



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 3 of 6

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

Within months of his installation Pope Francis issued an Apostolic Exhortation: *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*). Three years later he issued his second Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*). His pastoral priorities are those of Jesus: gospel and love! Joy is the byproduct common to gospel living and quality family life. Joy attracts, feeds, heals, and evangelizes. *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 NOT RUDE, IMPOLITE, OR HARSH

Courtesy is a developed skill that integrates respectful listening, careful speech, and often self-restraint or silence. Courteous speech encourages, comforts, heals and communicates respect and kindness. Christian language does not “*demean, sadden, anger or show scorn.*” (#100)

“Love is gentle and thoughtful. ... Its actions, words and gestures are pleasing and not abrasive or rigid. Love abhors making others suffer” (#99). Loving kindness builds up; rudeness tears down. Kindness creates bonds and establishes a climate for relationship to grow.

Parent Ponder-Points:

- “A kind mouth multiplies friends, and gracious lips prompt friendly greetings” (Sirach 6:5). For the next three days engage family members in noting examples – in life, literature, TV, or movies – that either affirm this teaching or illustrate how rudeness interferes with relationship-building.
- Others have remarked that God created us with two eyes, two ears and one mouth. What might that image suggest?
- “Reflective listening is a communication strategy involving two key steps: seeking to understand a speaker's idea, then offering the idea back to the speaker, to confirm the idea has been understood correctly” (Wikipedia). This week practice reflective listening.

Reflection Questions:

1. When do you feel it easy to be courteous, and when is it most difficult?
2. Would your spouse or children affirm that your language encourages, comforts, heals and communicates respect?
3. How consistently do you reflect back what your spouse or child says before giving your opinion or reponse?
4. *Read The Joy of Love, # 99-100. What thought(s) most speak to your heart?*

LOVE IS NOT IRRITABLE OR RESENTFUL

Love remains calm in the face of disappointment. Love is not easily provoked by the actions or inactions of others. Love exercises thoughtful self-control rather than show anger or annoyance at what is perceived as unfair or dis-tasteful treatment. Love is not easily outraged, annoyed, irate, incensed, aggrieved, irritated, disgruntled, indignant . . . *“To nurture interior hostility helps no one. It only causes hurt and alienation” (#103).*

Pope Francis advised: *“It is one thing to sense a sudden surge of hostility and another to give into it, letting it take root in our hearts. ... My advice is never to let the day end without making peace in the family.” (#104)*

Parent Ponder-Points:

- In the face of disappointment remind yourself that “Dis-appointment is His-appointment.” Ponder what greater good may result from this temporary disappointment. Trust that “temporary inconvenience can lead to permanent convenience!” Share this kind of reasoning with your children and give examples from your life-experience.
- Occasional bouts of irritability are most often caused by poor sleep, anxiety, and/or withdrawal from caffeine, alcohol, drugs, and nicotine. Safeguard a nightly sleep routine marked by the absence of lights, sounds, electronics, and TV. Eliminate caffeine after 6 PM, earlier, or completely.
- A pattern of irritability may have (1) human nature, (2) medical or (3) mental reasons that cause *frustration – the feeling of being upset or annoyed because a force outside yourself is preventing the progress, success, or fulfillment of something you desire.* If irritable, resentful behavior is human nature-based, *Wikipedia.com/ How to Cope with Frustration* suggests the following: 1. Learn your triggers. 2. Be proactive and avoid triggers whenever possible. 3. Practice stress-management breathing. 4. Manage your expectations of others. 5. View frustration as “delayed success” rather than failure. If irritability is medical or mental based seek professional help.

Reflection Questions:

1. Emotional growth requires that we “name, claim, and tame” our emotions. Recall a recent incident of feeling irritable or frustrated. What was the underlying cause? How would you remedy it in the future?
2. How do you end your day with your spouse and children?
3. Read *The Joy of Love*, # 103-104. What thought(s) most tutor your heart?