



## Thoughts on the Journey...

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As a mother, I remember those days of getting up on Sunday mornings and getting my children ready to go to church. It seemed

like a weekly fight against the clock as I grappled to get those obnoxious little patent leather shoe straps fastened or make a last ditch effort to get that remaining bit of hardened Cream of Wheat off their faces before heading out the door. It was always a great triumph when I had the three of them locked in their car seats looking somewhat presentable. It was even a greater victory as they got older and our prelude to Mass involved wardrobe wars about acceptable church attire, or the battle to get them up and moving and out the door on time when they didn't feel like going at all. Perhaps the real battle raged within myself as I questioned each week, *'is this really worth it?'*

Now, as I stand at the entrance of the church each week, I watch parents walk from their cars in the parking lot to the doors of the church. Sometimes that walk is fraught with effort as they juggle baby carriers, pick up dropped toys along the way, settle the tantrums that come from being rushed, or make a last attempt to fix hair or tuck in a shirt before coming through the doors. These mothers and fathers, who with great resolve and fortitude, are making every effort to raise their children in the faith. But, as most of us know, getting children to church is only a small part of the responsibility for people who have been entrusted by God to be shepherds of these souls. Being a good Catholic parent means picking up the cross of parenthood every day, denying themselves the comfort of self-indulgence, and personally investing themselves in instilling Gospel values, not only in what they teach, but how they live. Being a good Catholic parent means swimming against the tide of social demands that are contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ and making a commitment to serve God first.

In the Gospel of Luke this Sunday, Jesus rebukes Peter who didn't like the notion of suffering, dying to self, and facing the trials that being a follower of Christ requires. Jesus said to him,

**"Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."**

How many times in our lives do we find ourselves wrestling with the notion of suffering? How often do we struggle with what's comfortable versus what is

right? All of us are confronted daily with various idolatries that speak to our humanness – the very things that consume our time, our treasure, our spirits. When raising children, the voices get louder and parents are often faced with choosing between giving their children what they want versus doing what is right. The world is filled with false notions of success. Parents are faced with choosing between ball fields and church pews, monitoring access to technology, keeping their children protected from the seduction of morally objectionable messages and notions that have become accepted by society's standards. Even though they may not verbalize it in the same way, I'm sure that, like Jesus to Peter, Catholic parents find themselves often saying, "get behind me, Satan."

Today, my children are grown adults and we have survived the moral absolutes, the firm stands of faith, swimming against the tide of peer pressure, society's misguided notions, and the gamut of challenges that come with the responsibilities of raising children in the faith. We have grown together in our respect for what we have shared and conquered. As a parent, I have long outgrown the fear of my children hating me because I chose what was right over their acceptance and approval of me. Was it hard? Sometimes. Was it worth it? Absolutely! We dedicate ourselves and our children to God with no guarantee that they will be followers in the end. However, what we are guaranteed is that we will reap the reward of everlasting life if we remain faithful to the Gospel.

So, to the parents of our Catholic faith community, even though we can't tell you every week when you come through the door, our community supports you in your efforts. We embrace you in your struggle. We say to you: *keep up the good work! Continue to make the personal sacrifices! Get those kids to church! Persevere in your beliefs! Take on the cross of leadership! Be strong in your resolve to live for Christ and not society!* and hold on to the hope of Jesus' message:

**"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it."**