



2015-2016

Syllabus Handouts

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Respect (my wife and) your mother!

Summary

As a child's independence is developed in teen-age years, mothers are often treated poorly by their offspring. This can be particularly difficult period for moms. How do we, as fathers, act to support our wives during this time?

Objective

Each of us goes through a period in our teen years where we begin to establish our independence as an individual. This development of our independence often includes us abruptly distancing ourselves from those we have been very dependant on, most of all, our mothers. Talking back, ignoring, and ultimately condescension of our mothers provides a "safe test" of our ability to be independent, because mothers always "take us back." We, as husbands and fathers, need to stay involved in this mother-child relationship. We need to let our child know that before their mother was their mother, she was our girlfriend, then our bride. We need to create a family environment that lets the child know that we love and support their mother, and expect them to do the same. With our wives, we must delicately manage the child's growth and independence, while avoiding a breakdown in relationships. Is this statement true for you and your family? – "When you put your child before your spouse, both lose. When you put your spouse before your child, both win."

Bible Readings

1. Sirach 3:1-6

Children, listen to me, your father; act accordingly, that you may be safe. For the Lord sets a father in honor over his children and confirms a mother's authority over her sons. Those who honor their father atone for sins; they store up riches who respect their mother. Those who honor their father will have joy in their own children, and when they pray they are heard. Those who respect their father will live a long life; those who obey the Lord honor their mother.

2. Eph 6:1-4

Children, obey your parents [in the Lord], for this is right. "Honor your father and mother." This is the first commandment with a promise, "that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life on earth." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord.

3. Proverbs 6:20-22

Observe, my son, your father's command, and do not reject your mother's teaching; Keep them fastened over your heart always, tie them around your neck. When you lie down they will watch over you, when you wake, they will share your concerns; wherever you turn, they will guide you.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2217

As long as a child lives at home with his parents, the child should obey his parents in all that they ask of him when it is for his good or that of the family. "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord." Children should also obey the reasonable directions of their teachers and all to whom their parents have entrusted them. But if a child is convinced in conscience that it would be morally wrong to obey a particular order, he must not do so. As they grow up, children should continue to respect their parents.

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They should anticipate their wishes, willingly seek their advice, and accept their just admonitions. Obedience toward parents ceases with the emancipation of the children; not so respect, which is always owed to them. This respect has its roots in the fear of God, one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

2. Paragraph 2228

Parents' respect and affection are expressed by the care and attention they devote to bringing up their young children and providing for their physical and spiritual needs. As the children grow up, the same respect and devotion lead parents to educate them in the right use of their reason and freedom.

Small Group Questions

1. How do you deal with “respect” in your family, particularly that of your children for your wife?
2. Have you discussed with your wife how you will handle disrespect from children?
3. How do you let children know that when they show disrespect, it can hurt more than the intended individual? In fact, it reflects poorly on them. How does this affect your family?...

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.kevinathompson.com/obey-mother-respect-wife>
2. http://www.connectionparenting.com/parenting_articles/respect.html
3. <http://www.teach-nology.com/tutorials/teaching/respect>

Accountability

1. Talk to your wife about how you are now handling or will handle respect issues. One parent handing out punishment and then asking the other for support after the fact can be challenging.
2. Demonstrate to your children that you and your wife are a “team.”
3. Referring to your wife as your “girlfriend” or “bride” changes the perspective of children (particularly sons) being disrespectful to their mother....try it!

Recommended Song

Christ Be Our Light

Author(s)

Steve Frazer (updated from previous material from Reid Rooney and Kevin McDonough)

Included Resources

<http://drrobysilverman.com/parenting-tips/10-tips-on-teaching-respect-to-children-you-cant-get-it-if-you-dont-give-it/>

“How will the child learn respect if you don’t teach it, expect it and model it yourself?”

10 Parenting Tips for Teaching Respect and Curbing Disrespect:

1. Model it: If you want them to do it, you have to do it too.
2. Expect it: When your expectations are reasonably high, children rise to the occasion.
3. Teach it: Give children the tools they need to show you respect. Your Powerful Words Family School, can assist you with the lessons.
4. Praise it: When you see or hear your children using respectful language and making respectful choices, recognize it and praise them for making positive, respectful decisions.

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5. Discuss it: Pick out times when you see other children using respectful or disrespectful language or behavior and discuss with it your children.
6. Correct it: Be strong, firm and direct when teaching respect. At the same time, be sure you are being respectful yourself while correcting the behavior.
7. Acknowledge it: Don't just let things slide! Be sure to notice when respectful behavior is being exhibited and make sure to call them on disrespectful behavior!
8. Understand it: Your children are growing and learning. Sometimes word choice and behavioral decisions are made because they do not have the correct words or behavior to relay "I'm tired," "I'm frustrated," or "I'm angry."
9. Reinforce it: Remind children of their good decisions so that they remember how it felt, the praise they received, and the overall experience of being respectful.
10. Reward it: Respectful behavior should be something that children want to do without overindulgent rewards. However, it is good to associate respectful behavior with intangible rewards such as praise, recognition, extra responsibility, and privileges.

Teaching respect takes patience, time, and a willingness to do as you preach. Time isn't everything though, is it? It takes years to rear a respectful child and only moments to fill one with anger and disrespect. Which one do you choose?

Five Ways to Show Catholic Courage at Work

Summary

Are your actions in the work place influenced more by your faith in Jesus Christ or by concerns of what others may think of you? As the final destination that we as Christians hope to attain is Heaven and not just the corner office, join us this Friday as we explore ways to show Catholic courage at Work.

Objective

In *Gaudium et Spes*, the Second Vatican Council weighed in with this declaration: *"One of the gravest errors of our time is the dichotomy between the faith which many profess and the practice of their daily lives...The Christian who shirks his temporal duties shirks his duties towards his neighbor, neglects God himself, and endangers his eternal salvation. Let Christians follow the example of Christ who worked as a craftsman; let them be proud of the opportunity to carry out their earthly activity in such a way as to integrate human, domestic, professional, scientific and technical enterprises with religious values, under whose supreme direction all things are ordered to the glory of God."*

Do we ever stop to consider how many times a day our thinking and actions about our Catholic faith are influenced by a misguided concern for what others think of us? During the day, how many times have we missed opportunities to stand up for Christ or share our faith? Is it the conversation we avoid with a troubled co-worker? Is it our refusal to publicly make the Sign of the Cross and say a blessing over our meals? Is it our reluctance to stand up to someone who is attacking the Church? How about the person who is quietly curious about the Catholic faith and is only waiting on an invitation to attend Mass with us?

Too often, a misplaced concern for the possible negative opinions of those around us keeps us from embracing our responsibilities. However, it is crystal clear that Jesus expects us to openly share our faith and acknowledge Him before others: *"Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father."* (Matthew 10:32-33) From Jesus, we learn that being a courageous and faithful Catholic in the workplace and the public square is not something to be ashamed of or to hide.

Christ is our greatest example on how to not be concerned about the respect of others. He always taught the truth, regardless of the audience or his surroundings. His enemies recognized this aspect of Christ's teaching, *"Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. And you are not concerned with anyone's opinion, for you do not regard a person's status."* (Matthew 22:16)

"For the Christian living in the middle of the world, he or she must choose to act responsibly in daily work. Work should be ordered to the glory of God, to the service of society, to the fulfillment of family obligations. It also provides a vital area for personal apostolate." (Francis Fernandez, *In Conversation with God* Volume 5, p.292-293)

As Catholics we are called to lead a Christ-centered life that integrates faith, family and work. We need to be the same person and the same Catholic 24/7. Leaving our faith at the door of the workplace is not an option as we need to pray in earnest for guidance and discernment on how to integrate our faith into our daily life.

Bible Readings

1. Matthew 10:32-33

"So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."

2. Matthew 5:13-16

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

3. Genesis 1:28

And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

4. Genesis 3:17-19

And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 905

Lay people also fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, "that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life." For lay people, "this evangelization ... acquires a specific property and peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world."

2. Paragraph 2427

Human work proceeds directly from persons created in the image of God and called to prolong the work of creation by subduing the earth, both with and for one another. Hence work is a duty: "If any one will not work, let him not eat." Work honors the Creator's gifts and the talents received from him. It can also be redemptive. By enduring the hardship of work in union with Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth and the one crucified on Calvary, man collaborates in a certain fashion with the Son of God in his redemptive work. He shows himself to be a disciple of Christ by carrying the cross, daily, in the work he is called to accomplish. Work can be a means of sanctification and a way of animating earthly realities with the Spirit of Christ.

3. Paragraph 2428

In work, the person exercises and fulfills in part the potential inscribed in his nature. The primordial value of labor stems from man himself, its author and its beneficiary. Work is for man, not man for work. Everyone should be able to draw from work the means of providing for his life and that of his family, and of serving the human community.

4. Paragraph 308

The truth that God is at work in all the actions of his creatures is inseparable from faith in God the Creator. God is the first cause who operates in and through secondary causes: "For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Far from diminishing the creature's dignity, this truth enhances it. Drawn from nothingness by God's power, wisdom and goodness, it can do nothing if it is cut off from its origin, for "without a Creator the creature vanishes." Still less can a creature attain its ultimate end without the help of God's grace.

Small Group Questions

1. Is your life compartmentalized in that you separate your work and family distinctly with no faith of any kind?
2. How do you witness your faith at work?
3. Do you prioritize your faith around your work or your work around your faith?

Recommended Resources

1. Being Catholic at Work by Randy Hain 3/1/2012:
<http://www.integratedcatholiclife.org/2012/03/randy-hain-being-catholic-at-work-2/>
2. Practical Tips for Being a Catholic At Work:
<http://www.livingfaithatwork.org/Documents/Being%20Catholic%20at%20Work.pdf>
3. Faith at Work – Finding Purpose Beyond the Paycheck, book by Kevin Lowry and his website:
<http://gratefulconvert.com/>
Also on EWTN Live 2015-07-08 Fr. Mitch Pacwa w/ Kevin Lowry
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XieS9frRIU>

Accountability

1. Take some time in prayer, preferably in adoration, to discern how Jesus wants you to be his light not just at home and in church but also in the work place.
2. If this is uncomfortable for you, what is one step you will take this week?

Recommended Song

They'll Know We Are Christians

Author(s)

Michael Copfer

Included Resources

Five Steps to Being More Courageous at Work - By Randy Hain 1/8/2015 (*This post is adapted from Chapter Seven of The Catholic Briefcase: Tools for Integrating Faith and Work (Liguori 2011)*)

<http://www.integratedcatholiclife.org/2015/01/randy-hain-show-catholic-courage-at-work/>

The more we are able to profess our faith, the easier it will be to carry out the actions of that faith. So here are five thoughts on how to overcome our fear of what others may think of us, be more courageous and go about setting a good example:

1. **Show me that in the policy manual.** I have heard many times that expressing our Catholic faith in the workplace is probably “against company policy.” Have you actually seen a written policy addressing making the Sign of the Cross and praying at meals, praying quietly at your desk, going to Mass at lunch or wearing ashes on your forehead on Ash Wednesday? Let me challenge all of us to consider the possibility that much of our fear may be based on a false perception of possible persecution and not reality. Therefore, let’s use our right to live our lives as faithfully as we possibly can. In doing so, we will not only find work more enjoyable, but we will inspire others to do the same.
2. **Witness through personal example and be a light for Christ.** Think about our own faith journeys, how we got to where we are, how we live it day by day with something new to look forward to when we head into work. Think about the example that we could set for others and the Christ-inspired joy we can radiate to those around us. Letting others see Jesus Christ at work in us is a powerful form of witness that will attract others who want what we have in our lives. We are always being observed by someone. Will our actions inspire them or disappoint them? *“You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”* (Matthew 5:13-14, 16) Let’s think about our actions and how they can inspire others to live as faithfully as we are attempting to do. Be careful, however, as we do not want our actions to be of a selfish nature. Love as Jesus teaches and others will follow.
3. **Start the conversation with a little sharing of our own.** Transparency invites transparency. We can’t expect someone to open up to us unless we are willing to do the same. Our faith journey is a blessing, meant to be

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shared. The witness we give may have a profound influence on someone. As we read in (1 Peter 3:15-16): “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame.” While we may be eager to share our faith with others, we are warned here to do so with care and with gentle love.

4. **Reality Check: Pursuing heaven vs. being popular.** Heaven is our ultimate destination and not this place called Earth. Will our critics help us get to heaven? Will they stand up for us during tough times? No, they will pull us into a secular way of life which has little room for God and where materialism and popularity are the fashionable idols of the day. Francis Fernandez wrote that overcoming human respect is part of the virtue of fortitude. He describes the challenges a Christian may endure as, “...rumors and calumnies, mockery, discrimination at work, the loss of economic opportunities or superficial friendships. In these uncomfortable circumstances it may be tempting to take the easy way out and ‘give in.’ By such means we could avoid rejection, misunderstanding and ridicule. We could become concerned at the thought of losing friends, of ‘closing doors’ which we will later be unable to re-open. This is the temptation to be influenced by human respect, hiding one’s true identity and forsaking our commitment to live as disciples of Christ.” Doing what is right is not always easy, but in the long run it is clearly the most beneficial. Why would we not choose heaven?
5. **Be consistent and lead an Integrated Catholic Life.** Do we take our faith with us to work, meals with friends, the kid’s soccer games and neighborhood swim meets? Or, do we only practice our Catholic faith at Mass on Sunday? It is easy to conform to secular expectations, but difficult to publicly show our love of Jesus, live out the Beatitudes, evangelize and lead a fully integrated life. I have always found inspiration on this topic from the wisdom of Blessed John Paul II’s apostolic exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*: “The fundamental objective of the formation of the lay faithful is an ever-clearer discovery of one’s vocation and the ever-greater willingness to live it so as to fulfill one’s mission... The lay faithful, in fact, are called by God so that they, led by the spirit of the Gospel, might contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties. Thus, especially in this way of life, resplendent in faith, hope, and charity they manifest Christ to others.”

We can’t do this alone and we must pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In my own experience, this is a daily work in progress and it is never easy. But, we should all recognize that there are people looking at us to see our example. They want to learn from and be inspired by our courage, if we are only willing to take a stand for Christ. Think about how fortunate we are to live in a Christian country (although our religious liberties are under attack, i.e. the recent HHS Mandate) where all we risk is possible disapproval or alienation from others. When we take our faith to work, we are standing up to that fear and solidifying the core values that we as Christians believe in. In order to maintain that strength, it is important to live faithfully each and every day, which means taking that faith to work. It will be difficult at times and will require sacrifice, but to live with the love of God every minute of every day is far more rewarding than a little disapproval.

I know this is difficult, but the sacrifice on our part is required. The sacrifice is simply to love Christ more than we love the opinions of those around us. Let’s pray for one another and continue to ask Jesus for strength and the discernment to know and follow his will.

Tomorrow is a new day. Will we have the courage to be a light for Christ to those around us?

Managing the Impact of Social Media on Our Children

Summary

Like it or not children today are spending more and more time on Social Media. It has become the new way to communicate with friends, catch up on celebrity gossip and gather information about society as a whole. Studies show it can also lead to internet addiction, Facebook Depression, cyber bullying, etc. How do we as fathers help our children manage this effectively?

Objective

Before the invention of the cell phone, the evolution of the personal computer and of course social media, communicating with those around us was quite different than it is today. If you wanted to talk to your friend you had to pick up the telephone (yes the one attached to the wall) or hop on your bike and head over to their house. Bullies had to be brave enough to look you in the face and child predators were the ones driving down the street in the mysterious white van. As technology continues to explode, we can now communicate with someone on the other side of the globe with the swipe of a finger. Social media giants such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc., have created a new set of challenges for today's parents.

There is nothing wrong with Social Media...is there?

Studies have shown that a large number of teens aren't prepared to handle the responsibilities of social media. Some of these problems include but aren't limited to the following:

- 1) Facebook Depression
 - - Affliction of establishing a presence on the social networking sites, spending a great deal of time on these sites and then feel unaccepted among peers online.
- 2) Internet Addiction
- 3) Sexting
- 4) Cyber Bullying/Online Harassment
- 5) Cyber Predators
- 6) Privacy concerns

Can anything good come from social media?

Children have much to gain from being on social media when it is managed properly.

- 1) They can learn how to communicate in today's connected world, and to find and share news and information.
- 2) Sites like Instagram and YouTube allow them to be creative and share things they've made.
- 3) Help young people who experience shyness or social anxiety initiate new relationships
- 4) Opportunities for community engagement

Tips for managing your child's exposure to social media

- 1) Talk with your kids about their online use and the specific issues that today's online kids face
- 2) Become familiar/educated about the technologies kids are using

3) Family online-use plan that involves regular family meetings to discuss online topics and checks of privacy settings/online profiles for inappropriate posts.

4) Supervise online activities via active participation and communication, as opposed to/in addition to remote monitoring with a "net-nanny" program.

Bible Readings

1. Proverbs 22:6

Train a boy in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not swerve from it

2. Romans 12:2

Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2224

The home is the natural environment for initiating a human being into solidarity and communal responsibilities. Parents should teach children to avoid the compromising and degrading influences which threaten human societies.

2. Paragraphs 2496

"The means of social communication (especially the mass media) can give rise to a certain passivity among users, making them less than vigilant consumers of what is said or shown. Users should practice moderation and discipline in their approach to social media. They will want to form enlightened and correct consciences the more easily to resist unwholesome influences."

Small Group Questions

1. Do you permit your child to participate in social media? Why or why not?
2. How should we talk to our children about the responsibility of participating in social media?
3. Do you monitor your child's activities on social media? Why or why not?

Recommended Resources

1. The Impact of Social Media... <http://m.pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/127/4/800.full>
2. The Bad, the Ugly and the Good of Children's use of Social Media:
<http://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/3346768>

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start speaking with your children about social media
2. Become more familiar with the social media your child uses

Author

Dan Driggers

Lust and Fighting It as a Devoted Husband

Summary

Being able to name our demons is an essential part of growth and healing. Learning to combat the vice of lust is critical to being a devoted husband and father.

Objective

Of Seven Deadly Sins lust can be the most deadly in any marriage. If this sin is not conquered, it can drive a deep wedge between husband and wife, thus destroying a family (the domestic church). It is a great value to know and begin to understand lust. This is more than just sin; it is a driver or a pattern of sin that can lead us into mortal sin. As faithful husbands, we must gain mastery over this sin because it has effects all of us to one degree or another.

What is **lust**?

Lust	The sin of excessive desire for sexual pleasure. This causes us to see a person as an object, and not a person made in the image and likeness of God.
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1. What can this sin cause a man to do?
2. Looking at a woman for her body (taking that second glance)
3. Pornography (paper and movies)
4. Masturbation
5. Domestic Violence
6. Adultery
7. Rape

How to fight and conquer this sin – use the virtue of **temperance**

Temperance	The Cardinal Virtue of balance, self-discipline, and self-control over people and things of this world.
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Ten things you can do using temperance:

1. Pray the Rosary
2. Go to confession

3. Talk to a priest (outside of confession)
4. Fast and pray for your wife
5. Eucharistic Adoration
6. Take time to go to Mass more often than Sunday
7. Receive the Eucharist
8. Have someone keep you accountable for your actions
9. Do something fun with you wife and family
10. Exercise

Bible Readings

1. Galatians 5:16-26

16 I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. 18 But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, 21 occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ (Jesus) have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit. 26 Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envious of one another.

2. Mathew 5:8

8 "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God."

3. Mathew 7:13-14

13 "Enter by the narrow gate: for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter are by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few."

4. Romans 12:21

21 "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1865

"Sin creates a proclivity to sin; it engenders vice by repetition of the same acts. This results in perverse inclinations which cloud conscience and corrupt the concrete judgment of good and evil. Thus sin tends to reproduce itself and reinforce itself, but it cannot destroy the moral sense at its root."

1. Paragraphs 1866

"Vices can be classified according to the virtues they oppose, or also be linked to the *capital sins* which Christian experience has distinguished, following St. John Cassian and St. Gregory the Great. They are called "capital" because they engender other sins, other vices. They are pride, avarice (greed/covetousness), envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth or acedia."

2. Paragraph 1869

"Thus sin makes men accomplices of one another and causes concupiscence, violence, and injustice to reign among them. Sins give rise to social situations and institutions that are contrary to the divine goodness. "Structures of sin" are the expression and effect of personal sins. They lead their victims to do evil in their turn. In an analogous sense, they constitute a social sin."

Small Group Questions

1. How does society make it difficult to overcome lust?
2. Do you have a problem with lust?
3. What will you do to increase in the virtue of temperance?

Accountability

1. As you go through the week see if you can avoid lustful temptations in this world (movies, tv, books, newspaper, etc.) that would cause you sin.
2. Do an examination of conscience and go to confession – PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU DO GO TO CONFESSION, ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVE NOT BEEN IN A WHILE!!

Related Resources

1. A great book to read that will help you become the father God intended you to be is called Joseph's Way. I strongly suggest you read it because among other great things you learn from
2. Bible
3. CCC
4. For an examination of conscience click on the link below:
<http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/penance/examinations-of-conscience.cfm>
5. How to go to confession click on this link below:
<http://www.catholictv.com/how-to-go-to-confession>

Recommended Song

Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory

Author

Jon Stahlberger

The Catholic Understanding of the Afterlife

Summary

What happens at the end of our life? At the end of History? Will it be Heaven, Hell, Purgatory? The answer to this question is most likely, “Thy will be done.”

Objective

There is so much around us that deals with the “end times” – whether this is the end of “our time” or the end of “all time”. Books, movies, TV shows - but what are these things all about? What is the Catholic teaching on these topics?

There is a lot of information about “eschatology” - a major branch of Christian theology – the study of “end things” – whether this is the study of the end of an individual life, end of the world, and/or the kingdom of God. This syllabus topic will only scratch the surface.

In traditional Catholic understanding, the human retains individuality beyond death and goes on to experience one of three states of being: heaven, purgatory, or hell.

- Heaven is the place of perfect peace and joy, a place where humans join the angels in having direct knowledge of God and praising God through eternity. It is the hope and desire of all Catholics to reach heaven and exist in this perfection. There is some thinking that suggests you can experience glimpses of heaven while still on earth.
- Purgatory is, as its name suggests, a place of purgation. Christ's death may have opened the way for humans to receive salvation and attain heaven, but their souls are still warped by the sins they have committed. In order to purify their souls, humans pass through purgatory, where they endure severe punishment and in the process become cleansed of sin and its ill effects. All humans who enter purgatory will eventually pass from it into heaven.
- Hell is the place for the souls of those who are too corrupted with sin and who continue in disobedience to God until death. These souls cannot be cleansed even in the fires of purgatory and will instead choose hell. While Hell has traditionally been thought of as a place of unending torment, theologians today talk about the suffering of souls in hell less in physical and more in psychic terms: the soul's endless sorrow at an eternity spent away from the source of all good and truth, with no possibility of a reprieve.

Everyone has to work to get to heaven. All you have to do is have faith in Jesus Christ and demonstrate your faith by doing His work. Possible? – Yes. Effortless? – No. Quoting from CS Lewis - “There are two kinds of people in the end; those who say to God: ‘Thy will be done’, and those to whom God says in the end ‘Thy will be done.’” Which one are you?

Bible Readings

1. Jn 6:39-40, 53-54

And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it [on] the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him [on] the last day.” Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day.

2. Jn 14:1-3

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be.

3. 2Cor 5:6-10

So we are always courageous, although we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yet we are courageous, and we would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord. Therefore, we aspire to please him, whether we are at home or away. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive recompense, according to what he did in the body, whether good or evil.

4. Rev 14:13

I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," said the Spirit, "let them find rest from their labors, for their works accompany them."

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 670

Since the Ascension God's plan has entered into its fulfillment. We are already at "the last hour". "Already the final age of the world is with us, and the renewal of the world is irrevocably under way; it is even now anticipated in a certain real way, for the Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real but imperfect." Christ's kingdom already manifests its presence through the miraculous signs that attend its proclamation by the Church.

2. Paragraphs 1021-1022

Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ. The New Testament speaks of judgment primarily in its aspect of the final encounter with Christ in his second coming, but also repeatedly affirms that each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith. The parable of the poor man Lazarus and the words of Christ on the cross to the good thief, as well as other New Testament texts speak of a final destiny of the soul—a destiny which can be different for some and for others.

Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven—through a purification or immediately, -- or immediate and everlasting damnation.

