



16

Spoiled Rotten as a Kid

3RD SUNDAY OF EASTER: LET KIDS BE KIDS

THE PURPOSE

To remember a time when parents and children's schedules were much less busy and hectic, and to talk about ways to prioritize each of the family's activities in order to give the family more quality time together. To reflect on what it means to have a holy childhood.

SCRIPTURE

1 John: 3:18

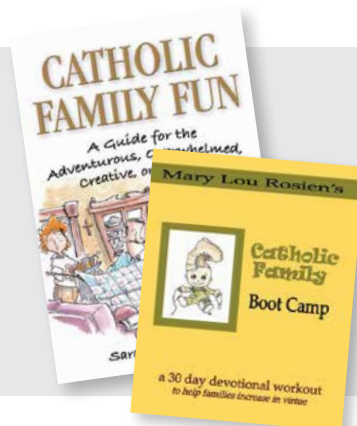
CATECHISM

CCC 2378



THE SAINT

St. John Bosco: Feast Day, January 31. St. John Bosco is known for his tireless work with the poor children in Italy. He would attract their attention by performing tricks that he'd learned from travelling performers, and would then instruct and evangelize them. St. John Bosco knew the value of play and its role in bringing people to Christ. He lived until 1888.

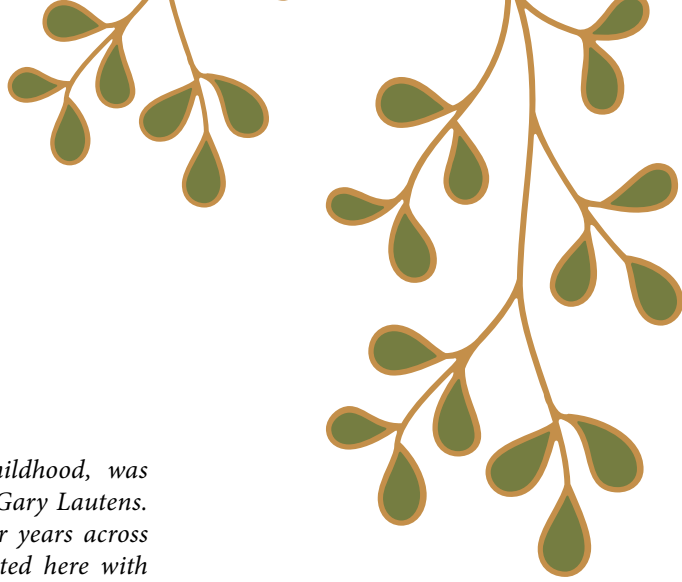


THE BOOK

Catholic Family Fun: A Guide for the Adventurous, Overwhelmed, Creative or Clueless, by Sarah Reinhard

Catholic Family Bootcamp, by Mary Lou Rosien

THE STORY



This article, which describes an idyllic childhood, was written by my all-time favourite columnist, Gary Lautens. His Toronto Star column was syndicated for years across Canada and the United States. It is reprinted here with permission from his widow Jackie Lautens.

I'm glad I'm not a kid today. I couldn't handle the hours. When I was young, being a kid was one of the best jobs around.

You'd get up at 8:15 (after your mother wiggled your toes), you'd have breakfast, and then you'd mosey over to school for a 9 o'clock start. At 4 o'clock you'd knock off for the day. In the meantime, you had enjoyed two play periods called recesses, and been home from 12 to 1:30 for lunch.

It was a snap and, when I look back, I'm surprised I ever gave up my job as a kid. It had everything, including a five-day week, take-out peanut butter sandwiches and room service if you had a cold.

From what I've observed, kid work has changed a lot from those distant days. For example, when I walk to work in the morning now, I see loads of kids already on their way to day care, babysitters and other child centres. It's hardly dawn and you can spot them — in the back seat of cars, strapped into plastic buddy seats on bicycle fenders, in taxis, in minivans.

I don't know what time the average kids get up in Toronto today but if you said 6:30 a.m., I wouldn't be surprised.

*“What can you do to promote world peace?
Go home and love your family.”*

ST. MOTHER TERESA

Even 5:30 or 6:00 a.m. isn't out of the question if parents have any distance to travel and have to be at the office or shop by 8:00 a.m. And many of today's kids don't get picked up and home again until close to 6 o'clock at night. That's a twelve-hour day.

