



Family Life



THE FAMILY LIFE OFFICE

DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS

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Mutuality

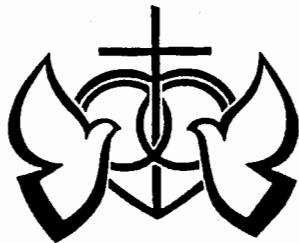
"Mutuality is really about sharing power and exercising responsibility for a purpose larger than ourselves."

-- Follow the Way of Love

The subject of sexual equality is addressed sensitively in the section on marriage in the pastoral *Follow the Way of Love*: "Marriage is the partnership of a man and woman equal in dignity and value." While the bishops support sexual equality, the more important message in the pastoral to Catholic married couples is that equality is defined as mutuality.

How do married couples aspire to such mutuality in a culture that promotes individualism? The pastoral invites exploration of this ideal. It says that "unlike other relationships, marriage is a vowed covenant with unique dimensions. In this partnership, mutual submission - not dominance by either partner - is the key to genuine joy. Mutuality is really about sharing power and exercising responsibility for a purpose larger than ourselves."

Married couples are invited to study the tension that still exists today between our culture's expectations of a marriage relationship and the ideal of mutuality in marriage -- a religious vision of life together. Perhaps reading this entire pastoral will be a good beginning. Call the Family Life Office to obtain a copy.



"The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than to win his understanding; it seeks to annihilate rather than to convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It leaves society in a monologue rather a dialogue. Violence ends by defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers."

-Dr. Martin Luther King

The Role of a Responsible Parent in a Child's Character Development

1. **Be clear how you want your children to treat others.** Parents should discuss what values they want their children to embrace.
2. **Is your life consistent with the goals and values you set for your children?** Children learn best from role modeling. Be the kind of person you want your children to be.
3. **Treat your children with dignity and respect, and see that they treat you the same way.** Let them know that they are loved and that you value their ideas and feelings. Let them know that who they are and what they do matters. Say you're sorry when you are too harsh or when you slip and say something hurtful to them. Do not allow siblings to abuse each other verbally or physically. Only when children feel loved and valued will they have the emotional strength and stability to move to the next level of reaching out to others with dignity, respect and compassion.
4. **Use everyday teachable moments.** Watch for the unpredictable, spontaneous opportunities of daily life to model appropriate behavior or to point out powerful examples of both positive and negative social responsiveness. Watch children in play situations and point out inappropriate behaviors in a non-threatening way. Help children make amends (restitution) for mistakes that they have made. Talk about respect for diversity. Help children develop a sense of an "internal parent."
5. **Actively engage children in acts of kindness.** Help children discover opportunities where they can perform acts of kindness. Use TV and current events to talk about the less fortunate and how the family can reach out to those in need. Encourage children to appreciate diversity.
6. **Provide positive feedback.** Notice and acknowledge your children's acts of compassion, caring, or volunteering to help a friend. Words of recognition, a hug, a smile help instill an inner sense of genuine caring and compassion.

Adapted from July 1999 Family Information Services.

10 Tips for Divorcing Parents

Divorce is never easy on kids, but there are many ways parents can lessen the impact of their breakup on their children:

1. **Never put down your former spouse in front of your children.** Because children know that they are "part mom" and "part dad," the criticism can harm the child's self-esteem.
2. **Do not use your children as messengers between you and your former spouse.** The less the children feel a part of the battle between their parents, the better.
3. **Reassure your children that they are loved and that the divorce is not their fault.** Many children assume that they are to blame for their parent's hostility.
4. **Encourage your children to see your former spouse frequently.** Do everything within your power to accommodate the visitation.
5. **At every step during your divorce, remind yourself that your children's interest is what is most important.** Lavish them with love at every opportunity.
6. **Your children may be tempted to act as your caretaker.** Resist the temptation to let them. Let your peers, adult family members, and mental health professionals be your counselors and sounding board. Let your children be children.
7. **If you have a drinking or drug problem, get counseling right away.** An impairment inhibits your ability to reassure your children and give them the attention they need at this difficult time.
8. **If you are the non-custodial parent, pay your child support.** The loss of income facing many children after divorce puts them at a financial disadvantage that has a pervasive effect on the rest of their lives.
9. **If you are custodial parent and you are not receiving child support do not tell your children.** It feeds into the child's sense of abandonment and further erodes his or her stability.
10. **[Give long consideration before you] uproot your children.** Stability in their residence and school life [can] help buffer children from the trauma of their parents' divorce.

By Mike McCurley (1998). Reprinted with permission from the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers.



What to Keep in Mind in Relating to the Grieving Person

1. Our PRESENCE is more important than what we say or choose not to say. Simply "being there" is our best gift to the person who is grieving.
2. We need to be THOUGHTFUL in what we say or do. Rather than saying "I know exactly how you feel," we can say "I cannot know how you feel; I know what I felt when..."
3. Recognize that some things that we say need TO BE AVOIDED, such as:
"Time will heal."
"Life must go on."
"You're young; you can marry again."
"It's the Lord's will."
"You can always find someone in worse shape."
"Don't be upset."
4. Be near, but NOT TOO CLOSE. Give the grieving person space and encouragement. Be available in a natural way ("I am going to the supermarket, can I get you some bread or anything else? Or, better yet, could I pick you up so we could go together?").
5. Be CONSISTENT in your care. Keep in touch. Since abandonment may be a feeling that is present, consistent contact is helpful to demonstrate genuine care for the person.
6. Allow the grieving person to CHANGE. None of us is the same day after day. Be a listener whenever the grieving person chooses to share. We learn more about the grieving person by listening than by talking.
7. EXPRESS YOUR CONCERN through visible expressions, such as books, flowers, mowing the lawn, helping with insurance forms, etc.

Source: November, 1994, Family Information Services Focus Issue "Marriage and Family Development," prepared by Britton Wood, Ph.D.

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Resource to Parish Family Ministries

Marriage Preparation/Enrichment, Natural Family Planning, Parenting, Separated, Divorced, Bereaved, Remarriage