Welcome to the first issue. In each, we’ll focus on a topic relevant to families, share a related interview, and highlight local events. Let’s embrace the words of St. Pope John Paul II:

“Family, Become What You Are”

PARENTING

An interview with Matthew & Lupe Schaefer

Q: What was it like raising 5 kids? What were your greatest joys and struggles?

Lupe: We always talked about having 10 kids, so five was easier by comparison! It was busy, crazy, but a lot of fun, especially because they were so close in age. Matthew was in ministry while they grew up, so it was fun having them around that and also homeschooling. The thing I enjoyed the most was watching them develop friendships as siblings. One struggle at times was each child finding their identify in the midst of a large family and everybody wanting to be heard and noticed, but we found ways to help make that happen.

Matthew: One day-to-day joy was discussions around the dinner table; we would talk about our faith and the lives of the saints. Those conversations helped them find their personalities. It was hard to watch them struggle at times, but we knew that was part of life. So we tried to give them the tools to deal with failure and disappointment. They learned about how to deal with things more in learning from the saints than from us.

Lupe: We introduced them to the saints early and homeschooling made it easy to do that. For example, when they learned spelling words, they were words related to our faith, like beatify.

Q: What are some of your “success stories”?

Lupe: Each kid embraced a relationship with God at a
Family Prayer: Lord, help us to be an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred in our home, let us sow love, darkness, light, and anger, joy. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Matthew and Lupe with their 5 children, pictured from left to right: Luke (23), Dominic (26), Kevin (19), Jude (17), Monica (22)

Q: What are some things you did to help them establish a relationship with God?

Lupe: Through homeschooling and daily prayer, we taught them very early on they have to have prayer time with God; we couldn’t just do it for them. In kindergarten and first grade, we would sit together and I’d read the Gospel and ask them what they think about it. Once we all talked, they would have quiet time with a Bible, journal, rosary - whatever suited their needs. Even at 4 or 5 years old, each child would have their own quiet time. They knew that every day that is what we did. After work, Papa would ask them, “What did you hear today? What did you hear from God?” Papa was almost like a spiritual director.

Q: What advice would you give to new parents, or those considering becoming parents?

Matthew: First, make God first and put your trust in Him leading you. Second, rely on the sacrament of marriage. Trust in the sacramental grace and be very bold about relying on that. Claim the power of the grace of the sacrament. Third, believe in the fact that God chose you to be the parents of these particular children. No one else can do it. Embrace that reality. Because of that, God gives you the grace needed to raise your children. Fourth, spend time with your children - individually and as a family. Have fun together! We used to have big water balloon fights and do all sort of fun and crazy things together. They remember that. Discipline without relationship equals rebellion. You have to have a relationship with your kids and let them be exactly who God made them to be.

You can hear more from Lupe, Matthew and others at the “Be an Amazing Parent!” online workshops 8/19, 8/26, and 9/2. Info: www.victoriadiocese.org/amazing-parents.