No, ours was the golden age for kids.

Besides the good hours, I never had to carry a house key (which I'd have lost playing street hockey or marbles) to let myself in. Somebody was always home.

I never had to eat lunch with strangers and learn the names of a lot of grown-ups in smocks.

I didn't have to memorize a phone number where my mother or father could be reached if I fell down and got a bleeding nose.

I didn't have to ask permission of a non-family member if I wanted to sprawl on the front veranda with friends and make up nicknames for each other while drinking Freshie and planning where the tent (if we had one) would go in the backyard.

I didn't have to have my name stencilled on all my clothes so a supervisor wouldn't get them mixed up.

Because of the shorter hours and simpler lifestyle, not as much was expected of us either. When I was a kid my parents didn't expect me to read Tolstoy when I was four, learn a foreign language or play the bassoon when somebody from the office dropped by. I didn't have to know how to cook my own dinner, get to Winnipeg without help, call the plumber if the toilet backed up or take care of my baby brother by age six.

It was, in short, an undemanding time. I can't remember doing anything worthwhile or practical until I was at least 11 or 12.

Today's kids might think I'm making this up but it's all true. By today's standards, I was spoiled rotten, especially by my mother.

And it was wonderful. ❤️

QUESTIONS

- 1 Do you have a conviction about the type of childhood you would like to create for your children? Have you ever written a family mission statement?
- 2 Many moms want to give their children a happy childhood. Many saints speak about the importance of creating a holy childhood. What might it mean to give your child a holy childhood?
- 3 Research has well established that the early years of a child's life are critical to their development. Have you heard about the groundbreaking study: *Reversing the Brain Drain*?
- 4 Can you give three examples of how this story is an excellent illustration of irony?
- 5 In the first letter of John, 1 John: 3:18, we are told to love in deed and truth. How can we as parents do that?
- 6 When St. Teresa of Calcutta says to "go home and love your family," what do you think she means?
- 7 CCC 2378 states that a child is "the supreme gift of marriage." How can we as parents treat our children as the supreme gift of marriage they are?

ACTIVITY

Ask the mothers to think of ways they can spend time as a family without digital devices or expensive fees. For example, a walk in a conservation area or family board game night.

Alternate Activity:

Prior to the meeting, print out a copy of *Reversing the Real Brain Drain, Early Years Study* and highlight a few things from the document which might be of interest to moms.

QUOTE

"HOW IRRESPONSIBLE WE ONCE WERE, TO ALLOW OUR CHILDREN SUCH HUGE BLOCKS OF TIME TO BE THEMSELVES, OUTDOORS WITH OTHERS OF THEIR KIND, INVENTING THINGS TO DO! THINK OF THE TROUBLE THEY GOT THEMSELVES INTO. SOMETIMES THEY WENT FISHING. SOMETIMES THEY SET OFF FIREWORKS IN GARBAGE CANS. SOMETIMES THEY HOPPED TRAINS. SOMETIMES THEY HIKE THROUGH THE WOODS AND MAPPED OUT TRAILS. SOMETIMES THEY RODE THEIR BICYCLES TO NEARBY TOWNS. SOMETIMES THEY CLIMBED TREES. SOMETIMES THEY DECLARED WAR ON ONE ANOTHER. SOMETIMES THEY WANDERED OFF TO A CONSTRUCTION SITE TO LOOK AT THE BACKHOES AND WINCHES. SOMETIMES THEY FORMED SECRET SOCIETIES WITH PASSWORDS AND OATHS AND PENALTIES OF DEATH, OR WORSE."

Anthony Esolen,
Ten Ways to Destroy the Imagination of Your Child



Study #16

Spoiled Rotten as a Kid

I John 3:18

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

CCC 2378

A child is not something *owed* to one, but is a *gift*. The "supreme gift of marriage" is a human person. A child may not be considered a piece of property, an idea to which an alleged "right to a child" would lead. In this area, only the child possesses genuine rights: the right "to be the fruit of the specific act of the conjugal love of his parents," and "the right to be respected as a person from the moment of his conception."