Small Group Questions

1. What is more important to get to heaven, "faith" or "works"?
2. When have you seen "evidence" of heaven here on earth? Have you personally experienced it?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.patheos.com/Library/Roman-Catholicism/Beliefs/Afterlife-and-Salvation>
2. <http://www.ewtn.com/vexperts/showmessage.asp?number=340085>
3. <http://www.catholicmissionleaflets.org/death.htm>
4. Heaven – The Heart's Deepest Longing, by Peter Kreeft
5. Eschatology – Death and Eternal Life, by Joseph Ratzinger (eventually Pope Benedict)
6. Revelation Bible Study material from IHM education office

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start looking for the true beauty, truth, and love that might be glimpses of heaven.
2. You meticulously plan for a vacation, or for retirement. What can you do now to start planning for your life in eternity? Identify ways to start working on your "faith" and your "works".

Recommended Song

Soon and Very Soon

Author(s)

Steve Frazer

Included Resources

Highlights from Revelation Bible Study material

The intimate relationship between the kingdom of God and the Church is taught throughout the New Testament, including within the teaching of Jesus himself – especially in Matthew’s Gospel. The kingdom already is present, although not completely revealed and realized, in the Church. Lumen Gentium clearly states this essential teaching: “To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of that kingdom. By his obedience he brought about redemption. The Church, or in other words, the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery, grows visibly through the power of God in the world.”

The second coming of Jesus Christ often is called the Parousia, a Greek word that literally means “presence” or “arrival”. It’s used in the New Testament to refer to the glorious and victorious second coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus himself describes his second coming by saying that “the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.” Mt 24:30. St. Paul assures his reader that Jesus Christ’s appearance will put an end to the work of Satan: “And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming” 2 Thess 2:8

The Parousia will be fully realized at the end of time but already is a reality initiated by the Incarnation, which revealed the glory of God among men: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father” Jn 1:4. The Parousia, God’s presence among men, began when the Son of God became a man and continues with the presence of the Holy spirit. In his book *Eschatology; Death and Eternal Life*, Ratzinger wrote: “By gazing on the risen Christ, Christianity knew that a most significant coming had already taken place. It no longer proclaimed a pure theology of hope, living from mere expectation of the future, but pointed to a ‘now’ in which the promise had already become present. Such a present was, of course, itself hope, for it bears the future within itself.” For Catholic Christians, this presence is most fully experienced in the sacrament of the Eucharist, in the partaking of the actual Body and Blood of the risen Lord.

Highlights from Heaven – The Heart’s Deepest Longing

The heart’s hunger for heaven

ALL who seek him, find him. But ONLY those who seek Him will find Him: “You will seek me and find me; when you seek with all your heart, I will be found by you says the Lord. Jer 29:13-14 Finding Him is heaven. Seeking Him is heaven’s door. Not finding Him is hell, and not seeking is the door to hell. The road to hell is NOT paved with good intentions, but with no intentions, with “I don’t give a damn” or “the hell with it.”

If life on earth is not a road to heaven, this it is a treadmill, a merry-go-round minus the merry.

Jesus did not satisfy the disciples’ curiosity about the comparative population statistics of heaven and hell when they asked, “Are few saved?” He replied simply, “Strive to enter in.” Luke 13:24

Heaven on Earth?

Most people look at the world and only a few look along it. We think of science as basic knowledge and religion and philosophy as private luxuries. But suppose, as religion claims, that “human science is but the backward undoing of the tapestry-web of God’s science”, that “the idea of God is the flower; His idea is not the botany of the flower; its botany is but a thing of ways and means – of canvas and color and brush in relation to the picture in the painter’s brain.”

Scripture is God's verbal sign, nature his pictorial sign.

All artistry reflects the artist; and if God *is* love, then His world is the eternal love made visible in time. It is made of matter, but more fundamentally it is made of love.

Remember, God doesn't make junk.

The Joy of Heaven

A person is said to have 3 "elements" – Body, Soul and Spirit

Body – the senses' power to receive sense data or experience, and the instinct to seek pleasure and avoid pain. This is the route for "pleasure"

Soul – consciousness, thoughts and feelings – knowing truth and desiring happiness. Senses are oversight, Soul is insight. Pleasure is outward satisfaction and happiness is inward satisfaction. This is the route for "happiness".

Spirit is the deepest level. Many people do not even realize they exist on this level; and some do not even realize the level of soul but see themselves (or, more frequently, by others) as mere material organisms, complex animals. This is the route for "joy"

The body is our relation to what is less than ourselves (the material world); the soul is our relation to ourselves, or self-consciousness; and the spirit is our relation to what is more than ourselves (God). That is why we usually discover the real, living God and the reality of our own spirit at the same time and why we can't find our own deepest identity until we find God.

Not everyone knows the difference between what the spirit is and how it is distinct from the soul. Does it really make a difference? Only the difference between life and death. The soul makes the difference between life and death of the body, and the spirit makes the difference between life and death of the soul.

We can control pleasure and even happiness to an extent, but never joy: it is a sheer gift from God.

Joyful feelings and thoughts, even pleasure and health, result from joy: and this is a foretaste of heaven.

Joy is the life of heaven. Hell is not eternal life in pain or unhappiness, but (according to scripture) eternal DEATH – an emptiness shaped only by the fullness it is empty of an absence of God's presence and therefore of life and light and love.

The distinction between joy and happiness explains why joy brings forth tears, why we WEEP for joy.

The reason our supreme joy in heaven will not be our joy but others'. The question "what will I be in heaven?" will no longer interest us. This may not sound very joyful to us now – in fact it may sound positively unattractive – which is precisely an index of our distance from joy. The saints know better.

The joy of heaven, our fulfillment, is not primarily our joy but God's, not primarily the fulfillment of human desires, as if we were the seekers and God the sought, but of God's desires, or rather God's desire – his single-minded love of us and our perfecting.

"Thy will be done" is the infallible road to total joy.

What do I need to do to get there?

We receive God's love by faith and give it back by passing it on in the form of works ("the works of love")

The ecstasy of love is our training for heaven because it constructs the self that lives outside itself which is the only kind of self that can live in heaven.

Therefore if our early life is made of AGAPE, heaven and earth are made of the same stuff for us, and heaven is no more an escape from earth than the sun is an escape from the sunlight.

In order to be included in heaven's Kingdom, sins must be honestly repented. Every sin meets its necessary fate: expulsion from the Kingdom. And if we cling to this spiritual garbage, we will find ourselves in the universe's spiritual garbage dump. God does not forgive sins; He forgives sinners and destroys sins.

The present of heaven is presented to us in the present, and there's no time like the present. In fact, there's no time BUT the present. It's HERE, and the only thing we can add, the only thing God wants from us, is our desire for it, our yes to it. The "it" is a Him; His name is Jesus.

Highlights from Eschatology – Death and Eternal Life

“Kingdom” is not a place, but an active reality. “The Kingdom of God is at hand” = “God is close”. First and foremost, Jesus is not talking of a heavenly reality, but of something God is doing and will do in the future here on earth.

The only true biblical doctrine is that which holds that when man dies “he perishes, body and soul”. Only in this fashion can one preserve the idea of death as a judgment, of which Scripture speaks in such unmistakable accents. The proper Christian thing, therefore, is to speak, not of the soul’s immortality, but of the resurrection of the complete human being and of that alone.

The resurrection moves into a central position in the expression of faith. It is no longer one tenet of faith among many others, but rather is identified with the concept of God itself. Resurrection faith is contained in faith in God. Faith remains simple. It is simply faith in God.

Immortality is not something we achieve. Though it is a gift inherent in creation it is not something which just happens to occur in nature. Immortality rests upon a relationship in which we are given a share, but by which, in sharing it, we are claimed in turn. ... If the human capacity for truth and for love is the place where eternal life can break forth, then eternal life can be consciously experienced in the present.

The place where true life is found is the risen Christ. Christ brings time to its completion by leading it into the moment of love. When human life is lived with Jesus it steps into the “time of Jesus”: that is, into love, which transforms time and opens up eternity.

Hell: Hell is real. God has unconditional respect for the freedom of His creatures. Human life is fully serious. It is not to be denatured by the idea of divine planning. The irrevocable takes place, and that includes irrevocable destruction. The Christian man or woman must live with such seriousness and be aware of it. It is a seriousness which takes on tangible form in the Cross of Christ. For the saints, “Hell” is not so much a threat to be hurled at other people but a challenge to oneself.

Purgatory: The essential Christian understanding of Purgatory is not a supra-worldly concentration camp where man is forced to undergo punishment. Rather it is the inwardly necessary process of transformation in which a person becomes capable of Christ, capable of God and thus capable of unity with the whole communion of saints. It does not replace grace by works, but allows the former to achieve its full victory precisely as grace. What actually saves is the full assent of faith. But in most of us, that basic option is buried under a great deal of “worldly possessions”. Only with difficulty can it peer out from behind our own egoism. Man is the recipient of the divine mercy, yet this does not exonerate him from the need to be transformed. An encounter with the Lord is this transformation. It is the fire that burns away our “rubbish” and re-forms us to be vessels of eternal joy.

Heaven - One is in heaven when, and to the degree, that one is in Christ. It is by being with Christ that we find the true location of our existence as human beings in God. Heaven is thus primarily a personal reality, and one that remains forever shaped by its historical origin in the paschal mystery of death and resurrection. From this foundation, there follows a theological affirmation: the glorified Christ stands in continuous posture of self-giving to his Father. Indeed, he is that self-giving. The paschal sacrifice abides in him as an enduring presence. For this reason, heaven, as our becoming one with Christ, takes on the nature of adoration. However, Heaven will only be complete when all the members of the Lord’s body are gathered in. Such completion on the part of the body of Christ includes the resurrection of the flesh. The individual’s salvation is whole and entire only when the salvation of the cosmos and all the elect has come to full fruition. For the redeemed are not simply adjacent to each other in heaven. Rather, in their being together as the one Christ, they *are* heaven.

Stages of the Masculine Journey

Summary

Each stage of a man's life brings new responsibilities as well opportunities for spiritual growth and a renewed relationship with God. We will discuss the various stages of men's lives and identify the advantages of each.

Objective

Our culture doesn't have clearly marked rites of passage that address our internal or spiritual lives, but we know that we are different than the men we were 10, 20, 30 years ago. Outwardly we graduate, are employed, get married, raise children, retire, become grandparents etc. but do we know what to expect of life during the various life stages? This topic will help the men in Fathers' Team identify the stage of life that they are in now and will know more about what to expect from life in the next stages.

I have included some resources about the stages of the masculine journey, but I don't think the stages as identified by Al Polito in The Male Road Map are the only way of describing it. I mean only to help start the process. If your small group wants to use other resources for stages, that is alright by me.

Bible Readings

1. Genesis 1

God said, 'Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild animals and all the creatures that creep along the ground.'

2. Corinthians 1-13

For we know only imperfectly, and we prophesy imperfectly; but once perfection comes, all imperfect things will be done away with.

11 When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, and see things as a child does, and think like a child; but now that I have become an adult, I have finished with all childish ways.

12 Now we see only reflections in a mirror, mere riddles, but then we shall be seeing face to face. Now I can know only imperfectly; but then I shall know just as fully as I am myself known.

13 As it is, these remain: faith, hope and love, the three of them; and the greatest of them is love.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraphs 1700 - 1707

1700 The dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God (article 1); it is fulfilled in his vocation to divine beatitude (article 2). It is essential to a human being freely to direct himself to this fulfillment (article 3). By his deliberate actions (article 4), the human person does, or does not, conform to the good promised by God and attested by moral conscience (article 5). Human beings make their own contribution to their interior growth; they make their whole sentient and spiritual lives into means of this growth (article 6). With the help of grace they grow in virtue (article 7), avoid sin, and if they sin they entrust themselves as did the prodigal son¹ to the mercy of our Father in heaven (article 8). In this way they attain to the perfection of charity. (356, 1439)

MAN: THE IMAGE OF GOD

1701 "Christ,... in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, makes man fully manifest to himself and brings to light his exalted vocation."² It is in Christ, "the image of the invisible God,"³ that man has been created "in the image and likeness" of the Creator. It is in Christ, Redeemer and Savior, that the divine image, disfigured in man by the first sin, has been restored to its original beauty and ennobled by the grace of God.⁴ (359)

1702 The divine image is present in every man. It shines forth in the communion of persons, in the likeness of the unity of the divine persons among themselves (cf. chapter two). (1878)

1703 Endowed with "a spiritual and immortal" soul,⁵ the human person is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake."⁶ From his conception, he is destined for eternal beatitude. (363, 2258)

1704 The human person participates in the light and power of the divine Spirit. By his reason, he is capable of understanding the order of things established by the Creator. By free will, he is capable of directing himself toward his true good. He finds his perfection "in seeking and loving what is true and good."⁷ (339, 30)

1705 By virtue of his soul and his spiritual powers of intellect and will, man is endowed with freedom, an "outstanding manifestation of the divine image."⁸ (1730)

1706 By his reason, man recognizes the voice of God which urges him "to do what is good and avoid what is evil."⁹ Everyone is obliged to follow this law, which makes itself heard in conscience and is fulfilled in the love of God and of neighbor. Living a moral life bears witness to the dignity of the person. (1776)

1707 "Man, enticed by the Evil One, abused his freedom at the very beginning of history."¹⁰ He succumbed to temptation and did what was evil. He still desires the good, but his nature bears the wound of original sin. He is now inclined to evil and subject to error: (397)

Man is divided in himself. As a result, the whole life of men, both individual and social, shows itself to be a struggle, and a dramatic one, between good and evil, between light and darkness.¹¹

Small group discussion questions

1. Do you agree with the stages identified in the masculine journey of life?
2. If not, how would you characterize the stages of your life's journey?
3. Spiritually speaking, what are the advantages of being in your stage of life?
4. What are the challenges of being in your stage of life?
5. What advice would you give younger men about the stages of life you've experienced?

Accountability

1. Give some prayer time to identifying your stage of life . Define your stage by your personal qualities, not by outward signs of success, or earthly things.
2. Focus on the advantages of being in your life stage and make the most of the spiritual growth that your stage offers.

Included Resources

Al Polito in "The Male Road Map" writes:

When I was a teenager and college student, I would be visited on occasion by a nagging thought: "When am I officially a man? When am I no longer a boy?"

I paid attention to that question over time, getting involved in a terrific men's group and reading a lot about the subject. Relying on intellect and being an essentially risk-averse person at first, my knowledge of the subject remained primarily theoretical. But as I grappled with "what was missing" in my life—namely, risk

and experience, I began to sense and see for myself the kind of man I was becoming—the self that I inherited and the Self I discovered and created.

rites of passage

We know that there was a time in our own culture's history when the passage to manhood was unambiguous. It was marked by ritual and witnessed by the company of men who had walked the same path. The initiate was honored for his unique contribution to the community, knowing from that time forward who he was and why he was important.

It's clear that there are no meaningful rites of passage in Western culture anymore. Many mistakenly identify the passage as the purchase of a car, the first sexual experience, graduation from some school, or getting a tattoo. We have a few remnant religious ceremonies, such as Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation, that hint at the passage to manhood, but there is no authentic substance, no true cultural agreement and no expectation that the initiate's life is transformed by the ritual. Sadly, the only meaningful rites of passage celebrated anymore may occur for some at christening, marriage, and death.

Our society assumes knowledge of the difference between a boy and a man; and the difference between a young, a middle-aged, and an old man. But men themselves often lack context to know exactly where they are in life. As men develop from boyhood to seniority, their values and priorities, [as well as what they find fulfilling in their relationships change.](#)

Typically somewhat isolated emotionally from other men, today's man may go through life wondering if he's crazy for feeling certain things, or if other men have experienced what he's experiencing. He looks around at his peers and doesn't necessarily find them living out the same story, or if they are, they don't often feel great about what they're going through.

Literature and mythology, and now psychoanalytic theory and the self-help industry have contributed much to show men a basic "road map" so that they can at the very least know that they're not alone and that they're not the first one to experience a particular triumph, failure or frustration.

However, every man's story is also unique; his gifts and talents are distinctive and if one were to plot his life as a heroic journey, all the allies and villains, trials and triumphs would appear as a unique arrangement of familiar themes.

A MODEL

One road map that I like was developed by Alison Armstrong, whose "[Celebrating Men/Satisfying Women](#)" courses teach women how to understand and relate to men. Alison uses the classic medieval male heroic roles to describe how men develop from boyhood to seniority.

THE PAGE

According to Armstrong, men begin their development as "pages." Pages were young boys who attended to knights. They look up to the knights, polish the swords, feed the horses, fantasize about the knights' adventures, and get into all kinds of trouble. They drive their mothers crazy.

THE KNIGHT

As a page enters late teen years, he becomes a knight. The knight charges off in search of adventure, rescues damsels, pursues treasure, and slays dragons whenever possible. Men in their late teens, through their late 20s or early 30s, are today's "knights." They live for the challenge, which in modern life looks like sports, video games, adventure, women, travel, and jobs that promise new challenges and problems that need to be solved. If it's an adventure, a knight will show up.

You'll notice that much advertising is tailored to knights—a demographic that often has lots of money, and the freedom to enjoy that money. In their relationships with women, knights enjoy the pursuit or challenge, and often prefer a woman who will enjoy accompanying him on his adventure.

Some knights express their knighthood via the quest. (In history and mythology this is represented by the crusader or the search for the Holy Grail.) Questing knights often align with a spiritual, social or political cause, and put great energy into it. Such "questors" may join the Peace Corps, get active in politics, or enter the ministry. In their love lives, questing knights often turn their attention to the "damsel in distress." Questing on behalf of a woman whom he sees as needing "rescue," the knight gets drawn in by both eros

and his heightened sense of purpose. As knights mature, they learn that rescuing the damsel is an exercise in futility.

THE PRINCE

After a knight has had his share of adventure or quest, often in his late 20s or early 30s, he typically feels the need to “build his kingdom.” He may live in a disorganized apartment with a few roommates, a refrigerator with beer, leftover pizza, jar of mustard and some dodgy Thai food takeout. He may be in love, feeling the urge to start a household, or he may just want to “grow up” and make something more of himself. He gets serious about his career or education, and enters a long phase of focusing intently on creating his “castle.”

It is at this point a healthy knight typically assumes the mantle of the prince, a time of his life where his life is about something other than his own pleasure. Princes developing careers are often found working long hours, much to the chagrin of their girlfriends or spouses. They don’t have as much time for beer with their buddies, although the time they do get with friends can be precious. During this time, the prince’s significant other may begrudge him his singular focus on his career or education, but he has no choice. His identity quite often rides on what he is creating.

After a prince has been at it for awhile (typically late 30s to 40s), he finds that his kingdom is “just about there.” He may have a family if not a home, and an established business or career. He looks back on what he created, all he has worked for, and something doesn’t feel quite right. Like Lester Burnham, Kevin Spacey’s character in “American Beauty,” he finds himself questioning all the things he took for granted—what makes him happy, who or what he’s attracted to, what he stands for, what he believes. He finds himself at a most uncomfortable crossroads, at the threshold of a tunnel that only he can enter.

ENTER THE TUNNEL

Sometimes this phase is regrettably disregarded as “a midlife crisis.” However, this “tunnel” or existential reckoning must be viewed as the time a man begins to live life for himself in a way that he hasn’t done since he was a knight. If his youth was sheltered, he might have an uncontrollable urge to begin experimenting with his fascinations. Sometimes, the prince will find that the kingdom he built was not the kingdom he wanted at all. In the process, various aspects of a man’s life may be shed: his career, his practical car, his significant other, his pretense, his inhibitions, whatever worked in the past that no longer serves—ultimately his inauthenticity. It may be a rough time. The magnitude of the changes called for may cause some men to shut down and settle back into their lives without making any changes. Such a man’s mind, heart, soul, and body will rebel against him. His kingdom will be poisoned.

At this point it’s helpful to mention that for any archetypes like these, there are “high” and “low” forms, as Jungian psychologists point out. With respect to the male archetype set, the healthy or high archetype has a trajectory that moves from sacred infant to mature elder, from boy to man. All archetypes, high and low, have their proper place in every man, but for healthy men, the boyish, self-centered ego (which governs the low archetypes) will, in the end, be set aside (not banished) in order for the man’s sense of purpose and duty to prevail. This is the theme of true adulthood.

So, standing at the entrance and facing his tunnel, a man has the great opportunity to examine which archetypes have been running the show, and why, even if he doesn’t use this Jungian language. Maybe a boy has been running the show, medicating with drugs or alcohol to avoid grief, or running a parade of women through his life in search of power or validation. Or conversely, a man who spent his life being a “caretaker” personality may find that the boy within him never got to play, and demands a good time.

THE KING

Whatever the challenge of his tunnel, after he has been through his, a man will have emerged with a stronger sense of self. [He will know what interests him and what does not.](#) His tolerance for things he has left behind will evaporate. He has determined who he is and what he serves. He now bears the crown of the king.

Having figured out the hard way what he’s all about, the king lives to serve. Having been tested and proven by the trials of life, the king has authority, power, and strength. He walks taller, and cares less about what other people think. This doesn’t mean that his feelings can’t be hurt; on the contrary, if a king’s contributions are not valued, he feels not valued. Witness the father who wishes to help his daughter fix up her new house. He is eager to help with his hammer and level, and if she tells him she can take care of herself now, he will feel sad and slighted. A king wishes to serve and to have his contributions appreciated.

Stages of the Masculine Journey

Certainly, it is the King Archetype (present in every man, young or old) that has him want to make a difference. But as a man grows into the fullness of his king energy, he will not suffer people who don't appreciate what he provides for his kingdom. He doesn't have time for that anymore.

There are other important archetypal energies alive in every man in different ways. There is a warrior, a magician, a monk, an eternal boy, a lover, a trickster, all in high and low forms. Women have their own archetypes, and I think it would be accurate to state that some if not all of these archetypes are present in both men and women alike.

NAVIGATING THE MAP AND THE MEN WHO ARE ON IT

Since we lack formal rites of passage, it is helpful for men today to recognize and honor where they are on the male road map. If you are a knight, enjoy your adventures. Be attentive to your changing personal and professional priorities, even though you should always make time for some adventure when it calls out to you. If you are a prince, know that it's OK to work hard and focus intently, but don't forget to stop and smell the occasional rose. Take a vacation, and make it a good one. When your world no longer works for you, realize that you might be in the tunnel, that it's OK, and that you can only enter and emerge by yourself. Find supportive friends. If you are a king... well, enjoy it! It is good to be king!

As I became aware of my own location on the male road map, I was able to give myself license to honor my archetypes more passionately. I began to take risks, to have knightly adventures I had denied myself, even though I had already entered my Prince phase. After more than 10 years of creating both physical and spiritual adventures, I began to see that my princely ambitions of homeownership and career no longer served me. The woman I had hoped to meet and marry never materialized, the career I had devoted myself to meant nothing to me, and my home became a burden to me. I entered my own tunnel, sold my home, moved to Peru for a few months where I did some environmental activism, and moved to Portland to do work that mattered to me. Seven years later, I'm married just over a year to a wonderful woman, again a homeowner, and a new father—at 50!

As Hercules' journey was different from Odysseus', and William Wallace's journey was different from Abraham Lincoln's, each man's journey is unique, and has the potential to be heroic. Although there's inherent arrogance in proclaiming what it means to be a man, here's what I think it means to be an adult male: Be a Knight when adventure beckons, Warrior when the realm must be defended, Lover when you give your heart to another, and King when it's time to stand for something larger than yourself.

No two men are alike in the way they express their archetypes; every man brings his own values, taste, knowledge, talent and humor to each role. We can take one more lesson from the medieval model—namely, that men whose names live on in myth and story were the ones who served king and kingdom in community.

What is the name of the kingdom you serve? What values, ideals, and passions inspire you to get on your horse and ride? Successful heroes are the ones who ride together, with sidekicks or soul friends, when that is right to do. Spend regular time with your buddies, join a men's group, or do what it takes to find companionship for your journey. Whether you are going to battle with a competing company, struggling with an addiction, or just figuring out what's really important to you, find the support you need from others. But when it's time to go out into the wilderness to be alone with your heart, don't let anyone stop you. You are a unique expression of the Eternal Man and ultimately, your choices and values are themes of your personal epic.

- See more at: <http://blissbombed.com/the-four-stages/#sthash.tU4KywOu.dpuf>

Wild at Heart and Sainly of Soul

[James Gaston](#)

James Gaston

From the Sept/Oct 2009 Issue of Lay Witness Magazine

It is rare these days to talk with friends and not dwell on some aspect of the dire straights of modern social life. The loss of the Christian religion and vision, the base level of public virtue, the unraveling of the family, the confusion regarding the nature and role of men and women all make sad grist for the conversation mill.

