in the Catholic Faith.

We need parents to realize that grace before meals is not a choice, but a profound statement to God that we are truly thankful for all of God's blessings. We need to understand and counter the argument for parents that my family is doing well because of my personal intelligence, efforts and sacrifices. Until we are willing to accept that everything we have comes from God, we will continue to have difficulty in reaching out to our children.