

GWG V: The Challenge to Bring Spiritual Depth to Family Life
San Rafael Parish Listening Session, September 7, 2016 + 20 Participants
Report by: Eilin Friedman, Synod Delegate

1. How can our parishes bring prayer more into the center of family life, with specific attention to the multi-cultural dimensions of this challenge?

- Teach different styles of prayers
- Include in CCD class orientation or special parent classes to go over the material that the kids will be learning. Kind of like a parent guide so they can help kids grown in faith
- Lots of families have both parents working and it is very hard to get kids to Catechism classes if they are only offered week days at 4 or 3 pm. Having classes on Sunday so the whole family can go to mass and then kids can have the classes and maybe parents can have fellowship or take classes on the faith.
- Encourage fathers to bless children
- Do simple apologetics classes for adults and teens, play games with the CCD classes about the church teaching and faith
- People can have different ways to pray, what are some of the things that different families do in their day to day life. Have a "family summit" where people can share their ideas of how/when they pray as a family, holiday rituals, how they get their family involved in church, get youth more involved in youth ministry, etc. Could be done just with San Rafael families or with other parishes to get more ideas of what they do. (They did something like this years ago with CCD teachers where everyone could share their ideas and it was great!)
- Family/Youth Mass!! It would be so nice to have a regular family/youth Mass every Sunday night before Confirmation class, or maybe designate one 10:30am Mass each month as the family/youth Mass. I feel having some kind of family/youth Mass would really help get families more involved. Have different grades help with mass (K -12) they can plan and be a part of the mass so they learn the beauty of the mass.
- Have some testimonies so share about suffering in families and life so we can see that everyone has their cross but God will help us carry the cross if we turn to him.

2. What steps can our local church take to increase the participation of families at Mass, particularly in their identities as families? Invite others to functions and keep them engaged

- Small church groups so you build relationships with other families.
- Building community so if you are in need of prayer, you feel the community cares.
- Have families be a part of mass
- Offer special prayer for the families at mass
- Offer a way to build community after mass, possibly have a social time to get together and meet other families in the parish
- Be more friendly and introduce yourself at the beginning of mass, encourage a sense of community at mass
- Staff and Pastor to invite families to bring up gifts or participate in mass, ore get involved as greeters, readers, Eucharistic Ministers.
- At mass have the pastors welcome and encourage young families to sit in the front and that they are welcome. It sets a stage of tolerance and welcome of children in all stages of life.
- Encourage teens to read at mass it models a great example for the young kids
- At the end of mass take time to talk about the different events coming up in the parish and encourage people to attend

3. What specific steps can the diocese take to build a spirituality of care, consolation, love and realism in our families?

- Opportunity for family volunteer day – serving in the community in some way.
- Funding for building family life, not just per Cana marriage program
- Reconstitute family life, time to start building the budgets again
- Arrange for support groups, small group teams/meetings for widowed/divorced families. There is a large group of families with single parents and they need support with classes on parenting, blended families, healing from divorce.
- Have programs for teens and kids whose parents are getting divorced
- Offering reconciliation more often or before mass
- Offer childcare for masses so parents can attend together and participate without worrying about little ones
- Offering Healing workshops so lay members can meet and pray with others
- Offer family fun events, like a family camp
- Family friendly dances, to attend as a family
- Offer classes for parents on talking to kids about chastity and offer sessions for teens with great catholic speakers

4. How can we promote a substantial spiritual life shared between husbands and wives?

- Couples bible study, how do we sustain people who minister, train - religious education
- Offer more programs for married couples (with babysitting) on topics of interest/guest speakers/etc.
- More regularly scheduled couples' activities/social times (maybe once a month?) so more couples can meet and get to know each other in the parish (happy hours, game nights, wine tasting, etc.).
- Married couples retreat at Whispering Winds? Or at least a day retreat at San Rafael and/or with neighboring parishes, or somewhere close by like one of the missions, etc.
- That everything has to start with the married couple/parents and filter down to the family. Going to Mass regularly, praying, being involved at church, etc. all start with the parents and the parents need to model and instill these things in their children so it becomes a "way of life" and not just an obligation, so it can be passed down to future generations as well.
- Could we do something at the end of mass, a testimony or a couple/individual talk
- Starts with the parents/couple....give them the skill sets to be able to understand/defend your faith
- Train them early and set good habits with family. The kids will follow.
- Witness talks are powerful, everyone has issues/mess that they're dealing with.
- Offer classes for married couples that talk about real issues and stresses
- Teach what a Sacramental Marriage really means and looks like in real life
- How do the husbands become the Spiritual leaders of the house
- Solicit a "resource list" of people in the parish who would be willing to speak (give "witness talks") on specific topics they have experience with (family/couple related, divorce, death of a spouse/child, addiction/recovery of a teen/young adult, illnesses, financial issues, abortion, getting away from drugs or depression, parenting teens, etc.). That way the church would have a readily available list of free speakers for different events and confirmation classes.

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5. What can lead to a spirituality of evangelization and solidarity in family life rather than a spirituality of insularity?

- Regular mass attendance as a family
- We're all hurting, hard to show our wounds, we feel unprotected
- Seminar or Class for Returning Catholics day.....eliminate the confusion. Let us tell you who we are
- How do we create a sense of pride in the Catholic faith? Erase the negative stuff, and educate others, we have a lot to be proud off as Catholics but most Catholics don't know or are confused by the media—Get people to be excited about being Catholic
- SaturDads – Where dads can come with kids to do fun activities and meet other men
- Family events, Easter egg hunt, picnics, etc. Family for life
- Have a Q & A on the Faith or Apologetics about our faith so we can understand and defend it.
- Offer exciting bible studies for teens and families