



Seek First the Kingdom

Parents in Partnership with God – Sharing Faith with Children

A Ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Immaculata, Pennsylvania

PARENT ADVICE FROM POPE FRANCIS -- PART 1 of 6

The Joy of Love (Apostolic Exhortation), Chapter 4: “Love in Marriage”

Quality family life is the hope of the future! Following the *World Meeting of Families* in Philadelphia (September 2015) and an Extraordinary General Assembly of the Bishops – the *Synod on the Family* (October 2015) – Pope Francis issued a post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation titled, *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*). It is no happenstance that Francis chose March 19, 2016 – the feast of St. Joseph and the third anniversary of his papal inauguration – to focus on love, marriage and family. The *Joy of Love* spotlights love in the family. In chapter four Pope Francis tutors us on what love looks like in marriage by reflecting on St. Paul’s “love homily” (1 Corinthians 13: 4-7).

LOVE IS PATIENT

Patience is the virtue of showing restraint; holding back the bitter remark, responding respectfully and gently so that the door is open for repentance and the offender can save face. “[A patient person] does not act on impulse and avoids giving offense.” (#91).

A patient mindset recognizes that all people have a right to live according to their insights even when their ways are different. “It does not matter if they hold me back, if they unsettle my plans, or annoy me by the way they act or think, or if they are not everything I want them to be.” (#92) Patient love accepts others as they are.

Parent Ponder-Points:

- “Accept” and “Approve” are not synonyms. You may disagree with or disapprove of a child’s opinion, decision, or behavior. Parent voice, volume, mannerisms, body language and eye contact can communicate approval for the person of the child while correcting behavior that is unacceptable and in need of change.
- Avoid speaking from your own parent-need or ego. Make correction a “teachable moment” that focuses on the child and the negative effects that the behavior has on the child and others. Engage the child in brainstorming solutions to apply in the future.

Reflection Questions:

1. When do you find it easy to be patient, and when is it most difficult?
2. Have you ever been reprovved in a manner that made it easy for you to accept the correction and eager to improve? Explain what made it so.
3. What are the essentials in your family life? What are the optionals?
4. Read *The Joy of Love*, #91-92. With what thought do you most resonate?

LOVE IS AT THE SERVICE OF OTHERS

“Love” and “Like” are not synonyms. Love is more than a feeling. It is an action; a choice; a decision to do “the good” for another person whether or not you “like” him/her. For example, including him/her in conversation or activity, asking help, inviting an opinion, speaking respectfully, providing for needs. Love benefits and helps others. *“Love is ever ready to be of assistance.” (#93)*

[Love] “shows it fruitfulness and allows us to experience the happiness of giving, the nobility and grandeur of spending ourselves unstintingly, without asking to be repaid, purely for the pleasure of giving and serving.” (#94)

“Actions speak louder than words.” The attitude, body language and facial expression that accompany our action is possibly more important than the actual task. A person giving Christian service safeguards the human dignity of the receiver by communicating joy or enthusiasm for the opportunity to help with no hint of being bothered, annoyed or condescending.

Parent Ponder-Points:

- Completing household chores in a timely, peaceful manner is a way of serving the family. Engage your child in identifying specific ways of showing love within the family that go beyond assigned chores. For example: pairing socks from the laundry basket, reading to or playing with a younger sibling, turning down the bed covers, offering the favorite chair, controlling volume of voice and electronics, etc.
- As a family, practice the Corporal Works of Mercy with focus on giving; not receiving. “To feed the hungry. To give drink to the thirsty. To clothe the naked. To visit the imprisoned. To shelter the homeless. To visit the sick. To bury the dead.”
- From life observation, TV, movies or books point out to your child how the Spiritual Works of Mercy are ways of practicing Christian Service. “To admonish the sinner, to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the sorrowful, to forgive all injuries. To bear wrongs patiently. To pray for the living and the dead.”
- Teach your family the St. Francis Prayer for Peace. Regularly pray it together.

Reflection Questions:

1. When do you find it easy to serve others, and when is it most difficult?
2. Generally, is your heart more oriented to giving or to receiving?
3. Have you ever received the service of another person and thought, “If that’s your attitude, don’t bother! I’d rather do without.” What about that person’s attitude was a turn-off to you?
4. Read *The Joy of Love*, #93-94. With what thought do you most resonate?