



Preparing for this school year looks totally different than last year. Besides buying supplies, shoes and other necessities, parents must watch for any signs of illness, sanitize everything that goes to or comes home from school and keep a stack of clean masks at the ready!

Are you tempted to throw your hands in the air and scream *“I can’t do this”* or *“I don’t want to do this”* or *“I won’t do this”*? Most parents are, even though they know that there is no point to complaining about the added responsibilities. Everyone understands that, if children are going to go to class this year, there is a need to hunker down, steel one’s resolve and trudge forward together. So, chin up, Moms and Dads. It is time to face this pandemic head on!



The team at **Teaching the Way of Love** wants to help reduce your anxieties about the coming school year. They have created a strategy that creates a peaceful and calm home-front that can withstand nearly every challenge that you might encounter. It is called the circle of virtue plan. To understand what this is, let’s look at the meaning of the word virtue.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines a virtue as a habit or firm disposition to do the good. It is an excellent quality that readies you to choose what is right, at the right time, in the right way, for the right reasons with ease and pleasure. A circle of virtue within the home, then, is the consistent practice of habits that connects family members together so that they easily choose to do what is right, at the right time, in the right way, for the right reasons.

There are four main merits that provide the foundation for a family’s circle of virtue. These are prudence, justice, fortitude and justice. Prudence is the habit to know what is right and to choose it. Justice is the habit to do what is right in the right way. Fortitude is the moral courage to do what is right even when doing so is difficult. And temperance is the virtue of balancing our desires to embrace the full goodness God wants to give us.

These four virtues are the foundation of a “circle of virtue” because each one gives rise to related virtues. And, as you practice and strengthen the related virtues, you strengthen the foundational virtue. For example, family members who actively practice Prudence develop better humility and thoughtfulness. As the family becomes more humble and thoughtful, they strengthen the foundational virtue of Prudence. The resulting benefit is an upward spiral that leads everyone in

the family to choose what is right for the right reason, at the right time, and to do so easily and readily.

Why should you even think about taking the time to develop these habits within your family? Because a circle of virtue increases the happiness in your home by putting everyone on the same footing. Everyone starts from the same premise, “this family rolls in a virtuous way.” This means that everyone buys into the common good of the family unit. Everyone recognizes that they need each other and that they function best as a family when all contribute to the common good before doing what they want to do. In a nutshell, a home built on a circle of virtue dwells together in love as a community of persons.

How to Form a Circle of Virtue Right Now

Forming a circle of virtue in your home begins with a family conversation. Sit down together and talk about the four foundational virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. Once everyone has a basic understanding of these virtues, discuss the following questions.

- How well does our family live these virtues? Do we do them easily and with pleasure or do we have to work hard to bring them to life within our home?
- How easy is it for me as a member of this family to live these virtues with ease and pleasure? Which virtues am I best at living and which take the most effort?
- How can we help each other live these virtues in our home? What do we need from each other to establish a circle of virtue this academic school year?

Here are a few tips that will help you with your discussion and follow-up.

- As each family member answers these questions, another family member should restate what was said. Rephrasing each person’s response gives everyone a second chance to hear what was said. It also helps people attend to the conversation.
- Ask someone to write down the answers given to the last question. Post these responses somewhere in the home where everyone can see them. The goal for the family is to use the responses to support each other within the circle of virtue.
- Pray this prayer together as a family as often as you are able.

***Lord, protect and watch over this family, so that in the strength of your grace its members may practice the Cardinal Virtues, possess the priceless gift of your peace, and, as the Church alive in the home, bear witness in this world to your glory.
We ask this thought Christ our Lord. Amen.***

If you want to form a circle of virtue in your home, become one of our members. Members receive a specific parenting strategy each week to grow in virtue, a monthly video message that gives you confidence to parent with the heart of Christ and participation in live on-line meetings where you can get your parenting questions answered. We would love to guide you to be the first and best educator for your children. To join go to: twl4parents.com/membership.

*This newsletter series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, creators of **Teaching the Way of Love**. **Teaching the Way of Love** is designed to help you become a faithful, joyful and confident parent. Visit www.twl4parents.com for more strategies on how to become the best parent you can be. Consider becoming an annual member of the **Teaching the Way of Love** program. Members receive practical and timely parenting resources. Go to twl4parents.com/membership for more information.*
