

Diocese of Rapid City

Keeping God's Children Safe

A Safe Environment Newsletter

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Issue 3

Our children/youth's Winter Lesson on Mercy and Forgiveness is not only a good lesson on qualities valued in relationships, but continues the theme of Pope Francis' Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy this year. Our family home, known as "the domestic church," is where our children are first taught the qualities of healthy relationships. What we teach our children, as well as how we model with our words and actions as parents, are their first steps in learning about how to relate with other individuals as they begin their lives. Pope Francis, at his General Audience on November 4, 2015, in St. Peter's Square, began by saying, "You, dear families, are always journeying and you are already continually writing the beauty of the Gospel of the family on the pages of real life. In a world which is sometimes barren of life and love, you speak each day of the great gifts that marriage and family are."

His words spoken that day provide insights for us to reflect and act on, and to transform one's self into a merciful follower of Christ. This is part of our faith's call as we continue creating safe environments—not only in our own home, but for all our vulnerable children and adults in our communities where we live.

Pope Francis

General Audience

Wednesday, November 4, 2015



... Today, I would like to emphasize this aspect: that the family is a great training ground for the mutual giving and forgiving without which no love can last for long. Without self-giving and seeking forgiveness love

does not last, it does not endure. In the prayer that he himself taught us — namely the Our Father — Jesus makes us ask the Father: "Forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors". And at the end he states: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mt 6:12, 14-15).

One cannot live without seeking forgiveness, or at least, one cannot live at peace, especially in the family. We wrong one another every day. We must take into account these mistakes, due to our frailty and our selfishness. However, what we are asked to do is to promptly heal the wounds that we cause, to immediately reweave the bonds that break within the family. If we wait too long, everything becomes more difficult. There is a simple secret to healing wounds and to avoiding recriminations. It is this: do not let the day end without apologizing, without making peace between husband and wife, between parents and children, between brothers and sisters... between daughters- and mothers-in-law! If we learn to apologize promptly and to give each other

CONTACT INFORMATION

Charlotte Verhey
Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator
605-343-3541
cverhey@diorc.org

Dottie Borowski
Background Checks
605-343-3541
dborowski@diorc.org

If you are a victim or have knowledge of a sexual abuse incident of a minor by a cleric, church employee or volunteer, please report the matter to:

Barbara Scherr
Victim Assistance Coordinator
605-209-3418 (cell)

USCCB Office of Child and Youth Protection
<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/index.cfm>

Diocese of Rapid City Safe Environment
<http://www.rapidcitydiocese.org/safe-environment/>

"Be merciful as your Father is merciful."

- Luke 6:36

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mutual forgiveness, the wounds heal, the marriage grows stronger, and the family becomes an increasingly stronger home, which withstands the shocks of our smaller or greater misdeeds. This is why there is no need for a long speech, as a caress is enough: one caress and everything is over and one can start afresh. But do not end the day at war!

If we learn to live this way in the family, we can also do so outside, wherever we may be. It is easy to be skeptical about this. Many people — even Christians — think it is an exaggeration. It is said: yes, they are fine words, but it is impossible to put them into practice. But thanks be to God it is not so. Indeed, it is precisely in receiving forgiveness from God that we in turn are capable of forgiving others. This is why Jesus has us repeat these words each time we recite the Our Father prayer, that is, every day. And it is crucial that, in a sometimes pitiless society, there be places, such as the family, in which to learn to forgive one another.

The Synod also rekindled our hope in this regard: namely, that the capacity to forgive and to seek forgiveness is part of the vocation and the mission of the family. Practicing forgiveness not only saves families from divisiveness, but makes them capable of helping society to be less heartless and less cruel. Yes, each act of forgiveness fixes the cracks in the house and strengthens its walls. The Church, dear families, is always beside you to help you build your house on the rock that Jesus spoke of. Let us not forget these words which immediately preceded the parable of the house: “Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven”. And he adds: “On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name...?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you’” (Mt 7:21-23). It is undoubtedly a strong word, with the purpose of shaking us and calling us to convert.

I assure you, dear families, that if you are capable of walking ever more firmly on the path of the Beatitudes, learning and teaching to mutually forgive each other, the capacity to bear witness to the renewing power of God’s forgiveness will grow in the whole of the great family of the Church. Conversely, we may even make beautiful sermons, and perhaps drive away some demons, but in the end the Lord will not recognize us as his disciples, because we did not have the capacity to forgive and ask others to forgive us!

Truly Christian families can do a great deal for today’s society, and also for the Church. For this reason I hope that in the Jubilee of Mercy families may rediscover the treasure of mutual forgiveness. Let us pray that families may be ever more capable of experiencing and building practical paths of reconciliation, where no one feels abandoned to the weight of his debts.

With this intention, let us say together: “Our Father, forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors”. [Let us say it together: “Our Father, forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors”].

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20151104_udienza-generale.html

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Pray: Ask the Lord’s healing for situations in your marriage and family that are not peaceful.

Reflect: What areas of selfishness do you struggle with the most? How do they affect your spouse?
Your family?

Do: Do not hesitate to speak healing words into a tense situation as soon as possible: “I love you,” “I forgive you,” “I’m sorry.” These can defuse tension and re-focus the conversation.

<http://www.foryourmarriage.org/marriage-retreat-3-marriage-and-mercy/>

APRIL is National Child Abuse Prevention Month! Check out :

Prevention Month: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/>

Parish/School Ideas:

http://www.la-archdiocese.org/org/protecting/safeguard/Documents/2015_Child_Abuse_Prevention_Month_Packet.pdf

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/resources/child-abuse-prevention-month-resources.cfm>