

Back in 1991 when I had been accepted into seminary, but before I entered, my sister-in-law Karin, who was a history teacher at Newport High School, asked me to come into her high school class and answer her students' questions about Catholicism. I said yes, but I was nervous as soon as I said it. I was supposed to be able to do that, right? But I was scared they would ask hostile questions, or questions that I couldn't answer. So, you know what happened? Just before I was supposed to come to her class, (I forget whether it was the day before or even the same day) I called, and I bailed out. I'm still embarrassed. Not one of my finer moments. Why did I do it? Because I was afraid and felt ignorant. Simple as that.

I tell you that story because I want you to know that when I talk about our need to help others grow in the faith, I know that many of you are also scared to do it – for the same reasons I was. I know what that's like. I don't preach evangelization from a position of moral

superiority. But it's still so important to do that I can't accept, and leave you in, that fear.

When we hear this Gospel we might think Jesus' prophecy that Peter would soon be "catching men" refers only to Peter as the future first Pope. And that is a natural fit, we think. That's what Popes are meant to do – that's what Jesus equips them to do, right? But that's a fundamental mistake. We should hear Jesus' words as directed to each of us. It's not just Popes, bishops, priests. We are all as sinful and doubtful as Peter, but we're also all called to bring people to Jesus.

Evangelization is one of the four pillars of our parish, and lately I have been thinking about evangelization as it takes place within our families. Today I want to reach out especially to parents and grandparents on that score. You have a particular responsibility to help the children God has given you to know and follow Jesus.

But you parents are in a tough place – and I think many of you feel it. You know deep down that it's important to help your kids know God,

but you don't know how, and maybe you're actually scared to try – like me at the thought of that high school class. The truth is that many of you haven't been evangelized or well catechized yourselves. You don't have answers and knowledge – and that wasn't your fault. We the leaders of the Church have often let you down.

But that's the situation. And as a result, many parents want to outsource the religious formation and education of their children to others, assuming that the school or the faith formation program would do it for them. But if that's your thinking, just ask yourself, "How well did that work in my own spiritual life?" We need to stop that idea of outsourcing formation in the faith because formation of children in the faith has few results if the parents themselves aren't seriously living as Catholic Christians.

The fact is that parents are the irreplaceable people in creating a new generation of Catholics. And the role of the Fathers is especially crucial. I think of all the efforts you make to help your kids succeed in

life. But remember, the greatest success parents can experience is to facilitate a true relationship between their children and Jesus. That's why He helped you create your children. We're talking about eternal life and happiness. It's the greatest gift imaginable.

So why don't you do that? For the same reasons I chickened out back in 1991: Fear of failure; Fear of rejection; fear of hard work; fear of the cross. I'm not chastising you because I know all about those fears from personal experience.

But what's the remedy to the fears? Get to know and imitate Jesus more. Here are some disciplines towards making that a reality. First, go to mass every Sunday Eucharist and pray 20 minutes each day, and once a week in front of the tabernacle. You knew I was going to say that, right? Second, make decisions about activities and finances according to the mind of Jesus, not your neighbors. Third, let there be talk about Jesus and the faith between spouses and parents and kids. Don't let your embarrassment stop you. Fourth, create and enjoy

celebrations from your culture and the greater Catholic Tradition. The faith is a joyful thing when lived right. Fifth, engage in some service or ministry as a family. Last, but not least, make sacrificial love the goal in all your family relationships. Seek to imitate Christ's laying down of His life to your spouse, parent, child. These aren't easy at first, but they're necessary if you are to follow Jesus' call to bring people to Him.

Just like Peter at first, or like me thinking about that intimidating high school class, you may think that you can't do what Jesus tells you to do. Remember how Peter reacted when Jesus told him to let down his nets for a catch? "We've worked hard all night!" I bet that's how many of you feel when I mention you evangelizing your families. "It's impossible! I can't do it. I don't know how. It won't work. I don't even know what I'm talking about. How can I talk to my kids?"

Listen, many teachers in their first year of teaching are only one chapter ahead of their students. That might be you regarding trying to bring Jesus to your children. So what? Take responsibility for your own

faith formation. Grow in God. You can't give what you don't have. That is why we offer so many opportunities here at Holy Family. Make use of what we offer. Because the next generation can't become disciples until this generation has first come to know Jesus.

When I arrived in Port Angeles for my first pastorate, I was soon asked by a teacher from Port Angeles High School, who was a parishioner, to come talk to his class and answer their questions about Catholicism! Déjà vu, right? But this time I was ready. I had learned and grown spiritually since my sister-in-law had asked me to do the very same thing. This time it was scary, but in a good way – as when you're about to take the field for the big game. I knew I could do this now. So can you. Parents, grandparents, your family needs you to step up and follow Christ, so they can follow you. Drop the nets and get going!