



Seek First the Kingdom

Parents in Partnership with God – Sharing Faith with Children

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

PARENT ADVICE FROM POPE FRANCIS -- PART 6 of 6

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

Within the Christian family the gospel is experienced before it is heard. Through love two become one and they generate love. Parents then become the “first heralds of the gospel” to their children and that love continues to ripple through the family and into society. The vocation of fostering quality family life is fundamental to recognizing and transmitting the joy of the gospel. The *Joy of Love* spotlights love in the family. In chapter four Pope Francis tutors us on what love looks like in marriage by reflecting on St. Paul’s “love homily” (1 Corinthians 13: 4-7).

LOVE NEVER GIVES UP

Age-old wisdom suggests: “If you have nothing nice to say, say nothing!” This is the meaning of “**Love Bears All Things**” (#111-113). It means to “hold your tongue” (remain silent) or “hold your piece” (of information, opinion or insight) about a person if it will cause hurt or harm or spotlight the limitations of a person. “**It implies limiting judgment, checking the impulse to issue a firm and ruthless condemnation.**” (#112)

Speak well of each other. “Say the things that people need to hear, things that will help them. (Ephesians 4:28). Show the good side of your spouse, child, or sibling, not their weakness and faults. “**In any event, keep silent rather than speak ill of them.**” #113)

Expect to find goodness in a person. That is the meaning of “**Love Believes All Things**” (#114-115). This trustful attitude “**enables a relationship to be free. ... Love trusts, it sets free, it does not try to control, possess and dominate everything.**” (#115)

Trusting love fosters independence, openness, sincerity and transparency. When we know that we are trusted there is no need for secrecy, suspicion, and pretending to be anything other than who/what we are. Such trust generates freedom and eliminates deceit, falsehood, and lies.

Parent Ponder Points:

- Watch your words! Avoid asserting yourself at the expense of others by venting anger and resentment.
- Slander (harming a person’s good name) causes irreparable damage. “Hearts have been broken by harsh words spoken that sorrow can never set right.”
- Lying, deceitful behavior breaks trust and blocks growth in loving relationship.

Reflection Questions:

1. What is more characteristic of you: to vent frustration or to withhold criticism?
2. If an impartial, invisible guest spent the last three days in your home, would he/she view you as a dictator, spectator, or a facilitator?
3. Read *The Joy of Love*, # 111-115. What parts tug at your heart?

Love is Optimistic

Christian hope is more than wishful thinking. Hopeful love is a confident expectation that people can change and mature into God's vision for them. Love that **"Hopes All Things"** (#116-117) believes that a person has infinite potential. Hopeful love realizes that, **"though things may not always turn out as we wish, God may well make crooked lines straight and draw some good from the evil we endure in this world."** (#116)

A love that hopes is convinced that all events can have a positive outcome. **"This realization helps us, amid the aggravations of this present life, to see each person from a supernatural perspective, in the light of hope"** (#117) and, therefore, to anticipate the best and work with the least.

Christian Love **"Endures All Things"** (#118-119) meaning that it faces trials and tolerates challenges with a positive attitude. It communicates peacefulness while standing firm in the face of hostility, opposition or confrontation. **"It is a love that never gives up, even in the darkest hour. It shows a certain dogged heroism, a power to resist every negative current, an irrepressible commitment to goodness."** (#118)

Love persists regardless of the circumstances. **"Love does not yield to resentment, scorn for others or the desire to hurt or to gain some advantage."** (#119)

Parent Ponder Points:

- Pope Francis commented: **"The Christian ideal, especially in families, is a love that never gives up"** (#119). The ideal is a principle that sometimes feels out of reach. When you fail in your attempts name, claim, and tame the challenge and then begin again.
- Despair is the opposite of hope. Despair issues from depending on your own resources, strengths and abilities. Rely on God. If God calls you to it, God will see you through it. Reach out to others to restore balance and vision.
- When concern weighs you down or threatens your peace: pause, retreat and re-strategize but do not quit!

Reflection Questions:

1. When do you find it easiest to trust in the goodness of others? When is it difficult?
2. Recall a time when good came out of a sorrow/mistake/failure. In other words, a time when God redeemed a negative event.
3. Recall a time that you had a "dark hour" but were pulled through by the love of another.
4. Read *The Joy of Love*, # 116-119. What thought fills you with hope and grace?