

June 2016

MARRIAGE & FAMILY + PASTORAL CARE + PRO-LIFE + COUNSELING SERVICES

Marriage & Family Enrichment

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Comfort is from the Father

Full of great content written by the Family Ministries team, the Family Life Newsletter is a source for information, resources and faith-based discussions about all manner of issues affecting families today.

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When attempting to find out what experts consider to be the paramount qualities in a good father, it seems clear right away that consensus on the question does not exist. For every one "considered opinion" there are at least a dozen others who prize things totally different or occasionally even opposite. No wonder there is confusion and murkiness on this question.

Relationships, just like God himself, are by their very nature complex . . . we do a severe injustice to important things like fatherhood by attempting to be reductionist about them.

The traditional Catholic response to the plethora of diverse opinions on this should usually be the "both/and" answer . . . we do not believe oversimplifying important things like this.

Fatherhood is very much a massive blend of many virtues, all coming together in infinitely diverse combinations to make strong and real; something that we as Catholics understand comes initially from God. As our Father and Creator it is He who gives us life; it is He who models for us the greatest qualities of caring for others . . . and it is He who comforts us always in our times of need.

And at the risk of sounding reductionist, maybe that is a somewhat-overlooked image that does deserve some reflection on our parts . . . the Father who brings us comfort.



God is there for us . . . he models all that is good and consoling in all of existence. Just like God himself, a father is to bring hope, relief, reassurance and calm. He is to be a rock of stability even when he may not feel all that secure himself. He teaches justice, mercy and kindness and brings the gift of presence when it is so needed. And most importantly he teaches us to think of others first . . . for sacrifice is an essential part of the contentment and the comfort that he brings.

It is no accident that Jesus taught us to call God "father" just as it is also no accident that those who stand in his persona here on Earth are called "father" as well. Just as God is the source of all goodness, so must those who reflect him and act for him, labor to be his comforting presence to all they encounter.

This is what we call being pastoral . . . this is where we seek out our comfort . . . for this is he whom we call "Father."



"The triune God is a communion of love, and the family is its living reflection."

Pope Francis
"Amoris Laetitia"
April 19, 2016

Counseling Services

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The Power of a Father

“Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

Life is moving faster every day. For fathers everywhere it can sometimes feel like they don't spend enough time with their children. As Father's Day approaches, here are some helpful tips to help men be better dads.

- **Spend more time with your children**, especially when it comes to everyday things such as dinner during the week, maybe a trip to the store together. Quality time is always more important than sharing TV time, but any time is better than very little. If you're there and spending time with them, they'll remember and appreciate it. If, on the other hand, you always seem too busy for your children, they will feel neglected no matter what you say.



- **Be a role model.** Fathers are role models whether they realize it or not. A girl with a loving father grows up knowing she deserves to be treated with respect. Fathers can teach sons what is important in life by demonstrating honesty, humility, and responsibility.

- **Respect your children's mother.** Regardless of whether you have a relationship with the child's mother, it's important to show them the same kind of respect you should any other adult. Children pick up on far more than we think about relationships — especially between their parents. When children see their parents respecting each other, they are more likely to feel that they are also accepted and respected. Your relationship with their mother is the model for all future romantic relationships for the child. It doesn't have to be perfect, but it does have to be respectful.

- **Set fair rules, and discipline with love and restraint.** One fault of modern parenting is the lack of clear boundaries between many parents and their children, along with an accompanying set of clear rules, and timely, fair discipline. All children need guidance and discipline, not as punishment, but to set reasonable limits and help children learn from natural or logical consequences. Fathers who discipline in a calm, fair, and nonviolent manner show their love.

- **Be a kind, patient teacher.** Children need good teachers and nobody is a better teacher than you. Teaching comes in all forms — not just helping your child with their homework. Begin talking with your kids when they are very young and talk to them about all kinds of things. Listen to their ideas and problems. A father who teaches his children about right and wrong and encourages them to do their best will see his children make good choices. Involved fathers use everyday examples to teach the basic lessons of life.



- **Read to your children.** Children thrive on their imaginations, and nothing reaches their imagination more than a book. Begin reading to your children when they are very young. Instilling a love for reading is one of the best ways to ensure they will have a lifetime of interest in their imagination, leading to increased personal and career growth.

Pastoral Care

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Fathers Matter

It is nearly impossible to be engaged in current events without hearing the phrase “children at risk.” According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 24 million children in America — one out of three children — now live in a home in which the biological father is absent. However, nearly every study conducted through the social sciences confirms – fathers matter.

Following are 25 facts from social science research on the effects of having a father in the home:

- Children living with fathers in the home tend to fare better on cognitive achievement and behavioral outcomes.
- Adolescents living in intact families tend to report closer relationships with their fathers.
- Among urban fathers, those who frequently attend religious services tend to be more engaged with their children.
- Close relationships between adolescents and their fathers are positively associated with adolescents’ psychological well-being.
- Adolescents with more involved fathers tend to exhibit lower levels of behavioral problems.
- Adolescents who report having more positive relationships with their fathers are less likely to engage in delinquency.
- Adolescents who report having more positive relationships with their fathers are less likely to abuse substances.
- Individuals whose fathers showed more involvement in their lives early on tend to attain higher levels of education.
- Growing up without a father appears to be associated with greater likelihood of incarceration later in life.
- Fathers’ religiosity is linked to higher quality of parent-child relationships.
- Fathers’ engagement in their children’s activities was linked to higher academic performance.
- Among adolescent girls, those who have a strong relationship with their fathers are less likely to report experiencing depression.
- Close father-adolescent bonds protect against the negative influence of peer drug use.
- Adolescent girls who have a close relationship with their fathers are more likely to delay sexual activity.
- Adolescent girls whose fathers were present during their childhood are less likely to become pregnant.
- Adolescent males who report a close relationship with their fathers are more likely to anticipate having a stable marriage in the future.
- Men who become fathers outside of marriage are more likely to be poor.
- Fathers of intact families spend, on average, more time with their children.
- Children raised in intact families by happily married parents tend to be more religious in adulthood.
- Children raised in intact families are more likely to have stable and healthy romantic relationships as adults.
- Intact families are more likely to provide a safe home for children.
- Adolescent girls who have never lived apart from their parents are less likely to report sexual abuse than those who have.
- Girls who experienced a parental separation during childhood are more likely to engage in early sexual activity.
- Among teenage boys, those from intact families with frequent religious attendance average the fewest sexual partners.
- Children in father-absent homes are almost four times more likely to be poor.



