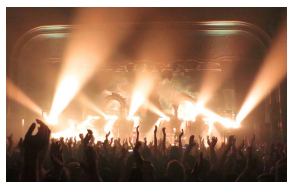




The Armor of Faith
Topic Summary: The Battle for Our Children
Part VI: Social Relationships



Public Domain

Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Helen is a lay-Dominican, which is also known as the Order of Preachers, and she, along with her husband Dan, are engaged in youth catechesis and music ministry. Sharon is our token cradle Catholic, and, as everyone by now knows, I am simply here to ask questions. Our panelists love to answer those questions, as a matter of fact, I think they lie awake at night just thinking about them, so welcome to our panelists as well as to our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.

Discussion:

We hope everyone had a very Merry Christmas. We also hope families were able to take advantage of the opportunities of Advent to help our youth to learn about the joys and blessings of their faith. If not, well, let's begin to plan for next year.

As we concluded our last discussion, we mentioned that we may not be able to stop the tide of politics overwhelming our education system, but we can help our children understand and

navigate the social paths which are in conflict with our faith. The reality is, as our children begin to step into the adult world, especially when they enter into post-high school education where our contact with them is diminished, they must be capable of putting on their own armor, not only for the defense of their faith, but for their very soul and perhaps the generations to follow. We must also recognize that in the process, we will set the example by which they will evaluate how they will raise their children, if that becomes their vocation, and how they will interact socially. Let us pray the Holy Spirit will guide us to be a positive example in how we engage our children as well as the world.

While the temptation may be to get angry as we battle the system, we must also remember that how we react will be evaluated by everyone, including our children. As we engage, we must realize that Catholics are only one faction in the culture wars over our education system. We must also understand that those we might think are our allies may not always be. Both the left and the right have biases towards the Catholic faith.

As we consider the challenges before us, we must not remain silent, else we will become increasingly marginalized within our society by the dominant political factions. Still, we must be wary, respectful, and responsible in how we choose to engage the system. The rules of generalization dictate that as other factions learn we are Catholic, then, everything we present is considered to represent our faith. We must ask ourselves, do we know our faith well enough to be good ambassadors of it? If the answer is no, we should not shy away, but endeavor to study and learn so we might share the blessings of His holy truth.

As we engage, we must also remember that many, if not most, of our public educators simply want to educate our children and will work with us. We must not over generalize our concerns, rather, we must reach out in the spirit of 1 Peter 3:15-16, where we are called to always be prepared to give reason for our hope in a manner which is gentle and reverent. To defend both our children and our faith, we may need to be both persistent and patient, but most importantly, we must endeavor to engage in a manner worthy of our Christian values.

Today, we are going to discuss social relationships as they influence our children. As we engage one another, we can be the influence or others may influence us. Some of those influences may be positive while others may be negative. As parents and loved ones of those preparing for adulthood, we have the opportunity to help our youth navigate the challenges and influences before them.

(Question 1: As we begin this discussion, let's examine the social environment. As our children grow, in what environments do they engage socially and who influences them socially?)

- Environments
 - ➔ Church
 - ➔ School
 - ➔ Music
 - ➔ Sports
 - ➔ Youth organizations and activities
 - ➔ Social media

- ➔ Streets
- Influencers
 - ➔ Peers and friends
 - ➔ Authority Figures
 - ➔ Celebrities
 - ➔ Parents
 - ➔ Family members
 - ➔ Family friends
 - ➔ Beneficiaries of ministry

(Question 2: Of course, as we engage socially, social feedback influences our personal values system and decision making processes. **What social issues are likely to influence how our children perceive the world and God?)**

- God and Science
- Faith formation (giving reason for our beliefs and our hope → 1 Peter 3:15-17)
- Sexuality and Marriage
- Life Issues
 - ➔ Abortion
 - ➔ Embryonic stem cell harvesting
 - ➔ Euthanasia
- Gender Issues
- Disinformation
- Bullying
- Political Correctness (ever changing and shifting according to political winds)
- Trial and tribulation (why does God allow evil?)

(Question 3: Our greatest concern in relation to the social interactions of our children is the damage it is likely to cause. **What damage can be caused to our children as they develop?)**

- Self Esteem
- Acceptance
- Values
- Judgment
- Priorities
- Loss or skewing of faith

(Question 4: As our children engage the social environment and those who interact with them, they are molded in many ways. **What are the positive influences we seek for them?)**

- Knowledge of faith and the blessings of the fullness of faith
- Values to do what is right and just (civility, compassion, caring, and charity)
- Personal vision and goals → life direction

- Self-confidence and self-esteem
- Education → skills to assume adulthood (family, vocations)
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Problem solving skills
- Emotional intelligence (sensing emotional needs of others)
- Health knowledge and activity
- Support of Ministry

(Question 5: As our children progress through puberty and into adulthood, social interactions influence their values systems as well as their priorities. **What priorities will help them to enter into adulthood and the vocations to which God calls them?)**

- Faith (scripture, prayer and adoration, Mass, sacraments, ministry)
 - ➔ Wisdom and guidance of scripture (we must read it to unlock its value)
 - ➔ Peace of prayer and adoration
 - ➔ Mass (learning from the Word, community celebration)
 - ➔ Sacraments (milestones of life and faith as well as blessings of vocations)
 - ➔ Ministry (putting faith into action, learning and doing for others)
- Education (faith, family, and career skills)
- Music (soothes the soul)
- Sports (healthy body)
- Social interests (blessings for others)
- Hobby interests

Quotes:

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. ... Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel.

– *The Catechism of the Catholic Church 2225-2226*

The most basic element ... is parental love, which finds fulfillment in the task of education as it completes and perfects its service of life.

– *Pope John Paul II Familiaris Consortio*

It is necessary not only that religious instruction be given to the young at certain fixed times, but also that every other subject taught, be permeated with Christian piety. If this is wanting, if this sacred atmosphere does not pervade and warm the hearts of masters and scholars alike, little good can be expected from any kind of learning, and considerable harm will often be the consequence.

– *Pope Pius XI, On Christian Education*

Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, 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.
– *Saint Peter (1 Peter 3:15-16)*

Final Thoughts:

Today, we discussed the social environment our children must navigate, those who influence them, the issues they may encounter, and the positive influences which are possible, and how priorities can influence our direction in life.

Our relationship with our children morphs as they grow. Parents begin their role by providing for every need of our child, but as the child matures, more and more people influence their development. As our children continue to mature, they seek increasing levels of independence, but we must also help them understand the responsibilities of independence.

The raising of our children, whether we are parents or family members, is also an opportunity for our own development. If we are to teach, we must first learn. As we attempt to look through the eyes of our children, we may also see the world from a different perspective. Every day is a learning opportunity, even as we teach. Let us take advantage and rejoice at the work to which God calls us.

As we look to protect our children from the evils of the world, the most important armor we can give them is the armor of faith and the values such armor instills from which the world is evaluated and decisions are made.

As we might expect, the evil one will use every tool at his disposal to pull our children away from their faith. The family of the child, both spiritually and physically, is the first and last line of defense as the child matures. Let us take this responsibility seriously. Let us perform this responsibility with love. Let us be vigilant over the passing days and let us never lose sight of the most important objective, the salvation of souls.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we pick up our discussion with

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: The Battle for our Children – Part VII: The Church

References:

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