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Archdiocese of Dubuque Celebrates Families and Grandparents during Jubilee Year

by Cassie Bird

The Archdiocese of Dubuque is celebrating families and grandparents during the Jubilee Year. Below, two families and a faith formation director in the Archdiocese of Dubuque reflect on their unique faith experiences.

The Schetgen Family

Cassie and Brandon Schetgen are parents of four and parishioners at Holy Spirit Parish in Dubuque. They are deepening in their own faith as they parent their children and guide them on their own faith journeys. As a family, Cassie and Brandon have traditions that help them to celebrate their beliefs alongside their children.

"We try to put faith first in our family by attending Mass as a family each week and going to Adoration and Confession regularly," Cassie says.

"We also try to live the liturgical year in our home. We celebrate our baptism anniversaries with treats. Our four children are named after saints and we have special traditions on those days – one of our favorites is going to look at Christmas lights around Dubuque on the

feast of St. Lucy since Lucy means 'light.' During Triduum, we also love visiting all the Altars of Repose on Holy Thursday and participating in our parish's Triduum liturgies."

Beyond the new family traditions that Cassie and Brandon have begun, becoming a parent has also affected Cassie's personal faith journey as she works to foster the faith of her four kids.

"Becoming a parent has given me a glimpse of the depth of our heavenly Father's love for each of us. I've come to understand better how He desires each person to choose goodness and love," Cassie reflects.

"Having kids also has shown me areas of my life where I need to grow in my faith – the need to surrender control, seek forgiveness, and grow in virtue each day."

As they grow older, Cassie and Brandon works to model the importance of faith, so that their children can learn from the example being lived out in front of them.

"We try to give them the opportunity to encounter Jesus personally. Some of the ways that we've done this are by bringing them to Mass and reminding them that this is Jesus' house and even if you can't receive Him yet physically, you can still invite Him into your heart," Cassie explains.

"We also invite them to pray in Adoration

and have that quiet time with our Lord. Brandon and I also know that we must also live out our faith as best we can. We try to model the importance of our faith in our own spirituality and in our marriage."

When asked about her hopes for her children's faith as they grow up, Cassie shares, "I hope and pray that each of my children come to know Jesus intimately and that they remain close to Him and His church all the days of their earthly life drawing strength from the Sacraments. That they discern God's calling for each of them and bring Him glory in whatever their vocations are. And ultimately that they are with Him in heaven for eternity."

The Lutgens Family

Joe and Sharon Lutgens are parishioners at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Hiawatha. They are parents of two adult children, and are also new grandparents as their daughter and son-in-law welcomed their first child last year.

As parents and now grandparents, Joe and Sharon have implemented daily practices to strengthen their own faith, as well as the faith of their family.

"Our family practice is saying a meal before eating – at home or when eating out we say the prayer together as a family out loud. We also try to do reading of daily scripture in the morning each day along with morning prayer and a Rosary each evening," the Lutgens shared.

Of course, raising children comes with many challenges, including the fear of what obstacles they might face as they grow older. Sharon reflects on how that fear ended up bringing her closer than ever to God.

"My faith grew a huge amount when I became a parent and realized I could not protect my children everywhere they went," Sharon shares. "My fear for their well-being brought me to a moment of complete surrender to God when I realized that He loved them even more than I could, and I needed to trust Him more and not only rely on my power to keep them safe in this crazy world. We constantly pray for our children and grandchildren – that God may protect them and bring good people into their lives who help point them toward God."

As their children grew up and now as they watch their grandchild grow older, Joe and Sharon have enjoyed sharing the Catholic faith with them through stories, prayers, music and movies.

"Starting when they were babies, we read books about faith, taught them to pray and prayed with them each day and through special moments of their lives and for their friends and situations. We also introduced them to spiritual music, watched faith movies and cartoons, listened to stories of the saints, helped them memorize Bible verses, took them to Mass every week, and sent them to Catholic schools."

If they could offer one piece of spiritual advice to their family, Sharon says, "Find some quiet time on a regular basis to think, listen, and talk to God." Meanwhile, Joe has a saying that he often repeats, "Do your best, pray that it's blessed, and leave the rest to God."

Sarah Casey, Faith Formation

It is the role of faith formation directors across the Archdiocese of Dubuque to assist families like the Lutgens and Schetgens in their faith journeys as both individuals and families. Sarah Casey is the Coordinator of Middle & High School Formation at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Hiawatha, and works at the parish to help guide middle and high school students on their journeys of faith, building upon the foundation that they learn from their families. In this Jubilee Year of rest and growth, Sarah shares

her reflection about how the Jubilee Year theme, "Pilgrims of Hope," resonates with the families and young adults in her parish community.

"Hope is universal, it doesn't matter if you're 5, 25 or 75 years old, everyone resonates with hope in their life on some level," Sarah says.

"This theme encourages people to see their faith as a journey, a pilgrimage toward deeper understanding and connection with Jesus. In a world often filled with uncertainty, hope becomes a guiding light, reminding them that God walks with them."

Of course, faith is not necessarily a linear journey of growth. There are times when families need additional support, or an extra hand, to continue walking along the path. Part of Sarah's role is to be a welcoming face at the parish, alongside other staff members.

"First and foremost, we want people to know that they belong," Sarah explains. "Ultimately, the goal is to meet families where they are, offering them encouragement, understanding, and opportunities to reconnect with their faith in a way that feels natural and meaningful."

During the summer of this Jubilee Year,

the faith formation team at St. Elizabeth is launching their partnership with "Hallow" – a popular Catholic prayer app. Parish staff hope that this technology will be able to help them further meet families where they're at.

"This summer we are doing something really special with the launch of our Hallow Partnership. It's no surprise that we are all connected to our devices on a higher level than ever before, but in the same breath we are disconnected from our friends, family, and community on a personal level," Sarah explains.

"Technology is a powerful tool that can either strengthen our faith or become a distraction. As Catholics, we are called to use all things for God, including the devices in our hands. Hallow provides ways for our community to pray with and for one another, to open the gateway of conversation with our neighbors, to strengthen family formation and much more."

Throughout her work, Sarah realizes the importance of supporting families, like the Lutgens and Schetgens, in the parish.

"The Church teaches that the family is the domestic church, where faith is first nurtured. Families need support in making prayer, formation, and Sacraments an integral part of their lives."

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

The June 2025 edition of *Together* will be the final issue. After careful consideration, the Archdiocesan Communications Office has decided to discontinue this printed bulletin insert and instead deliver the same content through email moving forward.

There are several reasons for this:

1. Format limitations: The publication has been limited to a double-sided sheet in order to minimize the burden on parishes for printing and stuffing bulletins. This constraint limits how much we can share.

2. Unmeasurable reach: We are unable to accurately determine how many people are reading *Together* in its current printed form.

3. Limited engagement: We've heard that the publication hasn't gained the traction we had hoped for.

4. Better digital reach: Email allows us to more effectively and directly reach households across the archdiocese.

While we recognize that not every household has an email address, the vast majority do—whether or not they consider themselves tech-savvy. Shifting to a digital format will allow us to share more content with a broader audience in a cost-effective, measurable way.

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