



St. Patrick Catholic School

Do Family Dinners Matter?

The Messy Family Project

Newsletter Vol. 2 No. 1 September 2022

Why Eat Together?

Beyond the simple enjoyment of food, why should we gather our children around the table to eat together? Meals with toddlers aren't easy and getting teens to come to the table can be difficult. So why put in the effort?

As you've probably heard, children who have regular meals with their parents have better outcomes in school and in social interactions than children who do not. But why is that and how does it relate to faith-based outcomes?

It has everything to do with the relationships we build around the table.

Sitting down to time with no distractions (barring forks and seconds), gives us the time to really listen to our children. To ask about their day with intention and genuine curiosity, listening to their responses without the distraction of a phone or other device builds their sense of belonging. When our children can count on that focused time with us, close relationships can bloom.

And when we have close relationships with our children, those based on trust and in truly delighting in them, we'll have an easier time addressing issues and communicating our family's values. That includes our faith.

Jesus Focused on Food

So, our society gives us practical reasons for eating together, but what about biblical ones?

Well, before God made man, he made food: the animals and the plants of the garden. And when you look through the New Testament, we find Jesus literally performing big miracles around the topic of food. The Wedding Feast at Cana and the Feeding of the 5000 are two big examples of this.

But for Catholics, the biggest and most important example of our Lord's focus on feeding his followers comes with the crucifixion. Every Sunday, we participate again in His sacrifice and share in the Eucharistic table, where we are fed, both literally and spiritually. Jesus was intentional in this.

He feeds us so that we have the grace to serve those around us, especially our spouses and children.

Practical Ideas

So, what does it look like practically to gather around the table without it being a daily chore? Family dinners are a spectacular time to model servant leadership, initiative, hospitality and caring for each other. Give age-appropriate tasks like setting the table or assisting with food prep to younger children. Even toddlers can bring napkins to the table! Another idea could be to have your older children take turns cooking the meal and filling the dishwasher afterward.

Make it a practice to open the meal with a short passage from Scripture and a lit candle. This is a great role for mom while dad leads in a before-meal prayer and serves everyone's food before serving himself.

An idea to help guide conversation is to ask an intentional question of each person. Something like "What was your favorite and least favorite part of your day?" is a great one that even the littlest children can answer. Not only will this spark conversation but gives parents hints to things they may need to address with their children in private. There are so many different ways to make meal time special for your family. Try things out and don't be afraid to walk away from the things that aren't working for you or communicating your family's values.

Sharing meals with others has been a way to bring people together for centuries. With higher outcomes in school and life in general, it's very clear that family dinners do make a difference.

Communicating family values, giving examples of virtue to follow and practicing those virtues are all benefits of shared meals. When we sit down for family dinners, we give our children dedicated time with us and to children, time equals love.

So, what will you be having for your next family meal?



September & October

Latchkey- Last day for LatchKey program – Friday, Sept. 2nd.

Labor Day- No School/Daycare- Monday, September 5th.

School Pictures- Thursday, September 8th.

Reboot- Chris Stefanick Event- Wednesday, September 14th @ 6:30 Parsons Municipal Auditorium

Parent/Teacher Conferences- September 20th and September 22nd. (More details coming soon).

No School- Friday, September 23rd - Daycare Open

No School- Monday, September 26th – Teacher In-Service - Daycare Open

Dental Screenings – Tuesday, October 11th

Fall Picture Retake- Thursday, October 13th

School Auction – Friday, October 14th

End of First Quarter- Friday, October 14th - Early dismissal @ 12:05

First Quarter Honor Roll Assembly – Friday, October 21st after Mass

All Saints class parties- Monday, October 31st