

Avoiding the Summer Spiritual Slide

Each spring, parents and teachers discuss ways that students can avoid the summer slide. This is the idea that during the summer months when students are not in school and not engaged in the daily routine of learning they have the potential of “sliding” backward.

This phenomenon of summer slide may be applied to the spiritual life of students and their families as well. After leaving the routine that a school year requires, it becomes easier to slide away from those spiritual practices that are embedded in the daily routine of the school year. Summer activities, vacation travel and lack of structure, while all good and necessary, can derail families from their formation in faith. To guard against this summer spiritual slide, parents might consider the following strategies:

1. Keep your Sunday Mass routine, even when traveling away from home. Sunday Mass is the foundation for a healthy life of faith. If necessary, choose a different Mass time to allow for sleeping in. Maintaining the practice of weekly Sunday Mass attendance provides an anchor for the faith of the entire family. If traveling, you can find Mass times on your mobile device using tools such as the Mass Times app.
2. Integrate opportunities for spiritual growth into activities that you already have planned. Rather than approaching faith formation as “one more thing” to do during the summer months, seek opportunities to integrate a spiritual dimension into your plans. If you are traveling for vacation, take part of a day to visit the local cathedral or other place of spiritual significance, creating a mini-pilgrimage.



3. Discuss with your family how you will avoid the spiritual slide before summer arrives. This conversation will communicate that the spiritual life is a priority all year long. The discussion also can allow each member to contribute his/her own thoughts about ways the family can prevent the spiritual summer slide, thus creating engagement for all family members.

The summer months need not be a time when families experience summer slide in their lives of faith. In fact, families can look at this time as an opportunity to remind family members that faith needs to be nurtured throughout the entire year. Each season requires a different approach. With advance planning and a commitment to making this nurturing a priority, the summer months can be a time of spiritual enrichment that will sustain each member of the family throughout the upcoming school year.

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