

# Train up a child in the way he should go

I'm always proud of my little brother, Anthony. At 11 years old and in fifth grade, he has shown family and friends that he is an honest kid who is smart and loves to have fun, eat good veggies and share with others.

Who could ask for a better brother than that? He's off to a good start!

He never ceases to surprise us. Which brings me to this week's event that I can only describe as pure genius and comedy at the same time.

Last week our aunt had a late doctor's appointment and I was getting things done downtown. Anticipating an empty house, Anthony took his house key with him to school.

I got home about 15 minutes after he did to find out the following: he called our mother to let her know he was home, did his homework, and proceeded to cook dinner. It was one of those box meals but I was just so impressed. Not surprised, but impressed. I asked Anthony why he chose that particular meal. He answered, "Because I wanted to make something everyone can share." What a kid!

I'm sure we all know kids like that. The ones who aren't caught up in themselves and astound us with their intellect and ability to see the world in an innocent and unique way. This is one of the reasons I love working with kids: they have so much potential and so much to offer. They also serve as a great reminder that future generations need not be lost in a sea of technology and social ills.

If we commit ourselves as a society and as Catholics, we can help these children stay on the straight and narrow path and be there to comfort and support them when they have trouble.

Although I'm not a parent, I take seriously the interactions I have with the children I

encounter throughout the day: on the bus, at my brother's school, at church, in the store, etc. These are all opportunities to be the face of Christ for kids and their family, regardless of their faith.

As Catholics, we are used to living our faith out through many works of social justice. Some religious communities, such as the Salesian Sisters, make youth their only work. What could we accomplish in the name of God if we take the time to invest in our youth? Take the time to share our knowledge and talents? I'm excited to see as I know I will have something in my community for youth (I'm just not sure what yet).

So, how can you help? Start with the kids you see every day. Ask them about things going on in their lives. Really listen to them and give them the opportunity to share what they really want to talk about. You'd be surprised at what you can hear and what a difference it makes in the life of a child. You can even start with the religious education program at your parish, college ministry, or young adult ministry.

My brother and I have lots of conversations about all kinds of things. We talk sports, TV, movies, school, anything. I ask questions but he appreciates being able to talk about what he likes. The result? A kid who is usually pretty honest with me and sees me model Christ in my compassion toward other people (and Mr. Cat, the stray neighborhood cat).

I can only hope and pray that he continues to be an even better person, but I'm not his mother. I look forward to teaching kids and talking with them. What can you do to help bring the next generation closer to Christ? To help them see the world is not hopeless and that they have worth and are truly loved? Consider that your task for the week!



*(Photo by Wendy Stewart)*