

Catholic Summer 101

Sanity, Sanctity, Socializing

Three Topics for Today

- Obstacles to Enjoying Summer with your Family
- Putting your Catholic on, Summer version.
- Why you should care about developing close friendships with other Catholic families, and how to start doing that.

Not Everyone Hates Summer

- Some of you are puzzled by this topic.
- For many parents, summer poses some challenges to sanity.
- The constant changes in your life as a parent can be a source of stress whenever “fun” rolls around.
- Sometimes a thing seems like a good idea, but it just isn't.

Obstacles to Enjoying Summer at Different Stages in Parenting

- Transitioning from Long School Breaks to a Full-Time Career (at any age)
- What Does Fun Look Like Now that You're a Parent, and Why are Your Childless Friends Avoiding You?
- Summer with School-Age Kids
- How Come I Never See My Teenager, and Do I Really Want To?

Summer Vacation Without the “Vacation” Part

This problem can hit at any age:

- You just got out college and now you're working full time year-round for the first time.
- The formerly stay-at-home parent now has a year-round job.
- You lost your accumulated vacation weeks when you changed jobs.

Summer Vacation Without the “Vacation” Part

Sources of Stress

- Your brain hasn't caught up to the reality that you don't get a long break anymore.
- People Who Love You Want to Steal Your Precious Vacation Minutes
- The parent who used to take of everything is suddenly unavailable, because: Work.

Summer Vacation Without the “Vacation” Part

Reducing the Pressure:

- Recognize that there’s been a big change and life is going to look different now.
- Get out a calendar and map out your time with your spouse. **Be realistic.**
- Remind your family of your new obligations.
- Prioritize sanity. **Does this activity make me feel rested and refreshed?**
- Set boundaries. Own your “yes” and your “no.”

Life After Kids

- Going from “zero children” to “I have children” is the biggest **good** change you are ever going to experience.
- Every waking hour *and* every sleeping hour is now claimed by a little person.
- You don’t get to “just relax.” You have to keep someone alive *all the time*.
- You no longer live in the same universe as your childless friends.

Life After Kids

- Activities like the going to the beach, resting by the poolside, eating out, or taking a trip are now non-stop crazy-work.
- Babies and toddlers do not put “quiet time” on their to-do list. Older kids aren’t much better.
- Your childless friends still love you, they just don’t know how to be around you.

Life After Kids

- Plan to do fewer things. Most of your energy is now claimed by parenting.
- Strategize for R&R. You can't just have it on-demand anymore.
- New leisure-time question: What would my child and I enjoy doing together?
- Invite your childless friends to visit your world, rather than struggling to survive in theirs.

Summer with School-Age Kids

Things that happen as summer arrives:

- Wrapping up the school year can be NUTS.
- For most parents, the end of school = major change in childcare needs.
- The school year routine goes away.
- Summer activities tend to reinforce the loss of routine.
- Not all vacations are much of a vacation.

Summer with School-Age Kids

- Allow time to decompress and “just do nothing.”
- Does this activity require me to push myself all day to make it happen?
- How much free time do we really have?
- How can I make family life more peaceful?
- Are we falling into depressing habits?

Summer with School-Age Kids

Choosing family vacation activities:

- Are we doing this because we want to, or because we feel like we have to?
- Do my spouse and I have different visions of an ideal childhood summer?
- Who enjoys this activity, and who finds it tiring, stressful, or boring?
- Do we love the activity, or just the *idea* of the activity?

Where is My Teenager?

- Teenagers are called “young adults” for a reason!
- Jobs, sports, hobbies, summer school, volunteering, and time with friends all have legitimate claims on your teenager’s life.
- Take into account these obligations when you schedule family activities.

Where is My Teenager?

Challenges with teenagers:

- Agreeing on expectations for summer activities.
- Learning to communicate about plans as schedules become more independent.
- Developing mutual respect for each other's time and effort.
- Learning to work through conflicts in a constructive way.

Where is My Teenager?

You are still the parent.

- Your teenager *needs* a strong relationship with you.
- Your teenager *wants* a strong relationship with you.
- Your teenager is still wants to learn from you.
- Your teenager still wants to spend time with you.

Where is My Teenager?

Teenagers are like Baby-Adults:

- Teens are capable of adult-style surliness, negativity, and cutdowns . . . But they are more like a baby's temper-tantrum.
- After the storm, Mom and Dad are back to being #1.
- Teens *need your help* in learning to use their maturing thinking skills to reason, plan, and consider consequences.