Stages of the Masculine Journey

But I would like to call your attention to an author who addresses in a novel and positive way one of these important subjects: the nature of Christian masculinity and social role of men, especially in modern society. His name is John Eldredge, and he has written two popular books, *Wild at Heart* (2001) and *The Way of the Wild Heart* (2006), that are worthy of our time.[1]

Any man worth his salt must pound upon the question of what it means to be a man. This is especially true of Christian men who seek to incarnate God in their everyday life-to be in the world, yet not of it. This is why Eldredge's effort warrants our attention. True, there are plenty of popular writers today who endlessly bemoan the dearth of strong fathers committed to their families, and yes, there is a growing body of social science data that documents the good rendered to children and wives by the security and stability of dedicated fathers. And, of course, we have the wisdom and the teachings of the Church to guide us. But few contemporary writers have attempted to understand the Christian nature of masculinity in such a comprehensive, intimate, and down-to-earth manner as Eldredge, who, as a Christian counselor, has spent years laboring to understand and help his fellow men-and himself. We Catholics can learn much from the fruit of his struggle while he, due to the integrity of his search, moves step by step closer to the Church.

Who is John Eldredge, and why is he worthy of our consideration? He is an honest man who, like many of us, has suffered greatly from the effects of modernity. His search for real answers to life's great questions brought him to Christianity and to an MA in biblical counseling from Colorado Christian University, an interdenominational Christian liberal arts university. He worked for Focus on the Family for a number of years before his own career as an author, counselor, and lecturer took flight.

Eldredge's vision of Christian masculinity is more than just scriptural. He draws heavily upon such writers as C. S. Lewis, G. K. Chesterton, St. Thomas à Kempis, and St. Augustine. He has a special place in his heart and work for George MacDonald, the mid-nineteenth-century Scottish author, poet, and Christian minister who was greatly influenced by the Church Fathers. C. S. Lewis regarded MacDonald as his "master," and Chesterton held that MacDonald's work "made a difference to my whole existence." MacDonald's brilliant *Unspoken Sermons*, concerning especially the subject of God as Father, obviously have had a great impact on Eldredge. In other words, Eldredge is eclectic, but he generally draws on wellsprings directly or closely rooted in the Church. Here, in the round, is his argument.

A Christian Man's Journey

Man needs adventure in order to validate himself, to prove to himself that he has what it takes to be a man. God ordained this need for adventure, this need to be "wild at heart," as a key aspect of man's nature. All men, and especially modern men, fail to receive such validation. Their fathers and the culture fail to provide an essential enculturation process-a journey of initiation-that teaches and enables a young boy to become a mature man. This

initiation, this bestowal of mature masculinity, can only come from other men, and in particular from one's father (never from women). However, this initiation often fails, leaving the young man "wounded," hiding from himself, becoming a "poser" by creating a false, self destructive personality and searching in all the wrong places (especially the approval of woman) for proof of his manhood.

What a man really needs is a personal relationship, a masculine adventure of initiation, with God. This is true even if a man's father did well by him. Such a relationship requires a true union with the Father so that the true spiritual essence of masculine strength is passed to the son. Such a relationship requires that a man, with the help of God, face his fears, his life's wound(s), and his pride; forgive his father and himself; and move on to

do God's will rather than his own. This mature Christian man's journey in life will require both a transcendent vision and a day-to-day battle against himself (his own human masculine weaknesses) and against evil. In other words, the mature Christian man's mundane life must be founded upon a disciplined spiritual life. And when you live in union with God and embrace the mystery and the "risk" associated with such a companion, life becomes the ultimate adventure: friendship with God. In short, "Masculinity is passed from father to son, and then from Father to son."

This is a concise summary of Eldredge's sweeping vision, and our evaluation must risk being overly vague and general. Still, what is likely clear from the outset is that elements of Eldredge's explanation of the masculine soul and character are far from typical for many of us. *Wild at Heart* is not based upon a theologically or philosophically refined systematic Catholic vision. This is its weakness. Rather, *Wild at Heart* is a work written for everyday Christian men, by an everyday Christian man, whose conclusions are based upon years of experience counseling troubled men and whose insights are interpreted and supported by his

scriptural training. This is its strength. Eldredge's work is overly intuitive and realistic; however, as a result, his approach bears much practical truth.

Let's be clear: Eldredge's vision cannot replace the Catholic vision, but portions of it can and do complement the Catholic vision, especially as regards how the faith might be propagated and lived in today's world. The good found in Eldredge's perspective depends greatly upon the reader's discernment of the eternal verities in the author's contentions, and this is best done in the process of honest self-examination. When we supply what is lacking by seeking the truth and the attendant reconciliation, rather than accentuation, of differing positions, Eldredge's work is rewarding. That being said, let us identify a few key concepts that warrant our attention because of their intrinsic worth or because they will profit from refinement in light of Catholic teaching.

Adventure and Initiation

Eldredge's opening notion of "adventure" immediately captured my attention and will, I believe, intrigue most men. He argues that God, the cosmos, and man are "wild at heart" and primed for adventure, that "life is not a problem to solve, but an adventure to live." God calls man to his personal adventure, and He wants to share it with him and help him along the way. Living out this adventure is absolutely necessary if man is to come to know God, the world, and himself—in other words, if he is to become a man in the image and likeness of the Father. Eldredge argues that each man can reach his end only if he has a personal relationship with God *based upon his personal life adventure*. God calls us, but we have the latitude and responsibility to answer in our own unique, dignified, personal way. Man is neither autonomous nor enslaved to a predetermined plan—two horns of one of the great dilemmas in Protestant and modern secular thought. The successful adventure requires self-limitation, and Eldredge is admirable in his attempt to solve this dilemma without the living sacramental and written tradition of the Church to aid him.

A young boy must be introduced to this adventure, taught that it exists, and shown how to proceed. This is Eldredge's notion of masculine "initiation." It is a powerful and important insight. The great Catholic historian Christopher Dawson long argued that the process of enculturation—the passing on of a culture's vision and way of life to the succeeding generation—was so essential that if this effort failed, the culture would for all intents and purposes die or be conquered. Modern generic education cannot possibly replace this complex effort that entails all dimensions of life and proceeds first and foremost by way of the family. Dawson's concept of enculturation and Eldredge's call for initiation are essentially the same, and the failure of either leads to the diminution of the person. Modern man partakes of no adventure because he has not been initiated. This failure to initiate young men is a result of original sin, the loss of the enculturation tradition, the modern industrial-technological-material penchant for control, the erroneous desire to eliminate the aggressive character of young men and feminize them, and the reality of spiritual assault.

When a young man is not initiated, he is left "wounded." His natural development is arrested, and he seeks false and often self-destructive paths for masculine confirmation. In Eldredge's second book, *The Way of the Wild Heart*, he details the generic stages through which a Christian man's life ought to proceed. From boyhood, to cowboy, to warrior, to lover, to king, and to sage, Eldredge clarifies, reaffirms, and offers excellent recommendations as to how fathers and older men can provide this vital journey and a series of tests through and by which the stages of masculine character might be fostered.

Seasoned by the Sacraments

Though Eldredge's stages of masculine initiation ring true, this is not sufficient. One can readily appreciate how fathers' influence upon sons, for good or ill, reverberates through the generations. But Eldredge relies too much upon the psychological and materialistic. What man needs is Confession, not just counseling. He needs the Church, the sacraments, and Christian culture to complete this socialization process, because they foster the true stages of the *saintly* soul and daily life (for men and women).

This socialization effort proceeded in Europe as the spiritual and sacramental life of the Church became incarnate in the particular ethnic regional cultures. Such Catholic mores—which comprise the incarnation of the spiritual and the material—were expressed in agrarian life; chivalry; the artisanal life of the guilds; the seasons and feasts of the Church year; and the communally celebrated stages of spiritual sacramental initiation, such as Baptism, Confirmation, and Marriage. Indeed, the very "liturgy of the hours" of lay and monastic daily life were replete with the *opus Dei*. These cultural traditions helped keep a man more connected to his God during the course of his life. And God even provided food for the journey: the Eucharist.

If one grew up post-Vatican II or in a household devoid of such European ethnic religious and cultural traditions, then he likely missed this whole tradition. Compare these traditions with our contemporary ersatz rites of initiation-grade and high school graduation; reaching the age when one can drive, drink, and smoke; college or university graduation, marking the beginning of one's career; having children out of wedlock; divorce; and retirement. These stages are essentially unreal. No wonder most of us, in particular our men, are bored stiff with religion and morality and seek escape in sports, careers, drugs, sex, and other false adventures.

A Step Further

The study of Catholic culture reaffirms that man, though he may be "wild at heart," must also be "saintly of soul." The ways in which this took place in Catholic European culture needs much more study, especially the process in which American Catholic immigrants maintained for a time and ultimately lost their Catholic cultural rites of initiation. In the meantime, in light of the modern secularism, Eldredge's stages may be the best we have for the moment as regards the culture at large.

Regardless of the stages, the main point is that a mature Christian man must have a personal relationship and adventure with God based upon a disciplined spiritual life that informs his daily worldly life. This part of Eldredge's vision is beautiful. He doesn't tell us anything we don't already know, but he tells us in a way that brings to life the reality of God's love for us. This section, mainly chapter 6 of *Wild at Heart*, must be savored by the reader. Eldredge once again overemphasizes the notion of the "wound." There is great truth in this need for intense self-examination, but it needs to be tempered and complemented with a Catholic understanding of original sin, a philosophy of man, and the spiritual life. Eldredge is wise to call us to an intimate dependence upon God. But a greater recognition of the notion that "grace perfects nature," and of the importance of a sacramental life, is required if we want men to have a truly masculine and mature incarnational life. Without the Church and a sacramental saintly life, man will remain only wild at heart, but in today's world, that is a step in the right direction.

All in all, given his limitation, Eldredge has done well. We have but skimmed his argument, and other aspects, especially the role of women in the masculine heart, warrant attention. Regardless, *Wild at Heart* and *The Way of the Wild Heart* are good books. They are best read by a mature and discerning Catholic. I highly recommend them to you.

[1] John Eldredge has authored a number of books; his two most popular are *Wild at Heart* and *The Way of the Wild Heart*. He has also coauthored with his wife, Stasi Eldredge, a companion work entitled *Captivating: Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman's Soul*.

Recommended Song

Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory

Author

Vince Phelan

Strengthen Your Marriage through Faith and Faith Based Activities

Summary

There are countless books on how to strengthen your marriage by improving communication, understanding the needs of your spouse, learning to fight fair, etc. What about the relationship you and your spouse have with God? How do we strengthen our marriage by strengthening our faith?

Objective

Activities with your spouse such as romantic dinners and walks on the beach can provide excellent opportunities to grow closer to one another. However, according to the Journal of Marriage and Family, couples that study Scripture, pray and attend church together are significantly more likely to say they are happy in their marriage.

Faith based thought starters with your spouse:

- Pray together
- Volunteer at a non profit
- Learn together: Visit a religious museum, tour the athenaeum
- Adoration
- Bible Study
- Surround yourself with other couples sharing your faith
- Admire God's creations: Hiking, Stargazing, watch a sunset
- Attend a marriage retreat
- Walk the steps at Immaculata
-

Bible Readings

1. Ephesians 6:16
In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all (the) flaming arrows of the evil one.
2. Hebrews 11:1
Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen
3. Proverbs 3:5-6
Trust in the Lord with all your heart, on your own intelligence rely not; In all your ways be mindful of him, and he will make straight your path

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 153
When St. Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus declared to him that this revelation did not come "from flesh and blood," but from "my Father who is in heaven."²⁴ *Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him. "Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and 'makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth.'"*

Strengthen Your Marriage through Faith and Faith Based Activities

2. Paragraphs 157

Faith is *certain*. It is more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie. To be sure, revealed truths can seem obscure to human reason and experience, but “the certainty that the divine light gives is greater than that which the light of natural reason gives. “Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt.”

3. Paragraphs 166

Faith is a personal act—the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself. But faith is not an isolated act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone. You have not given yourself faith as you have not given yourself life. The believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others. Our love for Jesus and for our neighbor impels us to speak to others about our faith. Each believer is thus a link in the great chain of believers. I cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and by my faith I help support others in the faith

4. Paragraphs 1661

The sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love which Christ has loved his Church; the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1799)

Small Group Questions

1. Do you spend time both individually and as a couple praying and studying God’s word?
2. What are some activities you do as a couple that helps strengthen your faith?
3. How strong is your own faith in God? Is this evident to your spouse?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.beliefnet.com/Love-Family/Relationships/Dating/Galleries/10-Faith-Filled-Date-Ideas.aspx?p=4>
2. <http://simplyoneinmarriage.com/protecting-your-marriage-with-the-armor-of-god-part-five-the-shield-of-faith-a-couples-bible-study/>

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start a habit of prayer in your household if you haven’t done so already.
2. Come up with at least one date night idea that will help strengthen your faith

Recommended Song

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

Author

Dan Driggers

Four Ways to Encounter Jesus in the Mass

Summary

Is Mass boring or are we? Would you like to have four encounters with Jesus in the Mass that can transform your life? Jesus waits for you there, to meet you...in the community, in His Word, in the Priest and in the Eucharist.

Objective

We will take a look at the Mass as an event - a point of contact, communication and communion with Jesus Christ. We will learn how the ritual of the Mass is a crucial event where Jesus Christ is present in four distinct ways:

1. In the community
2. In His Word
3. Through the Priest
4. Through the Eucharist

When we learn how to “be on the lookout for Jesus Christ” at Mass; when the Mass is no longer just a ritual that doesn’t make sense, but instead becomes an event through which we encounter Jesus Christ, then it will be anything but boring. In fact, it will have an enormous impact on your life and even be transformational.

Bible Readings

1. 1 Cor. 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ‘This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant of my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes”

2. Matthew. 5:23–24

Assemble on the Lord’s day, and break bread and offer the Eucharist; but first make confession of your faults, so that your sacrifice may be a pure one. Anyone who has a difference with his fellow is not to take part with you until he has been reconciled, so as to avoid any profanation of your sacrifice.

3. Luke 22:19

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me’.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1382

The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's body and blood. But the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed toward the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through communion. To receive communion is to receive Christ himself who has offered himself for us.

2. Paragraph 1378

Worship of the Eucharist.

In the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord. "The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession.

Small Group Questions

1. What effort do you put in to understanding what is going on during Mass? You only get out of it what you put in.
2. Do you challenge your family to participate and be attentive during Mass?

Recommended Resources

1. "The Mass: Four Encounters with Jesus That Will Change Your Life", Dr. Tom Curran
http://mycatholicfaith.org/files/TheMass_Curran.pdf
2. "The Lamb's Supper" – Scott Hahn
3. The Real Presence Of Jesus Christ In The Sacrament Of The Eucharist: Basic Questions And Answers - <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/order-of-mass/liturgy-of-the-eucharist/the-real-presence-of-jesus-christ-in-the-sacrament-of-the-eucharist-basic-questions-and-answers.cfm>

Accountability

1. Next time you attend Mass actively try to encounter Jesus through your fellow parishioners, in the readings, through the priest's homily and through the Eucharist.

Recommended Song

Christ Be Our Light

Author(s)

Tony Heekin and Graham Galloway

Included Resources

(Introduction from) "The Mass: Four Encounters with Jesus That Will Change Your Life", Dr. Tom Curran http://mycatholicfaith.org/files/TheMass_Curran.pdf

Is Mass Boring or are We?

I love going to Mass. But I often hear, "Mass is boring. We say the same thing every Sunday; it doesn't make sense. Why should I go to Mass when I don't get anything out of it?" If you've ever found yourself saying these things or wondering what to say to someone who does, then please keep reading.

do you go to Mass because you are supposed to but don't really understand what's going on? do you have a hard time keeping your mind from wandering? Would you like the Mass to have a bigger impact on your life but you're not sure what to do about it? I wrote this book for you. simply put, the Mass is not dull. We are dull. I know this first hand.

For years my mind was dulled by a lack of awareness. I didn't comprehend what was *really happening* at Mass, what was being *offered to me* and what was being *asked of me*. too often I sat in the pew watching the priest like an uninterested spectator observing and occasionally reacting to what was happening on the field. once I realized that the pew was part of the playing field, Mass became a lot less boring. At Mass, there are no seats for spectators. If you are there, even in a pew, you are in the game. Just as a football team is made up of players with different but uniquely important roles, at Mass you and I have a role to play that is irreplaceable and vital. We shouldn't settle for being mere *spectators*. Gradually, I came to see that there is a lot at stake in playing my part well, in being what the Church calls a "full, conscious and active" *participant* at Mass.

When a football team is losing and down to its last play, the quarterback will try to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat by throwing a "Hail Mary" pass. I imagine him in the huddle looking his receivers in the eyes and saying, "This is our last chance. I am counting on you." There is a lot at stake for these receivers. The outcome of the game is being placed in their hands. As dramatic as is that moment in a football game, it pales in comparison to what is at stake when we are "receivers" at Mass. What is placed in our hands is immeasurably more precious than a football, because it is not a *what*, but a *Who*: Jesus Christ. He is counting on you.

FOUR ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS THAT WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE

The Catholic Church teaches that Jesus Christ is present at Mass in four distinct ways: in the *community* gathered, in the *Word* proclaimed, in the *priest* who presides, and in

the *Eucharist*. But He is not only present, He is active. In fact, the root meaning of the Latin word for "presence" is "to turn towards." Jesus Christ is present at Mass in these four ways, turned towards you, addressing you. Jesus Christ doesn't see a crowd at Mass. He sees you. He intends to come close to you, speak to you, live in you and change your life. As I became more aware of this, a sense of expectation and even drama grew in me. Will I recognize Jesus Christ turning toward me at Mass today? Once I knew that life-changing encounters with Jesus Christ awaited me at every Mass, I began to look and listen for Him with new eyes and ears. It was so much easier to pay attention when I realized what was at stake: missing out on meeting the living Lord, Jesus Christ.

You might be saying to yourself, "I have gone to Mass my whole life and have rarely, if ever, experienced a life-changing encounter with Jesus." That's why I wrote this book. In it, I invite you to take a closer look at what you say and do during Mass. If you are like me and thousands of others who have discovered the message of this book, you will be amazed at what you've been missing.

Chapter by chapter, I accompany you from the time you pull into the church parking lot to the moment you walk out after the final blessing. If I do my job well, you will learn how to recognize and respond to Jesus Christ's drawing near you at Mass. That's my goal: to help you see with new eyes what is so familiar to you, and hear with new ears what you've heard over and over at Mass so that you might respond well and be changed.

WHY THIS BOOK?

There are a number of books written with the goal of improving our understanding of the *ritual* of the Mass, by explaining its biblical roots, history or symbolism. Other books present theological insights or reflect on the correct way of celebrating Mass. Altogether, these books provide an invaluable service by deepening our appreciation for the mystery and majesty of the Mass.

But I have yet to find a book that examines the Mass, from beginning to end, as an *event*. That is what I do in this book. At Mass you are involved in a *ritual* that is an *event*. By looking at the Mass as an event, I focus on how it is a point of contact, communication and communion with Jesus Christ. I will show that Jesus Christ approaches you through the ritual in ways that will change your life. This approach does not negate the value of the Mass as a ritual. Rather, it shows how the ritual of the Mass is itself a *crucial event*.

THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

At Mass, when we participate in the ritual Jesus Christ instituted at the Last Supper, we come into contact with an event greater than the “greatest show on earth.” To be

sure, the Mass is not a show, but during Mass, the greatest “showing up” on earth occurs. Why? Because Jesus Christ shows up at Mass in ways He does nowhere else. But He doesn’t just show up. By His presence in the community, the Word, the priest and the Eucharist, He invites us to encounter *events* that are overwhelming in their majesty and power.

At Mass:

1. Jesus Christ includes you in His thanks and praise of God the Father, uniting Heaven and earth in one *Community* of thanksgiving and worship.
2. He communicates with you as *Word*, speaking the personal message you most need to hear at that moment.
3. He involves you in the crucial event where He is both *Priest* and Victim, called the Paschal Mystery (Jesus’ Passion, death, Resurrection and Ascension).
4. He approaches you as Bread from Heaven, to be consumed by you in the *Eucharist* in order to transform you into Himself.

This is what happens at every Mass. In this book, I focus on these four encounters with Jesus Christ being offered to you. Your entire life is going to be changed. If only your eyes are open to see what is really happening. If only you have the ears to hear. If only you’ll stop being a *spectator*. It’s time to get off the sidelines and into the game. It’s time to be a *participant*.

You tell me. Is this boring?

6 Ways to Encounter Jesus in the Mass:

<http://catholicmom.com/2014/03/24/6-ways-to-encounter-jesus-in-mass/6-ways-to-encounter-jesus-in-mass/>

Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me. (Luke 22:19)

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God’s presence is everywhere. Mass is my favorite place to come into his presence. Each part of the liturgy helps me experience a personal encounter with Jesus. Here’s the place to develop this relationship with Jesus and cultivate it in our children.

Christ is present in the assembly of the body of Christ in the pews, for he has promised “*where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them.*” (Mt 18:20) So sing and pray knowing that Christ is among us, gathered as the body of Christ.

Christ is present in the priest or bishop who presides *in persona Christi*, in the person of Christ. When they vest before celebrating Mass the priests “put on Christ” in a special way.

Christ is present in the word proclaimed in the readings. It is Christ himself, as the Incarnate Word, who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read.

The Real Presence of Christ is always manifested in the elements of bread and wine, which become his body and blood. The most intense manifestation of the presence of Christ is in the holy Eucharist.

Christ is present in the presence of the saints and angels adoring God around the altar with us, as Jesus offers his body and blood to God his Father in heaven for our sins.

Christ is present in the holy Eucharist that we receive in each of our individual bodies, so he dwells inside us.

Each of these channels of his presence is real, even though different. Each offers us a unique opportunity to recognize Christ with us, around us, within us.

We can prepare to receive his presence in the Eucharist through repentance and meditation before mass. Fully participate in mass. Surrender to the Lord at the consecration with expectant faith in God that he will fill you with his love to overflowing.

Burn in your mind the memory of that moment of communion with him. Stay in his presence by returning to this touchstone during the day with songs of thanksgiving in your heart. Cherish him as you bring his presence everywhere you go.

Which of these manifestations of Jesus’ presence in the mass do you find most endearing?

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How do I help my children move from memorized prayer to a relationship with the Lord?

Summary

The apostles asked Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). As parents, we are to be the first teachers of our children in the school of prayer. That can be a daunting task, especially as they get older and need to grow in their prayer life. Come find out some ways to help your kids (and you) deepen your prayer lives through a living relationship with the Lord.

Objective

It is important to teach our kids at an early age to memorize such prayers as the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, etc. However, as the kids get older, we need to show them that prayer is much more than rote memorization, or they will eventually drift away from the faith because their faith is not rooted in a personal relationship with God, who remains for them abstract and aloof. Pope Benedict XVI wrote in *Deus Caritas Est*: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.” Pope Francis reinforces this idea in *Evangelii Gaudium*: “On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over: ‘Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.’”

There are many ways to help children develop a deeper relationship with the Lord as they move from memorized prayers to a more personal encounter with God. Here are four:

1. Rosary – The Rosary takes memorized prayer (The Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, etc.) and adds the dimension of meditation to that prayer. Because the prayers themselves are scriptural (The Our Father and the first half of the Hail Mary) and most of the mysteries come from the scriptures about Jesus’ life and teachings, meditating on those mysteries brings us closer to who Jesus is and his great love for us.
2. Eucharistic Adoration – Jesus’ Real Presence in the Eucharist gives us a prime opportunity to physically spend time with Jesus in a way that is concrete.
3. Prayer of the Imagination – St. Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises* encourages us to imagine ourselves as a person in a scene from the scriptures. It’s as if we are watching a movie in which we are character in a scene. This helps make the scriptures come alive for us and see ourselves as having a relationship with Jesus.
4. Contemplative Prayer – If we use St. Teresa of Avila’s definition of contemplative prayer as quoted in the *Catechism* (see below), then this form of prayer, which too often seems reserved for mystics and cloistered religious, becomes possible for all God’s people.

Bible Readings

1. John 15:15

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. When you pass through the

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water, I will be with you; in the rivers you shall not drown. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned; the flames shall not consume you.

2. John 15:9-11

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

3. John 21:15-17

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.

4. Romans 8:38-39

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2565

In the New Covenant, prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond measure, with his Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit.

2. Paragraph 2666

To pray "Jesus" is to invoke him and to call him within us. His name is the only one that contains the presence it signifies. Jesus is the Risen One, and whoever invokes the name of Jesus is welcoming the Son of God who loved him and who gave himself up for him.

