

## **Now is the Time to Bring Your Children to the Church**

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I recently read an editorial in Newsweek Magazine in which the author was reflecting on recent allegations that leadership of the Catholic Church, including Pope Benedict, then Bishop Ratzinger, was involved in the decision to allow a priest who had abused hundreds of children to continue in his vocation. At the end of the editorial she quoted a Catholic friend of hers who asked the question, “But how can I continue to send my kid to church?” The author called this “a heart-wrenching question to which there is no answer.”

**There is an answer.** There is no better time than the present to bring your child to the Church. As a Clinical Child Psychologist, I began working for the Roman Catholic Church in the midst of the child sexual abuse scandal. As a Catholic, I had been active in my parish, but my professional experience had been in mental health centers, public and private hospitals, and private practice. I had been concerned about the welfare of children for years, working or volunteering in domestic violence programs and with abused children awaiting placement in foster care. I began working for the Church because I see the coming to light of sexual abuse by clergy in our Church as opening our eyes (and hopefully the eyes of the world) to the value of children as seen by Christ Himself. There are hundreds more like me; concerned adults in parishes, schools, and dioceses across the country and throughout our world; who dedicate themselves to the mission of not only protecting children, but promoting right relationships and the dignity and respect of all people. As Catholics we are aware that there is, has been, and will be evil in our midst, as we are in the midst of human beings. We aren't Catholic because we follow human beings, but because we are followers of Christ, following Him in the line of His apostles.

**In the history of the world, there may be no better time than the present to bring your child to church.** From the beginning of documented history, children have been viewed variously as livestock, property, and inexpensive labor. Until 1874 there were no child welfare laws (the first child welfare case was addressed through laws prohibiting the inhumane treatment of animals). We have come a long way in correcting our views of children, implementing child labor laws, mandating the reporting of child abuse (beginning only as recently as 1974 in most states). As parents we not only recognize, but deeply feel the significance of our children; but make no mistake, as a society we continue to miss the mark in terms treating our children with dignity. As a society we continue to stress parental rights and rights of an adult to chose to terminate life before birth, and we continue to exploit children for our own gain (for example, the ever more increasing use of sexualized images of children and targeting children in our media and advertising). Even when we promote resources and programs for children as a society, we do so under the campaign that children are “our future” – not that they are deserving of their own accord. The Church has addressed evil in Her midst over and over again throughout Her history, each time bringing to light the Gospel message of Christ. Today the light shines for our children.