

Faith, Family, and the Choices That We Make

[< Previous](#) [Next >](#)



Shortly after our twins were born, I spent one of my many sleepless nights thinking about how my life had changed since the day I met my wife. How I had abandoned the thought of entering religious life; how I moved across country, leaving the only home I had ever known on the East Coast of the United States; how entering into a life-long

commitment of loving communion and intimacy in marriage had changed my relationship with God; and not really having an appreciation at how four young children can – all at the same time – exhaust me to the point of numbness, make me mad enough to pull out what little hair I have left, make me laugh until I cry, and fill me with so much love and joy that I can barely keep my heart in my chest.

My life had not just changed; it had been truly transformed. I had gone from living just for myself, to dying to myself in loving sacrifice and service to my wife and children in the same way that Christ had sacrificed his life for his Bride, the Church.

A certain level of “fear” and “death” often accompanies this transformation. We fear because in order to be truly transfigured to Christ, we must abandon sin, which means removing all obstacles that prohibit us from loving God alone and making us vulnerable

before Him. It means emptying ourselves so that God can fill us. It means exposing the weakest parts of who we are so that God can make us strong. It means becoming blind to the ways of this world so that Christ can lead us. It also means that we must die: die to our vices, our habits and idiosyncrasies, and our other inner secrets that we lie about and try to hide from God, our loved ones, and those around us. Living as a Christian adult means dying to ourselves so that we can rise to new life with Christ.

There is no question that the influence of secular thought has a profound influence on today's culture. Many young adults are struggling to hold on to the Catholic belief in absolute truth and because they have a weak foundation in the faith, they are unable to see how their faith is connected to their life experience. Instead, our youth align themselves with a society that places itself and not Jesus Christ as the center of all reality and truth, so much so, that as adults many will become Christmas and Easter Catholics, or leave the Church altogether.

God's Love Works Through Marriage and Family Life

Sometimes we have to look back before we can move forward. Looking back, we see that marriage and family life have their origins in that same love with which the Creator embraces each one of us made in His image and likeness: a love that flows from the family of Persons in the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; a love that flows from the very heart of God Himself. This marriage and family relationship is so central to God's love for us that He chose to be born and grow up in a family, entering into human history with a mother and foster father. In a culture where privilege, wealth, and prestige meant everything, our Father in heaven showed us in the simple life of a housewife and carpenter that "the divine mystery of the Incarnation of the Word has an intimate connection with the human family" (Pope John Paul II, Letter to Families, 2). Through marriage and family life, God unites himself in a special way to each of us, for God Himself labored with human hands and loved with a human heart. The family is where Jesus learned the love, respect, and obedience that children must have for their parents, which was the first expression of His obedience to the will of the Father that would ultimately lead to our salvation.

Formation in the fundamental truths of the faith must occur and operate within the context of family life so that as the domestic church – the church of the home – young adults are continually molded into the image of Christ. All of this must be fostered in the home where a Catholic ethos are nurtured, fostered, and instilled through family prayer. The home must embody a spirituality that enhances and promotes devotion and

active participation in the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist. This must be accompanied by a deep appreciation and understanding of the reality of sin and the need for frequent reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Our Faith Frees Us to Love

The values of marriage and family life prepare us for the future. When I graduated from college, there was a guy in my class who was one of the brightest and most noble persons I had ever known. He was a talented engineering student and at the end of our senior year, he received a full academic scholarship to pursue doctoral studies at the prestigious Stanford University, along with a generous stipend that matched many of my classmates starting salaries. He was perfectly positioned for a very lucrative career as an engineer with the potential to earn well over a hundred thousand dollars a year. As the proverbial expression states quite succinctly, “He had it made.”

However, my classmate turned down the scholarship to Stanford and joined the Peace Corps, spending the next two years serving in the cause of peace by living and working among the world’s poor. To this day, he looks back on his time in Africa as two of the most challenging and rewarding years of his life. He has absolutely no regrets and in his chosen career in public service, strives to be an exemplary witness of what it means to be a person of deep faith.

As you think about what it means to be a young adult in today’s very secular world, your thoughts should not focus on how an academic degree will make you “set for life” according to the standards of the culture. Jesus warns us that we must “take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15). Jesus wants us to be clear that we are not to confuse possessions with purpose, or equate the meaning of our lives with the size of our portfolio. The only bottom line that matters is the accounting that we must make before God at the end of our life, where God will not care about our net worth but rather how we had used the gift of our life to bring value to the lives of others.

