

December 2009

Scattering Flowers

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Recommended Citation

James Cotter, Eileen Admo (2009) "Scattering Flowers," *Verbum*: Vol. 7 : Iss. 1 , Article 18.
Available at: <https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/verbum/vol7/iss1/18>

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Scattering Flowers

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"One of the most important missions we have as parents is to instill in our children those values that we view as critical to living a successful life. Although the early parent-child years are filled with countless, explicit small lessons and recommendations, it is our unspoken values that teach the most during that time. Children are very keen observers and can see through (and often make their best attempt to ignore) our verbal recommendations, especially if they do not align with our non-verbal actions. For example, teaching children to be good to their siblings is often done through many stern and/or impassioned pleas, negotiations, compromises, time-outs and forced reconciliations. If, however, they witness unkind actions between mother and father, uncharitable adult siblings' interactions and continual criticism of friends and co-workers, they will learn the unspoken lesson of "but these rules don't always apply or won't hold true forever". Similarly, when teaching children about finishing a job well and not giving up on difficult tasks, they must witness this behavior in their home environment and have it become a part of the fabric of their being so that when they go off to college and/ or out into the working world, this is the way they attack problems."

From Our Guest Writers



Scattering Flowers

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As Catholic parents, we have the mission of sharing our Catholic faith with our children. Heartfelt enthusiasm for daily religious rituals (saying Grace before meals and prayers before bed) and weekly attendance at (and audible participation in) Mass speak as clearly as the acts themselves. Saying a prayer to St. Francis when a pet is sick or to St. Anthony when an item is missing demonstrates how sincerely we believe in the power of our faith and the importance of reflecting on how our religion can strengthen us each day. Teaching children that Jesus is always ready to forgive (either through sincere contrition or through the Sacrament of Penance) gives children the strength of knowing that no matter what happens, Jesus can and will help us as many times as needed. Remembering to frequently thank Jesus for our successes teaches children humility and allows them to realize that their talents are a gift from God and need to be nourished and shared as a tribute to Him. Although our world promotes the idea that achievements are a reflection

of our individual capacity, recognizing intellectual, athletic or artistic talents as a gift from God allows children to strive for great success without becoming self-centered with an air of superiority. Another benefit of approaching our faith in this way is that it allows for a talent or special ability to be found in every child. Although hard to quantify, the ability to empathize with the emotional needs of others is a talent that greatly benefits our world and can give the child who possesses it a great feeling of accomplishment and importance to their family, their faith community and society at large.

Finally, community outreach is an area of living our faith in which actions speak louder than words. By financial support of missions throughout the world both within and outside our Catholic faith community and through the action of participating in these programs, children learn to recognize the needs of those around them. It is amazing to watch the excitement in children as you explain the plan to buy Christmas gifts for those children who are less fortunate or to donate to organizations that bring sustainable living to those in 3rd World countries. We, as humans, start out very open to the idea of sharing and true concern for our fellow man and only have the potential to lose this if the beauty of such actions is not witnessed and cherished.

Our family made up a little prayer that we say at the close of each night which is simple and understandable to our daughters and elegant in the purity of its message:

“Thank you dear Jesus for helping me today and please guide me to be good tomorrow.”

We follow it with an opportunity for each of us to share a short thank-you, sorry or please to Jesus for a trial or success of that day or the next. Our daughters' responses are often inspirational to us in their simplicity, earnestness and honesty.

In the words of the ever-humble St. Therese of Lisieux, “What matters in life is not great deeds, but great love”. Similarly, she wrote, “Love proves itself by deeds, so how am I to show my love? Great deeds are forbidden me. The only way I can prove my love is by scattering flowers and these flowers are every little sacrifice, every glance and word, and the doing of the least actions for love”. Children understand this message and can recognize daily ways to implement it into their lives... and fortify their resolve by seeing their parents do the same.

Dr. Eileen Adamo and Mr. James Cotter