

Teaching the Way of Love

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Does Your Family Impact the Culture or Not?

A group of parents sitting next to me at a local sporting event engaged in a lively conversation about their children's education. The basic question that they discussed was, *whose is responsible for deciding what a child should learn, the parents or the schools?*

It was a compelling discourse and most of the parents agreed that they were responsible for the decision. In fact, many of them were quite adamant that they should be informed about the curriculum and what it contained. These parents seemed convinced that they wanted to be engaged in their son's and daughters' education, especially on matters relating to morality and ethics.



The exchange continued with a parent asking the group, "How do we actually step in and become more responsible for what is being taught in the schools? We can't just sit here and say we want to be engaged but not do anything." A few parents recommended going to school board meetings and being vocal. Others thought they should request copies of the curriculum. One parent thought it would be good to attend their children's classes. The conversation was ramping up again and many good ideas were offered, but it was the next parent's statement that caught the most attention.

A father who had listened quietly up to this point said, "If you really want to change what is taught in the schools, start by teaching your children what you really want them to learn inside of your home. Give your children a firm foundation about what is right and wrong. Teach them how to share and serve others. Teach them how to think and choose what is really good so that they aren't swayed by fly-by-night ideas in school. If you want to change education, man up at home."

The father's comments struck a nerve within the parents. His point was this – families form schools. Schools exist because of families. Families and the school structure are so intertwined that they rise and flourish together or fall together. Therefore, families can change the school simply by teaching their children about basic human dignity at home and preparing them to act accordingly at school.

The Catholic Church has taught this truth consistently. Whether it is a school or a workplace or society at large, the family is the basic cell of a culture. It is from the family that students, citizens and co-workers come to birth. It is within the family that people learn how to love and express

respect. The family is where authentic communion begins and matures. It is where human dignity is fostered and respected. Family is the dwelling place of generous service, heartfelt acceptance, and fraternal correction.

As the family goes, so goes society. This well-known slogan points out the obvious. When families accept the responsibility to educate their children in what is right and wrong, the culture prospers. The reverse is also true. If families shirk their obligations, society falters and declines. In fact, society becomes burdensome and frightening.

Perhaps it was the deterioration of the culture within the schools and society that triggered the conversation at the game. The parents were reacting to the dehumanizing behaviors that they were hearing about outside their front door. All the stories of disrespect, violence and unrest that filled their social media had caused them enough concern to be moved to discussion. And, because of one man's bold advice, they now had reason to reconsider what their family was doing to either make life better within the school and society or contribute to its decline.

Each of these parents left the game with a challenge to engage in the development of the school's society. Each family has the duty to come up with its own tactics to prepare its household to add value to the world. They have the responsibility to become a school of virtue where the good of God is guarded and transmitted. They can teach and expect the practice of personal accountability. They can figure out how to prepare their children to go outside their home and consistently behave civilly and charitably. They can come up with a strategy to teach their kids about the common good, authentic freedom, and personal accountability. They can impact the culture... or not. It all depends on what they choose to do.

This newsletter series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, creators of Teaching the Way of Love. Teaching the Way of Love is designed to help you become a faithful, joyful and confident parent. Visit www.twl4parents.com for more strategies on how to become the best parent you can be. Consider becoming an annual member of the Teaching the Way of Love program. Members receive practical and timely parenting resources. Go to twl4parents.com/membership for more information.



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