Where is My Teenager?

Teenagers see all the nastiness and danger of adult life, but have none of your experience for dealing with it.

- Your teen needs you to *explicitly teach* him or her how to handle dangerous situations.
- You need to re-teach these skills throughout the teen years.
- Do not assume your teen understands what you are talking about.

Where is My Teenager?

Your teen needs practice with adult life:

- Taking on real responsibilities with real consequences.
 - Practice navigating potentially risky situations.
 - Practice identifying signs of danger and taking active measures in response.
- Look for a balance between independence (important) and time spent doing new, big, adult activities **together** (very important).

Year Round Goals at Every Age

Babies and toddlers – Finding out that the world exists and what's in it.

Children – Learning how to manage the skills of ordinary life; how to take care of self in a sheltered environment.

Teenagers – Learning how to handle tasks that are only for adults, not children: How to create that sheltered environment for the next generation.

What about the Catholic Part?

Catholic Summer

- My Vocation, My Children's Vocations
- Prayer and a Life of Virtue
- Piety & Works of Mercy
- Observing the Summer Feasts
- Catholic Tourism
- Mass Attendance on Vacation
- It's all Catholic.

Catholic Summer Vocations

My vocation is to parenthood. This is my path to holiness. Am I letting parenthood take me there?

My children can discover **their** vocations thanks to my work as a parent. My goal is to help them know, love, and serve Jesus Christ.

Prayer and a Life of Virtue

- Prayer is the way I relate to God. It is the way I spend time with God. It is my intimacy with God.
- My children learn to pray by watching me, by practicing with me, and being given opportunities to practice on their own.
- Prayer is the foundation of the Christian life. You cannot build a Christian life without it.

How Well Is Our Family Living?

- Family life is the school of virtue.
 - Are relationships among family members warm, loving, and peaceful?
 - Are we growing as we should be, physically, spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally?
- Leisure is part of this process!

Piety and Works of Mercy

- The change in routine in summer will change my opportunities for practicing my faith.
- Is now a good time to take on a service project we couldn't do during the year?
- Is there a devotion I don't have time for in the school day, but could add (at times?) during the summer?
- Seasonal changes can also mean I have to set aside a practice of my faith temporarily.

Observing the Summer Feasts

- We don't have big Catholic holidays during North American summer time.
- Now is a nice time to have fun small feasts for saint's days and other holidays.

Tip: CatholicIcing.com.

Catholic Tourism

Consider making mini (or mega) pilgrimages:

- Monastery Visits
- Historic Churches
- Local Shrines
- Sacred Art and Music
- Holy hours (or holy minutes)

Don't exhaust your kids. Keep the day fun.

Mass Attendance on Vacation

- The Mass is the “source and summit” of our Catholic faith.
- The obligation to attend Mass on Sundays (and holy days – 8/15) doesn’t take a vacation.
- You still need this! Don’t starve yourself.

Tip: MassTimes.org.

It's All Catholic

- There is no separation between my “Catholic life” and “the rest of my life.”
- Sports, travel, socializing, national holidays, mowing the lawn – it's all Catholic.

I want my children to learn by living with me:

- The Catholic faith is part of normal life.
- My life *is always* my Catholic life.

Catholic Friends

How to Find and Keep
the People Who Will Help You
Hold Your Faith Together

Catholic Friends Belong In My Life

- My children *need* to form friendships with other Catholic children and adults.
- *I need* the friendship and support of time spent with other Catholic families.
- Catholic community happens when we spend our time *living with* other people who share our love of Jesus Christ.

Catholic Friends Belong In My Life

Making friends takes effort:

1. Introduce yourself.
2. Get to know each other via conversation (after Mass, on the playground, at school or parish activities, etc.).
3. Extend an invitation to spend time together.
4. Find ways to share other parts of your life (hobbies, leisure, kids' activities, feast days, work, etc.).

What Is a Strong Catholic Community?

- The base of our relationship is our common love of Jesus Christ and the Catholic faith.
- We spend time *living* together in multiple parts of our lives – work, leisure, church, works of mercy, evangelization.
- If something happened to me, my friends would **notice** and be able to **help**.
- Friendships cross generations and last over years and decades.

Making the Decision to Have Catholic Friends

- Summer can be a good time to extend a first invitation to a new friend, and to renew connections with old friends.
- The decision to build friendships requires perseverance and a willingness to take risks.

There is no golden age of Catholic community. Love of God and love of neighbor is the only method that works.

Catholic Summer 101

Have a good one!