3. Paragraph 2709

What is contemplative prayer? St. Teresa answers: "Contemplative prayer [*oración mental*] in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us." Contemplative prayer seeks him "whom my soul loves." It is Jesus, and in him, the Father. We seek him, because to desire him is always the beginning of love, and we seek him in that pure faith which causes us to be born of him and to live in him. In this inner prayer we can still meditate, but our attention is fixed on the Lord himself.

Small Group Questions

1. How do your children pray?
2. How do you model prayer for your children? Do you need to enhance your relationship with the Lord?

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Recommended Resources

1. The Rosary as a Tool for Meditation: <http://www.loyolapress.com/the-rosary-as-a-tool-for-meditation-by-liz-kelly.htm>
2. Developing a Personal Relationship with Jesus through Eucharistic Adoration: http://catholic-church.org/kuwait/relationship_jesus.htm
3. Imagination and Ignatian Spirituality: <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/pray-with-your-imagination>
4. Contemplative Prayer (video of Fr. Martin Laird, OSA): <http://video.pbs.org/video/2177471279/>
(Note: Don't be put off by the gong; Fr. Laird's approach to contemplative prayer is deeply rooted in the Christian tradition. For more detail on his approach, see his book, *Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation*.)

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to talk to your children about how to enhance their prayer life.
2. Pick one of the above approaches to try in your own prayer life.

Recommended Song

Amazing Grace

Author(s)

Pete Caccavari

Included Resources

The Rosary as a Tool for Meditation

<http://www.loyolapress.com/the-rosary-as-a-tool-for-meditation-by-liz-kelly.htm>

Gently focus on each mystery as you reach it in the course of praying the rosary. You might find it helpful to read some devotional material about the mystery. You might also listen to music, write, or practice exercises of the imagination.

Because the traditional mysteries are so visually oriented, I will sometimes begin my meditation by painting the scene in my imagination. For example, I might think about what kind of a brush and what colors I would use for the nativity of Jesus. I would think about painting the picture, about how I would depict the gentleness and innocence of a newborn. As I would begin to work on the picture in my mind, my meditation might settle on the virtues of gentleness and innocence. Where in my life is Jesus teaching me how to be gentle, tender? Where in my life can I model the innocence of a newborn child? In what area of my life do I need to place my total trust in Jesus, relying on him for my every need, or to become more childlike and less childish?

Developing a Personal Relationship with Jesus through Eucharistic Adoration

http://catholic-church.org/kuwait/relationship_jesus.htm

Jesus wants to be your best friend. He is the one friend that will always be there for you. He always loves you and wants what is best for you. He will never abandon you or reject you. When you offend Him you only have to turn back to Him and He forgives you. He loves you still even when you have hurt Him. He can be closer to you than your best friend if you want Him to. He is considerate; he will never force you to be with Him. How close you want the relationship to be is up to you. You have to spend time with Him in prayer, listening and just being with Him. What better way to accomplish this than within adoration of the

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Blessed Sacrament... Jesus is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament, body, blood, soul and divinity. That is why it is called the Real Presence.

Imagination and Ignatian Spirituality

<http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/pray-with-your-imagination>

The best-known example of this use of the imagination in the Spiritual Exercises is the contemplation on Jesus' birth in the second week. Ignatius suggests that we imagine "the labors of the journey to Bethlehem, the struggles of finding a shelter, the poverty, the thirst, the hunger, the cold, the insults that meet the arrival of God-with-us." In the course of the Exercises, Ignatius proposes many such scenes from the Gospels for imaginative contemplation. He chooses scenes of Jesus acting rather than Jesus teaching or telling parables. He wants us to see Jesus interacting with others, Jesus making decisions, Jesus moving about, Jesus ministering. He doesn't want us to think about Jesus. He wants us to experience him. He wants Jesus to fill our senses. He wants us to meet him.

Contemplative Prayer (Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*)

That we might accustom ourselves to a continual conversation with Him, with freedom and in simplicity. That we need only to recognize God intimately present with us, to address ourselves to Him every moment, that we may beg His assistance for knowing His will in things doubtful, and for rightly performing those which we plainly see He requires of us, offering them to Him before we do them, and giving Him thanks when we have done.

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Goals: Are You and Your Spouse on the Same Page?

Summary

Relationships are dynamic and are ever changing. Is your relationship with your wife growing closer or further apart? One way for the relationship to improve is to have common shared goals or dreams.

Goals take many forms, you may call them “dreams, expectations, desire, ideals, vision, values”. Shared goals don’t happen by accident, they take work and communication. Here are some proven methods to set goals and execute the plan.

Objective

A relationship without goals or a common vision is subject entirely to external influences, regardless of whether they are desirable or not. Setting goals as a couple ensures that you always have something common to work towards. This common goal and vision may be the glue that binds you together in times of hardship.

Relationship goals--Where to begin:

First, pick an area of your relationship that you'd like to work on. Here are some examples:

1. Communication goals: How can you become a better communicator? This might involve asking your partner more questions about his/her job, not interrupting your partner while s/he is speaking, or stating your needs more directly.

2. Compassion/support goals: This might involve asking your partner what s/he needs, driving him/her to a doctor's appointment, or setting aside a certain amount of time each day to check in with each other.

3. Affection/love goals: How often and how clearly do you express your emotions? Being affectionate can take on many different forms: directly with loving statements; through touch, such as hand-holding or a shoulder rub; or by establishing special gestures that only the two of you share. Establish goals to be more demonstrative means finding creative ways to express loving feelings on a regular basis.

4. Negotiation/compromise goals: Being in a committed relationship means learning to compromise. Taking steps to appreciate your partner's viewpoint (even when you may not agree with him/her) sends the message that you take your partner's needs seriously. Negotiating and learning to "agree to disagree" are essential for the health of your relationship.

5. Commitment goals: You can't feel an intimate connection with another human being unless you first feel safe with him/her. When you demonstrate commitment, you lay the groundwork for emotional safety and therefore, for intimacy. Think of commitment like a safety net: even during difficult times, that commitment will be there to break your fall. Establishing commitment goals might involve spending more time with your partner or making decisions that clearly demonstrate that your relationship is a top priority in your life.

6. Physical intimacy goals: Take steps to become a more attuned, responsive sexual partner. For instance, take the time to discover all the ways in which your partner would like to be sexually satisfied or come to an agreement with your partner regarding how often you'd both like to make love.

7. Shared interests/activities goals: The most successful married couples cite friendship as a key ingredient of their long-term success. Work toward developing activities that you both enjoy and that you both enjoy sharing with one another. You might try a new activity together each month, such as taking tennis lessons or learning to speak a new language.

8. Household responsibility goals: How involved are you with completing household chores? Does it feel like the work is equally or fairly divided? The mundane details of daily life (things like cooking, shopping, cleaning) should be negotiated, not just assumed by default. Find out if your partner is happy with the current arrangement by asking if there is more that you can do.

This list is by no means exhaustive. Reflect on the areas of your relationship that you'd like to improve. Do some introspecting on your own and also think back to feedback you may have already received from your partner. For instance, if your partner has questioned your commitment by noting, "You never call when you say you're going to," you can develop a goal to show your commitment by becoming more reliable in following through on your promises.

Bible Readings

Ephesians 5:25-31

25Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26to make her holy, cleansing[b] her by the washing with water through the word, 27and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— 30for we are members of his body. 31"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1605:

Holy Scripture affirms that man and woman were created for one another: "It is not good that the man should be alone." The woman, "flesh of his flesh," his equal, his nearest in all things, is given to him by God as a "helpmate"; she thus represents God from whom comes our help. "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." The Lord himself shows that this signifies an unbreakable union of their two lives by recalling what the plan of the Creator had been "in the beginning": "So they are no longer two, but one flesh."

2. Paragraph 373

In God's plan man and woman have the vocation of "subduing" the earth as stewards of God. This sovereignty is not to be an arbitrary and destructive domination. God calls man and woman, made in the image of the Creator "who loves everything that exists", to share in his providence toward other creatures; hence their responsibility for the world God has entrusted to them.

Small Group Questions

1. How have you used written goals to improve your life?
2. How do you get to shared goals from personal wants?

Goals: Are You and Your Spouse on the Same Page?

Recommended Resources

1. [How to Conduct a Family Therapy Session](http://www.ehow.com/how_4912419_conduct-family-therapy-session.html)
http://www.ehow.com/how_4912419_conduct-family-therapy-session.html
2. [Goal Setting Strategies - Goals for Marriages](http://www.goalsettingstrategies.com/goals_for_marriages.html)
http://www.goalsettingstrategies.com/goals_for_marriages.html
3. [Creating Dreams and Goals: Creating an Emotional Connection](https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/cfs/cfs-747-w.pdf)
<https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/cfs/cfs-747-w.pdf>

Accountability

1. Set a relationship goal with your wife this week.
2. Make a list of 3 goals to improve your marriage.

Recommended Song

We Are Many Parts

Author(s)

Sean Mullarkey

Personal Relationship with Jesus

Summary

Every relationship involves some type of risk. Do we have a living relationship with Jesus or are we simply trying to be a good person, or just practice religion?

Objective

Many non-Catholic Christians commonly speak of "knowing" Jesus and of having a "personal relationship" with him. "Do you know Jesus?" is just another way of asking "Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?" Such an inquiry can lead to the Catholic being accused of relying on a "religion" rather than a "relationship" for salvation. Religion is thought to be bad, a relationship good. Do these Christians know something Catholics don't?

At the start of the *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis writes: "I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not for him or her."

Christianity is a religion whose adherents are expected to live moral lives that include works. And Scripture reveals the very same thing about truly knowing, or being in relationship with, God. Thus, to know God truly is to be a religious Christian: Religion and relationship are not separate entities.

Therefore, making religion and relationship both priorities is important. We must live our lives the way Jesus taught – love God (relationship), and love others (understand and practice our religion).

How are you doing with these 2 things?

Bible Readings

1. Isaiah Chapter 43 11-13

But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, and formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine.

When you pass through the water, I will be with you; in the rivers you shall not drown. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned; the flames shall not consume you.

For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your savior.

2. John 14:20-23

On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him." Judas, not the Iscariot, said to him, "Master, [then] what happened that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.

3. 1 Cor 1:9

God is faithful, and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 787

From the beginning, Jesus associated his disciples with his own life, revealed the mystery of the Kingdom to them, and gave them a share in his mission, joy, and sufferings. Jesus spoke of a still more intimate communion between him and those who would follow him: "Abide in me, and I in you. . . . I am the vine, you are the branches." And he proclaimed a mysterious and real communion between his own body and ours: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

2. Paragraph 521

Christ enables us to live in him all that he himself lived, and he lives it in us. "By his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man." We are called only to become one with him, for he enables us as the members of his Body to share in what he lived for us in his flesh as our model: We must continue to accomplish in ourselves the stages of Jesus' life and his mysteries and often to beg him to perfect and realize them in us and in his whole Church. . . . For it is the plan of the Son of God to make us and the whole Church partake in his mysteries and to extend them to and continue them in us and in his whole Church. This is his plan for fulfilling his mysteries in us.

Small Group Questions

1. What habits do you have in your daily life or at certain times of the year that put you in a position to have a living relationship with God?
2. Aside from births, deaths, and sacraments, when do you feel closest to God? How does this affect your family?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.catholic.com/magazine/articles/do-you-know-jesus>
2. <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/standingonmyhead/a-personal-relationship-with-jesus>
3. <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/why.pope.francis.is.calling.catholics.to.have.a.personal.encounter.with.jesus/49378.htm>
4. <http://www.catholicbasictraining.com/apologetics/coursetexts/2k.htm>
5. <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/dan-burke/can-a-catholic-have-a-personal-relationship-with-jesus>

Accountability

1. Find a quiet time for prayer and spend that time getting to know Jesus a bit more
2. Possibly try saying the rosary or visiting the adoration chapel. Do something for another person without being asked.

Recommended Song

Glory and Praise to Our God

Author(s)

Steve Frazer

Included Resources

Excerpt from <http://www.catholic.com/magazine/articles/do-you-know-jesus>

Christians are often surprised to learn that the word "relationship" does not appear anywhere in Scripture at all. Nowhere in the Bible do we find the apostles or others asking the question, "Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?" Even so, Scripture does speak of knowing God and of not knowing him. In this passage, we discover what it means to be in relationship with God.

Paul tells the Christians in Galatia:

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were in bondage to beings that by nature are no gods; but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more? (Gal. 4:8-9)

This knowing God and being known by God which Paul writes about implies relationship.

Excerpt from <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/standingonmyhead/a-personal-relationship-with-jesus>

Finally, the best way to think about this is marriage. It's great to fall in love. It's wonderful to have those feelings and emotions of passion and affection. All of that leads to a wedding. But a marriage is the daily grind—the hard work of love. Marriage is "for better for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health until death do us part".

Same with the "personal relationship with Jesus" and it's no mistake therefore that Jesus calls the church his "bride" and that he is the "bridegroom" and there is so much nuptial imagery in the Bible. This is what our relationship with Christ is like. We're married to him, and marriage is full of hard work and sacrifice, but it is also full of love, and life and ultimate glory.

Are Your Friends Making You a Better Disciple of Christ and Vice Versa

Summary

How are you being influenced by the people you associate with? How are you influencing others to be more Christ like?

Objective

Motivational speaker [Jim Rohn](#) famously said that [we are the average of the five people](#) we spend the most time with.

When it comes to relationships, we are greatly influenced — whether we like it or not — by those closest to us. It affects our way of thinking, our self-esteem, and our decisions. Of course, everyone is their own person, but research has shown that we're affected by our choice of acquaintances.

Think about who you let your children hang out with, are their friends challenging them to be better versions of themselves. We can't necessarily pick our children's friends but we can influence who they hang out with by what activities we encourage them to participate in. We must also lead by example.

We are stuck with some of the people we spend time with, so if you feel they are a negative influence on you, then you need to be a very positive influence on them to improve their character. This will limit the negative effect they have on you and others. Spouses fall into this group. Working together as a couple for self-improvement can improve the affect you have on each other. Attend events like the married couples dinner, join a small faith group together, and attend self-improvement workshops together, exercise together.

Are you spending too much time with your college buddy that has never really gotten beyond the college party and play mentality. It might be time to move on, you don't need to completely cut off relationships with negative influencers but you do need to restrict their access to you. Make a list of people you know that you feel would be good influences on you. Look around the room at father's team; I'm sure there are good role models here. Invite them over for dinner, have lunch with them, invite them golfing. Get involved in other groups that are likely to have members of character.

Conclusion: work on improving yourself so that you can be the best version of yourself and have a positive effect on those around you and secondly make a conscious effort to associate with other people that challenge you to be a better version of yourself.

Bible Readings

1. Proverbs 13:20

Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

2. Matthew 5:13-16

"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

3. Psalm 1:1

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2480

Every word or attitude is forbidden which by flattery, adulation, or complaisance encourages and confirms another in malicious acts and perverse conduct. Adulation is a grave fault if it makes one an accomplice in another's vices or grave sins. Neither the desire to be of service nor friendship justifies duplicitous speech. Adulation is a venial sin when it only seeks to be agreeable, to avoid evil, to meet a need, or to obtain legitimate advantages.

2. Paragraph 2479

Detraction and calumny destroy the *reputation and honor of one's neighbor*. Honor is the social witness given to human dignity, and everyone enjoys a natural right to the honor of his name and reputation and to respect. Thus, detraction and calumny offend against the virtues of justice and charity.

3. Paragraph 165

It is then we must turn to the *witnesses of faith*: to Abraham, who "in hope... believed against hope";⁵¹ to the Virgin Mary, who, in "her pilgrimage of faith," walked into the "night of faith"⁵² in sharing the darkness of her son's suffering and death; and to so many others: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."⁵³ (2719)

Small Group Questions

1. Who are the people you spend most time with?
 - Do they elevate you or bring you down?
 - Are they proactive go-getters exhibiting qualities that you admire or people who just sit and criticize?
 - Do they motivate or drain you?
2. How do your habits and idiosyncrasies affect the people around you?
3. Do you reflect the light of Christ at home, work and at play?
4. How can we influence who our children are inspired by?

Recommended Resources

1. <https://catholicbusinessjournal.biz/p/560>

2. <http://bonfirehealth.com/positive-influence-inspiring-success/>
3. <http://www.drlaura.com/b/Teaching-Children-About-Choosing-Friends/-227052678898835268.html>
4. http://ubdavid.org/advanced/practical/practical-christian_19.html

Accountability

1. What is our game plan to release version 2.0 of ourselves?
2. What change in a relationship can I make this week to better myself or someone else?
3. I am going to inspire my children this week by doing _____. (fill in the blank)

Recommended Song

Gather Us In

Author(s)

Sean Mullarkey

Included Resources

Is Your Spouse Helping You Become a Better Person? | BlackandMarriedWithKids.com

Why did you get married? I got married because I wanted a partner to join me on this journey we call life, and I wanted to start a family. That's it. I don't have some deep, complicated reason for wanting to say "I do." I really just wanted to find a good person that I love and trust to spend the rest of my life with.

The question I asked myself before I got married (and still ask myself on a regular basis) is, "is my relationship making me a better person?" Don't get me wrong; I definitely think that I am responsible for creating and cultivating my own joy and I take complete ownership of becoming a better version of myself. However, I truly believe that any relationship I am in, particularly the one with my husband, should be contributing towards making me a better person.

What exactly do I mean when I say, "make you a better person"? I mean:

Does your spouse encourage you?

Does he or she challenge you?

Does your partner help you strengthen your weaknesses and make good use of your strengths?

Does he or she tell you what you need to hear even if it's not what you want to hear?

Does your spouse do and say things to help you become better in every possible way.

Does your marriage make you kinder, more patient, more giving, etc.?

If you feel like your marriage and your spouse don't make you better, and may even bring out the worst in you, don't dust the issue under the rug because doing so could cause irreparable damage to your relationship. To be in a life-long commitment with someone and feel like they are not helping you become a better person is really not what marriage is all about. After all, part of the joy of marriage is growing *with* someone and feeling like the relationship is mutually beneficial.

In a marriage, both parties should continuously ask themselves if the partnership is making them better people. If the answer is yes, keep doing what you are doing and enjoy the ride. If the answer is no, there is hope to change things but the issue can't go un-addressed.

Are Your Friends Making You a Better Disciple of Christ and Vice Versa

We should all do what we can to make ourselves better people, but we should also be invested in whether or not the person we married is growing and becoming a better person, too. I think one recipe for a healthy, happy marriage is one where each person is working on improving him or herself, while actively doing their best to make their spouse a better person.

You & Your Wife - Differences in Faith

Summary

You and your wife have different views on all sorts of things. What if one of these differences is how you practice your faith? Perhaps one of you is Catholic and one is not. Maybe one of you is a “Cradle Catholic” and the other is a convert. You still have to make it work as a couple. If you have children, you have to make it work for them too. How do you handle this potentially sensitive topic?

Objective

Spiritual intimacy in marriage is about more than just spending time in God's Word. It's about learning how to connect with your spouse through your faith. Often times, couples say that they "can't connect with their spouse" because they're not in the same place spiritually. But, there are small things you can do as a couple to become more like-minded in your spiritual walk. Whether you and your wife are of different religions, or just varying “degrees” of Catholic, explore ways to more effectively relate to your wife regarding your faith(s).

Bible Readings

1. 1 Corinthians 7:12-14,16

12 To the rest I say: if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she is willing to go on living with him, he should not divorce her; 13 and if any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he is willing to go on living with her, she should not divorce her husband. 14 For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through the brother. Otherwise your children would be unclean, whereas in fact they are holy. 16 For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband; or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

2. 2 Peter 1:5-11

5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, 6 knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with devotion, 7 devotion with mutual affection, mutual affection with love. 8 If these are yours and increase in abundance, they will keep you from being idle or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 Anyone who lacks them is blind and shortsighted, forgetful of the cleansing of his past sins. 10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more eager to make your call and election firm, for, in doing so, you will never stumble. 11 For, in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you.

3. Romans 1:14-17

14 To Greeks and non-Greeks alike, to the wise and the ignorant, I am under obligation; 15 that is why I am eager to preach the gospel also to you in Rome. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: for Jew first, and then Greek. 17 For in it is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous by faith will live.”

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1634

Difference of confession between the spouses does not constitute an insurmountable obstacle for marriage, when they succeed in placing in common what they have received from their respective communities, and learn from each other the way in which each lives in fidelity to Christ. But the difficulties of mixed marriages must not be underestimated. They arise from the fact that the separation of Christians has not yet been overcome. The spouses risk experiencing the tragedy of Christian disunity even in the heart of their own home. Disparity of cult can further aggravate these difficulties. Differences about faith and the very notion of marriage, but also different religious mentalities, can become sources of tension in marriage, especially as regards the education of children. The temptation to religious indifference can then arise.

2. Paragraph 1644

The love of the spouses requires, of its very nature, the unity and indissolubility of the spouses' community of persons, which embraces their entire life: "so they are no longer two, but one flesh." They "are called to grow continually in their communion through day-to-day fidelity to their marriage promise of total mutual self-giving." This human communion is confirmed, purified, and completed by communion in Jesus Christ, given through the sacrament of Matrimony. It is deepened by lives of the common faith and by the Eucharist received together.

3. Paragraph 818-819

818 "However, one cannot charge with the sin of the separation those who at present are born into these communities [that resulted from such separation] and in them are brought up in the faith of Christ, and the Catholic Church accepts them with respect and affection as brothers All who have been justified by faith in Baptism are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers in the Lord by the children of the Catholic Church."

819 "Furthermore, many elements of sanctification and of truth" are found outside the visible confines of the Catholic Church: "the written Word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope, and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as visible elements." Christ's Spirit uses these Churches and ecclesial communities as means of salvation, whose power derives from the fullness of grace and truth that Christ has entrusted to the Catholic Church. All these blessings come from Christ and lead to him, and are in themselves calls to "Catholic unity."

Small Group Questions

1. How has your spiritual journey differed from that of your wife? Do you know the story of your wife's spiritual journey?
2. Do you and your wife have different levels of commitment to your faith? If so, how have you handled this? How have you handled your children's faith formation?

Recommended Resources

1. http://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/strengthening_your_marriage/spiritual_intimacy/blending_two_spiritual_lives.aspx
2. <http://www.sandiego.edu/interchurch/religiousdifferences/religiousdiffedu.htm>
3. <http://www.catholic.com/quickquestions/what-does-the-church-say-about-mixed-faith-marriage>
4. <http://foreverfamilies.byu.edu/Article.aspx?a=146>

Accountability

1. If your wife and you are not "on the same page", set aside some time to discuss this topic. The following are sample questions:
 - a. How important to each of us is our own religious faith?
 - b. How have our backgrounds affected our faith journey?
 - c. How involved does each of us want to be in our child's religious formation?
2. Related to the above, write down a list of the five most important religious or spiritual beliefs that you have in common with your wife. After each of you have composed your lists, share them with one another. How are the lists similar or different? Are there any surprises? If so, why?

Recommended Song

We Are Many Parts

Author(s)

Steve Frazer and John Murphy

Included Resources

1. FAITH AND MARRIAGE — WHEN SPOUSES HAVE DIFFERENT BELIEFS

BY: DONNA ERICKSON COUCH, M.A.

<http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/EDC/preview.aspx?id=231>

After the romantic dust of my marriage settled, the fundamental questions of life surfaced dramatically when my closest friend was killed in a car accident. As I grappled with grief, my husband, Dana, comforted me as best he could. When I talked, however, about my need for God and church (I had drifted away from my Catholic faith), he was silent. Eventually he told me that, while he didn't mind if I wanted religion again, he would not participate.

About 10 years into our marriage, I not only forged my way back to my faith alone, but also embarked on a spiritual quest that changed my life. Through years of confusion and struggle, I prayed and suffered in silence as I tried to reconcile my simultaneous love for God and for my nonparticipant husband. I worried about my role in Dana's salvation and agonized over how to raise our children in the faith by myself.

Nagging questions plagued me: Why had this happened? Would God come between us? Was there anyone else like me in the community? Many years passed until, with the help of my studies in faith development, interpersonal communication and mysticism, I finally made peace with the uncertainties. These rather different topics resonated with me at an opportune time, and I received four transformative insights:

1. After a few years married, it's common to experience a spiritual awakening.

The richness of Catholicism often doesn't resonate until long after the wedding day. Upon completion of Confirmation class or during college, many churchgoers drift away from their practice of the faith. When thoughts turn to marriage, faith is frequently downplayed or discarded by those with limited adolescent or childhood views of faith. We may allow the naïve presumption that "love is all you need" to prevail. Religious practice becomes low or sometimes not even on the priority list.

