

Fr. Doug asked our parishioner, Amy Lynch, to give everyone some advice about homeschooling which she has been doing herself for 10 years:

We have all been facing great challenges over the past several weeks. Through these trying times, we are called to help each other, to serve our neighbors, and help each other to carry these burdens. Many of you are faced with the challenge of schooling your children from home.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (paragraph 2223), "Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children." This doesn't mean that parents cannot send their children to school, but that parents are to ensure that their children receive a proper education. Perhaps we can use this time of quarantine to solidify our responsibility to the education of our children. This can be a time to reconnect and bond with our children. But where do you start?

As the mother of a homeschooling family for the past 10 years, I hope I can share a little bit of wisdom with those of you who are suddenly faced with home educating your children. Even though you're at home and things can be more relaxed than at school, we have found that everyone works better if we stick to a routine, which includes getting up at the same time each morning and getting dressed out of our pajamas (including you, the teacher). We don't necessarily keep a strict schedule, but we keep a routine with set times for meals, snacks, and breaks.

We start our day with the hardest subject (math for most of my kids), and then I let them choose what to work on from there. We save an activity such as art, music, or geography for after lunch. It can be difficult to regroup after lunch, but if we have something that the kids are looking forward to working on, it's easier not to let the afternoon slip by. There are many great websites that you can use as extra resources. We like www.khanacademy.org. They have lessons and videos on just about every subject!

Take some time to turn everyday activities into learning activities. Teach children fractions while baking using measuring cups for your ingredients, read a fun book out loud together, check the weather or news together and discuss what you find out. Learn something new about the animals or plants in your backyard. You don't have to know everything, as long as you can help your child find the answer.

In the Gospel (Matt 19:13), "Jesus said, 'Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.'" At this time when our churches are closed, we can use this trial to build the "domestic church" in our homes. Pick a tradition that you can incorporate into your day such as reciting the Angelus Prayer at noon, reading about the saint's feast day each day (www.franciscanmedia.org/sod-calendar/), saying the rosary together as a family, or spending a little time reading from the Bible. A great website for crafts and ideas to celebrate the liturgical year is www.catholicicing.com.

Let us continue to carry each other in prayer as we take this pause from our normal daily life. We can reap from this slow down as we reconnect with our families and grow together.