

DISCOVER

the Joy of Christ



Why does the traditional family matter to society?

The future of humanity passes by way of the family. This bold statement comes from a letter that Saint Pope John Paul II wrote to us in 1981. It points to an understanding that a society is built upon its families. When families are strong, society is strong. And conversely, when families are struggling, society struggles.

In that letter entitled **The Family in the Modern World**, Saint Pope John Paul II described the important ways that a traditional family positively impacts society. He outlined several insights that are as true today as they were nearly 40 years ago when they were first written.

Family is the First Experience of Human Relationships

All persons are born of a mother and a father. This small triangle of people – mom, dad, and child – provides us with our initial experience of human love and relationships. It sets our expectations about life on earth. We will either learn to depend upon and appreciate family members or we will learn how to isolate ourselves and become selfish and self-reliant.

According to family development studies, the best experience of human relationships is found within a traditional family; one that is led by a married mother and father. While it is true that no family is perfect, these families enjoy more stability and unity. Their family members demonstrate a stronger work ethic which results in greater economic security. Individuals raised in a traditional family engage more frequently in service organizations. And, they are more likely to make charitable contributions to those in society who need assistance.

Families teach us to Serve Life in Love

Parents teach their children the first lessons of love and life within the home, setting the foundation for their understanding of human dignity. Families led by

a husband and wife teach their children that married love is expressed through a lifelong commitment based upon respect and generosity and the natural complementarity of man and woman. Children raised in this environment are disposed to believe that love is permanent, faithful and fruitful in bringing new life. They are inclined to embrace and imitate this understanding of love in their own lives.

Unfortunately, parents who are not committed to each other in marriage often teach and model a different understanding of love. When a commitment established in marriage is not present, children often reduce love to sentimentality and raw emotions. To them, love is only present when everything is going their way. This perception of love results in more frequent situations of disrespect, indifference and heartlessness both within and outside of the home.

Families Develop Society

Every member of society is also a member of a family. The state of the family impacts the state of the society. Citizens, who are raised in a family where love and respect for the good of each person is expected, live with honor, loyalty, charity and concern for the common

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good. Likewise, individuals who grow up in a family where the parents model apathy and condescension tend to bring dehumanizing characteristics into the public square.

Current research reports that children who are raised in a stable family by their married, biological parents add a greater positive value to their school, community and eventually to the state and country, as they are more hospitable and flexible and find it easier to work with others in pursuit of the common good. This is often not the case with children who come from other types of families.

Families Share in the Life of the Church

The family is the first place that we learn about the mystery of God. It is meant to be the place where we imitate Jesus Christ and live out sacrificial love. It is meant to be the community that teaches us about God and opens our heart to trust Him. In this way, the family is so closely connected to the Church as to become a sharer in the Church's life and Her mission to serve others in love.

Once again, research shows that married parents do a better job of passing on their faith. Their daily witness of Christian virtue helps to form the next generation. Their children enter society sensing an obligation to worship God in the larger community of the parish and to bear witness to that faith in the world.

The family is the basic cell of society. It gives rise to future generations. Both the experience of the Church and the research of social science confirm that the traditional family provides the elements and qualities most needed in a just and flourishing society:

- a life-long commitment between a man and a woman in Matrimony
- children who are raised by their parents
- family members living out the virtues aligned with life and love and faith in God

It looks like the traditional family still matters and is most needed in today's world. Let us pray for a strengthening of Sacramental Marriage and family life.

For more information contact:

Parish Name:

Address:

Ph: