

CATHOLIC MOMS: LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING AHEAD

by Stephanie Porto

It has been an amazing year, growing together in faith and fellowship alongside an amazing bunch of women and their kids at Our Lady of the Scapular's Catholic Moms Group. Funded by our Catholic Women's League as a 1-year pilot project, our ministry will be celebrating its first anniversary next month, right around Mothers' Day. We have had 11 regular monthly meetings so far welcoming a total of 25 women. We have also added 31 moms to our Flocknote mailing list where we share updates about meetings and resources from CatholicMomsGroup.com and other Catholic sites.

Our moms represent various stages of motherhood, from new moms with their first baby, to moms with teens and young adults, to grandmothers, and even spiritual mothers (Godmothers). Moms are always welcome to bring their children. This is a unique feature of our group where children are given an opportunity to play with and get to know other kids in the parish. So, not only are we forming a community for our mothers, but we are also encouraging Catholic peer relationships for our children.

Here is what some of our moms are saying: "Every meeting offers something new—whether we are learning through videos and lectures or simply crafting together. These moments unite us in our shared beliefs of charity, hope, and faith. In my case, my children are the ones reminding me to go because of the deep fellowship they have with the other kids and the activities that we do together. Most importantly, this group is vital because it helps lead us all toward heaven." -- Mariana Minakawa

"I look forward to meeting with like minded moms who strive to bring their children and family up in the faith and grow closer to God. The discussions we have and hearing from other moms, help me feel like I'm on the right track with the way I'm bringing my child up. The group activities and drives make me feel a part of something great and meaningful. I cherish the relationships I've made with the women from this group." --Beverly Pollock

"I haven't been able to come to one of the meetings yet and I am patiently waiting for the day I finally can. I wanted you to know how much I enjoy reading all your emails. Even though I can't be there in person, they make me feel connected and included, and I really appreciate that." --Amanda Soares

"Even after my first meeting with the mom's group this past Thursday, I see how much you do for the community and how we all help each other too. It's important to keep this group going. I feel very blessed to be part of it and thank you so much for welcoming me with open loving arms." -- Jen Southam

At our March meeting, we prayed Mary's Way of the



Cross in the church and then headed back to the hall to listen to Mariana Minakawa's experience of the Dynamic Women of Faith conference (organized by Dorothy Pilarski, founder of Catholic Moms Group). Mariana that she was deeply inspired by the speakers, and she encouraged me to continue promoting our Moms Group because it is so important for Catholic moms to have support in their vocation.

Besides looking for fellowship and support with other moms, many of our moms want to live their faith by giving to their community. At our very first meeting last May we discussed doing a service activity to help moms in need, and this Lent we held a Diaper Drive. We were able to collect more than 40 packages of diapers and wipes, which were distributed by Choose Life Niagara.

Our Advent Christmas Card campaign for the St. Vincent de Paul Society last November was very successful, with 9 moms and 8 children working together to create more than 65 handmade cards, which were included in the Christmas gift boxes prepared for clients of our SSVF council.

At our next meeting on April 23rd, our moms and kiddos will be crafting paper flowers containing messages of encouragement for our elderly community members living in long term care homes, and we are scheduling a visit to distribute the flowers Mother's Day weekend.

Looking back at our first year, it is clear this Moms Group has brought many blessings to our moms, to our parish and to our community. It is my great joy to announce that, thanks to the continued generosity of our Catholic Women's League and the support of our pastor, Fr. Gregory Schmidt, we can look forward to another year of Catholic Moms Group at Our Lady of the Scapular. I can't wait to see what the Lord has in store for us in our second year!

Upcoming meetings are scheduled for May 21 and June 26, followed by a summer break and meetings resuming in September.

For more information about upcoming meetings or to be added to our Flocknote mailing list, email me at momsgroup@scapular.ca.

Stephanie Porto is Mothers' Group Leader, Our Lady of the Scapular Church, Niagara Falls.

"We can understand the family as a gift and a task. It is crucial to promote the co-responsibility and protagonism of families in social, political and cultural life – promoting their valuable contribution to the community," Pope Leo XIV