

Archbishop O'Brien praises home-school families, stresses parents' role in teaching the faith

Kate Corzine recently became pregnant with her fourth child. Daughter Grayson, Corzine's eldest, was about to enter first grade after attending a private school last year. Corzine and her husband decided to educate her children through home schooling.

Thus far, the parishioner of St. Agnes, Catonsville, gives the home-school experience a grade of A-plus.

"I love having my kids at home," Corzine said. "The more time I get to spend with them, the better."

Corzine's family was one of many that filled The Lady Chapel inside The Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland for a Sept. 7 Mass celebrated by Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien, apostolic administrator of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. During his four-year tenure, the archbishop has often celebrated a Mass with homeschool families.

Archbishop O'Brien said during his homily, and later reiterated to The Catholic Review, that every school seeks to impart knowledge and truth. But, what happens with that knowledge and truth, is important as well.

"We can use what we consider knowledge and truth for destruction or for building up - for good or for evil," he said. Citing Pope Benedict XVI, he added, "We seek the truth to do the good."

During his homily and again in his interview with The Catholic Review, the archbishop praised the extensive sacrifices being made by Catholic school families and teachers.

He said families who choose to home-school are a reminder to Catholic parents of children in Catholic and other schools, that "theirs is the principle obligation for

forming the consciences of their youngsters in Gospel values.”

Archbishop O’Brien also said, “In a time when our government schools are forming, are dictating, the direction of moral values in many cases, home schooling reminds our public educators in the secular field that the final responsibility belongs to parents.”

He believes his support of home-school families is important.

“Home-school educators are very persevering in their admirable efforts to educate their children at home,” Archbishop O’Brien said. “Sometimes it can be a lonely endeavor and getting together like this with one another, with the encouragement of their archbishop, is a very important contribution to their perseverance.”

At the conclusion of Mass, Archbishop O’Brien said home-school families have become exceedingly important to the church. He praised their engagement in their spiritual and secular communities.

“There’s no greater feeder for the vocations than the home-schoolers,” he said. “I’ve seen this over and over again across the country. It’s in home schooling that you have every opportunity to share the values that really matter: respect for one another, respect for the church and the sacraments and the ability to sacrifice for others and to see how best we can serve.”

Archbishop O’Brien encouraged families to further talk about vocations with their children.

Miki Hill, who has nine children who have been homeschooled during the last 30 years, said Archbishop O’Brien and Cardinal William H. Keeler, archbishop emeritus of Baltimore, have provided key support for families like hers.

Hill, who is working on her theology master’s degree, said remaining part of larger networks and communities is important for overall home schooling success. She said home schooling should work in conjunction with the church’s overall goals.

“I think Christ always spoke to us in community,” Hill said. “I think community is hugely important.”

Her 15-year-old daughter, Madeline, said that the Hills take part in co-ops and sports leagues that allow for socialization beyond school and parish life. She said her home instruction comes with in-depth Catholic instruction that includes field trips to religious sites, reading about saints and praying the rosary together.

“When I’m younger, I only rely on my mother for teaching, so I know what I’m learning is really Catholic,” said. “Our religion classes are part of our lives.”

To hear audio from the Hill family about their homeschool experiences, visit <https://CatholicReview.org/palmerblog>.