



# Seek First the Kingdom

*Parents in Partnership with God – Sharing Faith with Children*

*A Ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Immaculata, Pennsylvania*

## PARENT ADVICE FROM POPE FRANCIS -- PART 2 of 6

### The Joy of Love (Apostolic Exhortation), Chapter 4: "Love in Marriage"

Jealousy, boastfulness, competition and arrogance are stumbling blocks in relational living. Pope Francis, reflecting on St. Paul's "love homily" (I Corinthians 13: 4-7), urges us to practice humble love that encourages, accepts and celebrates others. *The Joy of Love*, chapter four, spotlights this kind of love in the family.

#### LOVE IS NOT JEALOUS

Jealousy resents the achievements, prosperity and success of others. It takes pleasure when another person fails or meets with misfortune. Envy views another person as a threat to personal well-being and it causes us to close in on ourselves.

On the contrary, true love *"recognizes that everyone has different gifts and a unique path to life. So it strives to discover its own road to happiness, while allowing others to find theirs."* (#95)

#### Parent Ponder-Points:

- Sibling rivalry is a form of envy most likely to occur when children are less than 3 years apart in age and when they are of the same gender. Feelings of jealousy, resentment, hostility and competition surface for any event that threatens the pre-existing relational position of a child and his/her self-concept. Parenting practices can ease tension between siblings. Read more detail and practical suggestions at:

[www.ParentTeacherSupport.org/Newsletters/CharacterDevelopment/Guide for Difficult Behaviors/Sibling Rivalry](http://www.ParentTeacherSupport.org/Newsletters/CharacterDevelopment/Guide%20for%20Difficult%20Behaviors/Sibling%20Rivalry).

- Elicit the input of trusted friends and family members to brainstorm characteristics, achievements, and notable memories about each child in your family. Store the information in your "spiritual pocket" so that you have it on hand whenever conversations of comparison surface. For instance, when Henry says of his brother Austin, "He always wins awards in sports" be ready to respond, "And you are famous for your sense of humor, creativity, and practical helpfulness."

- Establish a birthday custom where each family member identifies two positive characteristics or achievements of the birthday-person. Publish it in some visual way. Celebrate individuality.

#### Reflection Questions:

1. When do you find it easiest to show pleasure in the good fortune of another person, and when is it most difficult?
2. How do you combat the human tendency to be jealous, competitive, or arrogant on behalf of your child?
3. How frequently do you speak words of encouragement, affirmation and validation?
4. Read *The Joy of Love*, #95-96. With what thought do you most resonate?

## LOVE IS NOT BOASTFUL OR ARROGANT

People who love refrain from speaking too much about themselves; they focus on others; and they do not need to be the center of attention. They do not seek vainglory, domination or competition. Nor are they haughty, nitpicking, pushy or inflated with their own importance. Humility makes it possible for them to understand, to forgive and to serve others joyfully.

Some people mistakenly define their self-worth or sense of importance on the basis of knowledge, power, or achievement. They act superior and condescending towards others. *“Yet what really makes us important is a love that understands, shows concern, and embraces the weak (#97). “Christian love is not about importance and power” (#98).*

### Parent Ponder-Points:

- “Humility” and “pride” are opposites. “Humility” is the antidote for “pride.” Guide children in the ways of humility. For instance, practice being approachable by greeting others with a smile and eye-contact, express interest in the affairs of others, withhold your opinion until others have expressed theirs, ask for advice, compliment others, express appreciation; verbally celebrate the achievements of others and speak admiration about another person.
- “Me, Myself and I” is the hallmark of pride! Guide children to adopt the language of “we/us/ours” as their primary expression rather than “I, me and mine.”
- Adopt as a family motto: “It is nice to be important but it is far more important to be nice!”
- Remember WHO you are and WHOSE you are! You are a child of God, made in the image of God. All that you are is an un-earned gift. “Who we are is God’s gift to us. What we make of ourselves is our gift to God!”

### Reflection Questions:

1. How frequently do you speak words of encouragement, affirmation and validation?
2. Pride is ego-based. Consider that EGO might mean “Edge God Out.” How might this acronym help you in the future?
3. If an impartial, invisible guest spent the last three days in your home, would he/she view you as humble and approachable?
4. Read *The Joy of Love*, #97-98. With what thought do you most resonate?