Later, perhaps after a child or two, it's common to experience an awakening, a need for God and community again. Frequently, those who return are surprised to discover a treasury of meaning in their original faith. Along with the elation of this breakthrough, however, may linger thoughts about the negative effects this may have on significant relationships. Does God come between people?

2. Authentic spirituality isn't divisive.

As my inner life grew and I couldn't share it with Dana, I felt an increasing distance developing between us. When I tried to describe my feelings to a friend, he quoted me the words of Jesus, "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword....and one's foes will be members of one's own household" (Matthew 10:34-36).

Though discouraged, I nonetheless pressed on and, with the help of prayer and a spiritual director, found deeper meaning in this biblical passage. I learned that, even though the incompatible beliefs we hold about God can indeed feel insurmountable, time and maturity quell the fear. Like with marriage, when we commit to God for the long haul, it's natural to experience times of tension.

Perseverance matters most when it comes to love and provides the backbone of authentic spirituality. This awareness led to yet another related insight: All expressions of love are expressions of divine love. As our capacity for God's love increases, so does our ability to love others. Paradoxically, my deep love for God empowered me to love Dana on an even deeper level. In the end, the "sword" of God's love actually keeps us together.

3. The inner journey is a solitary journey into God.

In another Scripture passage, Jesus says that there is no marriage in heaven (Mark 12:25). This was in response to the Pharisees when they questioned him about the eternal consequences of multiple marriages.

If we can imagine this concept as a blueprint for the spiritual journey, an important insight is revealed: While there are many companions on the outer journey, no one may walk the inner path with us. While we can try to describe our personal relationships with God, no one else—not even those to whom we are wed—may share those experiences completely.

God calls each of us into a type of “mystical marriage” which demands that we forsake all others. No one escapes the rigors of the solitary inner journey. Those of us who walk in faith without our spouses have the opportunity of learning this sooner and in a slightly different way.

4. All relationships are mirrors of the divine relationship.

Admittedly, we have a need to share what is deep inside and we long for someone to understand our zeal for God. Fortunately, an “inner landscape” reverberates throughout creation and is communicated through the many people we call friends and intimates. All of our relationships, not just with those who share our faith walk, teach us about God.

Can we see and hear the divine in everyone? Equipped with a bigger vision, we can welcome the challenges of living with those who, without words, can teach us about the subtleties and whispers of God’s presence. Meanwhile, spiritual directors and friends can help us process the complexities of relationship with God. Frequently, others serve this need better than the ones with whom we live.

If you find yourself in the middle of a spiritual awakening, while simultaneously married to someone not on the same page, you can take heart. The challenge of living an intentional, God-centered life provides an opportunity to experience what it means to fall in love again and again—with your spouse, your faith and the beloved Holy One.

When God means something different to your spouse, it’s not the end of the world but rather the starting point for a profound encounter with love’s sacred mysteries.

What advice do you have for an "unequally yoked" marriage?

http://family.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/25920/~/%22unequally-yoked%22-marriage%3F

Here are a few principles to keep in mind as you face the daily challenge of living with a mate who doesn’t share your deepest spiritual commitments:

- 1) Be patient. Try to remember that God loves your spouse even more than you do. He may be taking your partner on a spiritual journey that you know nothing about. He may choose to use you in the process, but He doesn’t need your help. So don’t play the role of the Holy Spirit. Stay in prayer and trust the Lord to do what He wants to do.
- 2) Don’t stand in the way. While perfection isn’t possible or even necessary, your behavior can attract or repel your spouse where spiritual things are concerned. You’re living out what you’re experiencing with God. Is it appealing? Is your relationship with Christ making you a more enjoyable person to live with – or just a more religious one?
- 3) Be authentic. You should not only share your faith with your spouse, but your concerns as well. In other words, don’t be afraid to reveal your personal weaknesses. It would be hypocritical to pretend that you’re not worried when you really are, or that you don’t have doubts when you really do. Your transparency can be especially healing if your mate has felt – accurately or not – that spirituality has become a competition in your marriage. The spouse who struggles with faith issues needs a “safe” and gentle partner to come home to. A holier-than-thou approach is sure to deepen the divide – not only between your partner and yourself, but also between your partner and God.
- 4) Stay balanced. There’s no doubt about the importance of faith. But it’s possible to lose a healthy perspective when you’re worried about your spouse’s spiritual welfare. You can’t be too devoted to Christ, but overspiritualization and hyper-religiosity will hurt your efforts as much as falling into the opposite error of apathy.
- 5) Examine the reasons. Take time to explore and understand the underlying reasons for your spouse’s skepticism. What was his religious experience as a child? Was his faith nurtured or hindered? Was his parents’ faith real and meaningful or a hypocritical chore? The Bible is clear: we’re not authorized to judge others (Matthew 7:1). Sometimes in marriage we’re prone to judge because of what we know – or think we know – about our spouses. Only God can see the individual heart.

Sex in Marriage as God intended it.

Summary

This week's topic challenges spouses to think about the role of sex in their marriage.

Objective

The Church teaches that sex should be Marital, Unitive, and Procreative. That is, sexual activity should take place within the sacrament of Marriage, that it should be built on intimacy, and that it be open to God's creation. Since most of the members of Fathers' Team can easily see the wisdom of sex within the marriage covenant and are fathers, the first and third priorities seem obvious. **The Unitive aspect of sex may be the area where men in our group may need the most guidance and discussion.**

Once or twice a year, we visit with my wife's sister and her husband. When my brother in law and I are sitting around drinking beer with no one else around, the conversation usually turns to his frustration with the amount and quality of sex with his wife. Since our wives are sisters, I guess he thinks I have insights or can at least commiserate with him. After a lot of discussion, I thought to ask him: *"have you talked with your wife about how unhappy you are ?"* I also realized that my communication with my wife needs improvement. My brother in law and I were choosing the easy way out by complaining to each other about our wives. As husbands we need to find ways to communicate our needs and feelings, to listen to our wife's needs and feelings as well. Many husbands have an immature attitude and a lot of misunderstandings about sexual relationships: "I am not getting what I want, but I'm not willing to make myself vulnerable by talking about it with my wife and I don't want to consider what she needs".

Communication is essential for the Unitive aspect of sex in marriage as God intended. Despite our highly sexualized media, sex is still a taboo subject in our culture.

Some things that destroy marital unity:

- Selfishness
- Pride
- Dishonesty
- Jealousy
- Pornography use
- Contraception
- Being a workaholic

Some of the things that build marital unity:

- Love
- Spending time together
- Nonsexual affection

- Conversation
- Honesty
- Trustworthiness
- Shared Activities

Bible Reading

1. Tobit 8:4-9

Tobias got out of bed and said to Sarah, "Sister, get up, and let us pray and implore our Lord that he grant us mercy and safety." So she got up, and they began to pray and implore that they might be kept safe. Tobias began by saying, "Blessed are you, O God of our fathers.... You made Adam, and for him you made his wife Eve as a helper and support. From the two of them the race of mankind has sprung. You said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; let us make a helper for him like himself.' I now am taking this kinswoman of mine, not because of lust, but with sincerity. Grant that she and I may find mercy and that we may grow old together." and they both said, "Amen, Amen." Then they went to sleep for the night.

Catechism Readings

(There are more entries here than are practical to read during the presentation, feel free to use whatever the small group thinks is appropriate)

1. Paragraph 1604

God who created man out of love also calls him to love-the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love. Since God created man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man. It is good, very good, in the Creator's eyes. And this love which God blesses is intended to be fruitful and to be realized in the common work of watching over creation: "And God blessed them, and God said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it'".

2. Paragraph 2360 - 2363

Sexuality is ordered to the conjugal love of man and woman. In marriage the physical intimacy of the spouses becomes a sign and pledge of spiritual communion.

"Sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to each other is not simply biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and woman commit themselves totally to one another until death.

"The acts in marriage by which the intimate and chaste union of the spouses takes place are noble and honorable; the truly human performance of these acts fosters the self-giving they signify and enriches the spouses in joy and gratitude" ([Gaudium et Spes](#) 49 § 2). Sexuality is a source of joy and pleasure:

The Creator himself established that in the [generative] function, spouses should experience pleasure and enjoyment of body and spirit. Therefore, the spouses do nothing evil in seeking this pleasure and enjoyment. They accept what the Creator has intended for them. At the same time, spouses should know how to keep themselves within the limits of just moderation (Pius XII, [Discourse](#), October 29, 1951).

The spouses' union achieves the twofold end of marriage: the good of the spouses themselves and the transmission of life. These two meanings or values of marriage cannot be separated without altering the couple's spiritual life and compromising the goods of marriage and the future of the family. The conjugal love of man and woman thus stands under the twofold obligation of fidelity and fecundity.

Small Group Discussion Questions

Sex in Marriage as God intended it.

1. Is your view of sex the same as God's as revealed in Scripture?
2. Does the term 'Unitive' describe your relationship with your wife?
3. Are there any aspects of our secular culture that support spousal unity?
4. Are you willing to talk with you wife about your sexual relationship and hear things from her that may sound like criticism?
5. Are you willing to change your view of sexual intimacy with you wife so that her needs are met more often?

Accountability

1. Build unity in your marriage this week. Have a meaningful conversation with your wife. Share your feelings with your wife and listen to her feelings.

Included Resources

The Catholic Church, in its official teaching, has always taken a positive view of sexuality in marriage. Marital intercourse, says the [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), is “noble and honorable,” established by God so that “spouses should experience pleasure and enjoyment of body and spirit.” (#2362).

The Church’s positive understanding of sexuality is rooted in the teachings of Jesus that were, in part, drawn from the wisdom of the Old Testament. Both the Book of Genesis and the Song of Songs describe the basic goodness of sexual love in marriage. In the New Testament, Jesus began his public ministry with his supportive presence at the wedding feast of Cana, a further indication of the goodness of marriage.

Marital sexuality achieves two purposes. The Church affirms, first, its role in creating new human life, sometimes called the procreative dimension of sexuality. In giving birth to children and educating them, the couple cooperates with the Creator’s love.

Second, sexual union expresses and deepens the love between husband and wife. This is called the unitive, or relational, aspect of sexuality.

The bond between the procreative and the relational aspects cannot be broken. Each sexual act in a marriage must be open to the possibility of conceiving a child. Contraception is wrong because it separates the act of conception from sexual union. (See [Married Love and the Gift of Life](#) for more on this topic.)

Recent church teaching has tried to integrate the two purposes of marriage into a single perspective, which sees marital sexual love as essentially procreative. Marital love is by its nature fruitful; it generates new life. The God-created expression of marital love, joined to an openness to new life, contributes to the holiness of the couple. The “call to holiness in marriage is a lifelong process of conversion and growth.” (Catholic Catechism for Adults, p. 408)

Like all the baptized, married couples are called to chastity. The Church defines chastity as “the successful integration of sexuality within the person.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2337). Married couples practice the conjugal chastity that is proper to their state in life.

Pope St. John Paul II wanted to find a new and compelling way to express this positive view of sexuality. He developed a strand of thinking about sexuality and its role in human life called “The Theology of the Body.”

The pope begins with the idea that each human being is willed for his or her own sake. Out of love God created human beings as male and female, persons of dignity and worthy of respect. Also out of love, God established marriage as the first communion of persons. In marriage, man and woman totally give themselves to each other, and in this self-giving they discover who they are.

The sin of Adam and Eve ruptured this original unity of body and soul. Sadly, we know the results: too often women and men have become objects to be used and exploited. The salvation won for us by Jesus Christ began the process of restoring the lost unity of body and soul. This process is partly completed here; full unity will be restored in the next life.

The Church teaches that human sexuality is sacred. Within marriage, it fulfills its purpose as an expression of deep, faithful and exclusive love that is open to new life. Marital sexual relations involve profound

Sex in Marriage as God intended it.

openness and receptivity, a complete and mutual self-giving. Sexuality is an important part of that incredibly rich and mysterious pattern in Creation that comes directly from the mind and heart of God.

A Bright Teaching that Makes Good Marriages Great

By Theresa Notare, Ph.D.

Most people enter marriage wanting the best for their spouses and themselves. They want their love to last forever. They hope life won't be too hard and that they too can have the American dream of children, a home and a happy life. These are good things to aspire to. The Catholic Church has similar desires for married couples but goes further. The Church wants good marriages to become great! How? By living God's plan for married love!

Today there are a number of modern practices that are actually bad for marriage. Chapter 7 in the catechism of the World Meeting on the Family sheds light on one of these negative practices: contraception. That may sound strange to many people because popular thought says that contraception is "practical" and even "necessary" in modern life. So, why would the Catholic Church insist that contraception is wrong and against God's plan? The answer may surprise you. It has to do with how God designed the nature of men, women, and marriage.

Men and women are created in God's image. This means that God has given men and women a share in His own nature which includes the ability to love, form relationships, be faithful, forgive, and even procreate. In God's plan, human sexuality is the means by which a man and a woman bring the unique gifts of their masculinity and femininity to each other to form friendships. When we consider that human fertility is part of sexuality, we can see that it is a central gift from God since it is the way by which new life is brought into the world.

In marriage man and woman create a two-in-one-flesh communion of persons for the "whole of life"—a total, self-giving union oriented to the good of the spouses and to having and caring for children (see the *Code of Canon Law*, Can. 1055). God designed marriage to form the family. Within the covenant of marriage, sexual intercourse is the act where husband and wife give all of themselves to each other to express their love and also to cooperate with God to bring new life into the world. St. John Paul II reminds couples that "nothing that is part of themselves can be excluded from this gift" (Message to Centre for Natural Fertility Regulation, 27 Feb. 1998). Their fertility, their power to participate with God in creating a new person to love in union with each other, is part of that gift. And herein lies the reason why contraception is wrong.

Contraception breaks the "inseparable connection" between the two meanings of the conjugal act, the love-giving and the life-giving (see *Humanae vitae*, no. 12). In other words, God designed sexual intercourse to be both where the spouses can *give* and accept the total gift of themselves to each other, and also *receive* the gift of new life if it comes. When couples use contraception, they basically reject not only something of each other, but also God's gift of fertility. In fact, contraceptive sex locks God out of the very union which He designed for their benefit. This is ultimately harmful to the couple.

So what are couples to do if they need to space or limit births in marriage? The Church answers with the natural methods of family planning or NFP. NFP methods respect God's design for married love. They do nothing to separate the life-giving potential from the love-giving nature of sexual intercourse. Couples simply refrain from sexual intercourse during their fertile time if they decide to postpone attempting pregnancy.

The Church's teachings on the moral spacing of births in marriage are a real bright spot for married couples. They represent God's invitation to husband and wife to live their marital love according to His plan. Couples who accept God's design for married love often remark that their marriages are stronger due to their mutual growth in a deeper respect for the gifts that God has given them. The light of God's truth is necessary for making good marriages great!

For more information about Natural Family Planning, see: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/what-is-nfp/index.cfm>

Marriage: Gift From God

By [Bishop W. Francis Malooly, D.D.](#)

Sex in Marriage as God intended it.

God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and God said to them: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:27-28).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines marriage simply: "The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament."

These few lines from the Bible and the authoritative teaching the Catholic Church summarize the meaning of marriage. Marriage is created by God for the good of spouses and the procreation and education of children. When two baptized people marry this fundamental institution becomes a holy sacrament. If we understand these simple facts we will know the good and the blessing of marriage and understand why it must be cherished and defended.

The Church believes that marriage, like all of God's creation, has a meaning. This meaning is revealed to us in Scripture and tradition, but its meaning is known to all persons of good will through the right use of reason. Marriage exists in every human culture because it is fundamental to human society. Humanity is hardwired for marriage.

From the beginning of the Bible, the Church learns the meaning of marriage and human sexuality. God created both. Sexuality and marriage are created for one another; the man and the woman are created for one another. Human sexual differences are an aspect of the image of God that we bear.

At the very least, every human culture recognizes that the sexual instincts and sexual appetites of human beings need to be channeled and that children who result from sexual relationships between men and women need to be cared for and nurtured. This wisdom was not achieved easily, and human sinfulness always challenges and weakens it. Still, the truth about marriage is not undone by human sin and human folly. It remains what it is – a gift of God to men and women, the ultimate expression of love between husband and wife, for the survival and the blessing of the entire human race.

Marriage is a unique and exclusive relationship between one man and one woman. It is not merely a private institution. Marriage is the foundation for family, where children learn the values and virtues that will make them good and productive people. The importance of marriage for children highlights the importance of marriage for all of society.

Marriage thus belongs to all peoples, but in the Church it is additionally valued as a sacrament, a means of God's saving grace. Marriage is nothing less than a participation in the covenant between Christ and the Church. Simply and gloriously, the grace of marriage assists husband and wife on their way to final salvation. The grace of marriage also strengthens them for their responsibility in the beautiful vocation of child-bearing and child-rearing and the very real challenges of sharing their lives amidst a culture that militates against permanence.

As Christians we need to remember that the meaning of marriage is not determined by romantic love. While romance is part of the relationship between husband and wife, the foundation of any marriage is the gift of total self to another promised in the solemn vows on the wedding day and lived day by day, year by year. This understanding will help us to better understand and resist contemporary assaults on marriage. Romantic love is important but it is not our feelings that constitute marriage. If it were, marriage would disappear when feelings change, as it too often does for our contemporaries.

Marriage is constituted by the vows that couples take and sexual activity appropriate to the generation of children. Those vows include a promise to love one other. That is a promise to live in sacrificial self-giving, not to feel a certain way. Feelings may ebb and flow, but the command to love one another endures. If married couples place that Christ-like value at the heart of their marriage, the feelings will endure. Without such a sacrificial commitment the volatility of human emotions will corrode the marriage bond. Romantic love can only bloom in the soil of authentic sacrificial love.

One good way to step back from the romanticism and emotionalism that confuse our modern ideas of marriage is to look at St. Augustine's reflections on the three goods of marriage. Sixteen centuries ago he described them with three Latin words: *proles*, *fides* and *sacramentum*.

Proles means offspring and refers to the good of procreation. The marital union reflects the unity of the triune God; in transmitting human life, couples participate in God's creative and sustaining work. He allows us to pass on his own gift of life.

Fides means faith or faithfulness and refers to the blessing of fidelity and exclusiveness and to the joy, security, and goodness of mutual commitment. The marriage bond echoes the love among the persons of the Trinity and the love of God for the world and the Church, the bride of Christ.

Sacramentum refers, of course, to the graced sacramental bond. The bond is a blessing in itself, protecting the couple from impermanence and uncertainty. The sacramental bond does not restrict freedom; it creates it. And it nourishes not just the couple but the entire community of both the world and the Church.

We live in a society in which these good purposes of marriage are not well understood. We live in a society that has driven wedges between sex, marriage and procreation – a society that has separated what God has joined together. We live in a society that has increasingly embraced the notion that marriage is about adult lifestyle choices. Many have forgotten that children are its most precious fruit and an essential part of its meaning. Children contribute “very substantially to the welfare of their parents” in the words of the Second Vatican Council. In a world that tends to see children as an economic burden or a lifestyle choice, the Council reminds us of the joy and humanizing challenge that children bring to adults. In caring for children adults gain not only love and affection but high purpose and growth in character.

If unrestrained romanticism damages marriage so also does its opposite – the individualism, isolation, and plain selfishness of our era. Out of fear or because of the pursuit of other goals, fewer people are marrying. This has led to a host of often unrecognized problems, not least of which is the withholding of the gift of new life. Living according to God's design for life and love does not mean that couples cannot plan their families. They can do so in moral and responsible ways. But fear of marriage and parenthood and the relentless pursuit of pleasure and economic advancement threaten authentic happiness and the fabric and future of society itself.

Although it is squeezed between romanticism and individualism and threatened by challenges to its God-given meaning and purpose, marriage remains the gift that God intends. It remains a pre-eminent blessing, and it is the state of life to which God calls the vast majority of people.

Thus, the Church is called to defend and foster marriage, to strengthen the lives of married couples, and when necessary, to remind the state in simple terms what marriage is and that it is not a creature of the state. This we do for the authentic good of all; it is an attack on no one. The Church's teaching about marriage is a message of joy, of purpose and of life. Marriage and child-bearing are arguably the simplest earthly expression of the virtue of hope. In the face of secularist despair the Church continues to call all people to cherish this gift, to nourish and strengthen it. It calls young people to discern whether God is calling them to marriage and, if so, to seek a faithful spouse and to do so without anxiety, knowing that God will bless them. The Church calls spouses to honor their vows by sacrificial love and openness to new life. It reminds parents that their vocation as parents is at the pinnacle of their baptismal calling. It offers to the victims of marital breakdown its pastoral support and the comfort of God's grace.

In this Year of Faith we are called to understand Christian teaching on marriage and to shape our lives in accordance with the truth in all areas, but especially in this area where so much is at stake.

This pastoral letter (2 February 2013) originally appeared online in the Dialog, the newspaper of the Diocese of Wilmington. Reprinted with permission.

Unitive and Procreative: What is Marriage? Part II

By Donald Prudlo, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of articles to explore the American Bishops' Pastoral Letter, "Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan."

Aristotle, the great philosopher of ancient Greece, in his *Politics*, makes something of a romantic statement (for those who know him, something exceptionally unusual). He says that all human society begins with the love of a man for a woman. From that love comes forth a human family. From families come tribes, from tribes come cities, and from cities come nations. Therefore the human family and marriage is at the very root of society itself.

Sex in Marriage as God intended it.

Hence it behooves society to do everything in its power to encourage marriage and the creation of families. Any policy which does not do this is suicidal, as we shall see in a subsequent analysis, it is just such a social suicide that many Western countries are experiencing right now.

Thus we arrive at the question of the definition of marriage.

After centuries of theological discussion and debate over each of its points, we are the happy recipients of one of the most well thought out positions on marriage in all of human history. Using the tools of Divine Revelation, Scripture and Tradition, along with its corollary, authentic and well-informed human reason, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* gives a concise definition (1601):

Marriage is a lifelong partnership of the whole of life, of mutual and exclusive fidelity, established by mutual consent between a man and a woman, and ordered towards the good of the spouses and the procreation of offspring.

Take away anything, even one bit, of that well-considered definition and you have deformed what marriage is meant to be, both naturally and supernaturally.

Let us begin with the purposes of marriage. The resolution of human complementarity built into us by the Creator Himself is the motivating force for human marriage. This is referred to as the union of the spouses, or the unitive aspect of marriage.

We are created in such a way that this unitive aspect, fully achieved in a Christian marriage, is the fulfillment of God's plan for creating us as male and female, both fully in possession of human nature, yet ordered one to the other for completion.

This union is both of body and spirit, it is a union of persons. The human person is neither simply body, nor simply soul. We are embodied spirits. This is our nature.

When you marry someone you marry their whole person. The concept of person is one of the most astonishing and important contributions of Christian philosophy to the world today. Unknown to the virtuous ancients, it was Christianity which laboriously and patiently worked out the concept of "person" in her debates about the Trinity and the Incarnation in the 4th and 5th centuries.

The bishops express this very well in the letter when they state, "The human person is a union of body and soul as a single being. Man and woman are two different ways of being a human person." Note that the difference between man and woman is not merely biological, it extends to their whole being, because their whole being is a unity.

We must not fall into the trap of moderns who claim that there is nothing different but merely the biological parts. This undermines the irreducible completeness of the human person and leads to ideas of the human that are mechanistic and reductionistic.

This love is most beautifully symbolized in the fact that it is potentially creative. Just as the love of God Himself is a creative love, so He permits humans to become co-creators, cooperating with Him in the greatest of all tasks, the production of new humans who can grow to know, love and serve God, fulfill their natural inclinations to happiness, and achieve their spiritual end ordered through Christ. This is possible only through the creative and unitive love of the spouses.

It is this procreative aspect that the unitive aspect finds its perfection and goal. Indeed historically the procreative aspect was seen as the fundamental end of human marriage, and indeed this is the case theologically.

Recent theologians have rightly understood however, that this procreative aspect is indivisible from the unitive aspect. Each is necessary and indispensable in a truly human and Christian marriage. As the bishops further say, because of the unity of the person, gender begins in biology, but does not end there.

Because of the unity of the person, procreation is not merely biological but has ramifications in both the personal and spiritual dimensions. (This is incidentally a fundamental problem with the lie of so-called casual sex, something which is ultimately impossible for human persons).

From these two great ends or purposes, the unity of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring, the great doctor of the Church St. Augustine of Hippo saw three fundamental goods of marriage, fidelity, sacramentality, and the creation of children. Faithfulness to death is one of the greatest of the gifts of Christian marriage, a great challenge made possible by the elevation of marriage to a sacrament.