Saint Paul reminds us that our lives on this earth are intimately linked to the Cross. Jesus died so that we might live, and He calls us to follow Him: to put to death within ourselves all of those things that destroy God’s life in us by separating us from the love of Christ. The pagan idols and false gods of the culture that the apostle Paul describes (greed, immorality, impurity, disordered passions and desires) are also the tenets of secular culture masquerading as freedom. As young Catholic adults, you must discover

that the treasures in your life centers on the paradox of the Cross where God's endless wealth is found in his self-giving and self-emptying love, which is the very opposite of the desire to possess everything and the hallmark of authentic freedom.

Our faith calls us to live in Christ: to follow him, to carry the Cross, to pour ourselves out, to sacrifice ourselves in love and to be counter-cultural. The freedom to love as He loves is the Father's gift to those who toil and labor without vanity. By giving ourselves to Him fully, completely, and freely out of love, we become most fully human, for it is in giving ourselves away that we truly find our freedom in God.

Choosing What Is True, Good, and Beautiful

Making the transition from youth to adulthood is a life-transforming experience and like young King Solomon in the Scriptures, you may feel overwhelmed by the responsibility that comes with being an adult. You will be faced with academic challenges at university or polytechnic; emotional challenges in a relationship; and spiritual challenges as you apply the faith that you have grown-up with to your every day lived experience. Your faith will be tested as you seek the path God has destined for your life. You will ask difficult questions and pursue meaningful answers, all under the watchful eye of family, friends, and Almighty God.

King Solomon faced this challenging period by seeking Truth. He was mature enough to admit that he didn't know all the answers and humble enough to ask the Lord to help him distinguish right from wrong. Solomon's wisdom runs in the family! His father, David, prayed to God, saying, "Teach me discernment and knowledge, for I trust in your commands. [...] The law from your mouth means more to me than silver and gold. [...] I take delight in your promise like one who finds a treasure. The lovers of your law have great peace; they never stumble" (Psalm 119:66, 72, 162, 165).

Our Lord Jesus, a descendent of Solomon, showed the people of Israel that genuine knowledge, true happiness, and lasting peace comes when we seek God first above all else. As a young adult, encountering authentic truth, goodness, and beauty must be your greatest desire as well. You will not find real Truth in stubbornly opposing the Church's teaching in faith and morals. You will not find real goodness in a society that places "the self" at the center of all meaning and existence. You will not find real beauty by getting drunk or high. You will not find what is true, good, and beautiful in using a member of the opposite sex as an object for pleasure and gratification.

Listening to God's Voice

We live in a culture that wants to turn Jesus into Barney. Rather than follow Jesus totally and completely – especially in His most difficult and challenging teachings – we selectively pick and choose our way through the scriptures focusing on messages of love and peace, effectively turning Jesus into a sort of flower-child hippie who spends His time on earth preaching the gospel of, “I love you, you love me, let’s all hold hands and sing ‘kumbaya.’” In reality, we are simply trying to justify our sinful behavior by covering it with a veneer of “God loves me no matter what.” It is true that God is love and that he who lives in love, lives in God, and God lives in him (1 John 4:16). But God’s invitation to love demands a response, and that response should not be a half-hearted, cafeteria Catholicism. Our response to the Gospel must be a free, faithful, and total commitment of ourselves in loving sacrifice and obedience to the will of God.

Our Heavenly Father desires an intimate, personal, loving, and life-giving relationship with us. He speaks to us through His Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. This communion of love and life between God and us is more than just communication, a simple exchange of words. Through the Cross and in the Eucharist, God establishes a covenant with us: an exchange of persons. In this relationship, God gives Himself to us freely and completely, and when we open our hearts to His love and mercy; when we make ourselves vulnerable before the Giver of all gifts; when we are able share with God the deepest parts of whom we are, without fear, then we are giving ourselves to Him in return.

Truth will come when we persistently ask God for it. Truth will come when we love the Lord our God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. Truth will come when we ask God to know and to do His will – to help me be that person whom He created me to be, made in His image and likeness. In your prayers, knock, seek and ask. Converse with God just as you would with an intimate friend. Openly share with the Father of Mercy your sorrows and joys, your hopes and fears, your aspirations and dreams, for His love and His truth will never fail. When Truth does come, proclaim with great joy: “I love the Lord for He has heard the cry of my appeal; for He turned His ear to me in the day when I called Him” (Psalm 116).

by Deacon Harold Burke – Sivers

Event Details: –

“THE ARMOUR OF LOVE” – a Public Talk