In your hectic life, don’t insulate yourself from faith

There exist some people who have taken upon themselves a kind of way of living they call the “Benedict Option.”

Inspired and fascinated by the example of the sixth-century monk Benedict of Nursia, Italy, these people seek to live protected from the hostile and rather faithless culture around them.

St. Benedict, founder of the great Benedictine Order of men and women who established the famous abbey of Monte Casino between Rome and Naples, was convinced it was impossible to live and keep alive the flame of Catholic and Christian faith in the culture of the Roman Empire.

So, living separate from and relying on each other and their own personal faith — in addition to the sacramental life of the church — those of the “Benedict Option” struggle to live in what is a post-Christian America.

Some would say that most things about our American culture seem to conspire to put down or eliminate things such as faith in God, the sanctity of family life and the sacredness of all life, the value of communities of faith, churches and worship itself.

Some would say the only way forward is to turn inward and be removed from the modern culture.

Well, that approach isn’t really possible, even recognizing that we do struggle to practice our Catholic ways surrounded by so many forces that seek to weaken us. The best way is the tried-and-true way: to value faith, family and weekend community worship so much that it takes a more significant place than other things in the complex and busy lives we lead.

Baptism, First Holy Communion, blessed marriages always invite the fuller and faithful practice of what it means to be a Catholic person or family — it can happen without the radical approach of the “Benedict Option.”

For many years, parents and their children having the motto, “Where there's a will there's a way,” have practiced very satisfying and fruitful lives within the household of our faith. The pull of sports, home entertainment, working, a high-tech secular culture is extremely powerful.

In addition, the temptation to give in to a kind of attitude of not making commitments to formal religion is an unfortunate attitude these days. It always comes down to making priorities and sorting out what is essential for a good, healthy and holy life. It doesn’t involve removing yourself from the world around you. It does demand being committed to the treasure of Catholic faith and life.

CELEBRATING THE SAINTS

St. Damien of Molokai
Feast Day May 10
The man who would become St. Damien of Molokai was born in rural Belgium on Jan. 3, 1840. His name was Jozef De Veuster, and he was the youngest of seven children.

Growing up on a farm, Jozef was prepared to take over for his family, but he did not want the responsibility. Instead, he wanted to follow his older brother and two sisters who took religious vows.

The brothers worried that Damien was too uneducated to become a priest, although he was not considered unintelligent. Damien demonstrated his ability by quickly learning Latin from his brother. He also was devoted in prayer, Damien prayed each day before an icon of St. Francis Xavier to be sent on a mission.

In 1866, Hawaii established a leper colony on the Kalaupapa Peninsula. Father Damien realized the people needed leadership, so he provided it. He asked people to come together to build houses and schools and eventually the parish church, St. Philomena. One of the people who help Father Damien was Mother Marianne Cope of Utica, now St. Marianne.

The sick were cared for and the dead buried. Order and routine made the colony livable. Father Damien personally provided much of the care the people needed.

After 16 years in the colony, Father Damien succumbed to leprosy on April 15, 1889. He was first buried nearby, and then his remains were transferred to Belgium in 1936. His right hand was returned to Hawaii in 1995 to be reburied in his original grave at Molokai.

Eventually, his religious brothers agreed to send him and have him ordained.

Damien arrived in Hawaii in March 1864, and was ordained as a priest on the island of Hawaii two months later. For nine years, he worked on the island as a priest, leading an important, yet undistinguished life.

Source: catholic.org
Parents, parish play major roles in faith formation of children

By FRAN PERRITANO


Choose whatever word you like and it describes what should be the relationship between the parish and parents in the religious guidance of their children in growing in the Catholic faith.

Teaching children about their faith is not just dropping them off for a one-hour Faith Formation class on a Sunday morning, picking them up and forgetting about it until the next Sunday. Just as those who teach your children for that one hour on Sunday morning have a responsibility, parents and guardians have an even greater role to play.

“The parents’ role is a very important one,” said Terri Panuccio, elementary school Faith Formation coordinator at Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament for the last seven years. “As they are told at their child’s baptism, they are the first teachers of our faith. It is up to them to lay a solid foundation for their children and show them, by their example, that God has to take priority in their lives. We are here to help and encourage them along their faith journey.”

And sometimes, that means difficult choices must be made by parents in choosing what is important.

Terri said her biggest challenges are “competing with sports like football, hockey, dance and cheerleading.”

“While sports and extracurricular activities are important for the children, that is not what gets them through life,” she said. “It is God and faith that will help them through whatever obstacles they will face in their lives. I think it would be great if parents got together with athletic directors and coaches to let them know there is a conflict so they could perhaps schedule games at a time that doesn’t conflict with religious education classes.”

Chris Vella is the father of four young sons, two of whom are in Faith Formation classes. His wife also volunteers as a catechist. Despite their hectic lives raising four children, they know what’s most important.

“First comes first,” Chris said. “You can play sports all week long — practice, games, whatever. Once a week, this comes first.”

Chris and his wife also recognize the importance of raising their children in the religious education and celebrating Mass together.

“The importance is to make sure my boys follow the same traditions we had when we were kids, when our parents were kids and follow the same religious beliefs we have been good to people, be nice, do the right thing,” he said. “And this is helpful on that path to learn the ideas about all of that. I went to Catholic school my entire life I learned this in school every day for 13 years. One hour a week isn’t really enough but something for these kids beyond teaching at home.”

Mike Bova has two grandsons in first grade.

“Mike Bova has two grandsons in first grade. He also stresses the importance of parent — and grandparent — involvement in sharing their faith, working in tandem with the Faith Formation program and, of course, going to Mass with the children and grandchildren.

“They have to get a base,” he said. “Just like elementary school, you have to start in kindergarten and go on through. We look at this as their base training outside the home.”

It doesn’t stop there.

“The responsibility is to not only get them here to class but also to discuss it outside the classroom so they understand why they’re here,” Mike said. “The one thing we like to do is we go to early Mass and bring the boys with us. Their mother comes and therefore they get to church and then it follows through into religion and there’s a tie-in there.

“Now, a lot of times the kids have conflicts. I think we do the kids an injustice if we pull up to the door, drop them off and drive away and come back in 45 minutes.”

Terri said there are 113 children in the elementary program, which has risen from recent years. One other major problem she sees is that children are sent to Faith Formation to receive their First Communion and then disappear until it’s time for Confirmation. After that, they vanish again.

“I think we have a lost generation and one that questions everything, which I’m not saying is a bad thing, but when we were younger, we didn’t need any kind of proof,” she said. “We followed the example of our parents and had a blind faith like they did, never really questioning, just doing. I believe the tides are changing and I am now seeing a generation of parents whose faith is important to them.”

Despite the conflicts of daily life, Terri is very optimistic and maintains a positive attitude.

“Being able to share my faith and love of Christ with so many wonderful children and families has truly been a blessing,” she said. “Because the Eucharist is so important to me, I especially love that I’ve played a role in so many children receiving their First Communion. ... I really don’t think any church in our diocese has liturgies as beautiful and meaningful as we do. We are so blessed to be a part of such a loving and warm worshipping faith community.”

View more photos on page 8 and at www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com/faith-formation-2017
A CONVERSATION WITH ... JACKIE THIBAULT

She’s living life on her terms

To say that Jackie Thibault is a social being is an understatement. She loves to be with people so much that she basically runs two bowling leagues, works at Utica Comets games, is on the Social Committee in our parish, volunteers at the parish festival and helps take care of her grandchildren, including taking them to hockey and soccer games. She continues to do all that despite her battle with cancer.

You’ve lived in Utica your whole life — and on the same street. What do you like about the area?

East Utica was my comfort zone. My school, church and where I shopped were all in the area or close by. Neighbors are friendly and family oriented.

Lots of young people can’t wait to leave the area. What reason would you give them to stick around?

There is so much to do on any given weekend in the surrounding area — plays, concerts, fundraisers, sporting events, and food and beverage tastings. We have so many things and they are more personal because you most always see someone you know. More money for fancy jobs does not always mean happiness. Comfortable income, family and friends are more important.

You are a secretary/treasurer for a 72-member co-ed bowling league and an 18-member ladies league. That seems like a lot of work.

I have been a league secretary for over 30 years. I like being with people and don’t mind the paperwork. I like to encourage all bowlers that it is not winning games but having fun and being with other people. My philosophy about bowling is “it’s cheaper than therapy.” Oh, and I get to be in charge.

You’ve been a bowler most of your life. How did you get into the sport?

My parents bowled at the Madison on Kossuth Avenue. I would go with them every week to watch. They always had fun and time to visit with friends and family. I started bowling in high school through the CYO program on Sunday mornings with my friend Alice Mary (Gerace) Zane. I then joined a women’s league that my mother was on. Haven’t stopped since.

As a grandparent, you keep busy with youth hockey, soccer games and Learn to Skate programs. Does it seem like your reliving your early years as parents?

Definitely, only I’m not the one doing team snacks or washing uniforms. It’s fun to watch the games and it gets you outside.

What are your thoughts about being a grandparent?

I love it. You can teach, guide, talk, laugh and then send them home.

You have been raised at Mount Carmel, as you say from “Day One.” What is it about this parish that you love so much?

The closeness of everyone. We are a solid family group. Everyone is always encouraging and supportive. We have different strengths, some more into spiritual and others into community life.

You also volunteer a lot — at the festival, at Mass and on the Social Committee. Why do you do it?

First, for the love of my church. If we don’t all do something, eventually nothing will happen. Second, I love to socialize and be with good, happy people. Volunteering to be on committees and such helps take you away from everyday routine and problems.

What reason would you give a newcomer to become part of our parish family?

We are a very versatile group who has a strong faith in God, family, friends. We enjoy our Mass services and the celebration of our holidays, and don’t forget the socializing.

You recently have been undergoing treatment for cancer. When you were first told about it, what went through your mind?

Youth hockey, soccer games and Learn to Skate programs. Does it seem like your reliving your early years as parents?

Once you confronted your diagnosis, how have you summoned the strength to carry on?

My oncologist was very informative and spoke in clear English words. It was not as bad as first thought and he was very confident that treatments would work. The support from family, church family, bowlers and co-workers at the Aud has been truly unending.

Some people would ask God, “Why me?” What was your response?

I thought about that, but held my faith and I talk to God every night. I believe that He only gives you what will make you stronger.

What has this setback taught you about?

Don’t procrastinate. Do what makes you happy when you want to do it. Think positive and be surprised and overwhelmed at the support you get from all those around you. My husband has truly been my rock.
He’s a natural-born leader

Anthony sets standard for others to follow

There is the old axiom that “there is no I in TEAM.” Anthony Ruggiero is a prime example of that. He loves sports, especially baseball, and works his hardest to make sure the TEAM comes first. He carries that on in life by volunteering and trying to make people’s lives just a little bit better.

You love sports, especially baseball and soccer. Where did you get this love of sports?

At a young age I was taught how to swing a plastic bat by hitting a ball off a tee. I loved to be outside, so my parents and I used this time to have fun with this newly acquired game for me. Soccer was a sport in which it balances off with baseball. I am a goalie, and since I am an outfielder for baseball, they both are very similar: I can use my hands, practice my dives and enjoy the competitive experience in another way. And now, 14 years later, I’m still swinging the bat with a ball still on the tee. I like to remind myself of this, as my love for the game increases every day.

Baseball is your favorite. Why?

From a young age it always captivated me on how fair it was. The quote I picked (see bio) explains this beautifully, by the sense that there is no mercy rule, and you cannot sit on a big lead. Every pitch can decide a game. Even if you are up by 20 runs, there is still an opportunity for you to regroup and change the momentum. Another reason is the announcing. You can follow a team, talk about all the history and enjoy yourself in a beautiful game while providing commentary that complements it perfectly.

