

*January  
Challenge  
Provide  
Guidance &  
Boundaries*



# Teaching the Way of Love

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**PLEASE PRAY  
THAT**

- Parents will guide their children towards the good that God intends.
- Parents will be blessings to their family, especially their children.
- The Catholic Church will be a sign of trust and hope in the world.
- Young people may have the courage to forge life-long, faithful commitments.
- We may all see the Catholic Church be ever more faithful and credible.
- Hope and charity will flourish in the world.
- Parents provide for the health and well-being of their family.

## Road Signs & Guardrails

New Year's resolutions are starting to fall into disfavor in our culture a little bit. We're becoming jaded about most of our ideals because we find them difficult to live up to. I mean, when was the last time you actually followed through on a New Year's resolution?

But despite our lack of follow-through with them, New Year's resolutions play a good and important role in our lives.



New Year's resolutions are recognition that there is a right path for us to follow. There are things that are physically healthy for us that we sometimes neglect. New Year's Day is a good reminder for us to do what's right for our bodies. The same is true for our spirits, and for our relationships. There is a right path for our lives to take. New Year's resolutions recognize that and move us to get back on track.

New Year's resolutions fit human nature because we like to set up structures and guidelines to move us toward our goals. Think about how we create our resolutions. If we're smart, we don't just say, "I'm going to exercise more." We buy a membership to a gym, or we purchase a specific exercise program, and we commit ourselves to a specific structure. It feels good to make concrete progress toward our goals.

New Year's resolutions remind us that we always have a chance to start over. For Catholics that "do-over" can happen every time we go to the sacrament of Confession. But new beginnings that are built into our lives - like New Year's Day - are also good reminders to us that we can always pick ourselves up and get ourselves back on the right track.

Even when resolutions are short-lived, they remind us of what is good for us to do. If we don't continue going to the gym every day, we at least become more aware that we need to remain active and to eat healthier.

Parents can do the same thing for their children that New Year's resolutions do for us. By setting up pro-active expectations for our children, we give them much-needed guidance toward those good things in life that helps us find health and happiness.

*Because humanity passes by way of the family...*

We can (and should) build positive expectations for our children in each area of human development.

- Physical expectations might include healthy eating and physical activity.
- Personal expectations might include ways your children talk about themselves or how they handle challenges.
- Social expectations might include the way your children treat each other, how they respect you, how they treat their friends, or how they act around guests in the house.
- Emotional expectations might include ways that your children handle and express anger or encouraging your children to share their emotions about their daily experiences.
- Intellectual expectations might include discussing decisions in a family meeting or talking about good media choices.
- Spiritual expectations might include going to Mass, saying daily prayers, and participating in the sacraments.

By setting these positive expectations for our children, we set them on the right path for their life. This is the path of happiness, health and most importantly, holiness. Think of your positive expectations as helpful road signs that show our children where to journey.

Once we get them on the right path, we also need to help them stay on that path. So we set up boundaries and rules. These are the guardrails that are erected especially around the most dangerous parts of the road - sharp curves, steep cliffs, and deep ditches.

Both road signs (positive expectations) and guardrails (rules that set limits and boundaries) are necessary parts of guiding our children toward the good that God has planned for them.

## Here is your January Challenge

Your challenge for January is to make some "New Year's resolutions" for your children by deciding which road signs and guardrails you will put in place in 2015. [Download the challenge here: http://goo.gl/mkSrPH](http://goo.gl/mkSrPH). Under the road sign for each area of human development, choose at least one pro-active positive expectation that you can promote for your children. Under the guard rails on the third page, choose three boundaries or limits you'll put on their behavior in order to keep them physically and spiritually safe. Then have a discussion with your children about your new expectations.



Are you ready to meet this month's challenge? Give it a try! Hopefully you'll come away with a different view of having high expectations for your children. This challenge is just a small part of good Catholic parenting. Visit [www.twl4parents.com](http://www.twl4parents.com) for more strategies that will help you become the best parent you 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](http://www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love).