

Honoring the Ministry of Parenting

As we remember to honor teachers at the end of the Church School year, consider also the importance of remembering the ministry of parenting at the same time. While some may be serving as assistants or volunteering in various capacities there are plenty of other ways to be considered. First of all the children wouldn't be there if the parents didn't bring them.

More than that, certainly the commitment of the parent is paramount to the child's total involvement in church life. But that's only the tip of the iceberg – it's the hidden part that really counts. It's the parent that lays the foundation for faith in the life of the child. It's true that every child is born with a yearning for the holy, and has an innate deep desire to be connected with this Mystery of Life - which also seeks to be at one with the child. One way of facilitating this connection is to name the Mystery – each according to their own tradition. This usually requires a caring adult – who looks lovingly into the face of the child and speaks this Word.

In some traditions the name of the Holy One is whispered into the ear of the child immediately after birth as the father holds the child in his arms for the first time. We might do well to learn from other traditions the importance of such early naming of the Mystery! It might be the mother who first holds the child and looks into its face. At least she is the one who is always present at birth – regardless of circumstances. How wonderful if she were to whisper softly, “Jesus loves you and so do I.”

Whether this is stated or not – certainly something of the image of God is expressed to the child through the life giving process and the first taste of goodness – which definitely models for the child the essence of their Creator. No argument here as to the feminine nature of the Divine. This is but the beginning of the nurturing process of Lifelong Christian Formation. And whether the parent knows it or not, just as important as all those wonderful Bible stories that will be read to the child and prayers that will be said – the critical thing is what is lived out in a day-to-day relationship of modeling behavior and of nurturing love and forgiveness. Studies have shown over and over again – that children do in fact form their image of God based on that of their parent. A very awesome role for the parent to consider, and one that needs constant affirmation and support from the Church – as parents are, indeed, the most important ministers and teachers the child will ever have.

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