Let us pray for all fathers – not simply on Father’s Day – and find ways in our parishes to encourage and support their presence in the home.

Pro-Life

contact: Ed Harpring, eharpring@archlou.org

A Father's Love and the Need for Foster Parents

Hank Fortener is the founder of the world's first adoption crowd funding site AdoptTogether.org www.adopttogether.org/about. He wrote "A Father's Day Story" a heart warming account of his father (and mother) that can be read at www.huffingtonpost.com/hank-fortener/



His parents had 3 biological children and fostered 36 children and adopted 8 children from 5 countries. The following passage summarizes the Grand Canyon sized heart of his father:

I sneaked to the hallway and listened as he spoke with my mom about monthly bills. I had no idea about the concept of money, or how much of that stress he absorbed so that our world could remain joyful and carefree.

It was then that I realized he had two jobs. He was a boss or something like that at his office all day. At home, he was DAD! Dad was a big job — the bills, the money, the house and of course, all of us...

The next year they traveled to Bolivia (I didn't even know where that was at the time) and adopted a baby girl, our new sister Gabby. Two years later, they headed off to China and adopted my little brother, Matthew. Two years after that, a friend of a friend asked my mom to adopt her unborn baby. She was 19 and too young for a family and wanted my parents to raise her child. My brother Brendan came home to us three days after he was born. Two years later, my dad and mom boarded a plane to Hawaii and adopted my little brother, Charley, from The Marshall Islands (I didn't know where that was and I was in college at the time). Two years later, they were off again to China to adopt my little sister, Lauren. Finally, two years after that, in 2005, they flew to Guatemala City and adopted my brother Jo and my sister Ady.

After 27 years of marriage, 36 foster children, eight adoptions from five countries and three biological children later, Mom and Dad were done growing their family.

This touching father's day story points out the enormous need for foster parents and for the adoption of the many children in foster care homes throughout the state of Kentucky.

Sadly, more than 8,000 children in Kentucky are in the state foster care system. Children placed in foster care range in age from birth to 21 years old. Many of these children have been abused, neglected, emotionally maltreated, exploited or sexually abused. In addition, some children in foster care have special needs, including medical disabilities, physical handicaps, special dietary needs, birth defects or chronic illness.

On a positive note, last year, more than 700 of these children were adopted, and more than 80 percent were adopted by their foster families. Our state is in desperate need of more foster parents to fill the gap for these forgotten children.

Scripture reminds us of our obligation to care for orphans, "Give justice to the poor and the orphan; uphold the rights of the oppressed and the destitute. Rescue the poor and helpless; deliver them from the grasp of evil people."

Foster care needs true Pro-Life advocates. Fully embracing the inherent value of every life requires the willingness and self-sacrifice to go beyond the Pro-Life legislative process (although that's certainly needed) by accompanying the "least of these" no matter their age, race, or disability. Many pro-lifers have already answered the call, but many more are needed. Is God calling you to adopt or to be a foster parent?

More can be learned about Foster care at chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dpp/fostercare.htm as well as the adoption services offered through Catholic Charities at www.kycaringconnection.org

Up & Coming

Sponsor Couple Materials Are Now Online!



One of the best marriage preparation programs we are pleased to offer in the Archdiocese of Louisville is the Sponsor Couple program.

Just as Pope Francis encourages in his recent exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, trained couples are available in many parishes throughout the Archdiocese to help instruct, mentor and walk with couples preparing for marriage by providing support and a uniquely relevant method for helping couples prepare to live their new lives together as a married couple.

As an initial step in improving the program at the Archdiocesan level, we are pleased to announce that a more in depth explanation of the program is now available online on the Archdiocese website.

For engaged couples who might be interested in learning more about the program:

- For engaged couples who might be interested in learning more about the program: www.archlou.org/sponsor-program-engaged-couples
- For married couples interested in becoming part of the program: www.archlou.org/sponsor-couple-program
- And current sponsor couples can now download their forms online: www.archlou.org/sponsor-couple-resources

Helpers of God's Precious Infants



7:00 a.m. - Mass at Cathedral of the Assumption followed by procession to local abortion facility.

9:00 a.m. - Benediction at Cathedral

Saturday, June 11 TBD

Visit: HelpersLouisville.org

Safe Environment Training

Sunday, June 5 5:30 p.m. Flaget Center
1935 Lewiston Drive

Monday, June 13 6:30 p.m. St. Margaret Mary
7813 Shelbyville Road

Marriage Encounter

A weekend retreat for married couples who desire time away to enrich their marriage. Cincinnati weekend - July 29 - 31, 2016
To learn more, visit www.wme.org



Retrouvaille (French for rediscovery)

This ministry is designed to help couples in troubled marriages to heal and renew.
Next Louisville area weekend - Sept. 16 - 18
To learn more, visit www.HelpOurMarriage.org



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<http://archloufamilyministries.org>



<https://www.facebook.com/ArchdioceseLouisvilleFamilyMinistries>



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