Sex in Marriage as God intended it.

Another good he discerns is sacramentality, or the sacramental bond which images Christ and the Church.

Finally the offspring are the greatest of the signs and goods of human marriage. Augustine further outlined a third purpose of marriage, subordinate to the other two but no less real. He pointed to marriage as a *remedium concupiscentiae* or a remedy for concupiscence, the tendency that all humans have to disorder and sin, especially to sins of the flesh.

St. Augustine correctly recognized that marriage, because it is a lawful outlet for the human desire for sex, quiets concupiscence, helping humans to avoid sin and to live more peaceably in society, fulfilling Paul's injunction in 1 Corinthians 7:9 "it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion."

It is then absolutely necessary to assert that the two fundamental purposes of marriage, the unitive aspect which unites two complementary people in a lifelong and unbreakable association of life and love, and the procreative aspect which is ordered towards the birth of children and the creation of families and societies, can never be severed. You cannot have one without the other. For instance we today would never think of a loveless union, simply entered into for the possibility of having children, neither is it logical or correct to think of a marriage of true, deep, and abiding love that excludes the creation of a family.

The family is the root and soul of human society; it is the reason why men and women are ordered one towards the other. Fatherhood and motherhood are built into the human person, so that one can say that if one is not a father or a mother in some way, then one has not fulfilled the potential of one's person and nature. Note that this does not mean that all must become biological mothers and fathers.

For in the end we should stand in awe of the awesome power of procreation, and not as so many moderns do, as one more technology to manipulate. The power of procreation is the power of co-creation. It is cooperating with God in the origin of new human persons, with individual souls, wills, intellects, and freedom. It is the opportunity to participate in the most intimate way possible with the outworking of providence, the progress of humanity, and of the filling up of the number of the elect. This participation is itself a gift, manifested in the unity of persons so closely that they become "one flesh," and that marriage becomes an intimate icon of the inner Trinitarian life of God, both loving and life-giving. As St. Francis de Sales says in the Introduction to the Devout Life "[Marriage is] the nursery of Christianity, which supplies the earth with faithful souls to fill up the number of the elect in heaven. Hence the preservation of holy marriage is of the highest importance for the state since it is the origin and source of all that flows from the state."

JP II's Love And Responsibility

Father Karol Wojtyla had a profound love for young people. We have all heard about his camping trips with university students when he was a young priest. The long discussions about the nature of God, the meaning of life, the nature of marriage and questions regarding sexuality provided lengthy material for his famous book Love and Responsibility which was published in Polish in 1960.

But, it was as John Paul II, that he used his weekly General Audiences to develop what is now known as Theology of the Body. His discourses, (129 teachings from September 5, 1979 – November 28, 1984), comprise a monumental work which is the most profound and most complete compendium of Catholic teaching on the subject of human nature, marriage and sexuality.

By carefully reading Pope Paul VI's prophetic encyclical, students of John Paul's Theology of the Body will notice familiar language. For John Paul II, *Humanae Vitae* launches him into its' defense through a more profound development of the principles already contained in Paul VI's work.

Why then is it true that the unitive significance and the procreative significance cannot be separated?

Perhaps most people have never even asked themselves this question. Perhaps our modern conditioning has already reduced the conjugal act to a mere biological act.

The Catholic Church's teaching on marriage reminds us that there is a theological dimension to marriage and sexuality.

This is why we must gain a new vision of sexuality.

For John Paul II, the beginning principle is the spousal dimension of the human body.

What Does This All Mean?

Sex in Marriage as God intended it.

Think of it this way.

For Christianity, all of existence is immersed in a giant ocean of love. God is defined in the Sacred Scriptures as love. Creation, as described in the beginning of Genesis, is an outpouring of God's love. Man, as a rational being, is the only creature that can correspond to the gift of creation by being a gift to God and a gift to others. Thus, everything is seen through the prism of marriage.

Sexual intercourse, the marital embrace, is an image of God who is love and gift. **The human body makes the invisible reality of God's love visible.** God created the human person for the purpose of being loving persons who freely choose to love. Through love, they give themselves as a total gift of themselves to each other. Thus, by being a total gift of themselves, married spouses, through the marital embrace, make visible the invisible reality of God who is love and God who loves us unconditionally.

"(Married love) is a love which is total-that very special form of personal friendship in which husband and wife generously share everything, allowing no unreasonable exceptions and not thinking solely of their own convenience. Whoever really loves his partner loves not only for what he receives, but loves that partner for the partner's own sake, content to be able to enrich the other with the gift of himself" (Humanae Vitae, 9).

Women Instinctively Know That This True

Interestingly, women instinctively know that all of this is true. Women know that after the conjugal act a couple seems unusually close on an emotional level. Husbands often open up with their wives in a way not usual or even characteristic of them, but in a way that women crave from them all of the time.

The marital act is designed by God to be completely and unreserved sharing of the "I do" and of the "husbands love your wives as Christ loves the Church." The totality of the gift: no reservations and no selfishness at all.

If the Catholic Church knows this and is so sensitive to the inner nature of marriage and the conjugal act, even of its' emotional content, she can be fully trusted when she affirms and teaches that the unitive significance and the procreative significance of the conjugal act cannot be separated.

By: Father James Farfaglia

The Inseparable Connection

CORPUS CHRISTI, TX ([Catholic Online](#)) In his landmark 1968 encyclical where the Church reaffirms its' teaching that contraception is intrinsically evil, Pope Paul VI argues that every marital act must keep together "the inseparable connection , established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act" (Humanae Vitae, 12).

The basis of the Pope's argument is the Church's understanding of natural law, human nature and God's plan for marriage, sexuality and family life. Paul VI writes, ".they must also recognize that an act of mutual love which impairs the capacity to transmit life which God the Creator, through specific laws, has built into it, frustrates His design which constitutes the norm of marriage, and contradicts the will of the Author of life. Hence to use this divine gift while depriving it, even if only partially, of its meaning and purpose, is equally repugnant to the nature of man and of woman, and is consequently in opposition to the plan of God and His holy will."

Why then is it true that the unitive significance and the procreative significance of the marital act cannot be separated?

Pope Paul VI lays out the principles and the reasons. However, it is John Paul II that brings the subject to an entirely new level of understanding.

marriage and sexuality.

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For John Paul II, the beginning principle is the spousal dimension of the human body.

In many marriages (but not all), sexual intimacy is very high on a husband's list. In books like William Harley's *His Needs, Her Needs*, sex is listed as the number one thing a husband needs in marriage. Many men would nod in agreement and tell their wives in so many words that they *need* sex; however, I've never known of a man dying because he didn't have it.

I've heard Christian speakers say things like, "A woman should never say no to her husband's sexual advances." Talk about a guilt trip! Wives in this situation would naturally feel manipulated, with a cloud of guilt hovering over every initiation. If he *needs* sex and you're the only one who can give it to him, sex becomes less romantic than cooking him dinner. You may feel like a "sex dispenser," just there to meet your husband's biological needs. Even if you once liked sex, all pleasure and anticipation has been drained out of it.

This is certainly not God's design for sexuality in marriage. A couple who operates with this thinking is doomed to experience no "intimacy" in sexual intimacy. So how do we reconcile the "need" factor without sex becoming an on-demand obligation?

Is Sex Really A Need?

We have a strange relationship to the word *need* in our society. We claim to need everything from a cup of Starbucks to the most recent smartphone. In reality, we need very little to survive. Food, shelter, community, and family. However, there are other things we don't need for survival but that are necessary to function in our world. For example, you don't need a car . . . but you do. You won't die without a car, but unless you live in a big city, it would be very difficult to navigate life without one. We also have emotional needs, like feeling loved and valued. While we won't die without feeling loved, we also may not want to keep living.

Think of sex in a similar vein. No one needs sex, but a marriage needs sexual intimacy to thrive. Intimacy in the bedroom is directly correlated to overall marital happiness. When a couple regularly engages in sex, even their body chemistry is working to build a positive emotional connection.

In most marriages, the husband is the more constant reminder of the need for sex. Because he has more testosterone and his body is wired to respond sexually, it's usually on his mind much more often than it's on hers. In other marriages, the woman is unsatisfied if too many days go by without sex. God has wired our bodies to express the importance of sexual intimacy, whether it is the husband or wife who prompts the other.

God's Word tells us that regular sex should be a priority in marriage. In [1 Corinthians 7](#), Paul says that both the husband and wife should meet each other's sexual needs and should be having sex regularly (yes, that's in the Bible!).

Final Thought:

Did I Marry the Wrong Person?

"I have no way of knowing whether or not you married the wrong person, but I do know that many people have a lot of wrong ideas about marriage and what it takes to make that marriage happy and successful.

I'll be the first to admit that it's possible that you did marry the wrong person. However, if you treat the wrong person like the right person, you could well end up having married the right person after all.

On the other hand, if you marry the right person, and treat that person wrong, you certainly will have ended up marrying the wrong person. I also know that it is far more important to be the right person than it is to marry the right person.

Sex in Marriage as God intended it.

In short, whether you married the right or wrong person is primarily up to you” - Zig Ziglar

Recommended Resources

1. www.catholiccounselors.com/more2liferadio
2. www.patheos.com
3. www.foryourmarriage.org
4. www.catholiceducation.org
5. www.catholicvoyager.blogspot.com
6. www.todayschristianwoman.com

Recommended Song

Prayer of St Francis

Author

Vince Phelan

Accepting and dealing with dysfunction in the home

Summary

What Is a Dysfunctional Family?

Family dysfunction can be any condition that interferes with healthy family functioning. Most families have some periods of time where functioning is impaired by stressful circumstances (death in the family, a parent's serious illness, etc.). Healthy families tend to return to normal functioning after the crisis passes. In dysfunctional families, however, problems tend to be chronic and children do not consistently get their needs met. Negative patterns of parental behavior tend to be dominant in their children's lives.

As a result, a destructive cycle of behavior envelops the entire family. Often the passive parent will make excuses or try to mitigate the damage that the problem has created, while failing to address the harmful actions that are destroying the family.

Objective

Feeling like your family is dysfunctional is normal. Beating yourself up and comparing yourself to other families who seem functional, is also normal, but it's not likely to help you become a more effective parent.

Parenting is tough for everyone. Every family is at a different point in their journey to becoming a well-functioning, healthy family system. Some parents have learned more effective skills for managing behavior, and have worked hard to develop a culture of accountability in their homes. Some parents are just starting out, beginning to learn these new tools. The fact is every single family is a work in progress.

You may be dealing with a dysfunctional family if one of the parents has a destructive addiction like alcoholism, drug addiction, sex addiction, abuse issues, and mental illness such as Bi-polar, schizophrenia, and depression. A dysfunctional family may also be caused by a child with similar problems. Almost all families go through a period once or several times where the situation is dysfunctional for the family, it is a normal occurrence and can be worked through when the parents are responsible and take corrective actions to fix the problem. Other times a situation might get so out of hand that only professional intervention can remedy the problem.

There are many forces both societal and spiritual that are attacking the family. Having a strong faith life and living a righteous life can be helpful in dealing with problems that weaken the family.

Bible Readings

1. Proverbs 11:29

Whoever brings ruin on their family will inherit only wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise.

2. Ephesians 6:4

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1657:

It is here that the father of the family, the mother, children, and all members of the family exercise the priesthood of the baptized in a privileged way "by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, and self-denial and active charity." Thus the home is the first school of Christian life and "a school for human enrichment." Here one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous - even repeated - forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one's life.

2. Paragraph 2207:

The family is the *original cell of social life*. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society.

Small Group Questions

1. How does this affect your family?
2. What methods do you use to build family unity and strengthen family bonds?
3. How can vacations be used to develop healthy family relations?
4. When is it time to seek professional help?

Recommended Resources

1. <https://www.k-state.edu/counseling/topics/relationships/dysfunc.html#overcometheeffects>
2. <http://www.brown.edu/campus-life/support/counseling-and-psychological-services/dysfunctional-family-relationships>
3. <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/god-s-mercy-in-messed-up-families>

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start addressing a problem within the family before it gets too big
2. What change can I make in myself to make my family a better functioning family?

Recommended Song

Prayer of St Francis

Author(s)

Sean Mullarkey

Included Resources

Here are four signs you may be living with dysfunction:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rachel-finn/4-signs-you-may-be-living_b_6156276.html

1) You're always having to give up something.

Most people will tell you having to compromise is a sign of a functional and beneficial relationship -- and they're right.

But are you really compromising, or are you just always having to give something up?

Do you give up your values, your beliefs, your power or your passions because you have someone in your life you're either trying to manage, appease or keep around?

Accepting and dealing with dysfunction in the home

This is not compromise -- this is dysfunction.

Compromise is going to the Mexican restaurant your partner chose when you felt like Italian because you knew you'll get Italian next week.

Dysfunction is when you *never* get Italian.

Compromise is the settlement of differences by mutual concessions. So, are you the one having to always make the concession? If so, that's not compromise.

If you are always having to give something up, it's worth your while to reflect on why you do. It's on us to examine why we accept the behaviors we do: What you choose to put up with is a very good indicator of your self-worth.

2) You, or others, keep talking about the same problems over and over again.

If you have a person in your life who is only ever talking about their problems, or you are that person, then you're living with dysfunction.

Continually hearing the same problems from the same person without anything changing has the listener feeling powerless to make a difference. They know the only person who can change it is the one who is offloading -- not only that, it also leaves them frustrated and defeated.

Relationships should be in a constant state of growth, not stifled, and you shouldn't only be bonding over problems: Healthy relationships will bond over all of life's events.

If you're the listener, you must first look at what benefit you believe you get from doing it: there is always a payoff from our habitual behaviors.

And if it's you who is the one continually sharing your problems, and you believe that's because you can never seem to be free of them, then that's also a pretty clear sign you are living with dysfunction in other areas of your life. And only you have the power to change that.

3) Somebody in your life refuses to take responsibility.

Most people's ears close over when they hear the word responsibility -- like it's some dirty word.

Personally, I believe it's the best word in existence and the most powerful -- when it's employed it's got the power to change your life.

Some of the more detrimental ramifications from someone refusing to take responsibility include: a child ending up having to assume the role of the parent; a spouse becoming a "single parent" by virtue of their dysfunctional partner becoming, in effect, a child. A good example is when grandparents end up raising their grandchildren because the parents are not stepping up emotionally or with care giving.

Anybody who has had, or has, someone in their life who refuses to take responsibility will very likely relate to the experience of having their life put on hold due to that person's problems or, at the very least, having their life extremely affected because of them.

If one person's life dominates the family system, and that person has the capability to take responsibility for their behavior but chooses not to, then you're living with dysfunction.

If somebody else's life disturbs the normal functioning of YOUR life, then you're living with dysfunction. Period.

4) Somebody is overstepping your boundaries and you're not doing anything to stop it.

A personal boundary is an invisible line that marks a limit, and allowing somebody to overstep your boundaries is a clear sign of dysfunction.

We all have internal boundaries but issues can arise when we've lived too long with dysfunction and have started accepting unacceptable behaviors. One way to re-establish your boundaries is to get present to the feelings in your body when such a situation arises.

You don't need to consciously know what boundary is being crossed -- you just need to know when something doesn't sit right for you. When you get that feeling, there's a good chance someone's pushing at your limits.

The overstepping of boundaries is likely to become regular when you either remain ignorant of your boundaries or continue to not enforce them.

On the Brink of Divorce: Is Your Marriage at Risk?

Summary

Divorce is a reality for almost 50% of all couples, is your marriage at risk? Do you know the warning signs, the key life changes that stress marriages, what can you do to assess and address your risk

Objective

Divorce is a reality for many couples that forever change the lives of the husband, wife, children and all the extended family and friends. Catholics are not immune to this and divorce also creates an issue of being able to fully take part in all parts of the Catholic faith.

We have interviewed 4 Father's Team men (all Catholic) who have either gone through, or are going through divorce now to get some idea of what were some of the potential issues, what the men wished they could have done differently, and what they would like to have heard 2-3 years before the divorce (from a Father's Team Meeting) that would have helped them do more to preserve the marriage.

Some of the men realize that it was really the right thing for the couple to separate, and some thought they (and their spouse) could have done more to keep the marriage together.

However, some of things that we as a Father's Team should discuss in this topic are:

1. Communication – what kind of discussions are you having at home?
 1. Are your conversations only about discussing logistics of kid sports and 'what goes on the shopping list'?
 2. Instead, can you name your wives 3 best friends and confidants?
 3. Do you know the dreams and aspirations of your wife?
 4. Are you telling your female co-workers more about your life then your wife?
2. How did your marriage start?
 1. Some of the men realized (too late) that 'maybe' their wives got married for the wrong reason.
 2. Some women are running 'away' from a situation (i.e. home life) and not running 'toward' something (you). Realistically, it is too late for all of us to revisit this – but again getting back to communication – do you know enough the history of your marriage – have you talked about it?
 3. This is also a great topic to be talking to our kids who are considering marriage – can you coach your kids to really understand these dynamics?
3. Life Stage impact on our marriage – are you paying attention?
 1. Some of the men interviewed started having issues – or were told their wives wanted a divorce – when the youngest child was going off to school full time.
 2. When the youngest is 7 years old, the couples were married from 15-20 years and all of a sudden the wife's primary role as 'mom' was diminished – at the same time that the man is 'hitting his stride' from a career standpoint.
 3. Have you talked about 'her' role when the heavy lifting of child care slows down?

4. Are you hitting your stride in your career, with lots of late nights, lots of travel, promotions, and business dinners? Are you missing a critical life stage opportunity to talk?

These questions should be a topic for the men of the Father's Team and we should all examine the health of our marriage.

Some of the other ideas volunteered by the men (besides the topics above) were:

1. Do you talk enough about meaningful things?
2. Do you pray together?
3. If you are having issues – have you addressed? Did you consider a priest, our deacons, marriage counseling?
4. There are techniques that can be used to change the negative dynamics into positive communication – would you be interested in learning new techniques (one of our Father's may be teaching this).
5. One of the men said in hindsight he would have – cuddled more, talked more about his day and asked her about hers, really kiss her every day, more time with her and less with kids, ask for more feedback, learn to dance, tell her I am proud of her, smile more and savor her eyes.

Bible Readings

1. Ephesians 5:25-28

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So (also) husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

2. Ephesians 5:31

"For this reason a man shall leave (his) father and (his) mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1642

Christ is the source of this grace. "Just as of old God encountered his people with a covenant of love and fidelity, so our Savior, the spouse of the Church, now encounters Christian spouses through the sacrament of Matrimony." Christ dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another's burdens, to "be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ," and to love one another with supernatural, tender, and fruitful love. In the joys of their love and family life he gives them here on earth a foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb:

How can I ever express the happiness of a marriage joined by the Church, strengthened by an offering, sealed by a blessing, announced by angels, and ratified by the Father? . . . How wonderful the bond between two believers, now one in hope, one in desire, one in discipline, one in the same service! They are both children of one Father and servants of the same Master, undivided in spirit and flesh, truly two in one flesh. Where the flesh is one, one also is the spirit.

2. Paragraph 2385

Divorce is immoral also because it introduces disorder into the family and into society. This disorder brings grave harm to the deserted spouse, to children traumatized by the separation of their parents and often torn between them, and because of its contagious effect which makes it truly a plague on society.

3. Paragraphs 2386

On the Brink of Divorce: Is Your Marriage at Risk?

It can happen that one of the spouses is the innocent victim of a divorce decreed by civil law; this spouse therefore has not contravened the moral law. There is a considerable difference between a spouse who has sincerely tried to be faithful to the sacrament of marriage and is unjustly abandoned, and one who through his own grave fault destroys a canonically valid marriage.

Small Group Questions

1. Are you willing to have a serious conversation with your wife about marriage?
2. How often do you examine your own behavior in your marriage before blaming your spouse?
3. How would you rate your ability to communicate with your spouse? How could you improve this?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.retrouvaille.org>
2. Ten Marks of a Happy Marriage: <https://www.retrouvaille.org/pages.php?page=30>
3. The Four Stages of Marriage: <http://www.retrouvaille.org/pages.php?page=7>

Accountability

This week would be a good time to start:

1. A serious discussion with your wife
2. An examination of your own behaviors

Recommended Song

Christ Be Our Light

Authors

Updated: Dan Driggers

Original: Rich DelCore

Included Resources:

The 5 “D”s

Retrouvaille

DESIRE – Recognize a need for change

DIALOGUE – Share Feelings

DISCUSS – Express thoughts, ideas, opinions, attitudes

DECIDE – Compromise, Decide to Love

DO – Action to create change

The 5 “D”s are encompassed in the relationship of a healthy communicating couple. If any of them are missing, then growth, intimacy and change will be stifled. Let’s start with the 2nd D – DIALOGUE. We can DIALOGUE every day and feel close to each other, but if we don’t take time to DISCUSS our issues, and the thoughts, desires and needs we have concerning them, then we won’t make any movement from what we learned about each other in the DIALOGUE.

If we DIALOGUE and DISCUSS regularly, but don't make any DECISIONS about our issues, then we just go around in circles. If we DIALOGUE on feelings, DISCUSS our issues, and make DECISIONS, but don't follow through with our actions, never doing anything about the issues, then we will frustrate the relationship and ourselves.

And now for the last D which must be listed first. Without the DESIRE to do the other four, we go nowhere. DESIRE is the motivator that makes our communication happen and compels us to move toward change. When trying to resolve conflict or solve a problem, the 5"D"s are imperative to follow.

The Seven Warning Signs of a Sick Marriage

By Norman Bales

When courtesies are abandoned.

When couples begin to think in terms of "I" instead of "We."

When they stop complimenting each other.

When stubborn silence replaced common-sense communication.

When they stop praying together.

When they fail to sense and meet the needs of each other.

When they fail to express love.

Forgiveness

Summary

The Gospels are very clear about our need to receive mercy from God and to show mercy to others. However, forgiveness is not something that comes easily to us. Our limited sense of justice or our desire for vengeance often blocks our ability to forgive ourselves or others. Furthermore, our culture preaches that we do not need mercy because sin does not exist, while at the same time showing no mercy to those who have transgressed certain secular values. Come find out how forgiveness helps in bringing about the Kingdom of God.

Objective

To give mercy, we must be aware of our own need to receive mercy. Pope Pius XII said in 1946: “The sin of the century is the loss of the sense of sin.” In 1 John 1:8-9 we read: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” So we must clearly see that we are sinners in need of forgiveness, and then we will be able to forgive others. Even forgiving others has a good effect on ourselves: “To forgive is to set a prisoner free and to discover the prisoner was *you*” (anonymous). Pope Francis, who has referred to the Church as “a field hospital after battle” (“A Big Heart Open to God”), has been emphasizing that the Church is a place for healing: “The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel” (*Evangelii Gaudium/The Joy of the Gospel*). Pope Francis announced a [Jubilee of Mercy](#) that will begin on December 8, 2015 and end November 20, 2016.

Bible Readings

1. Matthew 6:9-13

Pray then like this:
Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our debts,
As we also have forgiven our debtors;
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.

2. Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven. Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents; and as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ He refused and went and put him in prison

till he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

3. Luke 7:36-50

One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat at table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was sitting at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "What is it, Teacher?" "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, to whom he forgave more." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

4. Luke 15:11-32

And he said, "There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.''" And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry.

"Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1443

During his public life Jesus not only forgave sins, but also made plain the effect of this forgiveness: he reintegrated forgiven sinners into the community of the People of God from which sin had alienated or even excluded them. A remarkable sign of this is the fact that Jesus receives sinners at his table, a gesture that expresses in an astonishing way both God's forgiveness and the return to the bosom of the People of God.

2. Paragraph 1449

The formula of absolution used in the Latin Church....God, the Father of mercies, through the death and the resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

3. Paragraph 2843

Thus the Lord's words on forgiveness, the love that loves to the end, become a living reality. The parable of the merciless servant, which crowns the Lord's teaching on ecclesial communion, ends with these words: "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." It is there, in fact, "in the depths of the heart," that everything is bound and loosed. It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offense; but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion and purifies the memory in transforming the hurt into intercession.

Small Group Questions

1. When have you received mercy?
2. Have there been people in your life who have wronged you and were (are) difficult to forgive?
3. Is confession a regular part of your life? Why or why not?

