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My Mom the Theologian

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My Mom the Theologian

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Let me start off by saying that I love my family, all of them, and not one person more than the others. However, I really love my mom. In recent times, as she grows deeper in her faith and I in mine, we have had so much to talk about. It seems that, whenever I go home from college, the conversation quickly turns into some sort of exam on everything I have been learning through my Religious Studies classes. Well, not so much an exam as a test on the practical application of what I may have learned. I really like these conversations with her, because she brings a whole new side to my studies. By "a whole new side," I mean the side of lived-out faith."

My Mom the Theologian

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In school the main focus of learning about religion is on the academic and critical aspects of topics; it does not so much on how to apply our knowledge to our daily lives in an effort to become better believers (in my case, a better Christian.) This, of course, is to be expected. I am not implying that it is a bad thing but, for me as a Christian, the intellectual-critical learning is only a part of the grand whole that is my Christian faith.

Recently I had read a passage from Paul’s First Letter to the Christians in Corinth. The reading was meant as a preparation for a class discussion. Some of the lines I read did not make much sense to me. Later on the same day, as I had the opportunity to talk to my mother on the phone, I brought up in our conversation this seemingly inconsistent passage. In it Paul discusses how the community at Corinth should “[p]urge the evil person from [its] midst” (1 Cor 5:13). I could not understand how this instruction could go hand in hand with Christ’s command to forgive others and love the enemies. My mother came to my rescue by sharing with me her insight. She said to look at Paul’s words as applying to an extreme case and coming, at the same time, from a deep concern for the spiritual and social health of the Corinthian Christian community. The Christian community at Corinth had become complacent with itself and, in consequence, with the perpetrator of an abhorrent deed. The Christian community needed to resort to this action if even a last ditch attempt at convincing the sinful man were to fail. If the offender were expelled, this final act of separation would be a powerful symbol for the Christian community, the body of Christ, whose integrity and holiness would thus be preserved.

What a smart lady! Later, when I went on to read the passage again, I found that she was right. (I was reminded of the time when she told me not to put my toy cars in the oven...) I know that sometimes I get to play teacher with her and enjoy telling her a thing or two about the Bible but, no matter how old I get, I am sure I will always have something to learn from her. I am very happy that she is deeply focused on her faith journey and always willing to help me “see” things that I would otherwise miss by myself.

I love my Mom, and I like that she keeps me sharp. When I will have my own children, I hope that I can be for me a good spiritual resource and a loving parent as my mother has been for me.

Peter Santandreu