



Prayer of the Month

Jesus Christ,
By your Cross and
Resurrection you have
set us free.

As we begin this Len-
ten season, ready our
hearts to follow you in
all that we do.

Amen.



Parenting Tip of the Month

Being ready is easier when you know what to expect. Visit: <http://goo.gl/xew99K> to learn more about the common characteristics associated with stages of growth and development.



What a Polar Vortex can Teach Us about Readiness

Is anyone else ready to ditch winter? The snow season of 2014 has tested our mettle with frozen pipes, buried mailboxes and never ending sub-zero temperatures. If you are like most people, your first response to bad weather is flight (Florida anyone?) not fight.

Despite our desire to pack it up and move south when the chill of November comes early, most of us have to find a way to combat winter and keep it from taking us off our game. We have to remain battle ready until the first signs of spring erupt. We must take on a “you can’t defeat me” attitude with our hyper monitoring of the weather and pre-storm preparations: kids’ daycare (check), gas in the car (check), milk and bread (check), flashlight (check), cell phone charged (check)... We must remain prepared.

Most storm damage is caused by a lack of moderation on Mother Nature’s part and an absence of planning on ours. We can handle 3 inches of snow without too much anxiety. It’s the 8+ inches that send us reeling. We can manage a day or two of temps below zero. The headache starts when we go days on end without temperatures about freezing. A little taste of Ole Man Winter is o.k. But a steady diet can fill our life with chaos. We have to learn to be ready for the worst that winter wants to dish up.

How do we get ready for each tempest? Most of us are tied to some mobile warning devices or weather broadcasts that keep an eye on what is coming. These devices update us on changing conditions and tell us what to watch for. They also give us expert advice on what to expect. They tell us what to do before and after the storm. The only thing they don’t do is get us to act according to what they recommend. We are in charge of the action. We have to decide if we are going to take them seriously or if we are going to blow them off.

Preparing for a storm and managing the trials of family life are similar. Readiness is needed in both situations “for you know neither the day nor the hour” when the next test will come. When a parent has his house in order the chance of experiencing a life-threatening disaster is reduced. The reverse is also true. Lack of preparation likely spells out disaster.

Here are the suggested steps that every parent should take to ensure order and a sense of preparedness in their home. The first is to stay alert. The second is to learn what the experts are seeing. The third is to heed the advice of the wise. And the fourth is to take action.

Parenting with the Heart of Christ

Stay Alert: There are many “warning” signs that something could be brewing in your family. Here is a common list of behaviors that may tip you off that a trouble is ahead: ***detachment from the family, extreme mood swings, increased anxiety, diminished interest in hobbies and activities, use of foul language, secrecy, declining grades, risk-taking, changes in eating patterns***. As a parent, any of these needs to be monitored and watched because they often lead to serious problems.

What Experts are Seeing: If you observe any of these warning signs or any others that cause concern, it is time to check in with the experts to see what they are observing. These people may include your child’s teachers, coaches, counselors, work supervisors. It is also good to check in with the parents of your child’s friends and to do a quick scan of any social media sites that your child frequents. What are these individuals seeing? Is this behavior limited to your home or is it happening elsewhere? To what magnitude are others seeing this behavior? How long has it been going on?

Heed the Advice of the Wise: The “wise” are those who are prepared to deal with the issue. As the parent, this means you may have to seek the assistance of a classroom teacher, a principal, a counselor, a coach, a work supervisor, and a priest or youth minister. Ask their advice and collaborate with them to form strategies to correct what is wrong.

Take Action: You have identified the problem. You have an idea of its scope. You have strategies. Now you need action. This is when you roll up your sleeves and face the storm with a “you are not going to defeat us” resolve. Your storm may be an Alberta clipper and blow over quickly or it may be a full on blizzard. No matter which one you are facing, be patient and consistent. All course corrections take time and effort.

What happens to those who choose to ignore the forecast? Think back to the story of the ten virgins that is told in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25. Five of the virgins were wise and five were foolish. The wise virgins had enough oil for their lamps and they were ready when the bridegroom arrived. They entered the feast. The foolish virgins didn’t have enough oil and had to leave to buy some just when the groom arrived. They lost everything. If we are like the foolish virgins we are likely to experience undue drama and skate the edge of life-threatening disaster. But, if we are like the wise virgins we will avert the crisis and pain.

Winter officially ends in mid-March and it would be so nice to see the first signs of spring on the 21st. Something tells me that spring is going to be long delayed just like the bridegroom whom the virgins eagerly awaited. Are you prepared to wait and watch? Will you be ready to enter the feast? Perhaps this is a great theme to contemplate as we also begin the season of Lent.

Following these recommendations can help you prepare your children to really learn and develop during their time in school. But this is just a small part of good Catholic parenting. Visit www.twl4parents.com for more strategies for helping your children become the best they can be. And for the best systematic approach to parenting, consider purchasing the Teaching the Way of Love program, which can be found at the same website.

This article series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, authors of the Teaching the Way of Love home study series for parents. Find out more at www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love.