

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

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Honour your father and mother

THE HOST APOSTOLATE

WWW.THEHOSTAPOSTOLATE.ORG

info@thehostapostolate.org

14 Goatbeck Terrace
Langley Moor
County Durham
DH7 8JJ

United Kingdom

They say that it is a mark of a healthy and compassionate society if the care of the elderly, infirm and the young is catered for and persists. Indeed many societies hold the older members in high esteem and respect. At a time of financial austerity it is nevertheless vital that these groups are given a high profile for care and concern.

There is a paradox here for at a time when people in the western world are living longer and encouraged to do so by life style this care seems to be missing in many departments.. Our care homes are full and the elderly unvisited and the notions of Euthanasia discussed as if it were a viable and indeed reasonable option and 'progress'. The so called 'Liverpool Pathway, letting people die by withholding food and water has seen many lives terminated, sometimes very prematurely. All these are signs of an unhealthy and troubled society and certainly not based on Christian principles of love of neighbour let alone of God.

Even more troubling is the growing number of elderly who are abused by carers and sadly their own... However an even newer phenomenon is emerging and that is the blatant and often uncaused rejection of parents and grandparents. The break-up of the 'extended'(members outside the immediate family unit) through movement of people has not helped to bond families but time after time we hear of such and such not visiting parents, or speaking to them Sometimes it is a complete severing of relationship, a cruel blow indeed. Children are given many instructions about the rights they have and subtly this makes them focus on self. Little of course is mentioned about duties. Increasingly teachers report a lack of respect from pupils and it is not hard to find a very, or at very least, almost too familiar attitude expressed by children in regards to parents, which once upon a time would be called rude or cheeky.

Respect seems to be in short supply. Of course there are exceptions and efforts are made to instil attitudes of tolerance and deference but it seems to erode away in the self-seeking and self-centred culture. This is not necessarily true worldwide but seems to be a particular feature of the west.

Jesus said that the prime commandments are love of God and love of neighbour. Neighbour in this context surely includes parents. It is interesting to note that the first commandment after the three which relate to God directly is the fourth – *honour thy father and mother*. Honour- this seems almost an old-fashioned word, not applicable to us today. How often do we honour anybody? People are rewarded, honoured for bravery, for some feat or achievement but the word 'honour' (also used in the older marriage service) has a very rich meaning. When we honour our parents (or authority) we proclaim that we recognise their worth and value. We accept that they have authority over us and we pay them our homage, i.e. do not treat either what they say or do lightly. To honour our parents and elderly relatives is to acknowledge our relationship with them as one of not only love and affection but respect and filial duty. No parent is perfect. Parents, even the best, make mistakes and errors of judgment but often in good faith or the circumstances of the time, but this should not be a reason for severing relationships. Maturity should also carry with it an attitude of forgiveness



Saint Thérèse said of her parents that God made them more fit for Heaven than this earth

If we look carefully at Jesus' relationship with His Heavenly Father we see an incredible attitude of reverence, thanksgiving and praise, as well as understanding. If we look at 'The Our Father' the word father denotes great love and recognition. Abba, Daddy as Jesus called Him shows a very personal relationship which Jesus took with Him to the cross. Jesus says Our Father and indeed He is – we say the words so glibly...

Yet how can we honour our own parents, father and mother if we do not understand what Jesus was conveying and vice-versa. If we do not hold in esteem our parents are we really venerating the Father who made them? Furthermore if we look at the relationship in the Holy Family we see incredible love between the members. Jesus and Mary, Mary and Joseph, Joseph and Jesus. You may say that, -yes Ok, but they're special. Yes, but fully human and also with choices – and they chose to *honour* each other with love and service.

In order to honour we first have to accept the rights of people who have authority over us. Secondly we have to respect them as persons. Thirdly we have to own that we do not always know what is best for us especially in childhood and finally that they bear the wisdom of years. Truly too they have not to abuse their authority but somehow today all these points seem to have little value. Is it surprising therefore that we do not value and honour parenthood and the ennobling and giftedness of it.

HONOUR... to give high respect, credit, good name, special rights, nobleness of mind, are all included in the dictionary definition.

Families are breaking up – marriage is devalued increasingly and true obedience no more than a wistful reflection on the past. But can we really seek a growth in holiness and keep our sight set on this if we do not respect and honour our parents who care for us. Sometime later this disregard spills over into our attitude to authority, and finally God. A disrespectful attitude in one direction manifests itself in many situations. The old adage that a family that prays together stays together is not far from the truth.



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Dom Bosco and his mother Margaret

If we look at the lives of great Saints, notably St Thérèse of Lisieux we can see this attitude of honour in her family, her sisters, all who became holy (Mother and Father now Beatified), but also in the lives of others. St Jane Francis de Chantal who cared for her rather domineering uncle, Don Bosco and Pope Pius X who 'worked' with their mothers. When Pope Pius was elected Pope and all were admiring his Ring his mother kissed it but then said, "Never forget", pointing to her own, "that without *THIS* one you would not have yours!"

So let us ponder and reflect on these words.

Let parents pray for their children and their children for their parents in an atmosphere of love and acceptance. Let us honour and obey them...

Love your parents and treat them with loving care for you will know their value... when you see the empty chair.

Prayer... for all 'children'

Lord, I love my Mum and Dad
And they love me
But Sometimes I don't understand
All that they tell me
Sometimes it seems they've got it wrong,
And it's hard to get along,
But I love them as they do me
Help me to know and to see
All You will for me. H.H.

Feasts in August

*The Transfiguration 6th, St. Dominic 8th,
St. Teresa Benedicta (Edith Stein) 9th,
St. Monica 27th St. Augustine 28th ...*

Pray for us

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