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On Love, Respect, and Joy

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Abstract

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

"The most important thing parents must do every day of their life is to take responsibility of raising their children. Jeanine and I take that responsibility very seriously, because we believe that children are a gift from God. Children need nurturing and love, and they need to be taught to respect life and to consider the rewards and hardships that come with it. The best place for children to learn about life is from their parents."



From Our Guest Essayists

On Love, Respect, and Joy

Tom DiNardo

The most important thing parents must do every day of their life is to take responsibility of raising their children. Jeanine and I take that responsibility very seriously, because we believe that children are a gift from God. Children need nurturing and love, and they need to be taught to respect life and to consider the rewards and hardships that come with it. The best place for children to learn about life is from their parents.

Gift from God

As parents, it is our responsibility to take care of this gift (our children) God has given us. Our gift back to God is to raise them lovingly and kindly, and to respect the life of those they encounter. It's our job to teach our children to love each other and to help those who are less fortunate. Our job is to nurture them and help them grow, and to build for them a foundation for their own success and happiness in life. What children may not realize at a young age is that their parents have a duty to raise them in a way that will help them become productive adults in their society. They also don't realize that the time they are developing into young adults and learning from their parents will stay with them the rest of their lives.

How We Learned to Respect Life

People reflect on their lives, especially the time when they were young. When we are children, we do not understand how precious life is, and sometimes children find their parents' efforts to teach right from wrong not as fun as other options they have. Time will change that perspective.

Unfortunately, both Jeanine and I lost our fathers in our early twenties. Without a question this was the hardest thing we have had to face so far in our lives. My father, Robert, died when I was twenty-one, after a seven-year battle with cancer. From that experience I learned how precious life is. I think back at the special times in my life that my dad missed, such as my graduation from college, my first job, his meeting Jeanine, and the birth and life of our children, Michael and Lauren. During all this time of life I grew closer to the Church, always praying for my father when he was sick, and for my entire family. Then, when Jeanine lost her father suddenly in an automobile accident, both Jeanine and I grew closer to each other and the Church as we reflected on the death of our fathers.

“Going to Church” gave us the opportunity every week to reflect on the meaning of life, to thank God for the wonderful family he has given us, and for the material gifts we enjoy every day. It also was a source of comfort and joy for us and our two children, knowing God would always be there to listen to our prayers.

We hope to continue to teach our children what we strongly believe, that even if today they may not feel the need of a Church or of getting closer to God, someday they will; we want them prepared for that day. Going to Church was hard for me to understand when I was young, but I am now thankful that my parents did take me to Church: it was this continued exposure to the word of God and the Eucharistic meal that gave me the foundation for learning right from wrong, for respect and love of family, and for a place to reflect and thank God for everything we have.

Conclusion

The values of one’s family –such as honesty, respect, and hard work ethics - carry over into every aspect of life, including friends and work. This allows us to be consistent in our decision making, to always try and do what’s right and to make decisions that are good for everyone, not just oneself. These values remind everyone to treat other people with respect, to make good decisions, to seek a balance between having fun and learning about life, and to help oneself and others both now and in the future.

Living a life that treats others with respect, loving one’s family, doing what’s right and helping those who are in need, is very comforting and fulfilling.



Tom and Jeanine DiNardo, Fisher Grads 1988
And their children Lauren and Michael