



We surely know that the family is the school where children learn to live in society; where they develop the virtues that will enable them to be better people, to coexist as individuals in their communities.

The Christian family must be that place where children learn to live as Christians; where they develop the Christian virtues and Christian living in the community. If they do not learn that at home, where will they do it?

For this reason, the Church invites us to make every effort so that our children may really learn to live as Christians at home: to be respectful of others; to work with joy for the good of the family; to share with generosity what they have and what they are; to treat their fellow men and women in a Christian way.

Let us remember that all people are created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, the behavior among all must be of brothers and sisters in God.

The Church teaches us this through her social doctrine. That is, through the teachings that will help us live as true Christians: "*See how they love each other!*"

If we live these teachings and help our children to do so, we will be helping in the construction of the civilization of love, where we experience the most important commandment of God: "*Love one another as I have loved you.*"

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

The first and most important principle of all is this:

Recognize, respect and live with one another because we have an immense dignity; because we are all children of God, created in his image and likeness.

All human beings share that dignity. We all deserve to be respected. Does anyone

have the right to offend another? The Lord tells us: "*Love one another as I have loved you.*" Why? Because He knows that we are all his children. Therefore, the respect in the treatment between each other has to be lived day by day, in the details of social and family life:

** Respect your spouse, even if he/she thinks differently.

** Respect your children, even if they are restless and make you nervous.

** Respect your parents, though it is hard work.

** Respect your in-laws, because they are persons too.

** Respect all who serve you: at the store; the bus driver, the police, the doctor, the teacher.

** Respect those who offend you, because the Lord told us: "*Love your enemies.*"

Therefore, every Christian must respect the dignity of each and every person that lives around him/her, that is, his/her neighbor. A true Christian is he/she who, despite being angry, tired, sick, bored or upset, treats others respectfully, without offending or hurting them.

These are two passages that speak of the dignity of the person:

Genesis 1: 26-31: "*Let us make man in our image and likeness*"

Matthew 25, 31-45: "*... whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me*"

THE PRINCIPLE OF CHARITY

This second principle derives from the dignity of the human person, because we must love (look for the good of others) for the simple fact that they are people.

Love others, because Jesus Christ is identified with each one of us. Charity is to love others because we love God, because we love God in others, for God loves each one individually. Love as He loves.

Love is an act of will. All human coexistence, if it is fed by charity for the love of God, becomes a real Christian society. Charity is the hallmark of a true Christian.

The so-called civilization of love is based precisely on the relations of fraternal charity which must distinguish baptized Catholics.

Some passages that speak of charity:

John 15: 12-13, *"This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you"*

I John 7-21: *"Whoever loves God must also love his/her brethren"*

Matthew 5.43 to 48 and Luke 6, 27-38: *"Love your enemies ..."*

THE PRINCIPLE OF JUSTICE

Remember that justice does not mean giving everyone equally, but rather giving each one what is owed to him/her. This means that everyone deserves: respect, support, love, being nicely treated, education.

To be fair to others we need, above all, to recognize them as persons, like me, with dignity, a child of God, created in his image and likeness.

How to be fair to others? By thinking in "each person," according to his/her circumstances.

For example, to be fair with our children we must consider their age. We must treat each person according to how he/she is, valuing his/her rights, uniqueness, fame.

He/she who is just, loves. He/she who is righteous recognizes the dignity of others. Why do we see so many injustices in the world? Is it not because some people do not recognize the dignity of others and treat them as if they were things or animals? If we all would recognize each other as individuals we would always give them what we owe to them.

Some passages that speak of justice:

Matthew 25, 31-45: *"For I was hungry and you gave me food ..."*

Luke 6, 31: "[*Do to others as you would have them do to you*](#)"

Luke 20: 20- 26: "[*Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.*](#)"

THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY

This principle has a very unusual name. However, it is crucial to know it, not by name but as a principle, and to understand what it means.

Subsidiarity is to help others to do something when they cannot do it by themselves. However, this aid is not to be given forever, but until others learn to work things out, to handle things by themselves.

The Christian ought to apply this principle. As soon as the other can handle things, we must let him/her go. He/she should, in fairness, grow as a person, learn to be responsible. The true Christian will set him/herself aside when the other can take care of him/herself.

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE COMMON GOOD

All individuals are important in the eyes of God because we are all his children, created in His image and likeness. Therefore, each person must be taken into consideration so that he/she can improve and develop. It is unfair to allow some individuals to grow at the expense of the suffering of others. Growth must be for everyone. This is what *common good* means, in that all individuals may participate when a decision is taken.

This principle tells us that whenever something is done, it must be for the benefit of each and every one of the participants, not just the majority of members. *The common good*. No one can be damaged for the benefit of others. Without love, without justice, without solidarity, without respect for the individual, there is no common good.

AUTHORITY AS SERVICE

Society, as it is made up of individuals, must be organized in such a way that some may lead the others. If not, society would be confusion and chaos. But why should they be the rulers? To use the power to satisfy their whims? To take advantage of their power?

In the smaller society that is the family, what must the duty of parents be towards their children as authority figures?

The Church teaches that the leadership is willed by God to help all members of society, whether civil (country, town or city) or a family, so that everyone may benefit of *the common good*. Therefore, leaders must exist to serve the members of society, and not for members to serve their leaders.

At home, the job of parents must be to help their children to be better each day, to

develop their qualities; to be better individuals, better Christians, better children of God.

When you educate your children, always ask yourself: Will what I do help them become better? Could my behavior be just a whim? Could it be that I treat my children as slaves? The parental authority exists for children to be better people.

If you have the opportunity to reach a position of authority in the village or community, it is also your responsibility as a Catholic to work so that all who are under your care may receive the benefits of your selfless service.

Some passages that speak of authority:

John 13: In this passage you can witness how Jesus, being God, sets to serve his disciples by washing their feet. Right there He said, "[*If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet.*](#)"

Luke 9: 1-5: Jesus gives his disciples authority to take away demons, to heal diseases, to announce the Kingdom of God. He gives them authority to serve others, not to serve themselves.