



# CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

Diocese of Salt Lake City

## CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING **The Call to Family, Community, and Participation**

In a recent article we addressed the concept that all persons have dignity and therefore need to be treated with respect. Our tradition proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social. We are created as individuals but we cannot exist alone; we are social beings. Because of our need to exist with others, there are various communities which provide the means for us to grow as persons.

Catholic tradition teaches that human beings grow and achieve fulfillment in community. The base community for human beings is the family. How do our schools support the family? The family is the core social institution that needs to be supported and strengthened. Schools attempt to have open communication with families by providing internet access to grades, sending home bulletins and letters, having presentations which help families with issues of raising children, providing convenient times for conferences and various other activities determined by the school the children attend. These are available but not always utilized.

The word “social” implies communication. The communication era is exploding all around us through technology and the media. The multiple means of communication can be good and can also present a challenge to individuals, family, and community. Technology is both beneficial and detrimental. Although it is meant to provide avenues of communication it can draw the individual away from forming community and strengthening families. Face to face communication with each other and with the school or outside communities is always the best. Parents need to monitor the use of internet, cell phones, computer games and television; they can be harmful as well as draw the child into an anti-social environment where communication skills are not developed and he or she become content to exist alone.

Our schools have always believed that parents are the primary educators. Teaching children is a life-long project which requires many avenues and many hands. Communication in the family is necessary to bring about a strong bond of trust and caring. Often each person in the family is over-extended and so busy they do not have time for basic communication. Never let good intentions of providing for the family get in the way of bringing the family together.

Parents need to set priorities and make sure that family togetherness is a cherished value. Eating together should be a priority. If the children are in too many activities, the parents are run ragged transporting them and often not only mom and dad but the children are tired. Little energy is left for the strengthening of bonds among the members. Quality time with children requires one on one time. We have all seen the decline of family life in the United States. Divorce rates are up and there is a basic insecurity in many of our children.

Families are not lone rangers as base communities. We are called to family, community, and participation. “We believe that people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. Our Church teaches that the role of government and other institutions is to protect human life and human dignity and promote the common good.” (United States Catholic Conference of Bishops) The local parish can be a supportive community in this quest for the common good of all. Working together, we achieve much for society and each other. We have a responsibility to contribute to the growth of the parish community. The mandate to participate should draw us to volunteer in the parish. Every parishioner is part of the whole and all are needed to have a smooth running body.

We are also called to become involved in the democratic process in our nation. As Catholics, we should become familiar with the issues, weigh pros and cons, and vote according to our conscience. Our moral Christian values should have a part in determining the course of the government. Every person counts. Let us be the social beings that we are meant to be. Our involvement is essential.

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