

# forming our children to go forth

Aug 10, 2016 admin

*“Families should not see themselves as a refuge from society, but instead go forth from their homes in a spirit of solidarity with others. . . A married couple who experience the power of love know that this love is called to bind the wounds of the outcast, to foster a culture of encounter and to fight for justice. God has given the family the job of ‘domesticating’ the world and helping each person to see fellow human beings as brothers and sisters.”*

- Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, nos. 181, 183

Jacob, Matthew, and Sarah still hold my hand when we walk to school. For now, it’s an instinctual reflex for them. I extend my hand and their little hands swing up to meet mine. This probably won’t last much longer, but I hope it does.

As I think about it, the metaphor of walking together about sums up how my husband Jay and I try to foster a culture of encounter within our family. Pope Francis’ latest exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, affirms the role of the family—the domestic church—as a “vital cell in the transformation of the world” (AL 324). To be relevant in the world, the road must be made by walking. Remarks like “they grow up so fast” may sound cliché but with two of our three children in middle school beginning this fall, we realize how quickly time passes and just how small a window we parents have to help form our children into reconcilers, rebuilders, and restorers in God’s world.



Children is that each one knows they are loved by God—the love and acceptance they find at home. We hope to extend that love to others.

Maybe with God’s grace and their discerning hearts, they will even desire to discover what call God has placed uniquely on their hearts.

We see our primary role in parenting of our children as encouraging Jacob, Matthew, and Sarah to engage the world around them—confronting injustice, witnessing hope in action, experiencing joy, asking for forgiveness, displaying compassion, showing empathy, and loving even in the midst of anger or fear.

We have found that ordinary everyday life presents our family with invitations to foster a culture of encounter. For our little Murphy domestic church this means living inside the city where our neighbors, classmates and colleagues are diverse. When Jacob comes home from school asking why so many classmates rely on free and reduced-price meals, we can talk about the dignity of the human person. When Sarah attends PTA meetings by our side, she sees her community coming together for the common good. When Matthew’s best buddies in school are from different religious and ethnic backgrounds, our family is enriched by authentic solidarity.

For our family, fostering a culture of encounter means watching the nightly news together and discussing what we see. During the non-stop campaign coverage for this year’s elections, this means talking about what the candidates stand for and exploring what our faith has to say about the topics debated. One of the hardest things to explain is that while neither political party shares all of our Catholic values, we cannot simply retreat from political life and its respective duties.

Admittedly, this kind of parenting isn’t for everyone. From where we sit, the road to a culture of encounter is made by walking. Pope Francis put it best in the last few



lled to keep striving toward something  
Let us make this journey as families, let us  
(p. 325)

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