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FAITH-SHARING IN THE FAMILY

When we engage in conversations of faith, we respond to the call to evangelize. *By Bob and Maggie McCarty*



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When our grandson, Thomas, was younger, he loved maps. Once we were lying on the floor looking at a map of the world. Thomas asked all sorts of questions: “Pop Pop, where do I live?” “Pop Pop, where do you live?” and “Pop Pop, where does God live?”

Recognizing a teaching moment, we explained that God lives everywhere, is all around us—and also lives inside each of us. Taking Thomas’ hand, we placed it on his heart and then on each of our hearts and told him God lives within all of our hearts. “Ah,” Thomas said, and then continued, “Pop Pop, where’s the beach we go to for vacation?”

EXPERIENCE-RICH, LANGUAGE-POOR

Children have active religious imaginations. They think about God and God questions but don’t always have ways to express them or people they’re comfortable asking. The Gallup Organization reports that one in three teenagers before age fifteen reports a “significant” personal experience of God. This raises two important questions: (1) Do young people have the language to speak about this experience? (2) Do they have a faith community that helps them integrate that experience into their lives? The research illustrates that young people are experience-rich and language-poor, especially when it comes to experiences of God.

Parents and other adults play key roles in helping young people grapple with, name, and grow in their God experiences. Yet many of us grew up in families where faith was considered a personal experience, and we may have never heard others in our home speak of their faith. We know

COMMUNICATING FAITH

We must develop our own ways to speak of faith and how it impacts our daily lives. Our friend, Jeanne, a single mom, has four children. She recently told us how upset she feels when her kids argue about going to church, making her late for Mass.

Jeanne told us how hard her life is and how important her faith is. She considers the time spent at Mass the most important hour of her week. Praying to God, receiving the Eucharist, and surrounding herself with other people of faith all give her the strength to face the challenges of her life.

Jeanne asked us how to make her kids want to go to Mass. We asked her, “Have you told them how you feel?” “No,” she said, “that never occurred to me. I don’t think I’d know how. I just assumed that my kids knew how important my faith is to me.”

The reality is that our children don’t know the importance of our faith unless we tell them. Jeanne’s story is *our* story. She didn’t think she knew how to talk to her kids about faith, but her story was so compelling and her passion so sincere, we were certain her kids would respond. And respond they have! They stopped arguing about going to Mass, and even the older ones join her for Mass when they’re home from college.

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now that the most effective way to foster the faith of the adolescent and child is to have an active partnership among parents, parish, and schools.