

Welcome to RCL Benziger Family Life!

You are a family! Your child is a gift from God—and a great responsibility. During these important growing-up years, you are the most important influence in your child's life.

Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Exhortation *On the Family*, challenged families to become what they are—“a community of life and love.” He invited you to wrap your child in the love of Christ, so that your son or daughter will become a follower of the Lord.

You only have to think back as far as your last family argument to know that it isn't always easy to be a community of love. You can use all the help you can get these days to be a Christian family. The Church supports you, and your parish or school chose RCL Benziger *Family Life* to be a part of that support.

In the weeks ahead your child will be learning more about the skills and virtues of Christian family living. This booklet will help your child to make the connection between what was learned in the classroom and living it at home. Your role is to do what you already know how to do best—be a good parent. You will be asked to share your own faith and values with your child in informal and enjoyable ways.

The first five sections in the Parent Connection correspond to the five themes in your child's book. Read through these materials. Throughout this booklet you'll find ideas to help you to better understand and communicate with your child. You will also find simple explanations of the Church's teaching with regards to living a healthy and holy family life. You will also learn new ways to create family experiences that your child will remember for a lifetime!



“Family, become what you are . . . a community of life and love.”

*Pope John Paul II,
On the Family 17*



In God's Gift of Family, your child is learning the following concepts.

1

Being Needed

- ▶ Family members depend on one another and bring each other closer to God.
- ▶ A family is a good place to learn about giving and receiving love.
- ▶ I live the virtue of justice when I give of myself to meet the needs of others.

2

Why Rules?

- ▶ Rules are important in family life.
- ▶ God gives each of us the gift of free will to make good choices.
- ▶ I live the virtue of obedience when I choose to follow good rules.



Connecting with Your Child

Although parents strive to teach their children to be independent—to be able to take care of themselves and to make their own decisions—the goal in family relationships is one of mutual dependency rather than independence. Members of a family depend on one another for many needs. Every member brings gifts to the family. Nurturing an appreciation for family life in your child will give them that all-important sense of belonging.

To foster a sense of belonging

- ▶ Maintain an environment of loving acceptance. Children find security in their home environment.
- ▶ When appropriate, involve your child in decisions concerning your family life. Children value feeling that they are important in the life of the family.
- ▶ Celebrate family traditions. Your child will mature by participating in the family's joyous observances and solemn moments. Make family prayer one of those traditions!

Honor your family heritage by sharing your childhood memories and inviting grandparents to share their stories.

Preserve and cherish these memories through a family album. An appreciation for family life is a gift that children can pass on to their families.

Rules

At this age your child is concerned with following the rules, whether they are family rules, school rules or rules of the community at large. Children learn that this is part of what it means to be family. Teach your child that obeying rules helps us to meet our needs and the needs of others.

- ▶ Establish a strong relationship with your child. Rules you set are then connected to that relationship. Frequently clarify and write down all family rules.
- ▶ Your child may question authority. Remember to respond gently, yet firmly. This will give your child a sense of security and safety.
- ▶ Pray as a family. We all need grace to strengthen our lives.

Wisdom from the Church

We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that “loving our neighbor” has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions, Major Themes

The saying “No person is an island” reinforces the idea that we live as a community. What we do and don’t do affects everyone. We need each other to survive. In this age of ecological and global awareness, Christian men and women are recognizing their interdependence more and more. Neighbors come together to form neighborhood watches, effectively lowering crimes rates in their area. Neighborhoods come together to form community recycling programs and help clean up the environment. Communities around the world band together to aid victims of earthquakes, floods and hurricanes.

Interdependence does not happen automatically. The Catholic Church has a long history of social teachings, yet they are perhaps the least known teaching of the Church. Everyone must take the responsibility of teaching the concept of mutual dependency to future generations. As a Catholic parent, you face a big challenge in helping your child to recognize the extent of Christ’s love and to accept the responsibility to care for others.

Learning Responsibility

The best place for people to learn responsibility toward others is within their own families. The family is the community where a person can grow in self-knowledge and learn how to help others. The love of Christ shows through us to the world, across every nation, in each community and lived daily in the home. Your family is a sacred community. It is where your children will first learn to love others as Christ loves us.



Catechism of the Catholic Church

Read paragraphs 340–344 to learn more about the interdependence of all creatures.

Spend Time with Your Child

Here are some tips on how your family can grow in holiness and health:

- ▶ Set aside time for the family to complete the Family Time pages. For example, one time can be devoted to the front page before your child begins the corresponding unit and the back page can be completed at the conclusion of the unit.
- ▶ Help your child make a list of their responsibilities (getting dressed for school, making their bed, feeding the family pet, doing school work). Then discuss what new responsibilities they might be able to handle now that they are a bit older.
- ▶ Discuss the importance of each of the family rules with your child. Give your child a chance to ask questions and perhaps even discuss the rules. Have your child write the family rules on a piece of construction paper in their own words and post them in a prominent place, such as on the refrigerator.

Family Web Time
RCLBenziger.com
and click on “Family Life”

Catholic Parenting 101

This section includes more practical advice for parents, health and nutrition tips, parenting skills, and new research in areas of interest to growing families.