What has playing sports taught you?

Playing sports has taught me how to manage my time with school and activities and how to be a team guy instead of a “me” guy.

Your mom says you’ll do anything you can for your team, making sure everyone stays in the game and being a real team player. Those are signs of leader. Do you consider yourself a leader?

I would consider myself a leader because I might not be the best player on some teams, but people look up to me in the sense of my heart. If we are losing by 20 runs or winning by 20 runs, I never get lazy. I still try my best to be the best I can, I do not get an attitude and throw my gear, I still run on and off the field, and I still always cheer on my teammates. I will try to work harder than anyone else so I know that I did something right that day, hoping that people follow trying to beat my effort, so it improves the team as a whole.

You also participate in many activities at school. Why do you do it and what do you get out of it?

ANTHONY RUGGIERO
Age: 16.
School: Whitesboro High School.
Family: My parents and a twin brother.
Things you like to do: Play baseball, soccer and just enjoy being outside.
Favorite movie: “The Benchwarmers”
Favorite TV show: “I Love Lucy”
Favorite musician: Frank Sinatra.
Favorite quote: “You can’t sit on a lead and run a few plays into the line and just kill the clock. You’ve got to throw the ball over the plate and give the other man his chance. That’s why baseball is the greatest game of them all.” — Earl Weaver

Personally, I like having a full schedule. If I have down time, I might not use it as effectively as I should, so being more active helps me keep my focus. Some of the clubs at school keep me interested in topics going around the world, so I can see what could affect me in the near future. Another reason is for college, since they could help my application to try and get into the best college I can.

In addition to being an athlete, you love music. You’ve been playing percussion instruments since fourth grade and are a drummer in school and in church. What does music mean to you?

Music is a big stress reliever for me. Maybe I had a bad day, made an error in game, or just was not 100 percent. This is the time for my emotions to come out, so that the lyrics I listen to usually are based on my mood. Music really helps so that my actions are never phased on the field or in school, but when the time comes to be alone and reflect on my day, that can be let out so that it won’t affect me the next day and I can be the best I can be again.

Why is playing drums in the parish music ministry meaningful to you?

Playing in church is honestly more fun than playing in school band because it is a small group who is close and knows each other, and we play great music. Everyone makes you feel welcome, and we welcome people into a deeper understanding of faith by the music we play for the parishioners.

What have you learned from volunteering?

I have learned the gift of giving. I don’t expect anything in return, but when I get a “thank you” or “great job,” it helps me know that I am doing something right. And I like to try and make conversation for a few quick seconds. Maybe that person has not had the best of days, and someone interested in what they do or how they are might bring them to a better mood.

Last summer, you traveled with other teens to South Bend, Indiana, for Notre Dame University Vision. With your sports background, how cool was it to be at the home of the Fighting Irish?

It was an awesome experience. It was one of the best things and trips I have been on. From the sports side, I still practiced baseball by playing wall ball, but soccer captivated me there. There were so many people who loved it, and since there was a soccer ball, every day, in pouring rain or beautiful sunshine, we played for about an hour in a game. Just played to have fun, and by the last day, almost all the teens were watching our game, as it brought everyone together. With the faith, it brought...
Educating our children is Job 1

Jean-Baptiste de La Salle considered the founder of the first Catholic schools

This issue of “More Good News” is being dedicated to the Faith Formation programs at St. Mary of Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament.

Religious instruction is an important responsibility of the church in that it fosters the perpetuation of the faith and the good works that the church does among its flock and in the world at large. One need only consider the multiple agencies sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church and their impact on the poor, disadvantaged and distressed throughout the globe.

Consider agencies such as Food for the Poor and Cross Catholic Outreach that build homes for, feed and give medical services to the poor. Catholic Relief Services has established camps that give shelter and sustenance to the thousands of refugees who escaped the war-torn areas of the Middle East, South East Asia, Africa and more.

