

BE PART OF CHURCH AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

Raising your children is an important calling and in the environment of today's popular culture it is a very challenging calling requiring your total commitment. The job of raising responsible children and of handing on your Christian Faith is not a solo job. You and your children need to be part of a Church community which shares your deepest beliefs, values and traditions. If you want to keep your children from being overly influenced by a shallow and often harmful popular culture, you need to provide a counter culture in which you find like-minded parents and children who will help you and your children to develop into mature Christians and responsible citizens. This Church community will provide opportunities for your family to deepen your beliefs, and provide support and friendship in good times and troubled times. If you do not provide your children with an opportunity to make friends who share your Faith and a community in which they can learn and practice faith, they will have to by default look for a network of friends in the popular culture. In addition to your Church community, there are other community groups which can be helpful. Many civic groups seek to encourage responsible citizenship. These places of networking and fellowship can be places where you can find encouragement of your Christian values and opportunities to practice community service.

Today there has been a decline in civic participation, as well as joining the social and service organizations that once were the backbone of our community. People are not participating as much in Lions Club, PTA, Rotary Club, etc. What do these have to do with parenting? These are organizations that encourage you and your children to become a productive citizen. When these are not incorporated in a parent's life, then parents can become complacent about the community in which they are raising their children. When a parent is involved, they become more aware of community concerns and can be helpful to their community. The parent's involvement teaches children that being involved is important to a community. Of course as other articles in the handbook have stated, family time is the priority, then Church, and then community. And of course the ages of your children are important. When children are young, they need more of your time. Use discretion and if time is available choose an area of community involvement.

The school community is a place which has a big impact on a child's social and moral development. Many parents and children view schools from a consumer view and not a partnership view. When a parent volunteers at school, a home/school partnership can develop which benefits all. For example, when a child's grades are not good, some parents will blame the teacher or the classroom environment. An involved parent can work with their child with the teachers input and show the child how to overcome a problem and work better in the classroom. Teaching a child the tools to get around stumbling blocks gives them a sense of accomplishment and teaches them to be accountable for their actions. Whether a teacher is good or bad is not what you should be discussing with your child; it is whether your child can learn in that environment and what tools you can show him to overcome the obstacles. This helps to prepare a child to become a productive citizen by teaching critical thinking skills that will help them overcome obstacles as adults. A parent working with the teacher can help the teacher better understand the child's learning style and, by offering your help, you form a partnership with the teacher in regard to your child's education. Be a partner, not a consumer.

With regard to your church community, you also should be a partner and not a consumer. Unfortunately, the consumer mentality is also present in your church community. Some parents see themselves as consumers of church services. They take a critical stance and sometimes move from church to church looking for the right mix of services. In doing this, they lose a sense of deep community involvement. Be a committed church member. Volunteer according to your talents and work to make the church community better for all. As with school involvement, your children will benefit from your church involvement. They will be part of a positive Faith community which will nurture and challenge them in positive ways. Hopefully, you will befriend other parents who share your vision for your children's growth and development and, as a Faith

community, all will benefit from mutual volunteer work and commitment to Faith. Being a parent is not a solo job; you need a supportive community. Accept the challenge of involvement. You will be happy you did.

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