

The Catholic Parent's Survival Guide: Straight Answers to Your Kids' Toughest Questions

Julianne Stanz

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The Catholic Parent's Survival Guide is filled with discrete answers to children's faith-based questions.

Julianne Stanz's practical manual *The Catholic Parent's Survival Guide* is designed to help families discuss their Catholic faith in a straightforward way.

A child's simple question ("What's the closest planet to heaven?") led to the creation of this catechism that's aimed at helping parents strengthen their faith and family bonds. It notes that while many parents adopt a trial-and-error approach to discussing faith with children, an increasing number of teenagers are leaving faith behind entirely; a more direct approach is needed. Thus, Stanz sets out to collect clear answers to difficult questions in one place.

Pulling from an array of questions asked by children and teenagers, most of the book deals with Catholicism itself, though there are also discussions of the importance of reconciling faith with science, morality, and ethics. Its chapters are thematic, addressing the core tenets of Catholicism and other basics in tidy form. Questions about attending church, sexuality, and the afterlife are covered in turn. And for ease of navigation, all of the chapters follow the same formula, sharing questions and following them with resonant answers. Lists of key takeaways, opportunities for journaling, and popular culture resources are used to wrap up each chapter and make its lessons actionable.

The prose is both authoritative and familiar, and its declarations are supported with humanizing stories. In them, children encounter difficult or new situations and turn to trusted adults for help with processing what's new, as when a girl asks a bishop questions and then waits for her mother to verify the information he gives her. Indeed, a loud message runs throughout the book: that open communication and honesty between family members is necessary.

Every question is answered in a direct manner, though also with an eye toward simultaneous propriety and engagement. Sometimes, the answer is no clear answer: admissions that neither faith nor science have provided concrete explanations arise alongside Catholic-approved takeaways. And while the book's answers to children's questions are numerous and detailed, it stands to be even more impactful because of the compassion and honesty that it encourages. Its material represents a modern approach to family faith—one indicative of love, warmth, and honesty too.

Filled with discrete examples of answers to children's faith-based questions, *The Catholic Parent's Survival Guide* addresses difficult topics with realistic answers to facilitate stronger family communications.

JOHN M. MURRAY (May 3, 2023)

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