

“What a wonderful little book! Quinlan’s insightful and practical reflections will speak to the heart of every parent.”

FR. JAMES MALLON, *Pastor and Author of Divine Renovation: Moving Your Parish from Maintenance to Mission*



“*At Home in the Heart of God* provides encouragement for parents who are rediscovering the Catholic faith in their own lives and learning how to share it with their children.”

JOHN ROBERTO, *Author of Lifelong Faith: Formation for All Ages and Generations*



“There is so much packed into this easy-to-read booklet. The very building blocks of our Catholic faith are here, presented in a way that never felt over my head.”

TINA, *Mom*



“The message is powerful...that the perceived gap between the sacred and the everyday of family living is not nearly as wide as we tend to think.”

LEIF KEHRWALD, *National Speaker, Author, and Pastoral Minister, St. Charles Parish, Portland, OR*



“A must-read for parents who seek heaven for themselves and their kids.”

CARLOS, *Dad*

“A great booklet for parents, full of encouragement, story, and meaningful teaching. This welcoming, “come as you are” booklet connects the importance of learning to walk with the eucharistic Lord and being the parent you want to be. I warmly recommend it as a meaningful, and even life-changing, gift for parents bringing children to the Church to receive Baptism or First Communion.”

SUSAN WINDLEY-DAOUST, *Director of Missionary Discipleship, Diocese of Winona-Rochester*



“If you’re a parent who struggles to get your family to church, or even understand why you should want to, then *At Home in the Heart of God* was written just for you.”

FR. PJ MCMANUS, *Pastor, Christ the King Parish, Des Moines, Iowa*



“I’d like to put this marvelous, touching book into the hands of every Catholic parent!”

BILL HUEBSCH, *Author of Promise and Hope: Pastoral Theology in the Age of Mercy*



“This is authentic to who Tom Quinlan is, expressing his love for God, his family, his Catholic faith, and the Eucharist.”

DENISE UTTER, *Author of Engage Every Family: A Parish Guide to Integrated Faith*



At Home
IN THE
Heart
OF
God



**FAMILY, JESUS,
AND THE EUCHARIST**

TOM QUINLAN



**TWENTY-THIRD
PUBLICATIONS**

twentythirdpublications.com

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Parenthood: Generosity and Meaning.....	3
Incalculable Love.....	6
The Mass: Word and Sacrament Celebrated.....	9
Real Presence: What and Why.....	12
Life as Journey.....	16
Family Road Trip.....	18
Jesus in Our Midst.....	20
Transformed for Mission.....	22
The Human Heart.....	25
Why Bother.....	29
Leaning into <i>More</i>	33
Bringing It Home: Catholic Practicalities.....	36



INTRODUCTION

I AM A CATHOLIC AND A PARENT. That means I believe that Jesus is God. And that I never get to watch a ballgame uninterrupted. Or have the house clean for very long. Being a parent means pouring yourself out in love *constantly*.

This short book tries to show the connection between your love as a mom or dad and God's love for us. As Catholic Christians, we see Jesus as the proof of just how intensely God loves us. We recognize this particularly in Jesus' journey through suffering and death to Resurrection and the gift he left us at the Last Supper, the Eucharist.

I will share some practical insights from my journey of life, family, and faith. And together, we'll consider the transformative *good news* that Jesus offers us.

Whatever your level of engagement with Catholic faith (including none), I hope this book will make you smile and think and reflect with gratitude. And maybe explore how a eucharistic lifestyle can be a blessing to you, your parenthood, and your family.

Turn to the next page to read more about the special place you have in God's heart...a heart that desires to feed us with the Eucharist for the journey ahead as adults and as parents.



Parenthood

Generosity and Meaning

WILL IT MATTER 100 YEARS FROM NOW?

Much of what we do in our lives won't. Heck, a lot won't matter in five months. But here's one thing I guarantee will matter in 100 years: *parenting*.

In fact, every little thing we do to love and care for our children and help them become their full selves will echo forward, rippling out for all eternity! No pressure now, moms and dads, eh?

As someone who is married with two little boys, I can see it. How every day, Danny and Matt are learning and changing. They are watching Kristi and me and picking up ideas and behaviors from us all the time. These are hugely impactful, formative years. Our boys are becoming, moment to moment, who they will be as adults. If they have children, our parenting now will impact their descendants and the course of history. Even if they don't have children, who they are will make the world a better (or worse) place forever.

Parenting is so meaningful and rewarding. And so exhausting! We continually give without asking the cost. It is a lesson in generosity and humility. Parenting stretches us and teaches us how to be adults ourselves!

Parents are the unsung heroes of society. Videos of you cleaning the kitchen will never go viral. No awards are given for bathing your little one or patiently helping with your kids' homework. The sacrifice required in parenting follows Jesus' example at the Last Supper when he washes the feet of his followers and says that we must live in loving service to others.

