

Necessary
Conversations

On Following
His Plan



Teaching the Way of Love

because humanity passes by way of the family . . .

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Set a Firm Foundation in 2020

PLEASE PRAY THAT:

- All families find time to discuss how they will follow God in 2020.
- Parents will embrace their role as primary educators for their kids.
- Parents will share the truth about God's love clearly and with charity.
- Parents will correct their children's behavior without hardening their hearts.
- Parents will love their children in the same way that God does; selflessly, consistently, unconditionally.
- Parents will make time to pray daily with and for their children.
- No child (or parent) will ever find themselves beyond God's love and mercy.
- Families will desire to do God's will.

The new year has begun and with it a new decade. Take just a moment to think back over the past ten years. Reflect upon this question. *What has changed in your life since 2010?* You may have married and started a family. You might have changed employment or the place you reside. Perhaps you experienced something life-altering that either caused you great joy or pain.

How would you respond if I asked you this question? What has stayed the same? You may be able to think of many things that remained unchanged; same job, same home, same friends, same parish. You might even say that you still strive to live by God's Ten Commandments despite the various changes that have happened to you over the past ten years.

One more question, what do you think life will look like in 2030? How will your family mature? Will your work requirements adjust up or down? What health concerns will concern you? What will you hold sacred? What will you want to let go of?

Each new year (and in this case new decade) is a perfect time to ask and answer these deeper questions in order to maximize the joy in one's life and minimize unnecessary agony. A truthful reflection at the beginning of a year helps you take stock of your foundational beliefs and morals which should remain unchanging despite the turn of the calendar and think about rules of life that will help you stand firm in any situation.

Recall Matthew 7: 24-27 which tells us to build our home (and life) upon a rock. Why? That which is built on rock will not collapse when buffeted by rain, wind or storms. A life that is built on firm footings (personal commitments to follow God) will not be tossed by life's pressures. It will not break down or fail.



Because humanity passes by way of the family...

What societal issues can breach your foundation and shake your personal commitment to follow God? Consider how the culture wants to give internet availability to your children when it gives access to both the bright and dark side of the web. Ponder how your kids want to use social media rather than have a face to face conversation. Think how the porn industry wants to be a normal form of entertainment for teens. Reflect on the explosion of cyber bullying and its impact on the self-worth of adolescents and young adults. Think about society's redefinition of marriage and gender. Reflect on the changes in state and federal laws that impact the sanctity of life from conception to natural death.

Let's face it. Today's societal beliefs will pressure you and your family in the coming days and years. They will try to convince you that truth and morality can change with time and circumstance. They will tempt you to gather wealth and fame and to pursue busyness and enlightenment instead of finding peace in just being a child of God. They will try to lure you into elevating your own thoughts above God's laws.

It is likely that today's culture won't encourage you to develop self-control or self-denial. It won't ask you to live in moderation or to suffer for the sake of another. It won't suggest that you believe in absolute truth and deny relative thinking. That is why it is vital that you talk with your family soon about setting a firm foundation in 2020.

Preparing a Necessary Conversation that will Set a Firm Foundation in 2020

The first step in this process falls to the parents who should make a joint commitment to follow all of God's commandments which set the firm foundation. Once a commitment has been made, they will develop several rules of life that will help them follow God's commandments as a family. Here are examples of 'rules of life' that set a firm foundation for a family to follow. (Families are encouraged to develop these as a family and to have more than one rule of life during the year.)

1. All personal devices will be used in the common living areas of the home, not in bedrooms.
2. Parents have the right to see any social media account that their children use. Parent's also have the right to deny access to social media.
3. The family will eat meals together. Personal devices will not be allowed to dine with the family.
4. Athletic or extracurricular events will be missed if they are scheduled at the same time as Mass.
5. Every family member will commit to pray daily with and for the other family members each.
6. Parents and children agree to learn more about God's plan for love by attending talks, webinars, listening to podcasts that are faithful to God's commandments. Parents should consider attending the upcoming Necessary Conversations webinar on the Harms of Pornography scheduled for Monday, Jan. 13th at 8PM. Register at: twl4parents.com/necessary-conversations-webinar/ .

This challenge is just a small part of good Catholic parenting. Visit 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.