

Mommy and Daddy's Kids

By the Rev. Dr. Carla Romarate-Knipel

When I was a toddler in the Philippines, college students from Thailand, Nigeria and the United States lived in the boardinghouse with us and called my parents “Mommy and Daddy.” Some of these “siblings” became my godparents, and many introduced my family to new foods—some very hot and spicy.

Although my parents didn't give us formal lessons on building intercultural relationships, watching them with their “kids” taught me not only to tolerate but also to celebrate their “otherness.” One of the most effective ways to teach children to welcome people who are different is for parents and other adults to model welcome, creating circles of compassion that start within families and radiate into churches and communities.

My Mom would often quote Hebrews 13:2: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

While our welcomed strangers weren't always angelic, my parents showed them patience and love, which helped them grow their own wings of compassion. My parents' lesson of love and respect for all—regardless of race, culture or belief—continues to be spread through me, my sisters and all their kids from different parts of the world.

In our current climate of resistance to the other, welcoming the stranger is more important than ever. Persons in need of a Mom and Dad, Grandpa or Nana, sisters and brothers are all around us—as are children in need of learning the joy of inter-culturalism.

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Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.”

— Marie Curie

Younger children are often direct about differences between themselves and others, but rarely do they attach judgments to their observations. A parent may feel awkward and shush children when they make such observations, inadvertently giving the message that there is something wrong with people looking, talking or dressing differently than they do. Talking openly about differences is an important step toward teaching that differences enrich our world.



We live, in fact, in a world starved for solitude, silence, and private. — C.S. Lewis

Lent means “spring,” and the season of Lent originally referred to the observance by various cultural groups of springtime awakening in nature. The Christian church adapted Lent as a penitential season to prepare for Easter through prayer, reflection and study. The 40-day season (not counting Sundays) parallels Jesus' wilderness sojourn following his baptism. Lent provides an opportunity to introduce children to the disciplines of silence, sacrifice and service. Here are some suggested activities. Set aside television and phones for 1 minute of daily focused breathing together. Plant seeds in starter pots and move them outdoors to tend until they produce fruit or flowers that can be shared with others. Embrace a simpler diet for the season, and plan together how the savings might be used to help those in need.



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Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.