Recommended Resources

1. Forgive (Fr. Larry Richards-video):
<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=fr%ee%80%81+larry+%ee%80%80richards+on+confession&qpv=fr.+larry+richard+on+confession&FORM=VQFRML#view=detail&mid=E77C36B14A623666C743E77C36B14A623666C743>
2. A Story of Love (Fr. Larry Richards-video):
<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=larry+richards+story+of+love&qs=n&form=QBVLPG&pg=larry+richards+story+of+love&sc=0-24&sp=-1&sk=#view=detail&mid=107B52C528836B0F6A68107B52C528836B0F6A68>
3. Confession (Fr. Larry Richards-video):
<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=larry+richards+confession&qs=AS&sk=&FORM=QBVLPG&pg=larry%20richards%20conf&sc=4-19&sp=1&qs=AS&sk=#view=detail&mid=9BF4FE61EEE9B660804B9BF4FE61EEE9B660804B>
4. Divine Mercy Chaplet: <http://www.ewtn.com/Devotionals/mercy/dmmap.htm>

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet.
2. If you have not been to confession for a while, go.
3. Ask Jesus to help you forgive someone who has wronged you.

Recommended Song

Let There Be Peace On Earth

Author(s)

Pete Caccavari

Included Resources

John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia/Rich in Mercy*

http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30111980_dives-in-misericordia.html#%24G

The Church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims mercy-the most stupendous attribute of the Creator and of the Redeemer-and when she brings people close to the sources of the Savior's mercy, of which she is the trustee and dispenser. Of great significance in this area is constant meditation on the Word of God, and above all conscious and mature participation in the Eucharist and in the sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation. The Eucharist brings us ever nearer to that love which is more powerful than death: "For as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup," we proclaim not only the death of the Redeemer but also His resurrection, "until he comes" in glory.

St. Faustina Kowalska, *Diary*

Let the greatest sinners place their trust in My mercy. They have the right before others to trust in the abyss of My mercy. My daughter, write about My mercy towards tormented souls. Souls that make an appeal to My mercy delight Me. To such souls I grant even more graces than they ask. I cannot punish even the greatest sinner if he makes an appeal to My compassion, but on the contrary, I justify him in My unfathomable and inscrutable mercy. Write: before I come as a just judge, I first open wide the door of My mercy. He who refuses to pass through the door of My mercy must pass through the door of My justice... (1146)

Dealing with Temptation

Summary

“Lead us not into temptation,” are words that Jesus Christ himself taught us to pray as he knew we would be tempted as he was also tempted. Jesus also instructed us to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect and St. Paul reminds us to be holy. But, in a world surrounded by temptations, how can we persevere?

Objective

While we are all sinners in need of God's love and mercy, we have also been baptized and called to a new life in Christ. Jesus prayed not that we should be taken out of the world, but that we should be protected from the evil one. The objective today is grow in knowledge of things that we can do to protect ourselves from the temptations of the evil one as he strives to separate us from God by seducing us with short term pleasures over the long term happiness and joy offered through a life in the Blessed Trinity.

Some things that can help us overcome temptation:

- Prayer, fasting and alms giving
- Lead a life in the sacraments especially confession as they give us sanctifying grace
- Read and meditate on Scripture
- Study the lives and writings of the saints
- Avoid things that lead us to temptation
- Practice the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

Bible Readings

1. 1 Corinthians 10:13

No trial has come to you but what is human. God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength; but with the trial he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to bear it.

2. Matthew 26:41

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

3. James 4:7

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

4. James 1:12-16

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2339

Chastity includes an *apprenticeship in self-mastery* which is a training in human freedom. The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy. "Man's dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved

and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint. Man gains such dignity when, ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, he presses forward to his goal by freely choosing what is good and, by his diligence and skill, effectively secures for himself the means suited to this end."

2. Paragraph 2847

The Holy Spirit makes us *discern* between trials, which are necessary for the growth of the inner man, and temptation, which leads to sin and death. We must also discern between being tempted and consenting to temptation. Finally, discernment unmasks the lie of temptation, whose object appears to be good, a "delight to the eyes" and desirable, when in reality its fruit is death.

God does not want to impose the good, but wants free beings. There is a certain usefulness to temptation. No one but God knows what our soul has received from him, not even we ourselves. But temptation reveals it in order to teach us to know ourselves, and in this way we discover our evil inclinations and are obliged to give thanks for the goods that temptation has revealed to us.

3. Paragraph 2848

"Lead us not into temptation" implies a *decision of the heart*: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. . . . No one can serve two masters." "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." In this assent to the Holy Spirit the Father gives us strength. "No testing has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, so that you may be able to endure it."

4. Paragraph 2340

Whoever wants to remain faithful to his baptismal promises and resist temptations will want to adopt the means for doing so: self-knowledge, practice of an asceticism adapted to the situations that confront him, obedience to God's commandments, exercise of the moral virtues, and fidelity to prayer. "Indeed it is through chastity that we are gathered together and led back to the unity from which we were fragmented into multiplicity."

Small Group Questions

1. Do you struggle with the opposing viewpoints on temptation held by society and the Church/your faith?
2. What are some of the items or situations that cause you temptation?
3. Would you like a camera on all of your actions for your wife and kids to see? How about the communion of saint?
4. Have you ever overcome a battle against temptation/lust; if yes, how did you deal with it?
5. Do you have friends or activities that encourage or keep you in situations of temptation?

Accountability

1. Pray a Rosary and/or Chaplet of Divine Mercy for yourself and/or others battling temptation.
2. Strive to live in a state of grace through the sacraments, especially Confession.
3. Rid your home and computer of temptations.
4. Identify those areas of your life, those environments and people that cause you temptation and eliminate them or escape them.

Recommended Resources

1. "Manual for Spiritual Warfare" by Paul Thigpen, TAN Books, 2014
2. Overcoming Temptations: <http://www.catholicbible101.com/overcomingtemptations.htm>
3. Fighting the Good Fight: Resisting Temptation: <http://www.catholic.org/featured/headline.php?ID=5143>
4. Temptation -by Archbishop, Cardinal Henry Edward Manning <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=7066>

5. Lust Kills the Soul - <http://catholicexchange.com/lust-kills-the-soul/>

Recommended Song

Amazing Grace

Author

Graham Galloway; refreshed by Michael Copfer

Included Resources

1. From the book "Manual for Spiritual Warfare" by Paul Thigpen - things done by some of the saints at the moments when facing temptation:
 - Making the Sign of the Cross
 - Speaking the holy names of Jesus, Mary or the Blessed Trinity
 - Recite scripture, "At the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father." (Phil 2:10-11)
 - Turn to your guardian angel for help
 - St. Teresa of Avila, "The fact is, I know now how little power the evil spirits have, provided I am not out of the grace of God"
2. Prayers Against Temptation: <http://www.ourcatholicprayers.com/prayers-against-temptation.html> :

Are you having difficulty breaking a bad habit? Is it perhaps becoming an addiction? Prayers against temptation can help provide the strength you need to break free from whatever sinful enticements that have become snares!

While God allows us to experience temptations, He never gives us more of these than we can bear. He will give us means to overcome our sinful habits *with His guidance and grace through prayer*.

Recovery programs, support groups, rehabilitation centers, and counseling all play vital roles in breaking cycles of addiction and despair as well, of course. Yet, we are reminded in this prayer below to turn to God first and foremost in seeking to change our ways. If we approach our falls with humility, we can indeed learn and grow from them.

Behold me, O my God, at Your feet! I do not deserve mercy, but O my Redeemer, the blood with You have shed for me encourages me and obliges me to hope for it. How often I have offended You, repented, and yet have I again fallen into the same sin. O my God, I wish to amend, and in order to be faithful to You, I will place all my confidence in You. I will, whenever I am tempted, instantly have recourse to You. Until now, I have trusted in my own promises and resolutions and have neglected to recommend myself to You in my temptations. This has been the cause of my repeated failures. From this day forward, be You, O Lord, my strength, and this shall I be able to do all things, for "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me." Amen.

Note from this prayer the importance of seeking God's help when tempted before taking that drink, cigarette, or whatever else your "poison" may be. It is worth noting as well in this regard the wonderful phrase used in 12-step programs dealing with addictions: "Let Go and Let God."

While you should by no means hesitate to seek outside help to overcome bad habits, remember how important it is to keep God in the picture. St. Paul, quoted from his letter to the Philippians (Phil 4:13) in the last line of this prayer, certainly did!

As he strongly suggests, God will strengthen us in our weakness. It is helpful in this regard to keep in mind Christ's stirring words in John's Gospel: "I am the vine, you are the branches...without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

We are reminded of the importance of turning to God when we feel vulnerable to temptation in this short selection from an old Catholic prayer book entitled "Manual of Prayers." Our Lord stressed many times in His earthly ministry the connection between our thoughts and our actions.

Almighty and most Merciful God, graciously hearken unto our prayers; and free our hearts from the temptations of evil thoughts; that we may worthily become a fit habitation for Thy Holy Spirit.

The sacrament of penance can also help us in our struggles to overcome bad habits. In confession we receive not only absolution, but grace from our Lord to resist giving into the same temptations over and over again.

Do you feel somehow too ashamed to go to confession? Be wary of one of the greatest snares of the devil: Dismissing your fear of God's justice and counting on His mercy before sinning and reversing this order afterwards! (That is to say fearing His Justice so much as to not call upon on His mercy.)

We live in a society still reeling from the excesses of the sexual revolution and the mantra "If it feels good, do it!" Many of us grew up thinking of the Holy Trinity not as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but rather as Sex, Drugs, and Rock and Roll. Speaking of Rock, the group the Doobie Brothers summed up the problem many people face in the title of one of their albums: "What Were Once Vices are Now Habits."

Indeed, "vice" seems like an antiquated word nowadays to many people nowadays. (So does "virtue"!) We live in a sadly relativistic time in which many people seek to find *the* God within, rather than God within, themselves.

As they try to become their own Masters of the Universe, they might engage in abusive or selfish behavior to make themselves feel "on top of the world"; or perhaps they're getting drunk every night or engaging in some other sort of self-destructive behavior to blot out nagging feelings of inadequacy or despair, rather than sharing their anguish with our Lord on the cross.

Speaking of sharing, remember again if you feel like you need to escape in a bottle (or some drug or whatever), that we need not go through our struggles alone! Reach out for strength with prayers against temptation like the ones above.

Ask for help from your parish community whenever possible. If needed, by all means seek out the appropriate treatment. And treat yourself, and others who might be undergoing similar problems, with compassion as much as possible.

We are all sinners in need of God's love and mercy, after all. And yet, we are offered His love and redemption. As the first of our prayers against temptation above mentions, Christ shed His blood at Calvary for *all* of our sins!

Look at a crucifix next time you feel lost or hopeless. Let it remind you of just how much God loves you. And of how much He wishes to help you secure a place in His Heavenly Kingdom for yourself and others! Still feel useless? Remember this, as best you can. God doesn't want to lose *any* of us!

3. Catholic Youth Ministry : Dealing With Temptation Talk

Wisdom of the Saints:

"Sins that are easiest to amend bring the greatest punishment." – St. John Chrysostom

"The devil tempts so that he may ruin, God tempts so that He may crown." – St. Ambrose of Milan

"He did not say: you will not be troubled – you will not be tempted – you will not be distressed. But He said: You will not be overcome." – St. Julian of Norwich

"No one sins by an act he cannot avoid." – St. Augustine of Hippo

Relevant Points:

- We must remember that God doesn't set us up to fail and He doesn't tempt us beyond our control (1 Cor 10:13).
- We must change the way we view temptations – from burdens/trials to opportunities for growth/holiness.
- Jesus was tempted, too. Go to Him. He knows what it's like to be tempted.
- God's grace is enough (2 Cor. 12:9).
- Temptations help us to understand ourselves and where our hearts truly are
- One of the best things you can do for yourself is to identify those areas of your life, those environments and people, that cause you temptation and eliminate them or escape them. It's not enough to overcome temptation if you repeatedly put yourself in its path.

How Do You Make Your Spouse Feel Appreciated?

Summary

Whether it has been one year or fifty since your wedding, what are you doing to let the awesome person you married know that you appreciate them? Routine is a good thing, but making your wife feel special is a GREAT thing and everyone loves to feel appreciated. Let's get our creative juices flowing and demonstrate to your wife how special she is!

Objective

As a husband we should be lifting up the spirits of our wife by letting her know that we appreciate all of the things that she does on a daily basis for us and our family. We all need encouragement and your wife needs to know that you appreciate and rely on her role as an important part of your life. Women were probably more fixated on grades than you were in school and they really want to know that they aced the test. They want to know that they are doing well as a wife too. They want to know that you see how they are doing as a mother. They want you to notice when they treat you well. This tells them that what they are doing is right and that they are producing fruit. They love to know you appreciate even the little things that they do.

No one wants to be coddled in worthless flattery, but if you can focus on your wife's special qualities you can inspire her self-esteem. The words are powerful and your relationship will be strengthened. She can feel confident and grow in knowing that she is pleasing you. "Love" is an action verb; therefore, you can improve your marriage relationships "by doing" and thus letting your wife know she is appreciated by you. The goal today is to come up with some ways that you can take action and let your wife know that you appreciate her.

Bible Readings

1. Ephesians 5:25-30

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the Church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

2. Colossians 3:19

Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them.

3. Sirach 25:1

My soul takes pleasure in three things, and they are beautiful in the sight of the Lord and of men; agreement between brothers, friendship between neighbors, and a wife and a husband who live in harmony.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1639

The consent by which the spouses mutually give and receive one another is sealed by God himself. From their covenant arises "an institution, confirmed by the divine law, even in the eyes of society." The

covenant between the spouses is integrated into God's covenant with man: "Authentic married love is caught up into divine love."

2. Paragraph 1644

The love of the spouses requires, of its very nature, the unity and indissolubility of the spouses' community of persons, which embraces their entire life: "so they are no longer two, but one flesh." They "are called to grow continually in their communion through day-to-day fidelity to their marriage promise of total mutual self-giving." This human communion is confirmed, purified, and completed by communion in Jesus Christ, given through the sacrament of Matrimony. It is deepened by lives of the common faith and by the Eucharist received together.

3. Paragraph 1661

The sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church; the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life

Small Group Questions

1. What is something unique that you have done that made your spouse feel appreciated?
2. What are the root causes that may make your wife to feel unappreciated by you?
3. What will you do in the next week to show your wife she is appreciated by you?

Recommended Resources

1. 10 Ways to Love Your Spouse:
<http://www.simplecatholicliving.com/reflections/10-ways-to-love-your-spouse>
2. Do You Tell Your Wife That You Appreciate Her?
<http://respectedhusband.wordpress.com/2013/01/04/do-you-tell-your-wife-that-you-appreciate-her/>

Accountability

1. Do one thing for your wife this week that she will be able to tell her friends about.
2. Investigate and search fun things going on in town and recommend that the two of you need to make a plan to attend or participate.

Recommended Song

How Can I Keep From Singing?

Author(s)

Reid Rooney; refreshed by Michael Copfer

Included Resources

1. The 5 Step Secret to making your wife Feel Appreciated

Step 1 Understanding: Although you cannot make anyone 100% happy, you can do your part in making your wife feel special and appreciated. The wife (like the husband) has a unique and key role in the marital partnership. If she feels abandoned, neglected, or otherwise unappreciated it will be difficult for her to maintain that positive ambiance.

Step 2 Show Direct Appreciation: Women need the small things that may be easily overlooked. A phone call in the middle of the day for no reason; fresh flower arrangements; date night; unexpected tokens of

How Do You Make Your Spouse Feel Appreciated?

affection, etc. Keep note of her interests and use them to personalize your surprises i.e. if she's dieting do not get her chocolates.

Step 3 Acknowledgement: You may not understand her emotional needs but you definitely need to acknowledge them. Take the time to actively listen to her. Be the initiator of conversations. Be nonjudgmental with your opinions.

Step 4 Pick your Battles: Let the small things pass. Arguing or a domineering attitude will only fester and eventually poison the love you share. If it irritates you that she isn't the best housekeeper, try to hire help or help clean up when you have time. Remember that you are not perfect either. Was it her laugh you fell in love with or her clean kitchen?

Step 5 Tell her you love her everyday: Tell others you love her. Hearing it and saying it will keep the love alive. Love is a chain reaction. The more love you give the more love you receive.

2. Other ideas to show direct Appreciation to your wife:

Acts of Service:

Doing something special for your wife is an easy and free way to show your appreciation. A foot rub after a long day of work would be greatly appreciated. Use some scented lotion for a bit of aromatherapy as well. Clean the house! Coming home to a messy house can be very stressful. If you are home during the day on a weekend, keeping the house clean shows your appreciation for the hard work your wife does.

Making your spouse's favorite meal or dessert on an ordinary day is a terrific way to make her feel special, especially if you don't make it very often. Or make something new for dinner to try together; the same old things can get boring after a while.

Whatever your spouse's job around the house is, give her a day off. Who wouldn't feel special and enjoy not having to do a chore? Folding the laundry, doing the dishes for once and let your spouse enjoy a little well-deserved rest.

Treats and Surprises:

A simple and inexpensive way to surprise your wife with a treat is to pick up her favorite treats at the grocery store. Then you can sneak them into a her purse or computer bag for your wife to find and enjoy at work or out running errands. Or leave a treat on the pillow or nightstand, or in a coat pocket.

Leave your spouse alone to do a hobby, with no strings attached. She is probably tired of hearing you complain when she is watching TV while the laundry is not done. Let her have a night off to do her own thing, and don't be looking over her shoulder. Or your wife might enjoy a night out

Show Your Appreciation:

If your spouse works hard at a job, thank her for working hard for you and your family. A simple thank you can mean a lot. Send an "I love you" text message, or leave a message on your spouse's voicemail. If your spouse travels out of town on business, write love notes and hide them in the luggage. Put one in her purse, in reading materials, tucked in a shoe etc. You could even have the kids write notes, or draw pictures so your wife will know how much she will be missed by you and your family. Hiding love notes around the house works just as well.

Say Thank You:

It turns out that it's the little things that count. Mom and Dad probably taught you that you're supposed to say thanks when someone does something nice for you but you may have picked up their bad habits of failing to say it to one another. Don't take anything that your wife does for you for granted.

Try to notice the small things:

The small haircut that she got on the way home from the store or the new seasoning that was used on a meal are all really small things but noticing them goes a long way towards making your wife feel like you're actually paying attention and appreciating what you've got.

Do things that your wife likes:

When figuring out what you want to do over the weekend, consider trying things that you don't love but you know your wife really enjoys. It won't kill you to sit through a chick flick and it will make your wife feel appreciated.

The Husband does not feel appreciated by his wife:

How Do You Make Your Spouse Feel Appreciated?

In some cases, the husband may often wish that his wife would do things to show us that we are appreciated. Try to think in the reverse instead; make an effort to show your wife that you're appreciative of the marriage. This will improve things drastically and probably produce the results that you as a husband are looking for.

Love In Action: Disciplining Our Children

Summary

Did you know the experts (American Mental Health Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Family Physicians) have established guidelines regarding child discipline? Their recommendations are a good place to start our discussion of “Is there a ‘best’ way to correct children’s behavior?” Please join us as we travel from “Old School” to New Age” to explore options to make us more effective and aware parents.

Objective

Discipline is the process of teaching your child acceptable versus non-acceptable behavior (follow the rules). Discipline may involve punishment (time-out) or more importantly, rewards. Effective techniques aren’t about physical punishments. Most of the time they are more about treating children like adults, making them understand the gravity of the situation, and leading by example. The AAFP recommends several ways of shaping behavior: 1. positive reinforcement (focus on good behavior) 2. redirecting 3. verbal instruction/explanation 4. time-outs 5. re-explain expectations until compliance 6. grounding and 7. withholding privileges. Their charts indicate at what age these strategies work and when they are non productive.

The American Mental Health Association says that being authoritative is the best parenting style. This parent sets clear expectations and consequences and is affectionate toward his or her child. The authoritative parent allows for flexibility and collaborative problem solving with the child when dealing with behavioral challenges. Corporal punishment is not recommended because there is no proof it works and has several negative consequences. Tips they recommend are:

1. Guide your discipline techniques to fit well with your child’s temperament.
2. Communicate your discipline plan
3. Be respectful of your child
4. Be consistent
5. When it’s done it’s done (for both parent and child)
6. Understand what is appropriate for your child’s development
7. Look for the why behind behaviors. This doesn’t excuse behavior, but it can help prevent reoccurrence
8. Admit your mistakes
9. Realize some days will be challenges. If the situation becomes dangerous or intolerable, seek professional help.

No discussion would be complete without considering the concept of positive discipline. This approach does not use any form of punishment. It is about loving guidance as opposed to threats and punishment. It is based on minimizing the child’s frustrations and misbehavior rather than giving punishments. The foundation of this style of discipline is encouraging children to feel good about themselves and building the parent’s relationship with the child so the child wants to please the parent. To achieve this, children

need some time with parents every day that they can enjoy and feel good about. Children recognize a parent's love through the time spent with them.

Discipline and teaching work best within such positive relationships. Other important aspects are reasonable and age-appropriate expectations, feeding healthy foods and providing enough rest, giving clear instructions which may need to be repeated, looking for the causes of any misbehavior and making adjustments, and building routines. Children are helped by knowing what is happening in their lives. Having some predictability about their day without necessarily being regimental will help reduce frustration and misbehavior.

Some parents feel that positive parenting and non-punitive discipline is too permissive and will lead to unruly and disrespectful children. They also argue that there is no recourse for parents of misbehaving children to effectively control their misbehavior. Deliberate misbehavior, they say, must be firmly punished to prevent its recurrence.

Proponents of non-punitive discipline argue that children who misbehave often do it not out of malice, but out of ignorance, boredom or frustration, and simply need to be taught, listened to, or redirected. They argue that a close and loving relationship is vital and if there is such a relationship, the child will want to please the parent and will better accept rules and listen to reason. They also feel that punishments and smacks weaken the relationship which will lead to more problem behavior.

Bible Readings

1. 1. Hebrews 12: 7-11

7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

2. 2. Ephesians 6: 4

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Catechism Readings

1. Section 2223

Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery – the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the “material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones.” Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children. By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them:

Small Group Questions

1. Is there anything you can take home and use for child discipline in your family?
2. Is child discipline a life-long obligation? How does it mix with unconditional love of a child?

3. Corporal punishment is outlawed in 24 countries (Europe and Latin America) but is legal in all 50 States of the Union. Are there situations when it is necessary?
4. Is positive discipline a possibility with a large family? Is it unrealistic?

Recommended Resources

1. Dr. Phil Site

<http://drphil.com/articles/category/4/15/>

2. AAFP Site

<http://www.aafp.org/afp/2002/1015/p1447.html>

3. Catholic Parenting

<http://www.angelfire.com/hi3/catholichomeschool/parent.html>

4. Catholic Culture

<http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/activities/view.cfm?id=136>

Accountability

1. Are you able to share with your small group partners one thing you did differently regarding child discipline next week? What were the results?
2. Did you discuss with your wife how you will handle discipline for the children?

Recommended Song

Be Not Afraid

Author(s)

Kevin McDonough / Reid Rooney

Surrendering to God...Turning Over Control of Our Lives

Objective

There are many ways to approach this subject, today we will consider just one path. The objective is to provide an approach for surrendering control in our lives to God, acknowledging that there are other approaches. We'll consider a chain of behaviors/virtues that "leads to a posture of surrender, of self-emptying, as one makes space for God." (St Augustine) "Is it only when our lives are emptied that we're surprised by how truly full our lives were?" "Instead of filling with expectations, the joy-filled expect nothing----and are filled." "Empty to fill!" (One Thousand Gifts by Ann Voskamp).

We start with the Eucharist and the meaning of the word. The root word is "charis" meaning grace, but even deeper, the root "chara" means joy. Eucharist, though, means thanksgiving. "Deep joy (chara) is found only at the table of the Eucharist---the table of Thanksgiving." (Voskamp) So our surrender, our emptying ourselves begins with thanksgiving. Thanks for all the things in our lives, the little things, the big things, the wonderful things and, yes, ultimately the sad and suffering things. This giving thanks teaches us patience, which leads to humility, that in turn builds trust and finally gives us hope---hope for salvation. Our being thankful for the gifts, the grace we receive from God, and the wonder of it all is what brings us joy. And this joy can transcend all the other emotions. It is the joy Pope Francis exhorts us to nourish in our faith, in our service and in our reading of the Word.

The next link in the chain is patience. "Patience" Henri Nouwen tells us, "is a hard discipline. It is not just waiting until something happens over which we have no control...is not a waiting passivity...Patience asks us to live the moment to the fullest...let's be patient and trust that the treasure we look for is hidden in the ground on which we stand."