We as Americans are privileged to live in a society where even on our worst days, the majority of us don’t have to worry about our homes being shelled by missiles, unspeakable famines and conscription of children to fight in wars that they are incapable of understanding.

We do, however, have the obligation to educate our children on how blessed they are and how they have a moral duty to do what is possible to raise those up who do not enjoy the same comfortable lives, whether it in our own community or in a distant country.

That is one of the reasons why I have been involved in education for 43 years. I hold in great esteem those who have gone before me and my colleagues to help enlighten the children of our world.

One such saint was Jean-Baptiste de La Salle (1651-1719), considered the founder of the first Catholic schools. He is remembered by the church at Lasallian institutions and elsewhere on May 15 as patron of teachers of youth, school principals and other educators.

Jean-Baptiste de La Salle died in 1719, three weeks before his 68th birthday. He was canonized on May 24, 1900, by Pope Leo XIII.

Anthony
Continued from Page 5

A.J. VALENTINI

Educating our children is Job 1

Jean-Baptiste de La Salle (1651-1719) is remembered by the church at Lasallian institutions and elsewhere on May 15 as patron of teachers of youth, school principals and other educators.

Jean-Baptiste de La Salle is remembered by the church at Lasallian institutions and elsewhere on May 15 as patron of teachers of youth, school principals and other educators.

If there is one thing you would want people to know about you, what would it be?
It would be that under my competitiveness, eager for excitement and love for the game, I have a strong side of faith and trying to bring good not only in my life, but in the lives of others.
On Sunday, April 30, children received their First Holy Communion at Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament. It’s a special time for family, friends and parishioners as these children welcome Jesus into their hearts and souls for the first time as the body and blood of Christ.

**LAYLA CARBONE**  
Age: 8  
Father: James III  
Mother: Amy  
Sister: Talia  
If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? To have a baby brother.

**SANTO CIMBALO**  
Age: 8  
Father: Santo  
Mother: Brooke  
Sister: Sofia  
Brother: Sam  
If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? World peace.

**SOFIA CIMBALO**  
Age: 7  
Father: Santo  
Mother: Brooke  
Brothers: Santo and Sam  
If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? For everybody to get along.

**MIA DUMOULIN**  
Age: 8  
Father: Dan  
Mother: Carla  
Sisters: Sophia and Antonia  
Brothers: Sebastian and Marco  
If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? How do pets die?

**DAVID FANELLI**  
Age: 7  
Father: David  
Mother: Maria  
Sisters: Gianna and Giulia  
If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? Why don’t you have a body?

**GABRIELLE GRAZIADEI**  
Age: 8  
Father: Carlo  
Mother: Donna  
Sister: Isabella  
If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? Do you always forgive my sins?

**FEBRUARY PETER HTOO**  
Age: 8  
Father: Ta Lu  
Mother: San Aye  
Brother: December Luke  
If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? How does some people have power?

**PATRICIA JA SANG RA**  
Age: 8  
Father: Brang Seng  
Mother: Maran H. Lahtem  
Sister: Nova  
Brother: Dominick  
If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? How does the grass grow without water?

**LENNON KNOOP**  
Age: 7  
Father: Shannan  
Mother: Tennille  
Brothers: Sebastian and Hudson  
If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? How does it feel to be God?

**JAMES LEHMAN**  
Age: 8  
Father: Richard  
Mother: Kimberly  
Sisters: Joline and Emma  
Brother: Daniel  
If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? How do you listen to everyone’s prayers?

**KIERNAN SULLIVAN**  
Age: 8  
Father: Dan  
Mother: Aubre  
Sister: Addie  
If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? What do you look like?

**CONNOR THIBAULT**  
Age: 8  
Mother: Cathy  
Sister: Bella & Jessie  
Brother: Vincent & Hayden  
If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? I wish my family lives long.

**DANIEL TREVISANI**  
Age: 7  
Father: Daniel  
Mother: Carrie  
Brothers: Colin, Carson and Marco  
If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? How are sins forgiven?
Learning about their faith

View more photos at www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com/faith-formation-2017