Trust me when I share that Kristi and I fall short frequently in our parenting. We miss opportunities. We overreact. I fail

The sacrifice required in parenting follows Jesus' example at the Last Supper when he washes the feet of his followers and says that we must live in loving service to others.

to be as generous as I could be. Kristi might forget to play the long game with the boys at times. I share this to help you avoid the *perfectionism* trap. You fall short, too. And that's okay. Saint Teresa of Calcutta once said, "God does not require that we be successful, only that we be faithful."

Parenting is not about doing everything right all the time. It is about steadfast love. And yes, hopefully succeeding a lot more than we fail...because what we have been called to is really, *really* important. With God's help, our hearts can grow to meet our role and responsibilities.



How do see your parenting role?

As beautiful...impactful...sacrificial...exhausting?



Incalculable Love

YOU KNOW HOW YOU LOOK UPON YOUR CHILD? WITH A LOVE BIGGER THAN YOU THOUGHT POSSIBLE. I'm convinced that's how God looks upon us. Parenting is a window into the mind...and heart...of our God! And it's how parents give children their first inkling of who God is and what unconditional love feels like.

I'll always remember an ordinary midwinter evening. Kristi was putting our toddler, Matthew, to bed. Four-year-old Danny was already in his PJs but hanging out near the

kitchen, where I was cleaning up. A folk song called “Daddy’s Chair” (about a father who died) was playing, and I felt a pull on my heart. Now, I pride myself on being “tough dad” and saying “no” a lot to the boys. Usually, they have to earn their treats. But this time I called Dan into the kitchen and broke off and shared a part of the candy cane I was about to have.

Dan looked up and asked, “What’s this for, Dad?” And I said, “Just because.” He put it in his mouth, smiled at me and trotted up the stairs. My heart nearly burst with joy and

love just then. Be attentive to these kinds of moments. Look for opportunities to give and receive extraordinary grace in the most ordinary of living. These moments abound and God is there!

That evening I was able to reveal for my boy the heart of God, who loves us *just because*. And Dan got a taste of this ultimate truth. We are loved not because of our externals or achievements. We are loved and fed by Jesus simply because we are each God’s beloved one, in whom the divine image is reflected.

Is there anything your children can do to make you stop loving them? Of course not. And so it is with our God. God’s faithfulness and the love I have for my family combine to

Is there anything your children can do to make you stop loving them? Of course not. And so it is with our God.

inspire a deepening posture of gratitude. I have been given so much!

Parenting is the closest we'll come in this life to seeing the world and loving people as God does. It is a holy role, a calling, a *vocation*! To be our best in this calling, we must lean on God's grace for strength and sustenance. And channel, as much as possible, God's full and perfect love for us, embodied in Jesus, into our children and into the world.



*Spend some time observing your children
and reflecting on your love for them.*

*Ponder how God's love for you
is even greater.*



The Mass

Word and Sacrament Celebrated

JESUS IS THE GREAT GIFT FROM GOD, THE FATHER. The Eucharist is Jesus' great gift of himself. And the Mass is where the Eucharist becomes available to us. Let us begin our journey into the mystery of divine love for us and our children, revealed in Jesus and the Eucharist.

The Gospel of Luke was written about 80 AD. Many Scripture scholars consider it to be the most refined of the four Gospel accounts. It portrays Jesus' ministry as primarily being about two things: *healing* and *feeding*.

The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35) is a rich, multilayered narrative of Jesus coming upon and walking with two despondent disciples who are leaving Jerusalem after the execution of their Lord. (Consider reading it right now.) In the story, Jesus walks with them, unrecognized. Then light begins to overtake their darkness as Jesus explains the meaning of the Scriptures relating to him.

When they reach their destination for the evening, the disciples beg him to stay. Jesus takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them to eat. (Luke uses this fourfold formula to convey, as in the Last Supper, that this meal *is* Eucharist.) Simultaneously, they recognize Jesus and he vanishes from their midst. And they feel *compelled* to return to Jerusalem immediately to share the uncontainable good news that Jesus is alive and “how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread” (Luke 24:35).

There is much to unpack here. Jesus wants to accompany us in our struggles and despair. Encountering Jesus is good news that can’t wait until morning. It reorients our lives, opening us to new ways of seeing and living.

Luke was capturing the theological consciousness of first-century Christians here. *Where was Jesus to be found forty years after his life and ministry?* In the assembly of his disciples as they proclaim the Scriptures (as was the Jewish worship custom) and gather around the table to share in

the “breaking of the bread” (the new element brought into Christian worship).

What we do today at Mass has its most basic structure reflected in this Easter Day story. The first half of Mass is largely about proclaiming and reflecting upon the Scriptures. This is called the *Liturgy of the Word*. Then, in the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*, the gathered community joins in the prayer of the presiding priest and the Eucharist becomes real on the altar through the power of the Holy Spirit.

An important historical-theological point is found here and revealed elsewhere in the New Testament and in the early Church. Mass is not the concoction of someone’s medieval imagination. The liturgy has its origins in Jewish worship and in the Last Supper. The earliest Christians were people of Scripture and Sacrament. And so are we.



*What’s good news in your life that you love to share
with your children? With others?*