Being thankful, living patiently in the moment then leads to a sense of humility, for how can we not be humbled when we are acknowledging our thankful ness for all God gives us. St Augustine writes, "He now said that what the pagan world had called wisdom was redefined by Jesus as humility, because humility was the first rung on the Christian ladder to perfection.' He emphatically declared "this way (to truth) is first humility, second humility and third humility and no matter how often you keep asking me I will say the same over and over."

The practice of humility then builds trust. "Trust is the basis of life," Nouwen states. He shares an image of the trapeze artist and their spectacular performances, but emphasizes the trust they must have in their catchers. "Much of our lives is flying. It is wonderful to fly in the air as free as a bird, but when God is not there to catch us, all our flying comes to nothing. Let's trust the great Catcher." The trust allows us to turn over our desire to be in control. It forms the foundation of our faith, our believing. And it is this faith that fosters Hope.

The final link is Hope. Again referencing Henri Nouwen, he says don't mix up hope with optimism. Optimism being an expectation that things will get better. "Hope is the trust that God will fulfill God's promises to us in a way that leads us to true freedom. The person of hope lives in the moment with the knowledge and trust that all of life is in good hands."

So live in the moment, put gratitude/thankfulness in your thoughts constantly. Experience the joy that will provide. See how it will improve your patience, how small life's tribulations will become. Feel the humility that results when you make yourself small, so God can grow in you; as you understand Jesus' servant model. Release your urge to control your life, seek what is God's plan for you and learn to put your trust in God's plan. Know that those choices, that path is the path to holiness, the path of hope and our salvation.

Bible Readings

1. 1Thes 5:16-18.

Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you

2. Rom 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

3. John 15:4

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

4. 1Cor 6:17

But he who is united to the Lord becomes one Spirit with Him.

5. Luke 22:42

Father, if you are willing remove this chalice from me, nevertheless not my will, but yours be done.

6. John 3:30

He must increase, but I must decrease.

7. Matt 18:4

...anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.gen 18:27 I will speak to my Lord, I who am but dust and ashes.

8. Ps 72:22

It is there Thou showest me to myself, what I am, what I have been and what I am come to: for I am nothing and I knew it not.

9. Imitation of Christ Ch 8.

If I am left to myself, behold I am nothing and all weakness , but if Thou shouldst graciously look upon me, I presently become strong and am filled with a new joy.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 224

It means living in thanksgiving "if God is the only one, everything we are and have come from Him. What are you that you did not receive? What shall I render to the Lord for all His bounty to me?"

Surrendering to God...Turning Over Control of Our Lives

2. Paragraph 229

Faith in God leads us to Him alone as our first origin and our ultimate goal, and neither to prefer anything to Him or substitute any thing for Him.

3. Paragraph 2825

Although he was a Son (Jesus) learned obedience through what He suffered. How much more reason have we sinful creatures to learn obedience—we who in Him have become children of adoption. We ask our Father to unite our will to His Son's in order to fulfill His will, His plan of salvation for the life of the world. We are radically incapable of this, but united with Jesus and with the Power of the Holy Spirit, we can surrender our will to Him and decide to choose what His Son has always chosen: to do what is pleasing to the Father.

Small Group Questions

1. What aspect of “personal control” in my life presents my biggest challenge for surrendering?
2. When have I been confronted with circumstances where I had to put my trust in God?
3. From the minute I awoke today, just those couple hours, what blessings/gifts might I identify and be thankful for?

Recommended Resources

1. “The Road to Character” (chapter on St Augustine), by David Brooks
2. “Bread for the Journey” (Jan 5, 11, 16, 17 and Feb 5) Henri Nouwen
3. “One Thousand Gifts” by Ann Voskamp
4. “Imitation of Christ (pp156-158) by Thomas A Kempis

Accountability

Today we talked about how hope, trust, humility, patience and thankfulness can assist us in surrendering to God.

This week jot down every day the little things, the gifts really, that you encounter in your daily routine, for which you are thankful. Use your iphone or a notepad so you capture it “in the moment.” This can grow into a habit of thankfulness. If you want to increase the challenge, set a target for a 100 thanks or even a thousand!

Pick one day this week, just one day. On that day pray for patience and humility (google them you'll find numerous short prayers) before you leave the house. Pledge that on the drive to and from work you will let God be incontrol, no rushing, no frustration with traffic, other drivers, traffic lights etc. Just one day, try it. And if you want to truly challenge yourself, use that same posture to guide the whole day. Check how you did at the end of the day with spouse/family. Challenge them to try as well. Again as with thankfulness, we are growing a new habit, and learning what surrendering to God really entails.

Recommended Song

Eye Has Not Seen

Author

Charlie Pfizenmayer

Surrendering to God...Turning Over Control of Our Lives

Included Resources

- C S Lewis said he was “surprised by joy,’ so much so that he wrote a book about it.
- “The feeling of joy begins with the action of Thanksgiving.” (Tonia Pekover)
- “The humble live surprised. The humble live by joy.” (Ann Voskamp)
- “...humility isn’t burden or humiliation or oppressive insight but humility is the only posture that can receive the wondrous gifts of God.” (Voskamp)
- “(Jesus) who humbled Himself and became obedient to death.” (Phil 2:8)
- “True humility is self-smallness to the point of ‘blessed forgetfulness’ and what could bring more happiness than emptying of self-will and being wholly immersed in the will of God for this moment?” (Voskamp)
- “In Mary’s humility---her willingness to die to her expectations and plans---God exalts her. In her submissiveness to His will, He fills her emptiness with fullness of Himself. “ (Voskamp)
- “God created the world out of nothing, and as long as we are nothing, He can make something out of us.” (Martin Luther quote, from Voskamp book)
- “Use me then, my Savior, for whatever purposes and in whatever way you may require. Here is my poor heart, an empty vessel, fill it with your grace. (D. L. Moody quote from Voskamp book)”

We Are A Missionary Church

Summary

"We are on a mission from God" was the line made famous in the movie 'The Blues Brothers' when Joliet "Jake" Blues (John Belushi) told his brother Elwood Blues (Dan Aykroyd).

The word mission comes from the latin word *missio*, which means "having been sent". Find out how regular fathers, just like you, share what "having been sent from God" means in how they are living their lives today for the Catholic Church.



Objective

Help Father's understand the definition of "Missionary Church"(aka "We are on a Mission from God") with respect to why God is asking each individual to come to together in community to share their unique talents, personalities, and spiritual endowments to spread and enact the good news of Jesus.

As background, the word "mission" comes from the Latin word *missio*, which means "having been sent." Since we as Catholic's 'have been sent' to do God's work in the community, 'we are a Missionary Church.'

A Missionary Church recognizes that we are all one body, but individually parts of it, we are all called to be part of the Missionary Church to spread & enact the good news:

- Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it. Some people God has designated in the church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then, gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts. (1 CORINTHIANS, CHAPTER 12; 17-31)

This allows each of us to be one body (Church) but individually parts that having been sent (Mission) to tell & enact the good news of Jesus in a way that reflects our talents, personalities, and spiritual endowments.

We, as Catholic Christian's follow Jesus are a sent people, even as Jesus was sent into the world by his Heavenly Father. We are sent on a mission together: to keep on doing the ministry of Jesus so that all people and all creation might experience in a community, the reconciliation of God and proclaim & enact the good news. God has designed the church of Jesus Christ to be "missionary" fellowship.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to be part of the Missionary Church that which Jesus commanded to his original team of 12 apostles:

- Go and announce . . . that the Kingdom of Heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received! (Matt 10:7-8).
- Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other (John 13:34).

Like Jesus, we have been sent to proclaim and enact the good news. In addition to telling his disciples to wait for the Spirit to empower them, Jesus explained what the Spirit's power would accomplish:

- When the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere — in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Even as the Spirit came upon Jesus in his baptism to anoint him for preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, so the Spirit empowers us to spread & enact the good news about Jesus. Whereas Jesus proclaimed the coming of God's reign, we bear witness to Jesus himself, to what he accomplished in his life, death, and resurrection. We have the privilege of announcing to people that Jesus died for their sins so that they might be reconciled to God and therefore live forever under God's reign, both in this life and in the life to come. Our good news is more than: "You can go to heaven when you die." It is "You can be reconciled to God right now. You can begin to experience true community fellowship with God by living under God's reign because of what Jesus has done for you"

Bible Readings

1. John Chapter 13: 34-35

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples

2. Luke Chapter 4: 18-19

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppressors, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come

3. 1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 12: 17-31

Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it. Some people God has designated in the church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then, gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts.

Small Group Questions

1. What is your "Mission from God" for the Church?
2. If you and your wife said "We are on a Mission from God"...describe it?
3. What are your talents, personalities, and spiritual endowments that you can help the Church?

Recommended Resources

1. How can I understand and define my role in the "Missionary Church"
<http://www.evangelismcoach.org/2012/growing-an-engaged-church/>
2. What is God is calling me to do?
<http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CGAQFjAJahUKEwizsc7T5lvHAhUDJw0KHZitAqQ&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.qas.org%2Fpdf%2Fmass-journal.pdf&ei=Kce-VfP4CI0eNpbjbiqAK&usq=AFQjCNF7iSRoFco0N9qS2vvnlMvNxtvWKQ>
3. <http://www.usccb.org/bible/1corinthians/12:4>
4. <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/markdroberts/series/the-mission-of-god-and-the-missional-church/>
5. <http://www.usccb.org/bible/1corinthians/12:4>
6. <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/markdroberts/series/the-mission-of-god-and-the-missional-church/>

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start to look at my talents and see what my mission is?

2. I will reach out to my accountability partner to ask what he thinks my talents, personalities and spiritual endowments are?
3. I plan to get involved in the following Church ministry _____, as it best fits my talents, personalities and spiritual endowments of _____, _____, _____.
4. God is calling me to _____. I hear his voice and will by (date) plan to _____.

Recommended Song

They'll Know We Are Christians

Author

Kevin Scott

Men raising girls: Looking at the example of St. Louis Martin raising St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Summary

The recent canonization of Louis Martin gives us a shining example of fatherhood, especially in his family life, raising five daughters including St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the “Little Flower”. His virtues give us tangible ways to grow a holy family.

Objective

As fathers, it is easy to get overwhelmed when trying to understand our children and helping them grow in Christ. Raising a daughter can be even more difficult because, as men, we were never girls or young women and cannot draw on life experience when trying to comprehend what they are going through and parent appropriately. And yet, we cannot leave our daughters, alien though they may be, to be parented solely by our wives.

So, we look to men we trust and admire for inspiration and support. But for those times when the need is greatest, it is good to know that there are exceptional men who have raised exceptional women. There are few father-daughter saint pairings and those that do exist, like the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joachim, provide little concrete information that can help modern fathers. But the October 18th canonization of Louis Martin, father of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, provides us with not only the existence of such an example, but specific traits and actions, outlined in letters from St. Thérèse and gleaned from letters of Louis Martin himself, that can strengthen our relationships with our daughters and help lead them to be closer to Christ.

Shared prayer: Zélie Martin, Louis’s wife and mother, died when their youngest, Thérèse, was only four years old, leaving him with five daughters. He took it upon himself to take his daughters to daily Mass with him every morning. Despite the obvious financial disadvantage, he refused to work on the Sabbath or let any of the employees of his small watchmaking business do any work, even though it was not part of French culture at that time. Louis read spiritual books such as *The Imitation of Christ* with his girls and took them on pilgrimages on foot. These are not mighty deeds individually, but collectively, they set the foundation for a love for God.

Trust and Communication: Before becoming a nun, Saint Thérèse went to her father for permission. As a young man, Louis had aspired to be a monk and he doubtlessly shared the thoughts behind those aspirations with his daughters. Even though he suffered from mental illness, his daughters still consulted him, even after all five left to become nuns, including one who had a rebellious adolescence.

Playfulness: Louis admitted in a letter that he was “a big child with my children”. His daughters had pet names from him: *pearl*, *guardian angel*, *diamond*, and, for Thérèse, *little queen*.

Bible Readings

1. Ephesians 6:4

4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord.

2. 1 Timothy 4 : 12

Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2228

Parents' respect and affection are expressed by the care and attention they devote to bringing up their young children and providing for their physical and spiritual needs. As the children grow up, the same respect and devotion lead parents to educate them in the right use of their reason and freedom.

2. Paragraph 2223

"Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by *creating a home* where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for *education in the virtues*. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery - the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the "material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones." Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children. By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them."

3. Paragraphs 2224-2225

The home is the natural environment for initiating a human being into solidarity and communal responsibilities. Parents should teach children to avoid the compromising and degrading influences which threaten human societies. Through the grace of the sacrament of marriage, parents receive the responsibility and privilege of evangelizing their children. Parents should initiate their children at an early age into the mysteries of the faith of which they are the "first heralds" for their children. They should associate them from their tenderest years with the life of the Church. A wholesome family life can foster interior dispositions that are a genuine preparation for a living faith and remain a support for it throughout one's life.

Small Group Questions

1. What ways do you pray and discuss the faith with your children? How do you deal with stubbornness or rebellion to religious practice in the family?
2. Do you have any examples in your life of a father who is a prayer/faith leader? What attributes does he exhibit?

Recommended Resources

1. "The Holy Household of Louis and Zélie Martin", an article in Crisis Magazine by Christopher Lane: <http://www.crisismagazine.com/2013/the-holy-household-of-louis-and-zelie-martin>
2. <http://www.amazon.com/Call-Deeper-Love-Correspondence-1864-1885/dp/0818913215>
3. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Martin_\(lay_brother\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Martin_(lay_brother))

Accountability

1. Look for opportunities to pray with your daughter. Pray with them once this weekend. If you do not have a daughter, pray for your future daughters-in-law
2. If you have difficulties leading prayer, ask someone you trust for guidance.

Recommended Song

Let There Be Peace On Earth

Men raising girls: Looking at the example of St. Louis Martin raising St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Author(s)

John Murphy

Spiritual Dryness ... Do You still love me? / Spiritual dry spells / Ways to get out of a prayer rut

Summary

Ever feel like you are just going through the motions. Like you are going to church because you know it's right, but it just isn't making that special connection. How do you work your way out of it? What can you focus on to bring you back to a rewarding relationship with God and the church?

Objective

It seems like a lot of people go through spiritual dry spells. People sometimes feel apathetic about their relationship with God and/or feel like God's voice is silent during a difficult time. The objective is to provide some practical tips for getting through times of spiritual dryness.

Here is a list of items that can help overcome spiritual dryness.

- Read an inspirational book
- Start going to confession on a regular basis
- Get a spiritual director
- Watch an inspirational movie
- Volunteer to help the less fortunate, visit those in hospitals or prison

Bible Readings

1. Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

2. Job 30:20

"I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer; I stand up, but you merely look at me.

3. Matthew 8:26

He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2088

The first commandment requires us to nourish and protect our faith with prudence and vigilance, and to reject everything that is opposed to it. There are various ways of sinning against faith:

Voluntary doubt about the faith disregards or refuses to hold as true what God has revealed and the Church proposes for belief. Involuntary doubt refers to hesitation in believing, difficulty in overcoming objections connected with the faith, or also anxiety aroused by its obscurity. If deliberately cultivated doubt can lead to spiritual blindness.

2. Paragraph 162

Faith is an entirely free gift that God makes to man. We can lose this priceless gift, as St. Paul indicated to St. Timothy: "Wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith." To live, grow and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith; it must be "working through charity," abounding in hope, and rooted in the faith of the Church.

Small Group Questions

1. What do you do when you are going through a spiritual dry spell?
2. Is there some activity, sacrament or inspirational book that helps you get back on track with your spiritual journey?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.catholiclane.com/spiritual-dryness-%E2%80%9Ci-don%E2%80%99t-feel-anything%E2%80%9D/>
2. <http://www.spiritualdirection.com/2015/07/04/keeping-faith-alive-during-lifes-dark-nights-part-ii-of-iv>
3. <http://alaycatholic.com/2013/04/10/how-do-you-combat-spiritual-dryness/>

Accountability

1. Ask yourself – is there anything I am doing to block God's voice? Take time to reflect on what you have been doing lately.
2. Have you been praying, receiving the sacraments, etc.?
3. Are you filling your life with other distractions?

Recommended Song

Be Not Afraid

Author(s)

Tony Heekin

Sean Mullarkey

Included Resources

From <http://www.conversiondiary.com/2009/07/9-tips-for-spiritual-dry-spells.html>

1. Make sure you're not doing anything to block out God's voice
 - Is there specific sin in your life that is blocking your relationship with God?
 - Are you holding a grudge against someone?
2. Keep praying (no, seriously, keep praying)
 - Mix up your prayer life a bit. Add the rosary if you are not currently saying it. Pray with your spouse.
 - A spiritual dry spell is not the time to start subtracting spiritual practices that you once felt called to do.
3. Receive the sacraments
 - Increase the frequency with which you receive the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confession. As with prayer, it's tempting to slack off on going to Mass or Confession if it doesn't lead to an emotional experience, but the sacraments are channels of grace regardless of how we feel when we receive them.

4. Read inspiring spiritual books

Mother Teresa's Secret Fire, In the Shadow of His Wings, Come Be My Light, He Leadeth Me, Finding God's Will for You, 10 Prayers God Always Says Yes To

5. Make sure there's not a physical cause

Though we always have free will to turn to God no matter what the circumstances (as I was recently reminded), I've found that if I'm staying up too late, constantly eating junk food, not exercising, pushing myself too hard, etc., I'm far more tempted to turn away from God than when I'm feeling good physically — and this alone can lead to spiritual dry spells.

6. Make sure you're recharging your batteries

This is similar to the above, but it's so important yet so often overlooked that I think it's worth addressing as a separate point. It is critically important to understand how you recharge your batteries, i.e. knowing what activities give you energy vs. what activities drain your energy.

7. Find a spiritual director

Spiritual directors can help you work through questions like, "Am I doing something to block out God's voice?", "What could be the purpose for God's silence in my life right now?", "How can I keep praying when I feel so unmotivated?", etc.

8. Consider counseling

If you think you might have serious unresolved issues in your life that are impacting your relationship with God, you may want to consider finding a Christian counselor to help you gain peace in those areas of your life.

9. Research the Christian understanding of spiritual dry spells

If you've done all of the above and nothing is better, it may simply be that God is withholding spiritual consolation from you for a reason.

Spiritual dryness – remedied by the dew of the Holy Spirit - CNA Columns: Answering the Tough Questions

By Father Rocky Hoffman *

I have often read that St. Thérèse of Lisieux suffered from spiritual dryness." Can you please explain exactly what is "spiritual dryness."

Spiritual dryness is just that: when it comes to conversation with God, you feel like you've got nothing to say and that God isn't saying much either. If you turned it into a movie, it would be a bust at the box office. But from God's perspective, spiritual dryness is a valuable test. Those who persevere in their practices of piety and devotion – even when they feel they get nothing out of it – win God's grace and grow in holiness by proving their fidelity and loyalty to the good Master.

Not only did St. Therese experience this, trial, but many saints have as well. There's a marvelous section of the Catechism on prayer which is well worth reading. Regarding spiritual dryness, it has this to say:

Another difficulty, especially for those who sincerely want to pray, is dryness. Dryness belongs to contemplative prayer when the heart is separated from God, with no taste for thoughts, memories, and feelings, even spiritual ones. This is the moment of sheer faith clinging faithfully to Jesus in his agony and in his tomb. "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if dies, it bears much fruit." If dryness is due to the lack of roots, because the word has fallen on rocky soil, the battle requires conversion.(no. 2731)

Servant Leadership

Summary

Servant leadership is a leadership style that puts others first. Jesus was the greatest example of a servant leader. You do not have to be an official leader to be a servant leader. Learn more about this way of leading through service and how it can affect your professional and personal life.

Objective

The term “servant leadership” was first coined by Robert Greenleaf in the 1970s. There are many versions of what this term means, but in general it is the idea that one can inspire people to do their best by deeply caring about them. If a leader serves others, then a relationship of trust and collaboration develops where the individuals of the group are looking out for each other, where they are empowered to exercise their skills and creativity to their potential, and where the leader’s greatest success is not personal achievement but the growth and advancement of the individuals in the group.

For Christians, Jesus is the ultimate example of the servant leader. He showed compassion to sinners while still instructing them in the truth. He was not intimidated by powerful people, and he sought out the weak and marginalized. The early Christian community saw Jesus as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s “Suffering Servant” (Isaiah 42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12), indicating that this kind of leadership involves a willingness to suffer for others, but knowing that such suffering can obtain a higher goal. However, servant leadership is not reserved only for Jesus or even people in management roles in the business world. Servant leadership is a way of interacting with others, regardless of official titles, and seeking the good of others for their own sake and for God’s.

Bible Readings

1. Matthew 20:28

But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

2. John 13:5-10, 12-15

Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. He came to Simon Peter; and Peter said him, “Lord, do wash my feet?” Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand.” Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part in me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”

When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 580

In Jesus, the Law no longer appears engraved on tables of stone but “upon the heart” of the Servant who becomes “a covenant to the people,” because he will “faithfully bring forth justice.”

2. Paragraph 608

Christ’s whole life expresses his mission: “to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Small Group Questions

1. Think of a story about Jesus where you think that he is shown as a servant leader. What quality of servant leadership stands out for you? How did others feel about the approach Jesus took?
2. Do you consider yourself a leader, regardless of whatever official roles you may have? How can you apply some principles of servant leadership at work or at home?
3. Sometimes people think that servant leadership is a weak way to lead. St. Paul said that “the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18). Later he told the Corinthians that the Lord told him in prayer that “my power is made perfect in weakness,” causing Paul to conclude: “when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10). What does Paul mean, and how can it apply to our lives?

Recommended Resources

1. Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership:
<http://www.slideshare.net/sevenpillarsofservantleadership/seven-pillars-of-servant-leadership-leaderserve-model>
2. Dateline NBC on Servant Leadership (video): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDVdXPo0ytM>
3. Servant Leadership at all levels: <http://www.peterson.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123288594>
4. Servant Leadership Liturgy of the Word:
http://www.ourlanguageourstory.org/staff_development/prayer_services/ServantLeadership.pdf

Accountability

1. This week focus on one aspect of servant leadership and apply it in your professional or personal life.
2. Spiritual leadership in the family is an important role for a parent. One day this week consciously be a spiritual leader to your family. Some possible things you could do are: lead your family in prayer, lead them in a discussion of a spiritual matter, teach your children something about the Catholic faith, or read the Gospel for the coming Sunday prior to going to mass and/or discuss it after mass.
3. In the coming week take some time to think about who you have known in your life whom you would describe as a servant leader. Identify what was most appealing about that person’s approach, and take to prayer how you can apply that aspect to your life and your interaction with others.

Recommended Song

God Has Chosen Me

Author(s)

Pete Caccavari

Included Resources

“The Servant as Leader” by Robert K. Greenleaf, p. 2

The idea of *The Servant as Leader* came out of reading Hermann Hesse’s *Journey to the East*. In this story we see a band of men on a mythical journey, probably also Hesse’s own journey. The central figure of the story is Leo who accompanies the party as the *servant* who does their menial chores, but who also sustains them with his spirit and his song. He is a person of extraordinary presence. All goes well until Leo disappears. Then the group falls into disarray and the journey is abandoned. They cannot make it without the servant Leo. The narrator, one of the party, after some years of wandering finds Leo and is taken into the Order that had sponsored the journey. There he discovers that Leo, whom he had known first as *servant*, was in fact the titular head of the Order, its guiding spirit, a great and noble *leader*.

Rebuilt: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost, Making Church Matter by Michael White and Tom Corcoran, p. 245.

We say someone is “full of himself” when we’re talking about pride. To explain the opposite of that, Paul says Jesus “emptied himself” and poured out his whole life. He took all his rights—the right to be worshiped, the right to rule, the right to the perfection of heaven—and gave it all up. He emptied himself to become not just a servant but a slave. Paul goes on to describe his life that way, too, “poured out as a libation” (Philippians 2:17).

That’s servant leadership. Pouring out selfishness and pride in order to have the capacity to receive the wisdom, knowledge, understanding, right judgment, and all the other gifts the Holy Spirit offers. And then, it is about emptying even these gifts into the lives of those you serve. Andy Stanley talks about mentoring his staff as emptying his cup into their cups.

The Servant: A Simple Story about the True Essence of Leadership by James C. Hunter, p. 65

“I’m sorry, Greg,” the teacher began, “I guess I have not made it very clear about what it means to be the servant. I said that leaders should identify and meet the *needs* of their people, *serve* them. I did not say that they should identify and meet the *wants* of their people, be *slaves* to them. Slaves do what others *want*, servants do what others *need*. There is a world of difference between meeting wants and meeting needs.”